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Siddanna Manashetti
M.V.Sc Scholar, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Medicine, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research, Puducherry, India

M Mohammed Thowfik
M.V.Sc Scholar, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Medicine, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research, Puducherry, India

Vikram Chandu V
M.V.Sc Scholar, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Medicine, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research, Puducherry, India

Rajkumar K
Professor & Head, Veterinary Clinical Complex, Medicine, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research, Puducherry, India

D Selvi
Assistant Professor, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Medicine, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research, Puducherry, India

N Devadevi
Assistant Professor, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Medicine, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research, Puducherry, India

P Vijayalakshmi
Professor & Head, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research, Puducherry, India

Corresponding Author:
Siddanna Manashetti
M.V.Sc Scholar, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Medicine, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research, Puducherry, India

Assessment of the status, challenges and opportunities of goat marketing in Puducherry: A field-based survey

Siddanna Manashetti, M Mohammed Thowfik, Vikram Chandu V, Rajkumar K, D Selvi, N Devadevi and P Vijayalakshmi

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Abstract
Goats are highly adaptable livestock with strong nutritional stability. In the context of increasing global warming and frequent natural disasters, goat farming presents a valuable opportunity for income generation, especially for poor and marginal farmers. The objective of the study was to understand the current market structure and marketing constraints, assess demand and pricing strategies, explore market channels, and examine the economic status of goat farming in the Puducherry region. A well-structured interview schedule based survey was conducted with 60 randomly selected goat farmers (N=60) from six revenue villages in Puducherry. The survey revealed that 66.66% of goat meat was sold within villages, with male kids mostly sold at 7-12 months of age (48.33%). Primary marketing channels included butchers (61%), traders (15%), and other farmers (15%). Key challenges included inadequate market infrastructure (45%) and distant market locations (25%). Purchasing constraints were lack of loan facilities (40%), seller malpractices (20%) and unregulated markets (15%). The study concludes that goat marketing in Puducherry remains largely unorganized, dominated by traders and butchers, with minimal government support.

Keywords: Puducherry, goat farming, marketing and economy, government support, nutritional stability

1. Introduction
Livestock production in India is becoming an increasingly important part of the rural economy, emphasizing its crucial role in livelihood generation. According to the 20th livestock census, India accounts for 148.88 million goats whereas in Puducherry accounts 73.63 thousand goats, reflecting an increase of 10.1% over the previous census. Goats offer high returns on minimal investment, with quick repayment of dues due to their rapid breeding, ability to produce multiple offspring per litter and early maturity. Known for their resilience, they can thrive in a diverse climatic conditions. Raising goats offers significant opportunities for generating income and creating jobs, particularly in rural communities (Singh MK *et al.*, 2013) [14]. They serve as a financial lifeline for vulnerable population, providing easily liquid-able funds through consistent market demand much like dependable fixed deposits. However, the socio-economic status of farmers significantly influences the flock size and adoption of advanced techniques in rearing. In coastal regions like Puducherry, the combined approach of marine product marketing and goat farming has emerged as a profitable venture for marginal farmers, yielding substantial returns. Implementing advanced management practices not only increases income levels but also enhances the socio-economic status of goat owners, contributing to sustainable prosperity. In Puducherry, only a few government schemes support goat farming, such as the Sheep and Goat Development Programme, Assistance for SC Families (10 female + 1 male goat) and breeding improvement programs. However, there is limited active involvement from NGOs in supporting the welfare and development of goat farming sector. In Puducherry, the goat market is still in a developing phase, with minimal infrastructure and little formal regulation. Most goats are sold directly to roadside butchers and small chevon shops, where the trade is largely informal and unorganized.

The objective of the present study was to assess market dynamics by understanding the current status of goat marketing in Puducherry, with a focus on analyzing demand and pricing strategies. This study also aims to identify the key challenges hindering effective goat marketing and to explore opportunities for improving marketing practices in coastal region of Puducherry.

2. Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in the Union Territory of Puducherry in the year 2023-2024, following an ex-post factor research design in line with the objectives outlined above. A total of 60 goat owners from six different revenue villages-Embalam, Seliamedu, Ariyankuppam, Villianur, Thuthipet and Sivaranthagam were selected (Figure 1), with 10 goat owners randomly chosen from each village.

2.1 Interview schedule

A well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule was developed to collect comprehensive information from goat farmers across selected villages in Puducherry. The schedule included both closed-and open-ended questions and was administered through personal interviews to ensure clarity and accurate responses.

