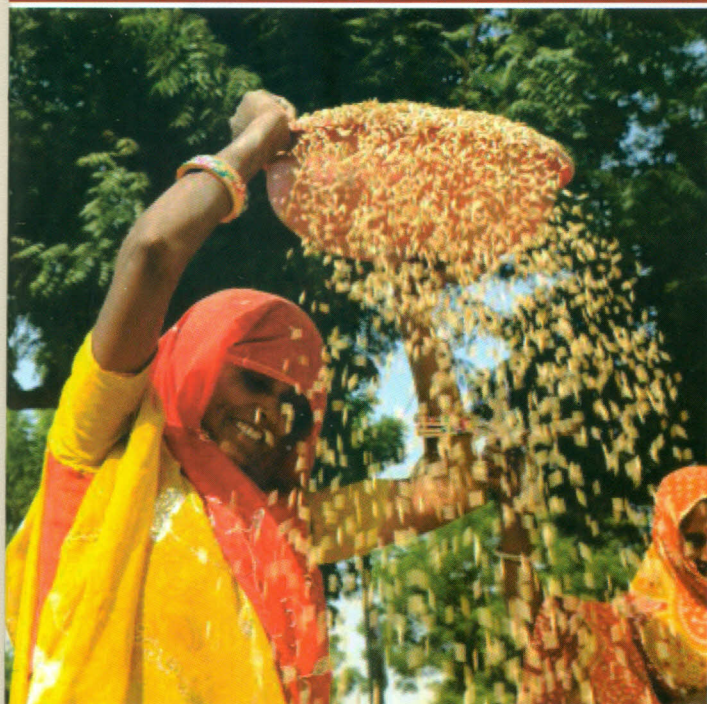


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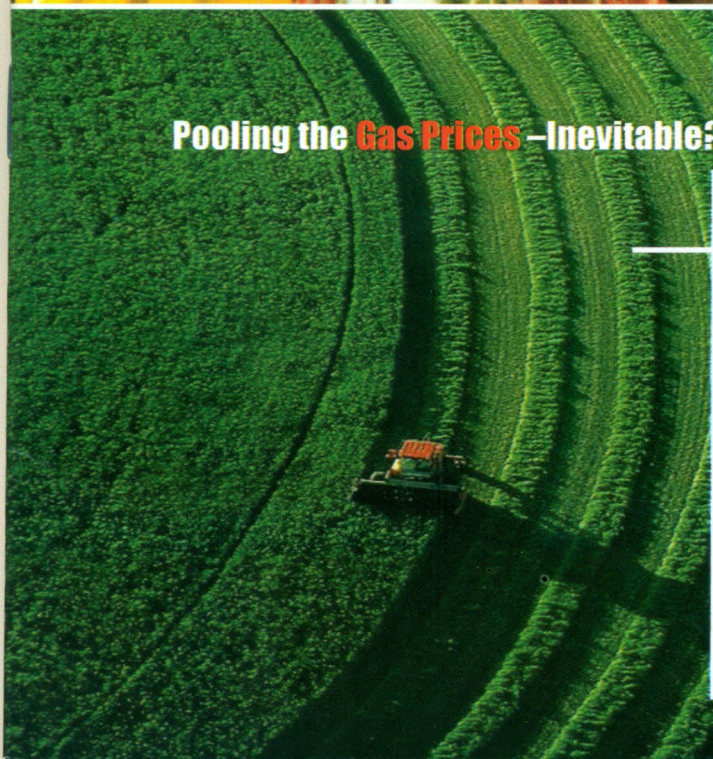
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Food Production



Farm Credit in Farm Growth

Pooling the Gas Prices – Inevitable?



