

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH DAIRY FARMING

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Introduction

India is the world's largest producer of milk, contributing nearly 23% of global milk production. The dairy sector plays an important role in strengthening rural livelihoods and contributes significantly to the Indian economy.

Dairy farming also serves as a powerful tool for women empowerment, providing income opportunities, improving decision-making power, and enhancing social status in rural communities.

Women's Role in the Dairy Sector

Women constitute nearly 70% of the workforce in dairy farming and are actively involved in many activities such as:

- Feeding livestock
- Milking animals
- Cleaning sheds
- Processing milk products
- Managing household nutrition

While men often handle marketing and transportation, women perform the core daily management tasks in dairy farming.

Why Dairy Farming Empowers Women

Dairy farming empowers women because:

- ✓ It can be practiced near home
- ✓ Provides regular income
- ✓ Requires relatively small land holdings
- ✓ Encourages participation in Self Help Groups (SHGs)



- India supports more than 80 million dairy farmers.
- Nearly 75 million women are engaged in dairy-related activities.
- Dairy farming provides a daily income compared to seasonal crop income.

Dairy Sector and Sustainable Development

The dairy sector contributes to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including:

- SDG 1 – No Poverty
 - SDG 2 – Zero Hunger
 - SDG 5 – Gender Equality
 - SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth
- By strengthening women's role in dairy farming, rural communities can achieve better nutrition, income security, and social development.

Measuring Women Empowerment in Agriculture

Emerging Opportunities for Women in Dairy

Researchers use different indexes to measure empowerment levels in agriculture.

Major Indexes Include

Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)

Measures decision-making power, access to resources, income control, leadership, and time allocation.

Women’s Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI)

Focuses specifically on empowerment through livestock and dairy activities.

Women can expand their role through:

- Dairy cooperatives
- Milk processing enterprises
- Value-added dairy products (paneer, ghee, yogurt)
- Digital dairy marketing platforms
- Agri-entrepreneurship

These opportunities can significantly increase women’s income and leadership in rural economies.

Key Indicators of Women's Empowerment in Dairy

Domain	Indicators
Economic Empowerment	Income generation, access to credit
Social Empowerment	Participation in cooperatives
Decision Making	Control over livestock management
Psychological Empowerment	Confidence and self-reliance
Health & Nutrition	Improved household nutrition
Access to Resources	Land, livestock ownership
Constraints	Cultural and financial barriers

Conclusion

Dairy farming has emerged as a powerful pathway for women empowerment in rural India. With supportive policies, access to finance, and improved training opportunities, women can transform dairy farming into a sustainable livelihood.

Strengthening women’s participation in dairy farming will not only improve family incomes and food security but also contribute to inclusive agricultural development.