The interview collected socio-economic details of the respondents such as age (categorized as young, middle-aged, and old), educational level (illiterate, literate, primary and secondary), type of family (nuclear or joint), family size (small, medium and large) and social participation. Landholding size was also recorded, classified into landless, marginal, small and large. Occupational data covered whether goat rearing was a sole or secondary activity. Income levels were grouped into three ranges: below ₹25,000, ₹25,001-₹50,000 and above ₹50,000 annually. Experience in goat rearing was categorized as beginner (1-2 years) or experienced (>2 years), while flock size was classified as small (≤4 goats), medium (5-8 goats) and large (>8 goats).

Questions regarding goat marketing practices explored places of sale (within village, local market or through intermediaries), reasons for preferring local sales (such as high transportation costs or lack of market infrastructure) and modes of transportation (on foot, bike, auto, tempo or truck). The schedule also covered timing of sale (seasonal, need-based or regular), pricing basis (appearance, weight or both) and preferred age for selling male kids (3-6 months, 7-12 months or beyond 12 months).

Further, the interview examined common reasons for selling adult goats, including immediate cash needs, fear of disease, management issues or marketing opportunity. Housing type was also recorded (open, thatched, concrete or mixed). The survey included details on market channels (direct to farmers, butchers, traders or cooperatives) and pricing of adult males. To understand marketing constraints, farmers were asked about problems like transportation, market access, middlemen involvement, lack of milk demand and price fluctuation. Buying constraints were also assessed, including difficulty in obtaining loans, seller dishonesty, unfair weighing and absence of clear market regulations. This structured approach ensured comprehensive and consistent data collection across all selected villages.

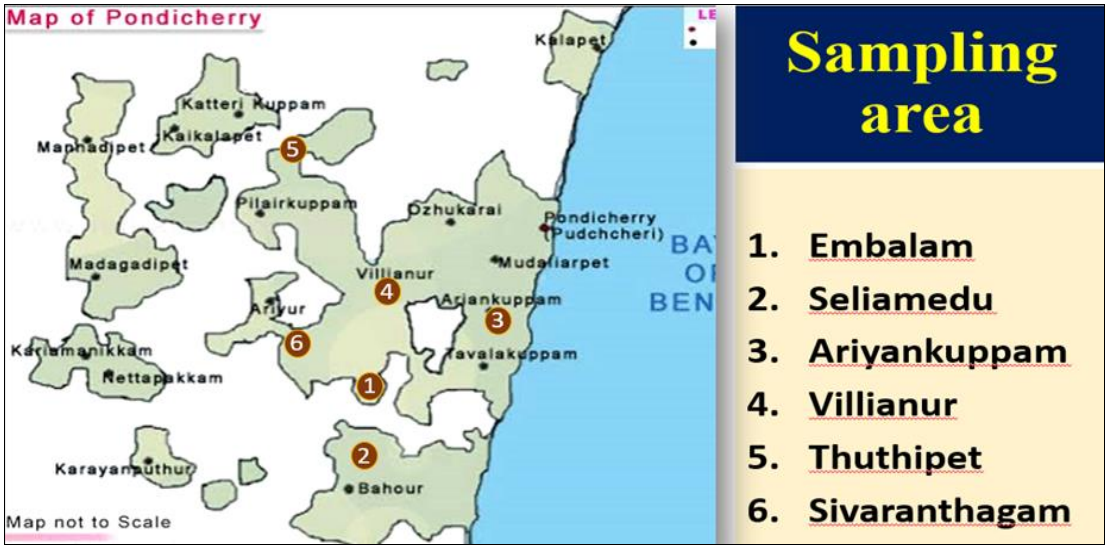

Fig 1: Map showing the locations of the six revenue villages selected as sampling areas across Puducherry

Villages were selected based on goat population density, accessibility and active engagement in goat farming practices. Data were collected through personal interviews using a well-structured interview schedule focused on marketing practices. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed using standard statistical tools in SPSS software version 29.0. A chi-square analysis was conducted to examine the association between the owners' experience and the middleman problem as one of the selling constraints.

