

Operation Flood

When some villagers complained to Sardar Patel that they were exploited by the big dairy owners in Anand town he suggested that they should have their own cooperatives for marketing milk. The experiment of cooperative procurement of milk, which a few villagers began, led to cooperative marketing of milk. Anand's experiment became a torch bearer for the rest of the country.

Livestock rearing and dairy are as important a source of income to the farmers as agriculture is to them. For ages the farmers have learnt to live with their cattle and take care of them like the members of the family. The cattle yield milk and milk products for farmer's family as a source of much needed protein and for sale to others in the village and outside. As a source of income they are to supplement the income from farming. Animal husbandry improvement thus formed an integral part of the agriculture development programmes from the early stages of economic development in the country. Veterinary services, artificial dissemination, cross-breeding facilities and better breeds of cattle were provided to the farmers both for farming in which bullocks and he buffaloes are the main draught power and for dairying.

With all that the production of milk was not keeping pace with the rising population and the per capita availability of milk in the country came down. As against a consumption of 132 grams per head per day in 1951 the level declined to 108 grams in 1966 and dropped further to 107 by 1969-70. Obviously the production of milk was not rising as fast as the population was growing and cities and towns were experiencing severe shortage. The supply of milk decreased causing hardships to the consumers.

Meanwhile Anand was forging ahead and processing of milk and production plans of milk, pannier, butter and other items were also a success. In 1970, the Indian government decided that the Anand model should be replicated gradually all over the country. The milk producing farmers could be enthused to get better yield and re-invest their savings in more milk-producing cattle if they were properly organized in cooperatives in which they were co-shares and participated as members of an organization. This realization helped in extending the Anand experiment to other parts of the country. It was then that the Operation Flood was launched and the urban consuming areas of the four metropolitan cities of Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were brought in closer relationship with rural producers through the cooperatives. The rural milk production and procurement centres were linked with the urban demand centres and processing capacity stepped up substantially. By the end of the Operation Flood-I there were 13,000

Anand pattern dairy cooperatives in 39 districts milk union in the country. They handled three million litres of milk daily.

In 1979, Operation Flood-II was launched – a much larger programmed which was to strive to bring a large number of small and big towns apart from the metropolitan centres into the coverage of the milk flood. Systematic flow of milk from the producers to the consumers with the producers as sharers in the profits and as wide awake members of their own cooperatives has been set in motion. More than seven million litres of milk is now procured and processed every day. The procurement centres buy even the extra milk which the producers bring in as milk supply goes up considerably in winter months.

Practically all states with the exception of Meghalaya and four union territories have been brought into the network of the programme and by 1985 there were four million farm families organized into village milk cooperatives whose number was more than 40,000. As many as 147 towns are availing of the benefits of the Flood from well organized 155 milk-sheds or clusters of milk cooperatives in the villages. The per capita availability and consumption of milk per day has gone up to 147 grams from 107 grams to which it had declined in 1969-70. For a healthy nation this is by no means adequate and more ground has to be covered. What has, however, been achieved has to be seen against the background of hardship which people have gone through and the immense benefits the programme has conferred on the farmers in the villages where the milk cooperatives have been organized.

It is estimated by the end of 1986-87 as many as 6.3 million farm families have been organized into villages cooperatives whose number has gone then up to more than 41,000. The numbers of cows and buffaloes in the ambit of this cooperative programme has gone up to 9.62 million.

A national milk grid is emerging, milk from Gujarat is carried to West Bengal. A fleet of 93 milk tankers on the road transport milk from one part of the country to the other. The rail capacity is 32.45 lakh litres and on the roads it is 78.14 lakh litres. The concept that a vital article of consumption like milk should equally be shared by all parts of the country is thus put into practice gradually and regional and local imbalances are being eliminated.

Apart from the Anand pattern Cooperatives there were also 2,800 other conventional milk societies in different parts of the country in 1986-86, but they were also being gradually restructures on the Anand model. The total milk processing capacity in the country now exceeds 10 millions litres. Besides there is daily capacity for producing 532.5 tonnes of milk power. The planned growth of milk production, procurement, marketing and processing has also stimulated the

development of a number of other activities like production of cattle feed, production of packaging materials and laminated paper in which milk is sold in urban areas. The training of management personnel, village cooperative personnel and even the producer member is also systematically organized in training institutes which are at Anand, Mehsana, Palanpur in Gujarat, Siliguri in West Bengal, Jalandhar in Punjab and Erode in Tamil Nadu.