

# An overview of the livestock sector in Assam

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## ABSTRACT

Livestock sector has been emerged as an important growth engine of rural economy of India and its share in gross domestic production has gradually increased. Besides agriculture, livestock is one of the prime occupations in the North- Eastern state of Assam. The state has been occupied highest number of livestock in respect of all the livestock in the region. Assam is rich in livestock resource, which are includes cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat, pig and poultry. In the 19th livestock census, 2012, a total livestock population of Assam is 19080.30 million. Assam is highest numbers of pig's production among the Indian state with a share of 15.88 percent in 2012. However, the performance of the other livestock productions in Assam is not satisfactory as compared to other state of India. In the Production of cattle, goat and poultry, the ranking of Assam is 8th, 11th and 7th rank in respectively. In the North-Eastern region almost 90 per cent of people are non-vegetarian and hence, there is huge demand of livestock product in the state. However, the livestock population in the state is very a large in numbers, but its production and productivity is very low as compared to other parts of the country. In spite of having huge livestock resources and ample potentiality as growth engine, the sector has lagging behind due to some perennial obstacle in the state. Proper understanding of the value addition to this sector and awareness and implementation of innovation along with institutional credit facility is mass important criteria for growing of this sector in the state. In this paper attempt has been made to analyze the overall performance of livestock sector in Assam based on the secondary data.

## 1. Introduction

Livestock sector is a sub-sector of agricultural economy and plays a significant role in economic development especially in rural areas. The sector has providing gainful employment opportunities particularly to smalland marginal landless farmers and women and agricultural labours. Apart from these, livestock sector is an important source of foreign exchange earner for a national economy. It supplementing family income and provides cheap nutritional foods to millions of people. At presently, in India about 20.5 million people are depending on livestock sector for their livelihood. About 8.8 percent of the population is getting employment opportunities in this sector. Livestock are known as the best insurance against the disaster of nature like, floods, draught, famine and other natural calamities. This sector is the second largest economic activity of rural India. If the country has to sustain economically, livestock sector has to be strengthen. Livestock in Assam is highly livelihood oriented and is gradually owned by small and marginal farmers and landless agricultural labours. In the state, more than 85 per cent people are residing in the rural area and they are basically depends on agricultural and allied activities for their livelihood. However, the sector has not performing as much as expected way due to certain obstacles. Lack of infrastructure, natural calamities, institutional credit in accessibility and lack of entrepreneurship attitude are the some major factors responsible for backwardness of this sector in Assam.

## 2. Objectives

The prime objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To analyze the current status of livestock sector in Assam;
2. To analyse the problems of livestock sector in Assam;

## 3. Methodology

The present study is scientific and descriptive in nature based on the secondary sources of data. The various sources of secondary data are published research journal, Livestock census of India, NEDFi databank and GOI bulletin etc,. Some table are presented to showing the clear picture of numerical data.

## 4. Analysis

### Livestock sector in Assam

Livestock constitutes one of the important homestead activities in almost all household in Assam. Almost every individual of household of the rural people are rearing livestock. The major livestock of Assam are cattle, buffalo, goat, pig, horse and ponies, and sheep. The livestock sector of Assam has been renowned as a back bone of Assam's economy. In the Indian prospects, livestock is one of the largest rich diversity of animal wealth in the world. According to 19<sup>th</sup> livestock census 2012, there are 37 recognized breeds of cattle, 39 of sheep's, 13 of buffaloes, 24 of goats and 8 of camel in India.

Livestock population in Assam is quite large as compared to the other North-Eastern state of India. According to 19<sup>th</sup> livestock census 2012, the share of Assam's livestock population to India's total is 3.72%. With 15.88 per cent contributions, Assam recorded as highest pig producer state of India. In case of cattle and goat, the state occupied 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> rank respectively. In the following table1, the state share of livestock population to the country's total during the year 2012 is shown.

**Table1: State share of Livestock population to the country's total 2012**

| Species   | Livestock in India<br>(in Millions) | Livestock in Assam<br>(in Thousands) | Assam's share in<br>India's Total (%) |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cattle    | 191.00                              | 10307.60                             | 5.39                                  |
| Buffaloes | 109.00                              | 435.90                               | 0.39                                  |
| Sheep     | 65.00                               | 518.07                               | 0.79                                  |
| Goat      | 135.20                              | 6169.19                              | 4.56                                  |
| Pig       | 10.30                               | 1636.02                              | 15.88                                 |
| Others    | 1.70                                | 14.15                                | 0.83                                  |
| Total     | 512.20                              | 19080.30                             | 3.72                                  |

Source: 19<sup>th</sup> livestock census, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries

### Livestock population trends in Assam:

The table2 depicts that the population of sheep, horse and ponies and goats has been increasing except cattle, pigs and buffaloes. However the pig's production in the state is highest

among the Indian states. From the table it's also found that the livestock population in Assam is gradually increasing over the time.

