

*Original Research***Traditional Rearing Practices of Indigenous Pigs in Tamil Nadu****Sangli Vikram Kumar, K.^{1*}, Balasubramanyam, D.² and Gopi, H.²**

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Abstract

Tamil Nadu covers an area of 130,058 km² (50,216 sq mi), and is the eleventh largest state in India. Indigenous pigs were domesticated and well adapted to our ecosystem. A study was conducted on pig rearing system among the people who rear pigs as their main source of income for their livelihood. The study revealed that the indigenous pigs were reared under traditional system by the particular community people and were evenly distributed among all parts of Tamil Nadu and is the main source of income. The phenotypic characters showed that these pigs were indigenous to this state and their existence was noted since many centuries. People use various indigenously made materials/utensils for housing and feeding. Pigs were fed mainly with locally available feed resources, through scavenging and rooting. Commercial sale of animal and meat was also practiced. Certain tribe/community practices century old established indigenous technical knowledge in pig rearing and they are passed through many generations. Indigenous traditional knowledge would significantly contribute to the generation and pave the way for exploitation of technology to benefit tribal/rural populations.

Key words: Indigenous Pigs, Traditional Rearing Practices, Tamil Nadu

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Introduction

The geological pattern makes this state as unique and very suitable for floral and faunal biodiversity. Among the indigenous livestock germplasm, pig contributes a major source of income for certain community in Tamil Nadu and also it is a part of traditions and culture. It is believed that pig production and pork consumption is strongly associated with specific communities and piggery is invariably a small-

scale backyard enterprise. Traditional management continues to dominate production system with exception that indigenous pigs were more preferred than the exotics or crossbreds.

Materials and Methods

Study Area (Location, Topography and Climate)

Tamil Nadu covers an area of 130,058 km² (50,216 sq mi), and is the eleventh largest state in India. The bordering states are Kerala to the west, Karnataka to the North West and Andhra Pradesh to the north. To the east is the Bay of Bengal and the state encircles the union territory of Puducherry. The southernmost tip of the Indian Peninsula is Kanyakumari which is the meeting point of the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and the Indian Ocean. Tamil Nadu has a coastline of about 1,076 km (669 mi) which is the country's second longest coastline. Tamil Nadu is mostly dependent on monsoon rains, and thereby is prone to droughts when the monsoons fail. The climate of the state ranges from dry sub-humid to semi-arid. The state has two distinct periods of rainfall: south west monsoon from June to September, with strong southwest winds and North east monsoon from October to December, with dominant north east winds. The annual rainfall of the state is about 945 mm (37.2 in) of which 48 per cent is through the north east monsoon, and 32 per cent through the south west monsoon. Since the state is entirely dependent on rains for recharging its water resources, monsoon failures lead to acute water scarcity and severe drought. Tamil Nadu is divided into seven agro-climatic zones: north east, north west, west, southern, high rainfall, high altitude hilly, and Kaveri Delta (the most fertile agricultural zone).

Survey

A field survey was conducted to study the traditional pig farming systems in Tamil Nadu. Survey was conducted in 44 villages of Tamil Nadu. The data was collected from 144 farmers using pre-framed questionnaire and recorded from randomly selected people both through personal interviews and observations with suitable photographs.

Result and Discussion

Pig Rearers and Their Livelihood

Women also involved in rearing pigs. All individuals irrespective of age were involved in rearing of pigs and 60% of the farmers were between 30-40 years of age. 90 % of the farmers completed their primary education. Individual's average herd size is 25. The indigenous pigs were reared by 85 % of poor and landless farmers belonging to specific communities. Mostly the pigs were reared under scavenging system. Few farmers also rear cattle, sheep and goat along with pig. The rearing of pig is profitable when

compared to other livestock enterprise. Other than local indigenous pigs, Large White Yorkshire, cross bred pigs was also reared by the people. Farmers prefer the indigenous pigs because of their good adaptation to the local climatic conditions.