3. Results

3.1 Socio-economic parameters

3.1.1 Age: The data reveal a predominant presence of goat owners in the middle-age group (31-45 years), constituting 50% of the surveyed population, followed by 45% in the older age group and only 5% in the younger age category (Table 1). This trend likely reflects the rural demographic structure, where older individuals predominantly reside and rely on goat rearing as a primary source of income. In contrast, younger individuals, who possess at least a minimum level of literacy, often migrate to urban areas in search of employment and business opportunities. As a result, fewer young people are involved in goat rearing activities. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Sabapara *et al*., 2016 [10], Tanwar *et al*., 2008 [16], Thombre *et al*., 2010 [17] and Susatkar *et al*., 2011 [15], who reported a significant representation of goat keepers within the middle and upper-middle age groups.

Table 1: Data on various social characteristics of goat farmers in the Puducherry region

Parameters	Type	Frequency	Percent (%)
	Young (≤30 years)	3	05.00
Age	Middle (31-45 years)	30	50.00
	Old (>45 years)	27	45.00
Education	Illiterate (cannot read and write)	13	21.60
	Primary level (up to 7th class)	31	51.66
	Secondary level (8th to 12thStandard)	12	20.00
	Above secondary level	4	06.60
Family size	Small size (up to 3 members)	16	26.60
	Medium size (4 to 6 members)	30	50.00
	Large size (above 6 members)	14	23.30
Family type	Nuclear type	33	55.00
	Joint type	27	45.00
Social participation	Yes	8	13.30
	No	52	86.60

3.1.2 Education
The present study revealed that 21.6% of the goat farmers were illiterate, while 78.4% were literate. Among the literate group, 51.6% had attained primary education, 20% had completed secondary education and 6.6% had education beyond the secondary level (Table 1). This educational pattern can be attributed to financial constraints that hindered many participants from pursuing higher education. These findings resonate with the studies of Deshpande *et al*., 2010 [3] and Thombre *et al*., 2010 [17], which reported that the majority of goat farmers had received only primary-level schooling.

3.1.3 Family size
In the present study, 50% of goat farmers had medium-sized families (4-6 members), followed by 26.6% with small families, and 23.3% with large families (Table 1). This trend may be attributed to increasing urbanization, economic independence and changing social dynamics that favour nuclear family structures and individual autonomy over traditional joint families. These results are consistent with the findings of Deshpande *et al*., 2009 [2], Tanwar *et al*., 2008 [16] and Thombre *et al*., 2010 [17], who reported that most goat keepers had small family sizes (up to 5 members), followed by medium (6-10 members) and large families (more than 10 members).

3.1.4 Family type: The majority (55%) of goat farmers belonged to nuclear families, while 45% lived in joint families (Table 1). These findings are in line with those of Thombre *et al*., 2010 [17] and Sathyanarayan *et al*., 2010 [11]. However, Shetter *et al*., 2005 [13] reported a higher proportion of goat farmers living in joint family structures.

3.1.5 Social participation
The study found that 86.6% of goat farmers were not involved in any social or organizational activities, whereas only 13.3% were actively engaged in multiple organizations (Table 1). These results align with the observations of Lahoti and Chole, 2010 [7], who reported limited social participation among goat keepers.

3.1.6 Experience
Most of the goat farmers have minimum of 2 years of experience in goat rearing. According to the survey, many of them began their goat-rearing ventures during the COVID-19 lockdown due to a scarcity of employment opportunities. Educated farmers those with qualifications above secondary education, including degree holders, postgraduates and Ph.D. holders were found to be earning a decent income and expressed plans to expand their goat farming operations. These educated individuals adopted scientific practices in housing, feeding, and management.

3.1.7 Land holding capacity
The study revealed that 31.66% of goat farmers were landless, while 38.33% owned up to 2.5 acres of land, 23.3% had holdings between 2.5 and 5 acres and only 6.6% possessed more than 5 acres of land (Table 2). This distribution indicates that poverty is prevalent among goat farmers, many of whom lack ancestral land assets. These findings are consistent with those of Tanwar *et al*., 2008 [16] and Thombre *et al*., 2010 [17], who reported that most goat farmers were marginal or landless. Similarly, Verma *et al*., 2007 [18] and Deshpande *et al*., 2010 [3] emphasized the high proportion of landless goat keepers in their studies.