**Table2: livestock population in Assam, 19th livestock census, 2012**

| Livestock           | 18 <sup>th</sup> livestock census<br>2007(in thousands) | 19 <sup>th</sup> livestock census 2012(in<br>thousands) | India (in Millions)<br>(in 2012) |
|---------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|
| 1) Cattle           | 10365.58  | 10307.60  | 191.00                           |
| a)Indigenous        | .....   | 9911.60   | ....                             |
| b) crossed Breed    | .....   | 395.90  | .....                            |
| 2) Buffaloes        | 525.84  | 435.27  | 109.00                           |
| 3) sheep            | 306.38  | 518.07  | 65.00                            |
| 4) Goats            | 4376.15   | 6169.19   | 135.20                           |
| 5) Pigs             | 2133.43   | 1636.02   | 10.30                            |
| 6) Horse and ponies | 10.95   | 14.15   | 1.70                             |
| 7) Total livestock  | 17772.33  | 19080.30  | 512.20                           |

Source: Directorate of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Deptt.

The increasing trends of these livestock populations and livestock production in the state is not so remarkable. The numbers of goats is increased to 6169.19 thousands in 2012 which was 2133.43 thousand in 2007 census. The table2 also revealed that the indigenous cattle 9911.60 thousand on against crossed breed population of 395.90thousand in 2012 census. But the production and productivity of these indigenous cattle are lower than that of crossed breed. According to the livestock census 2012, there are overall decline trends in total livestock production in India. However some states have showing a substantial increase in livestock numbers. The states namely Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Punjab, Bihar, Sikkim, Meghalaya and Chhattisgarh have

showing a substantial increase in livestock. With 10.77 per cent increase, Assam has recorded 3<sup>rd</sup> state of India after Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh in increasing trend of production of livestock.

### District wise livestock population of Assam:

Livestock population in Assam is not equally distributed among the district. The reasons behind in this unequal distribution are diverse climatic condition, social custom and regional imbalance. From the table3, it's cleared that Nagaon, Cachar, Dhubri, Udalguri and Karbi-Anglong districts of Assam is highest in the population of the cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goat and pigs respectively.

**Table3: District wise livestock population in Assam as per 19<sup>th</sup> livestock census, 2012 (in thousands)**

| District  | Cattle | Buffaloes | Sheep  | Goat   | Pig    | Horse and ponies | Total livestock |
|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|------------------|-----------------|
| Kokrajhar | 325662 | 13290     | 16293  | 128473 | 88409  | 244              | 572371          |
| Dhubri    | 508361 | 13043     | 118171 | 273502 | 4564   | 957              | 918598          |
| Goalpara  | 288494 | 7283      | 29105  | 135077 | 49353  | 1237             | 510549          |
| Barpeta   | 383548 | 27044     | 97667  | 194640 | 13373  | 650              | 716922          |
| Morigaon  | 317841 | 4179      | 12035  | 140982 | 23287  | 376              | 498700          |
| Nagaon    | 762460 | 7445      | 11966  | 377870 | 44591  | 742              | 1205474         |
| Sonitpur  | 942292 | 36106     | 13449  | 501799 | 156574 | 263              | 1650483         |
| Lakhimpur | 607682 | 13819     | 1349   | 210354 | 131243 | 2207             | 966654          |