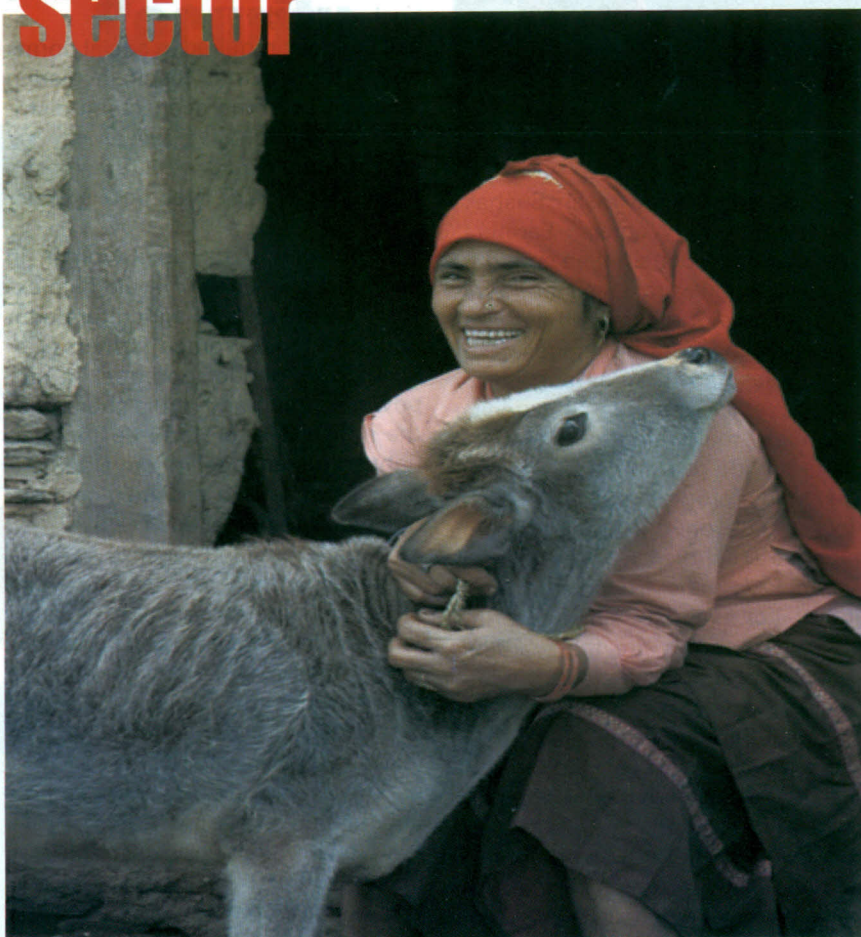
Budget Roundtable

Reminding women's contribution in livestock sector

India has emerged as a major economic driver and its livestock sector is booming. The contribution of the livestock sector to India's agricultural GDP is 26% and the livestock sector is growing at a rate of 4.6% a year. With 485 million livestock, India ranks first in global livestock population and the sector continues to remain small scale farmer led. Women contribute a significant share in livestock rearing. Over 73% of livestock related work is carried out by women, compared with 37% in cropping agriculture. Livestock sector provides employment to millions of people, particularly, woman, in principal or subsidiary status. Of the 600 million poor livestock keepers in the world, around two-thirds are women. Out of the 22 million people involved in animal husbandry in India, over 16 million are women, who play a significant role in livestock-keeping by providing labour; in poorer families, their contribution typically exceeds that of men; especially when men have migrated to the cities. Women play a greater role in mixed farming production systems (a system where crop cultivation and livestock rearing is done on the same farm) and carry out the majority of the tasks related to livestock. Due to increased out migration of men, similar to agriculture, it will not be an exaggeration to say that there will be a phenomena of feminization in livestock husbandry too! India's dairy sector is a case where cooperation of women brought strong political and social awareness to the challenges that women faced and still continue to face. The efforts lead to secure women's access to and control of productive and natural resources such as land, livestock and credit to strengthen her influence and social empowerment. Giving hope to mil-

lions of women, backstapped by abled professionals, women played an important role in the dairy (white) revolution that raised the country's milk production levels in 2011-12 to 127.3 million tonnes which is highest in the world. Vibrant dairy cooperatives have helped Indian women farmers to continue to gain more control over the sale of milk and the use of income from it. We observe special days like International Women's Day on March 8 every year to recognize women's economic, political and social achievements. Gender equality is enshrined in the Indian constitution; woman is put in the center stage of policy from VI five year plan onwards. After 18 years of the fourth United Nations World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing

from September 4-15, 1995 on how to make them more visible and to strategize ways to ensure that governments legislate and formulate policies, Government of India fulfilled the promise made at Beijing and unveiled national policy for empowerment of women in 2001. Progressively, in March 2010, an attempt by the Government to put women's concerns at the very heart of public policy and governance was made by launch of the National Mission for Empowerment of Women which has a mandate to achieve inter-sectoral convergence of all pro-women / women centric programmes across Ministries. Still, gender disparity prevails. In India, the word farmer or kisan is perceived as addressing a man and seldom a woman. Having recently





launched the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Yojana (Women Farmers' Empowerment Scheme) as constituent of National Rural Livelihood Project, women are recognized as farmers or Kisan. But the 'mindset' of the masses and to an extent, policy makers, still continues to perceive 'kisan' as male farmers! There still exists a wide gap between the policies, plans, programmes and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the women livestock farmers in India, on the other. For example, since time immemorial, women are the wardens of the indigenous livestock breeds, which have adapted to often harsh local conditions, are disease resistant, survive on local fodder etc. But the role of women in keeping indigenous breeds and improving their genetics through careful breeding has not been recognized for example: Kangayam cattle of Tamil Nadu, Chillika buffalo in Orissa. Such an indigenous knowledge of breed conservation is in the minds of women farmers, and yet women's contribution to indigenous livestock breeding and conservation is little documented and undervalued. As women are mostly attending the livestock, their life and livelihood is vulnerable to animal disease, market trends and shocks, and environmental factors, including climate change. In addition to it, livestock service and input-delivery systems are dominated by men and therefore difficult for women to access. Mostly gender disparities in access to extension services, information and training exist throughout the country. Full potential of developmental projects cannot be realized if women talent is untapped. Thus

there is a need for new creative solutions and opportunities necessary to let women participate in decision-making processes and take new leadership roles. Several positive steps should take place for ensuring such a change:

- Change is required in social norms and attitudes that result in glaring inequalities in the access and distribution of productive resources. At par access would result increased farm yields and livestock production.
- Involvement of more women in agriculture extension would help extend the benefits of agriculture education to more women farmers.
- Tapping gender potential to empower women and equip them with the right skills to stand up for their rights and engage in development processes, and to sensitize communities on gender issues.
- Awareness and legal literacy to women farmers at the self-help group or Panchayat level.
- Capacity building among Scientists/ Extension personnel/Local Governance for Gender Sensitive Technology Development must be made available.
- Empower women farmers as producers and service providers.
- Involving women in technologies and training on best practices and leveraging women's rich indigenous knowledge on livestock production

to enhance those best practices is a win-win.

- Development of the livestock sector and better support for livestock keepers will in turn recognize women's contribution to the sector and their own empowerment

Women's role in livestock keeping and food security needs to be better recognized and has to come to the center stage in policy making and policy implementation. Her enormous workload must be lightened and she has to be given due recognition as an equal partner in development. Only by recognizing the women farmers' contribution shall we be able to meet the challenges of the Millennium Development Goal that reminds us of the challenges of a vision in which men and women share equal rights and responsibilities. Let us celebrate the international women's day (8th March) by investing some more attention to the role women play in India's food security.

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