

Even cows need a dietician

OUR BUREAU

Bangalore, June 26

For Mangala Shivakumar, a typical small dairy farmer who owns two cows at Doddalanurhalli near Bangalore, the interventions made by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) through the ongoing National Dairy Project (NDP) are beginning to make a difference.

So also is the case with Munirathnamma, another dairy farmer in the same village.

They are not only able to get more milk from their cows, but also have reduced spending on the cattle feed. Enlisted under the Ration Balancing Programme (RBP), one of the major components of NDP, these farmers are advised by NDDB-trained local resource persons (LRPs) or 'cow dieticians' on the quantum, type of feed on a monthly basis, depending on the animal's health condition.

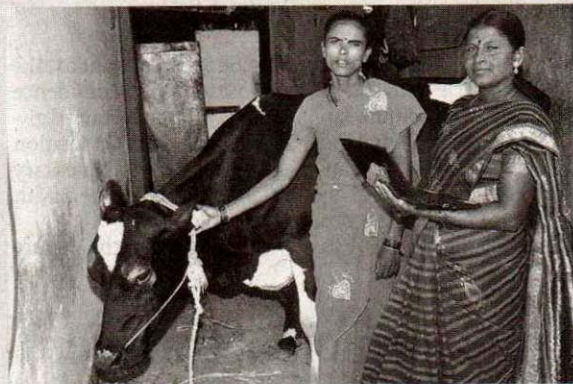
Each animal enrolled under RBP is tagged and details relating to the animal's weight and health are captured by the LRPs on their laptops and transmitted real time to the central server

at NDDB headquarters in Anand. The diet advisory for each animal is generated using the software IN-APH - Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health, developed by Infosys Technologies for NDDB.

"Earlier, we used to over feed the animals assuming that the more they are fed, they will yield more milk. After being enrolled under RBP, the feed that we provide is balanced and includes minerals. The quantum of feed has come down. We are able to save by ₹50-60 per animal per day, through the reduced and balanced ration, while the milk yield per cow has gone up by 500 ml. Also the fat content in the milk has improved," Mangala adds.

Kanthamma, an LRP at Doddalanurhalli where 82 animals are enrolled under RBP, says feed accounts for 70 per cent of the milk production costs. RBP has created awareness among select farmers on scientific animal feeding.

"Other farmers in the village also want a diet chart created for their animals," Kanthamma adds.



Rationing feed Munirathnamma, a dairy farmer at Doddanallurahalli, displaying the tag sported by her cow under the NDDB's Ration Balancing Programme. Kanthamma, the local cow dietician, is with her.

RBP, which helps farmers improve efficiency of utilisation of existing feed resources for boosting milk production, is being implemented in about 174 villages in Karnataka mainly in Bangalore and Kolar Milk Union areas covering some 7,000 animals.

"We are planning to take this project forward to all project areas under NDP and are in talks with the States/milk unions in this regard," said T Nanda Kumar, Chairman, NDDB.

The milk yields per cow have gone up from 300 ml

to two litres a day in various States and also the fat content has gone up benefiting the farmers, he said.

The NDP, being implemented in 14 States by NDDB, seeks to augment milk production in the country by improving productivity of milch animals and providing rural milk producers greater access to the organised milk processing sector.

The demand for milk is projected to rise 7 per cent by 2020 to around 200 million tonnes from the current 140 mt.