

Original Research Article

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Supplementing Rural Livelihoods through Backyard Poultry Farming

B.L. Dhaka*, G.S. Meena, R.K. Bairwa and N.L. Meena

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Bundi - 323 001, Rajasthan, India

*Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

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Backyard poultry has recognized as an effective tool for poverty alleviation in the rural areas. However, the level of monthly income from backyard poultry is low still it is an important source of supplementing earnings. It provides eggs and meat for family consumption and, to some extent, cash income thereby, enhances rural livelihoods. In order to stimulate economic growth of resource poor household in rural areas of Bundi district, Rajasthan, low input technology backyard poultry farming was introduced by Krishi Vigyan Kendra for supplementing earnings of resource poor farmers and landless labourers. Poultry birds of breed *Pratapdhan* were provided to farmers. The performance of birds reared under backyard production system was quite satisfactory. The backyard poultry farming generated subsistence income and provided valuable foods that improved household nutrition.

Introduction

Poor natural resource endowments and limited and inequitable access to productive natural resources is one of the most important drivers of poverty in rural areas. The vicious circle of poverty could not be broken even after planned effort for bringing improvement in the living standard of the rural masses. Despite marginal improvements, resources poor people find it more difficult to exit poverty. In recent years backyard poultry has recognized as an effective tool for poverty alleviation in the rural areas. The role of backyard poultry farming in sustaining and enhancing poor peoples' livelihoods in developing countries is well recognized among the development community (Ahuja *et al.*, 2008). There is also growing evidence to demonstrate the role of backyard poultry in enhancing the food and nutrition security of

the poorest households, reducing the livelihood vulnerability and insecurity, and promotion of gender equity (Ahuja, 2004; Ahuja and Sen, 2007). However, the level of monthly income from backyard poultry is low still it is an important source of supplementing earnings. It provides eggs and meat for family consumption and, to some extent, cash income thereby, enhances rural livelihoods. Realizing the potential offered by backyard poultry farming Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Bundi initiated to promote backyard poultry through various schemes. In order to stimulate economic growth of resource poor household poultry birds of dual purpose breed *Pratapdhan* were provided to small and marginal farmers and landless labourers on subsidized rate in rural areas.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Bundi district of Rajasthan. In order to understand the role backyard poultry farming in sustaining poor people's livelihoods, this study focused on its contribution to income, household nutrition, and empowerment. Towards that end, this study followed a traditional survey methodology and a qualitative approach.

The formal methods were further supplemented by formal and informal focus group discussions at the community level. The sample units were scattered over various villages of districts. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select sample for the study. Total 30 backyard poultry rearers were selected for the study. Data were collected using a well structured and pre-tested questionnaire. The collected data were statistically analyzed to draw inferences.

Results and Discussion

Performance of backyard poultry

Depending upon the agro-ecological conditions, practices of backyard poultry farming vary across study area. Majority of

households kept poultry under scavenging conditions resulting in lower unit cost. Accounting for home consumption of poultry meat and eggs, net income per annum per household was estimated to be nearly Rs.28000.00. Households used this increased cash income to pay for educational expenditures, medical emergencies, overcoming food shortages, and other little indulgences of life. This was possible only because backyard poultry farming provided marketable surplus, to some extent, to make it worthwhile for individuals to to meet essential family needs. The finding are corroborate the findings of Ahuja *et al.*, (2008), Meena *et al.*, (2012) and Debnath *et al.*, (2012).

Perceived benefits

During the promotion of backyard poultry farming it was believed important to convince beneficiaries about the advantages of backyard poultry farming. The beneficiaries came to regard the backyard poultry farming as an important livelihood enhancement that provided many benefits for all. While the benefits of backyard poultry farming were widely known, each respondent had their own perception and priorities.

Table.1 Performance of backyard poultry farming

Economic traits	Performance
Average flock size (No. of birds)	13
Birds sold / self consumption	23
Average weight of bird (g)	2360
Average market price per bird (Rs)	630
Total Revenue from Birds (Rs)	14490
Eggs sold / self consumption (No.)	1898
Average market price per egg (Rs)	8
Total revenue from eggs (Rs)	15184
Feed costs (Rs)	1230
Other costs (Rs)	244
Total costs (Rs)	1473
Annual revenue per household (Rs)	28200

Table.2 Perceived benefits of backyard poultry farming

Benefits	R.B.Q	Overall Rank
Alleviates protein malnutrition in vulnerable groups	58.41	IV
Waste material can be efficiently converted in to egg and chicken meat for human consumption	63.26	III
Provides additional income to the rural households	68.67	II
Integrates well with other agricultural operations	47.33	VI
Aids in enhancing the soil fertility	56.89	V
Provides egg and meat with almost no or meager investment	72.03	I
Generate employment opportunity in rural areas	46.12	VII

Table.3 Attitude of respondents towards backyard poultry farming

Category	Number	Percentage
Highly favourable	7	23.33
Favourable	17	56.67
Neutral	6	20.00

The results presented in table 2 revealed that backyard poultry farming provides egg and meat with almost no or meager investment was emerged as important benefit and given highest priority. The next most frequently mentioned benefit was additional source income to the rural households. Backyard poultry farming can be efficiently convert waste material (insects, ants, fallen grains, green grass, kitchen waste, vegetable waste etc.) in to egg and chicken meat for human consumption was the third most perceived benefit. It was further perceived that it alleviates protein malnutrition in vulnerable groups, aids in enhancing the soil fertility and integrates well with other agricultural operations. Similar benefits were also reported by Obi *et al.*, (2008), Pathak and Nath (2013), Islam *et al.*, (2014), Patel *et al.*, (2014) and Awasthi *et al.*, (2015).

Attitude of farmers

The attitude of farmers towards backyard poultry farming was measured and results presented in table 3. The results revealed that majority of the respondents (56.67 %) possessed favorable attitude towards backyard poultry farming. Results so may be because the respondents were convinced with the benefits reaped from the backyard poultry rearing. However, since the highly favourable category consists of only 23.33 per cent of the respondents, it may also be assumed that the farmers are still not fully convinced of all aspects of backyard poultry farming and that they do have apprehensions on its advantages. Similar results were also reported by Kanwat (2012).

In conclusion it may be concluded that backyard poultry farming is an effective tool for to strengthen the livelihood of resource poor farmers and landless labourers in rural area with low-cost initial investment. It provides eggs and meat for family consumption and additional income to the rural households.

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