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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. What steps need to be taken to improve the livestock productivity in India? How does it help in ensuring the doubling of farmers income by 2022? (250 words)

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Approach

- Write about the importance of the livestock sector.
- Write the challenges in the sector and steps need to be taken to improve the livestock productivity.
- Explain how it helps in ensuring the doubling of farmers' income.
- Give a brief way forward.

Introduction

Livestock is an integral part of India's agricultural economy and plays a multifaceted role in providing livelihood support to the rural population. Livestock sector apart from contributing to national economy in general and to agricultural economy in particular, also provides employment generation opportunities, asset creation, coping mechanism against crop failure and social and financial security.

Body

Challenges in the sector:

- Shortage of Feed and Fodder.
- Average productivity of livestock is lower compared to world average.
- A large number of infectious and metabolic diseases.
- Livestock contributing to climate change and global warming.
- Inadequate Infrastructure for marketing, processing and value addition.

Steps need to be taken to improve the livestock productivity:

- **Feed and Fodder:** Efforts should be made to increase production of quality fodder seeds through necessary incentives and increase area under fodder cultivation, especially through use of barren and fallow lands.
- **Livestock Research and Development:** To improve the productivity and health of various species of livestock in a sustainable manner while reducing the negative effects on environment, there is need for greater focus on research and development.
- **Strengthening Infrastructure and Services:** A fairly large infrastructure of veterinary institutions, vaccine and diagnostic production units, semen stations and artificial insemination breeding farms etc. are owned by government. These facilities should be restructured and strengthened for effective utilization and for ensuring optimal services.

- **New Technologies for Livestock Breeding:** Newer breeding and reproductive technologies, including those involving biotechnology and genetic engineering/genetic marker technology developed from time to time should be adopted for faster implementation of various breed improvement programmes and for increasing production.
- **Conservation of Animal Bio-Diversity:** The country has rich and diverse genetic resources of livestock in the form of a large number of species, breeds, and strains within a species. The focus should be on conservation of indigenous breeds of livestock and poultry.
- **Animal Health:** Veterinary hospitals, dispensaries, aid centers, diagnostic laboratories and veterinary manpower should be improved and expanded. Mobile veterinary dispensaries with provision for vaccination and facilities should be promoted to improve outreach.

How it helps in ensuring the doubling of farmers' income –

- **Vast resource potential:** India is a land of vast livestock resources, besides securing top most position in cattle population; it has pretty good position in poultry, meat, and other livestock enterprises.
- **Boon for landless farmers:** Livestock contributes 16 per cent to the income of small farm households. Not only this, livestock sector provides employment to 8.8 per cent of population which largely comprises of landless and unskilled population.
- **Dairy sub-sector significance:** Doubling farmers' income by 2022 is impossible without dairy farming. 85 per cent of the farmers in India, who are marginal and small, own 45 per cent of the land, but 75 per cent of the bovine. So probably for a landless person, dairying is one of the best occupations.
- **Diversification of income:** Farmers' distress can be largely minimized through livestock. The ratio of net income from farming of animals was found to be highest
- **Employment throughout the year:** Diversification by combining crop with livestock enterprises would lead to employment generation and would increase the labour requirement by employing family labour throughout the year.
- **Focus on women labourers:** It is estimated that about 70 million rural households own livestock of one species or the other. Women constitute about 69% of workforce engaged in livestock sector.

Way forward

- Government and all stakeholders should strive to achieve targets of its missions such as National Livestock Mission (NLM), Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM), National Kamdhenu Breeding Centre (NKBC), EashuHaat etc. through proper implementation.
- Other infrastructural and financial support to farmers should also be extended to sustain such allied activities.

- The role of SHGs can be crucial in this sector for input support and market linkages, so that farmers receive fair dividends from such activities thereby by boosting their income and investment capacity.