

## **AGROTECH BACKYARD POULTRY SCHEME. Women in Poultry: How backyard poultry empowers India's rural women**

Across India, backyard poultry farming is increasingly offering remote rural families both food and financial support – and as take-up grows, its effects on marginalised groups, especially women, could prove dramatic.

While it's home to malnutrition, poverty and gender disparity, rural India is increasingly becoming a place where people are exploring the possibilities of rearing backyard poultry by which the rural women have not only will overcome poverty through keeping backyard poultry flocks but will also achieved nutrition security for their families.

Most of rural poor women are poor people. When food prices in the market keep rising, they hardly have a choice to buy nutritious food for our children and the family.”

After six months of managing country chicken in their backyard, they have many reasons to smile. “Because they raise the chickens in their backyard, by which add egg and meat to their food plates and allow once children grow well with adequate protein and with more and more women opting to raise country chickens as an economic activity, backyard poultry is seeing widespread growth in rural India.

### **Backyard poultry's place in Indian production**

According to the Indian government's National Action Plan for Egg & Poultry-2022 (NAPEP), backyard poultry accounts for 20 percent of India's poultry sector, which is worth over ₹800 billion (around £8.5 billion). Across the country, around 30 million farmers are engaged in backyard poultry, estimates the 19th Livestock Census of India.

Backyard poultry farming primarily involves country chicken birds. Today's popular breeds include a number of genetically improved varieties of indigenous low-input technology (LIT) birds such as: Vanaraja, Aseel, Kaveri, Chhabra, Giriraja, Gramapriya, Kuroiler and Rainbow Rooster.



Vanaraja, Aseel, Giriraja in particular are popular varieties preferred by the farmers of major poultry meat and egg producing states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Odisha among others.

“These improved country type chickens are efficient dual-purpose birds to cater to both egg and meat needs and fetch more benefit to the backyard poultry farmers,” says said Dr Bandi Kumar Mallick, director of the Central Poultry Development Organization (CPDO), Bhubaneswar. “They are also resilient to different climatic conditions and capable of protecting themselves from predators.”

LIT birds grow faster than the native chicken, reaching the weight of 1.5kg in 45 days and 2kg in four months (120 days); LIT female birds lay 160 eggs.

## Addressing poverty and malnutrition

One of the primary objectives of popularising backyard poultry farming in rural India is to provide better income opportunities to the poor farmers and people from indigenous communities living in remote areas. Among its benefits is that it can help make rural women economically and socially empowered and can address the issues of food insecurity and malnutrition.

While the whole poultry sector of India produces around 88 billion - chickens per year – according to figures for 2016-17, which represented a growth of about 6 percent on the previous year – backyard poultry has a substantial, though still relatively small share in it. Over 31.4 million rural and poor households involved in it produce about 10.6 billion eggs annually, according to figures cited in NAPEP.

Going by standard nutritional requirements, half an egg a day is optimal for an average healthy person, which translates into 180 eggs per person per year. But the present availability is around 69 only.



Country type Vanaraja chickens being reared in a backyard farm

While India's per-capita chicken meat consumption is around 3kg per year, compared to the world average of 17kg, the consumption of poultry meat has been very low in rural pockets. The main reason is the low purchasing power of people living in these areas. According to Pragyan Parimita Harichandan, an assistant veterinary surgeon, the popularisation of backyard poultry is essential in India to ensure increasing access to protein and nutritious food at an affordable price in rural India.

In such a scenario, the "scope for backyard poultry is enormous to expand across rural India,"

## PER FARMER 100 COUNTRY CHICKS

### **Agrotech promotion**

Under the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DADF), poultry development programmes are implemented through state Government and implementing agencies like FPCs.

In this program Agrotech Farmer Producer company all set to supplying chicks to farmers who are below the poverty line by finding the real needy poor In the Rural Parts of Tamilnadu.

As per the plan Agrotech all set to fund to be spent on promoting backyard poultry among qualifying groups of farmers, whereas 100 percent of the allocation will be earmarked for women beneficiaries.



A backyard poultry space in a village of India

Each beneficiary will get 100 birds at a time as free of cost. If they require more birds, the farmers must invest in them from the income generated out of the business. Each beneficiary is also provided assistance for preparing night shelters and other facilities.

To ensure the benefits reach the maximum number of people Agrotech has a special educated coordinator to promote and support backyard poultry in the rural areas for disaster recovery and rehabilitation, entrepreneurship development and livelihood support.

Agrotech also builds the capacity of farmers by imparting trainings to the farmers on rearing of Chicks.

Agrotech also provides loan up to 80 percent financial support and encourages entrepreneurs, women groups, non-government as well other FPCs to start “Mother Units” to take care of the brooding and vaccination of chicks in the first four weeks of growth before they are distributed.

This scheme has got a huge welcoming in 9 districts in TAMILNADU and union territory like Pondichery.

## Possibilities

The rural women through this project will make a profit of Rs 3,000 to 4000 each every month while feeding their families with eggs and meat. Thousands of women in a similar situation across rural India will be empowered through backyard poultry, which has become as an important means of supplementary income. It plays a role in bringing socioeconomic improvement among the more vulnerable sections of society, especially among tribal populations, landless labourers, and women in remote areas.

Backyard poultry also makes protein-rich food available to rural people at their backyard or the neighbourhood at relatively low cost. Over the longer term, the hope is that the popularisation of backyard poultry farming will help address poverty, hunger, and malnutrition throughout rural India.

According to a report by management consultants McKinsey & Company, as cited in the NAPEP, India's per-capita chicken consumption is set to grow from 3kg to 9.1kg by 2030, on account of people's rapidly changing consumption behaviour. This suggests an even greater scope for backyard poultry to grow as an increasingly important part of India's poultry sector.