Fig 1: Women in rearing indigenous pigs

Traditional Pig Rearing Practices

Housing

Pig serves as food and nutritional security for certain communities of people. Most of them are reared under free range / scavenging system. Scavenging systems allow pigs to roam freely day and night. The pigs roam freely and may or may not return to the shelters and usually shelter underneath the trees. Few people have separate enclosure/shelters for piglet and rarely for adult. The type of housing varied based on the local climatic adaptation and locally available resources. Materials such as mud bricks, cement bricks, bamboo, concrete, wood and iron sheets were commonly used. The roofing material is usually thatched leaves and some people use asbestos / iron sheets.



Fig 2: Various types of housing for indigenous pigs

Feeding

Indigenous pigs are omnivorous. Usually pigs were fed with the kitchen waste from hotels, hostels, etc. Most of the people feed the pigs once daily either in the morning or in the evening. No specific sounds are made to call the pigs. The feed is dumped in a place; all pigs make way to that place for feeding at a particular point of time. In some circumstances, they also provide commercially available feed which includes grains, cereals, meat, fish meal, etc. No separate feed for piglets, weaner and for adults. They are fed in groups irrespective of their age or size or sex. The water trough is usually made up of tyre with the half cut in it for easy feeding. Usually they feed banana leaves, rice, and food waste from hotels, canteen, etc. They don't feed concentrate feed.



Fig. 3: Hotel waste for feeding indigenous pigs



Fig. 4: Indigenous pigs feeding on hotel waste

Pig Rearing Practice

Pigs were reared in free range system and few at backyard. The pig farmers practice low input production system. Breeding is mainly by the natural service and no selection was practiced. The breeding boar is very difficult to find or catch. No extra care was given to the pigs. Pigs are reared mainly for pork consumption. Farmers are not aware of the common diseases of pig and their incidence due to lack of attention / knowledge. Further, the people approach/seek veterinary assistance very rarely and in case of

any unnatural death they rarely report to the Veterinarian / Department of Animal Husbandry for conducting post mortem and for further investigation.

Health

Monitoring the health of pigs periodically is not possible in scavenging system. But, in case of any sudden outbreak of diseases, they isolate the diseased pigs based on their experience and treat on their own. Mostly the sick animals will be slaughtered or sold immediately. The animals are mostly under scavenging system, hence, no deworming/vaccination has been carried out.

Marketing

The animals are purchased at the farmers' place or through the middle men. There is no organized marketing channel for indigenous pigs. The slaughter of the animals is by jatkha method. The pigs were slaughtered twice in a week preferably on Sunday. Each individual market their own meat and is usually on the road side shops. No special products are made from meat of indigenous pigs. In some areas, the meat is cooked and sold for the people depending upon their needs. The pigs were sold based on the live weight (Rs.50-60/kg). Demand for younger pigs is higher than the adult pigs, both in terms of frequency and numbers. Usually few adult pigs are reared in sheds. It is considered as a social act for safeguarding traditional needs. During religious functions of certain communities, the demands for indigenous pigs are so high and hence, pay more for live weight during this period. Mostly adults over one and half years were preferred for religious functions.



Fig. 5: Feeders used by farmers



Fig. 6: Adults indigenous pigs for marketing



Fig. 7: Indigenous Dam with piglets



Fig. 8: Scavenging indigenous pigs



Fig. 9: Indigenous pigs resting under the trees

Conclusion

The study revealed that the marketing systems were controlled by informal marketing channels and hence no defined market place or traders for farmers to sell their pigs. The weight of the pig is lesser compared to their age, indicating poor growth performance and poor returns to pig farmers. To improve smallholder pig production, marketing systems and clean pork production, there is a need for strategic development of pig value chain. Native pig rearing plays a vital role in improving the socio-economic status of a downstream people. It ensures food and nutritional security. This unique indigenous pig germplasm is considered as prosperity of Tamil Nadu. The native pigs are reared by farmers of certain community of this state ecosystem over the centuries and they believe that animals perform well under this local agro climatic conditions. State should chart out strategies for improving the farming system management, genetic improvement and conservation.

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