

Laying golden eggs

1. Background

Backyard poultry is a common vocation among the Tribal areas of the Thane district. Backyard poultry does not require any extra investment. Poor farmers not only rely on it for regular income but also for nutritive food. Women are mainly engaged in this activity and take pride in contributing to the family income. But the farmers are unable to reap good benefits despite backyard poultry being so popular in the district. They mostly rear the deshi hens, which lay only 80 to 90 eggs annually and gain only 1 to 1.5 kg bodyweight.

2. Intervention and process

Sensing the potential of backyard rearing, the KVK decided to introduce a more profitable breed of birds called RIR, Giriraj and Vanaraj among the farmers. These birds not only lay much more number of eggs than the local birds, but also gain weight faster. The KVK Thane organized awareness programmes for the farmer groups. Following which, KVK conducted training programmes on back yard poultry at KVK. In the first phase, decided to introduce the birds in three villages each in Palghar and Jawhar blocks, as a pilot run. Initially KVK supplied poultry bird to the selected beneficiaries. Then KVK was decided to implement this important programme in other villages only after gauging the success of the programme in these villages. KVK experts provided training in scientific rearing and arranged for exposure visits to motivate and adopted the back yard poultry during the year 2013 to 2016. Since 2013 to 2016, the 320 tribal families were the beneficiaries & had given them a unit comprising 45 days old 09 females and 1 male chick. The cost of one unit was Rs 200. KVK scientist provided the technical support. These birds start laying from the age of 7 to 8 months.

3. Benefits and Impact

Sou. Anjali Jadhav, who resides at village Ganje, Tal. Palghar expects to earn around Rs 8000 from his one unit in the first year. The growth of the birds has taken her by surprise. KVK also was pleasantly surprised to see that the birds had gained 2.5 to 3 kg in 11 months. The women in the families are also a happier lot, as the RIR and Giriraj birds lay 200-210 eggs annually. They are now not only able to feed their children with eggs on regular basis, but also are selling the surplus. Earlier, taking care of the backyard poultry was a compulsion for many of them. Now, it's more of a pleasure. More and more farm women from neighboring villages are now approaching the KVK for the up gradation of local poultry birds in their villages. The KVK scientists are now encouraging the farmers not to sell or consume all the eggs but allow some to hatch. Each RIR and Giriraj bird's egg fetches Rs 3-5 in the market, which is tempting enough for the farm women. But some of them are showing enough wisdom and allowing a portion of the eggs to hatch. Because of lack of awareness, the innocent tribal villagers at times slaughter hens for feast, which they invariably regret later and promise not to repeat again. They all have realized that patience holds the key to prosperity. The RIR, Giriraj and Vanraj birds have certainly brought smiles on the faces of the farm women.

4. Future Prospects:

Need to be conducting more training and demonstration programmes on Back yard poultry keeping in the tribal areas. The various schemes should be formulated towards the back yard poultry which is most important for their sustainable livelihood of tribal women.