Table 2: Data on socio-economic parameters of goat farmers in the Puducherry region

Characteristics	Type	Frequency	Percent (%)
Land holding	Landless	19	31.66
	Marginal (up to 2.5 acres)	23	38.33
	Small (2.5 to 5.0)	14	23.30
	Large (above 5.0 acres)	4	06.60
Occupation	Only goat husbandry	10	16.66
	Goat husbandry + Agriculture	4	06.60
	Goat husbandry + Service	11	18.30
	Goat husbandry + Labor	33	55.00
	Goat husbandry + Dairy + Agriculture	2	03.30
Size of flock	Small (up to 4 animals)	0	00
	Medium (5-8 animals)	14	23.30
	Large (>8 animals)	46	76.66
Annual income	Less than Rs.25000	10	16.66
	Rs.25001-50000	34	56.66
	Above Rs.50001	16	26.66

3.1.8 Occupation
In the villages of the Puducherry region, goat rearing serves as a vital lifeline for many resource-poor farmer-labourers, offering crucial supplementary income. This survey revealed that 55% of goat farmers were engaged in goat husbandry alongside labour work, while 18.3% combined goat farming with other services. Additionally, 16.66% focused solely on goat husbandry and 3.3% were involved in goat rearing along with agriculture and dairy activities (Table 2). These findings are consistent with earlier studies conducted by Sharma *et al*., 2007, Deshpande *et al*., 2010a [3], Deshpande *et al*., 2009 [2] and Thombre *et al*., 2010 [17].

3.1.9 Size of the goat flock
The present study reported that 76.66% of goat farmers owned large flocks comprising more than eight animals, while 23.33% managed medium-sized flocks (Table 2). In contrast, Wadkar *et al*., 2009 [19] observed that 37.5% of goat farmers maintained small flocks, 35% had medium-sized flocks, and 27.5% kept large goat flocks.

3.1.10 Annual income
The study revealed that 56.66% of goat farmers had an annual income ranging from ₹25,000 to ₹50,000. Additionally, 26.66% reported incomes above ₹50,000, while 16.66% earned below ₹25,000 (Table 2). Factors influencing the income included flock size, primary occupation and goat sales. These results contrast with Sharma *et al*., 2007 [12], who reported that most goat farmers earned between ₹15,000 and ₹30,000 annually. Deshpande *et al*., 2010 [3] found that a majority earned less than ₹15,000, whereas Thombre *et al*., 2010 [17] recorded that most goat rearers earned between ₹36,000 and ₹60,000 annually. These findings highlight variability in income levels among goat farmers reported in different studies.

3.2 Marketing practices
3.2.1 Market place
The study documented diverse selling strategies among goat farmers. A majority (66.66%) preferred to sell their goats within their own villages due to the cost-effectiveness of selling smaller numbers locally and the benefit of stronger bargaining power within their communities. About 15% chose to sell exclusively in nearby city markets to better understand market demand and current pricing trends. Around 6.6% of owners sold their goats exclusively to middlemen due to their remote locations, which made market transport impractical. These middlemen would visit, negotiate prices, and purchase the goats directly. Furthermore, 10% of goat farmers adopted a dual approach by selling in both village and city markets to take advantage of varying market conditions. A few farmers had no fixed selling location, instead adjusting based on situational factors and profitability. These findings highlight the nuanced, adaptive marketing approaches taken by goat owners in response to logistical challenges and market dynamics. Similar observations were made by Brraj *et al*., 2016.

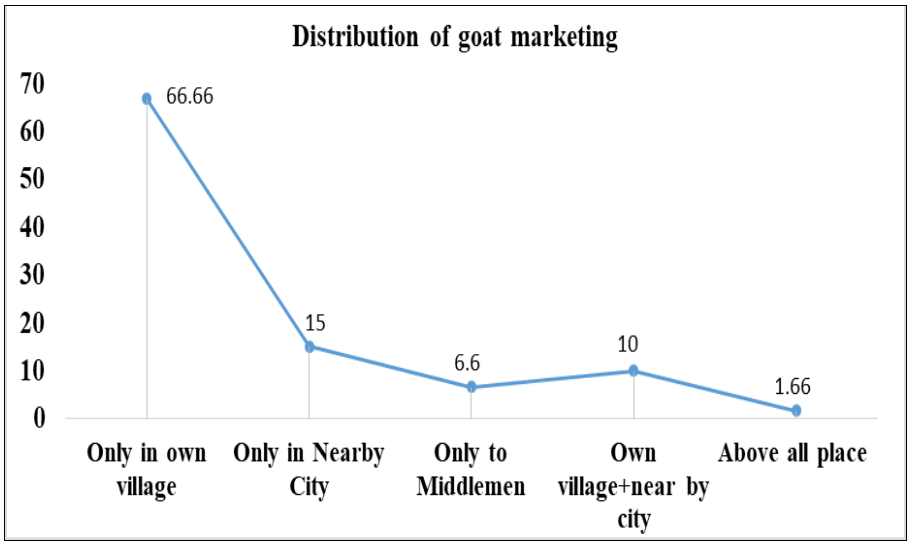

Fig 2: Line graph illustrating the percentage distribution of goats sold through various marketing channels in Puducherry.

