

**FAO Regional Forum for Innovations to Support Sustainable
Livestock Transformation in the Asia & Pacific Region
12th to 15th November 2024
Khon Kaen, Thailand**



Sanjeev Kumar participated in the FAO Regional Forum for Innovations to Support Sustainable Livestock Transformation in the Asia-Pacific Region organized by the FAO in Thailand and he shares his observations here.

CONTEXT

Livestock plays a vital role in the Asia-Pacific region's agriculture-based economy. This workshop was organized to provide an opportunity for participants to learn and exchange information on how livestock sector investment planning and innovations can transform the sector in Asia-Pacific to meet food and nutrition security objectives and sustainable development goals. Country directors of livestock, livestock development officers, technology providers, and innovators in the livestock value chain from 15 Asian countries, along with FAO team members, participated in the event.



TECHNICAL SESSIONS

Mr. Scott Newman, Senior Animal Health and Production Officer from FAO, initiated the proceedings by setting the overall context of current programs and projects in Asia-Pacific and highlighting the challenges in mobilizing investment planning. He pointed out three main factors constraining investments in the livestock sector:

1. Rising concerns about methane and GHG emissions by ruminants.
2. Deforestation often linked with livestock farming.
3. High manual labour and lower profits leading to reduced youth participation, especially in production.

This was followed by discussions on addressing key issues, especially methane emission reduction, and building a narrative through evidence-based reports and research. This narrative emphasizes the multiple benefits of livestock, ranging from nutrition, income, and employment to gender equity.

A tool for Livestock Systematic Investment Planning Technique was presented, encompassing multiple issues and generating options. The tool helps make projections and conduct analyses for scenarios 10 years down the line without interventions. It generates options for identifying core areas and processes for investment mobilization.

Case studies on livestock investment planning from a few countries were presented, followed by a discussion on ways to reduce negative factors and build on the positive aspects of livestock farming, considering the increasing demand for livestock products.

On the second day, presentations of case studies on successful livestock investment planning and strategy development from Bhutan, Mongolia, and Bangladesh were delivered. A special session on handling transboundary animal diseases and biosecurity was conducted.

A technical session on Climate-SMART Livestock Innovation to reduce GHG emissions focused on:

- Breed improvement to achieve higher food production per unit.
- Utilizing manure.
- Balanced nutrition for healthy animals with lower emissions.

A special discussion on Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) highlighted integrated livestock management, biosecurity, and genetic selection.



Day 3 started with a focus on the role of gender and youth in livestock development. Ten selected Youth Champions from various countries shared their experiences and perspectives. This session was followed by a dedicated session on innovation in dairy production. The Chairman of the National Dairy Development Board, India, presented insights and experiences from India.

A session on data standardization for livestock productivity management was particularly intriguing. The presentation detailed the process of data collection over the past 70 years in developed countries. Analysis of such data has provided a strong base for the systematic selection of elite livestock for optimizing breeding outcomes.



Panel discussion on role of Livestock in food safety & nutrition security

This was followed by a session on livestock products and their role in food security, food safety, and nutrition. Experts from New Zealand discussed the nutritional aspects of livestock products. Mr. Tara from Heifer Nepal presented a case study on private and public investment in marketing small ruminants. I presented a case study on a Digital Livestock Farming School, where farmers attend village-based digital schools to learn best practices in livestock farming and product processing. I also presented a case study of a community-led goat milk collection, processing, and marketing initiative. This included the goat farmers-led "Gift a Glass of Milk" campaign, which has provided 34,000 glasses of milk to selected malnourished children over 180 days to enhance their Body Mass Index (BMI).

MY REFLECTIONS

Participation in this workshop helped me understand the broader context of investment planning and global issues in livestock farming and the value chain. Experiences from various countries provided insights into how we can improve our processes and efforts in India. The context of Asian countries and the relevance of Indian experiences offered a unique perspective to extend our knowledge and experiences, especially in the small ruminant sector, to neighbouring countries.

Mr. Sanjeev Kumar is an alumnus of the National Dairy Research Institute (ICAR-NDRI) and is presently the Director of the International Institute of Goat Management (an academic unit of The Goat Trust). He has been working for 27 years on goat value chain enterprises and is an Ashoka Fellow and Social Entrepreneur. He can be reached at sanjeevfaculty@gmail.com.

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