|              |          |        |        |         |         |       |          |
|--------------|----------|--------|--------|---------|---------|-------|----------|
| Dhemaji      | 453390   | 14547  | 716    | 143154  | 118913  | 1238  | 731958   |
| Tinsukia     | 408537   | 17247  | 322    | 203779  | 64344   | 274   | 694503   |
| Dibrugarh    | 448081   | 12312  | 755    | 295615  | 116950  | 331   | 847044   |
| Sivasagar    | 411099   | 24406  | 932    | 222984  | 86970   | 311   | 746702   |
| Jorhat       | 491495   | 26449  | 358    | 182531  | 71943   | 626   | 773402   |
| Golaghat     | 412887   | 15153  | 905    | 236699  | 86297   | 293   | 752234   |
| KarbiAnglong | 363343   | 14935  | 842    | 281099  | 162295  | 205   | 822719   |
| DimaHasao    | 26958    | 14294  | 364    | 42238   | 34364   | 0     | 128218   |
| Cachar       | 330765   | 56036  | 17440  | 159025  | 28182   | 49    | 591597   |
| Karimganj    | 264704   | 40041  | 21412  | 108314  | 14624   | 42    | 449137   |
| Hailakandi   | 161512   | 27947  | 18370  | 89873   | 6960    | 32    | 304694   |
| Bongaigaon   | 208890   | 1783   | 31487  | 113211  | 10167   | 369   | 365907   |
| Chirang      | 227871   | 7692   | 13716  | 82571   | 54412   | 10    | 386272   |
| Kamrup       | 541327   | 7946   | 33110  | 423714  | 68473   | 1199  | 1075769  |
| Kamrup Metro | 116338   | 891    | 982    | 64802   | 22487   | 4     | 205504   |
| Nalbari      | 260150   | 4552   | 14060  | 188991  | 17847   | 2010  | 487610   |
| Baksa        | 361387   | 2528   | 13334  | 191859  | 80612   | 21    | 649741   |
| Darrang      | 343025   | 12522  | 41441  | 191700  | 9821    | 442   | 598951   |
| Udalguri     | 339105   | 1775   | 7486   | 984337  | 68967   | 21    | 1401691  |
| Assam        | 10307604 | 435265 | 518067 | 6169193 | 1636022 | 14153 | 19080304 |

Source: Directorate of Animal Husbandry & veterinary Deptt.

#### Livestock production trends in Assam:

Livestock productions in Assam have been showing a steady growth in the recent period. However the total demand of livestock production in the state is still in deficiency and the state needs to imports from other parts of the country. In case

of milk consumption, the per capita milk consumption in Assam is only 74 ml, in 2015-16, on contrary to the recommended norms of Indian Council of Medical Research of 208 ml per head per day in India.

Table4: Production trends of livestock in Assam. (2007-08 to 2016-17)

| year      | Milk (million litres) | Egg (Million Nos) | Meat ('000 tonnes) |
|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 2007-2008 | 824                   | 490               | 29.00              |
| 2008-2009 | 827                   | 466               | 30.70              |
| 2009-2010 | 830                   | 468               | 31.59              |
| 2010-2011 | 833                   | 470               | 33.83              |
| 2011-2012 | 839                   | 471               | 34.19              |
| 2012-2013 | 845                   | 471               | 36.63              |
| 2013-2014 | 857                   | 472               | 38.34              |
| 2014-2015 | 873                   | 473               | 42.54              |
| 2015-2016 | 888                   | 474               | 44.81              |
| 2016-2017 | 904                   | 477               | 46.86              |

Source: Directorate of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Deptt.

Total milk production in Assam during 2007-08 was 824 million litres and it's increased to 904 million litres in 2016-17. Assam's share to India's total milk production is only 0.57 per cent in 2014-15. However in case of meat production the state has revealed an increasing trend along with the increasing demand of meat products in the state.

#### 5. Major constraints of livestock sector in Assam

Over the centuries, the livestock in Assam have been suffering some problems due to some inevitable factors. Some of these obstacles are mention in below:

1. Inferior quality fodder has been perennial constraints to livestock sector in Assam. Production of livestock is basically depends on the quality foods and fodder.
2. Devastation of natural pastors as a part of human activities also another important constraint of livestock sector in Assam.
3. Ever increasing competition with human for foods, changing environment and changing customs also hinders the livestock sector in Assam.
4. Rapid urbanization, industrialization and mechanization are some important obstacles in this sector.

5. Small and fragmented landholdings also another reason for low production of livestock in Assam.
6. Lack of awareness or poor perception of the farmers towards the livestock production as a viable alternative production is another drawback of this sector.
7. An unorganised market facility for all livestock products is another cause of low performance of livestock sector in Assam.
8. Lack of institutional credit and absence of quality breed and animals are also obstacles to this sector.

Apart from these, recurrence of flood, poor co-ordination of stakeholders and institutions, traditional method of rearing, poor use of online marketing, slow diversification process, inadequate research and development integration and

inadequate extension are some chronic problems as well as challenges to this sector.

## 6. Conclusion

Livestock sector is inevitable culture and a great potential for changing rural economy of Assam. There should be comprehensive policy measures to overcome the constraints in livestock sectors. The coordination and collaboration approach is necessary condition for better performance of the sector in the state. Comprehensive extension and entrepreneurship development programmes are necessary in this regard. The uses of appropriate technologies are key to enhancing the production and productivity and reduce the cost of production in the state. However, market intervention and the development of infrastructure and research and development are the pre-requisite for making livestock production system sustainable in the rural Assam.

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