3.2.2 Sale of goats at different age group
The results of the present study align with findings by Sabapara *et al*., 2016 [10], Gurjar *et al*., 2008 [4], and Sharma *et al*., 2007 [12], who also noted variability in goat-selling patterns. A significant portion (35%) of farmers reported selling their goats year-round, reflecting a consistent market approach. Approximately 33.33% targeted festival seasons, taking advantage of increased demand and potential for higher profits. About 11.6% sold their goats upon attaining market weight, indicating a strategy aimed at profit maximization. Notably, 20% of farmers provided dual responses, selling goats both during festivals and based on weight considerations. Sharma *et al*., 2007 [12]; similarly reported that 50% of goat farmers preferred selling during festivals to fetch better prices. These findings underscore the diverse marketing strategies employed by goat farmers, shaped by seasonal demand fluctuations and economic optimization considerations, as also documented in several previous studies.

3.2.3 Transportation of goat to the market
The primary mode of transporting goats to the market was by bike (51.66%), as most farmers owned only a few goats and the smaller breeds were easy to carry. Using a bike was also cost-effective and convenient for short-distance transportation. Additionally, 26.66% of farmers brought their goats on foot, particularly those residing near the market and economically disadvantaged farmers who could not afford vehicular transport. About 10% of farmers used auto-

rickshaws, while only 5% used tempos for transporting their goats to nearby markets.

3.2.4 Criteria for fixing rate of the goats

According to the present findings, 88.3% of goat owners determined the price of goats based on both physical appearance and body weight. The remaining 11.6% fixed prices solely based on physical appearance. These results are in agreement with the findings of Assan *et al*., 2020 [1].

3.2.5 Age at which the male kids were sold

A majority of goat farmers (48.33%) preferred to sell male kids between the ages of 7 to 12 months. This age range is considered ideal as it strikes a balance between optimal growth, good meat quality and market readiness thereby maximizing profitability. A significant portion (41.66%) sold male kids after 12 months of age. The smallest group (10%) sold male kids between 3 to 6 months of age. These findings are consistent with the reports of Judith *et al*., 2018.

3.2.6 Reasons for selling kids

Goat farmers cited varied reasons for selling their kids. About 30% sold due to urgent financial needs, while 26.66% did so to mitigate the risk of mortality and disease. Additionally, 10% sold kids to reduce flock size and 8.33% cited difficulty in managing grown-up male kids. A smaller portion (5%) mentioned lack of knowledge regarding the optimum age for selling. The remaining respondents stated that they refrained from selling kids at an early age.

3.2.7 Reasons for selling adult goats

Table 3: Reasons for selling of the adult goats

Reasons	No of owners gave single reason	No of owners gave multiple reasons
Fulfill financial needs	23	31
Lack of fodder	5	0
To restrict the flock size	3	11
Culling of the old, diseased and unproductive animals	14	0
Non availability of family labor	3	0
Closing the goat farming	3	0

In the present study, multiple reasons were cited for selling goats, with the primary one being financial necessity. A total of 31 respondents indicated that meeting financial needs was their main motivation for selling. However, other contributing factors were also reported, as detailed in the accompanying table. Specifically, 5 farmers stated that they sold their goats solely due to a lack of fodder, while 3 farmers mentioned selling goats to manage flock size though an additional 11 farmers listed flock management as one of several reasons. Furthermore, 14 goat farmers reported selling goats to cull old, diseased or unproductive animals. Three respondents cited the unavailability of family labour as a reason for selling and a few owners expressed their intention to exit goat farming altogether due to various challenges, such as lack of profitability and persistent marketing constraints (Table 3).

3.2.8 Marketing channels

In the present study, the majority of goat farmers (61%) sold their goats directly to butchers due to the steady demand, which provides a reliable and efficient avenue for quick sales. Additionally, 9% of farmers each sold their goats to fellow farmers and traders. The remaining goat farmers used multiple marketing channels depending on profitability and market conditions.

