

Mitigating policy measures to increase fodder availability in natural calamities situations

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Introduction

Though the availability of feed and fodder has improved in the last decade, still there exists a substantial gap between demand and availability of fodder in the country, particularly during the lean periods and at the time of natural calamities including droughts and or flood situations. Availability of adequate quantity of feed and fodder for livestock is essential for improving livestock productivity. Under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), the States have sufficient funds and autonomy to undertake development of feed and fodder besides other agricultural and allied activities. There is a need to disseminate the benefits of using high yielding quality fodder seeds and combination of crops among the farmers through front line demonstration (FLD) and minikits. Although providing sustenance fodder to the livestock is the priority during the drought situation, it is vital to ensure that the nutritional level of productive milch animals is maintained to sustain production of milk. Under the SDRF and NDRF there is provision for supply of concentrates in cattle camps. The subsidy to be provided on the feed concentrates may vary from 25% to 50% of cost of feed, as would be decided by the State Government.

Materials and Methods

India with above 2.3% of the land area of the world, is maintaining nearly 17% of the world's human population and 10.71% of livestock. It is estimated that there is shortage of about 36 % of green and 40 % of dry fodder (NABCONS, 2007). Majority of livestock are reared on crop residue with little supplementation of grains, bran, oil cakes etc. In arid region and semi- arid regions, livestock are allowed to graze on available grasslands. Fodder as crop residues and their by-products constitute major ingredients (40%) in daily ration followed by green fodder (26%), concentrates (3%) and remaining comes through grazing. Inadequate nutrition affects the expression of full genetic potential. Balance feeding is also important to minimize green house gases (methane, CO₂ etc.) and climate change. Quantity and quality of feed supply remains the major limiting factor to improve livestock productivity. Livestock requires feed and fodder round the year. The number of livestock is growing rapidly, but grazing lands are diminishing due to pressure on land for agricultural and non agricultural uses. Most of the grazing lands have either been degraded or encroached upon restricting its availability for grazing. The area under fodder cultivation is limited to about 4% of the cropping area, and it has remained static for last four decades. Owing to the importance of food crops and other cash crops, it is very unlikely that the area under fodder cultivation would increase substantially. State Governments may promote use of crop residues and agricultural wastes or by-products as animal feed by enriching it through available technologies like treatment of straw with urea molasses along with silage. The State Governments will devise a suitable mechanism to ensure that only deserving farmers get the benefit of subsidised feed in a transparent manner. The list of eligible farmers and the number of cattle / buffaloes to be provided with subsidized feed concentrates will be approved by the Gram Panchayat or Gram Sabha of concerned village within the area notified as drought affected.

Results and Discussion

Practice of land use with multiple crops: The need of the time is to adopt efficient utilization of resources in a sustainable manner per unit of production per unit of time. Adopting silvi-pastoral and horti-pastoral models suitable to the area can help in substantially enhancing the availability of forage for livestock. About 29 million ha area in the country falls under the category of open forests with less than 0.4 canopy density which can be developed with fodder trees. This huge land resource can be utilized for growing of fodder, not only as an under-storey on the partially shaded ground without affecting standing trees. Adoption of high yielding dual purpose crops and varieties: Use of quality fodder seeds including dual purpose grain crops like Bajra, maize, Jowar and vegetable crops like cowpea, and guar *etc.*, is essential for improving productivity. Arid tracts - Rainfed-Jowar, Bajra, moth, guar, Lobia and for irrigated land-Lucerne, berseem, oat, maize, Jowar and Bajra are suitable crops. Availability of quality fodder seeds: Presently, approximately 20,000 MT quality fodder seed is produced, which is sufficient to cover about 4% of total cultivated area used under fodder crops (NDDDB). Fodder seed production and distribution under the National Livestock Mission and provisions under NFLM can

also be utilized for this purpose. Emphasis also be laid on availability of seeds of short duration and dual purpose crops, which can be used in emergency of drought, floods for getting fodder in short period. Adoption of suitable crop combinations: Improvement of grassland / wasteland: Conservation and utilization of crop residue/ by-products: Developments of fodder banks: Strengthening of Extension activities: Convergence of fodder schemes with MNREGA schemes. Taking into account the drought situation in the year 2012-13, States may consider providing subsidised feed concentrates to milch animals at rate of 1 kg per cattle per day from National Mission for Protein Supplements (NMPS). This provision will be applicable only in the areas notified as drought affected. State Governments are advised to give preference to BPL farmers in providing assistance under different fodder schemes, including supply of concentrates to cattle and goats/ sheep. Adult goats and sheep, in the areas where these are under stress due to drought, may be provided 200 gm per head of concentrate per day at a subsidy of 25% of cost as would be decided by the State Government.

Conclusion

Availability of adequate quantity of feed and fodder can be increased by various ways of fodder production, conservation and efficient utilization of natural resources particularly during natural adverse condition of production. Government of India Has released funds under various component of fodder development. Efforts should, however, be made to meet the nutritional requirements of livestock through locally available feed material and to reduce dependence on fund under NMPS. Funds under MNREGA may also be used, especially in drought affected areas, for promoting Azolla cultivation and other activities to augment availability of fodder, as allowed under the guide lines for MNREGA.

References

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