3.3 Selling constraints

The primary marketing constraint identified in the present study was the lack of adequate market infrastructure, reported by 45% of farmers. This was followed by issues related to distant markets (25%), where the cost-effectiveness of transporting small numbers of goats becomes a significant challenge. Another major concern, cited by 20% of goat farmers, was the involvement of middlemen who demand high commissions, thereby reducing farmers' profits. Lastly, 10% of farmers highlighted the buyers' strong preference for male goats as a marketing limitation (Figure 4). These findings underscore the key challenges within the goat farming sector, emphasizing the need for strategic interventions to improve market access, efficiency and overall profitability (Table 3).

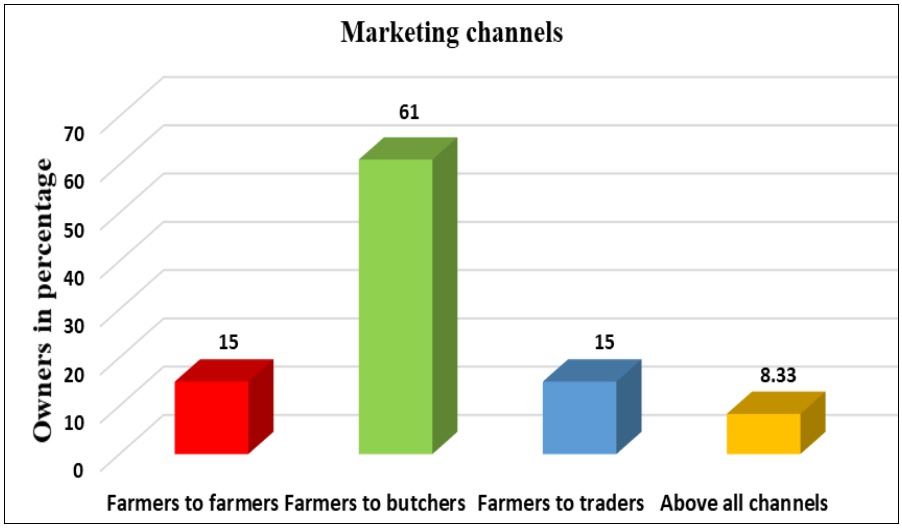

Fig 3: Distribution of goat marketing channels in the Puducherry region (bar diagram).

Table 4: Key marketing challenges reported by goat farmers in Puducherry

Type	Constraints	Number	Percent (%)
Selling constraints	Lack of market infrastructure	27	45
	Long distance market	15	25
	Middleman problem	12	20
	Buyers needs male goats	6	10
Purchasing constraints	Malpractices by the sellers	12	40
	Lack of loan facility	24	40
	Unregulated market	9	15
	Middleman	8	13.33
	No purchasing constraints	7	11.66

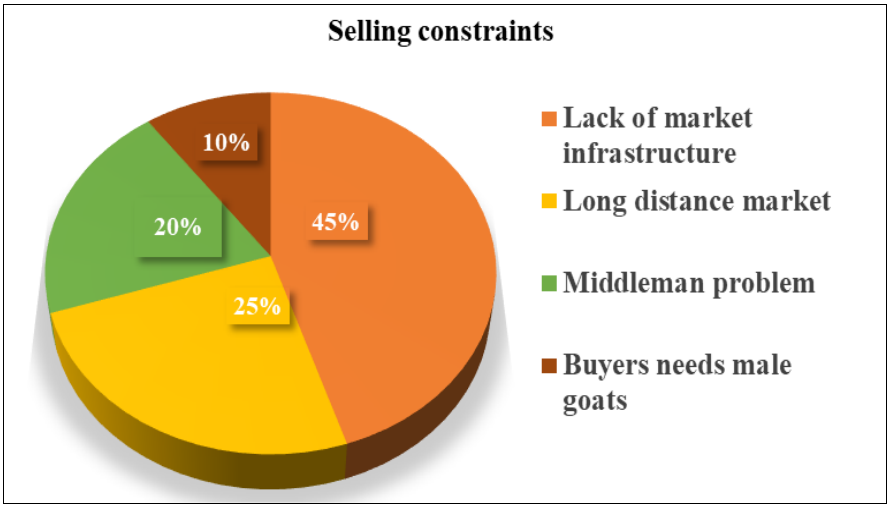

Fig 4: Pie chart depicting various constraints faced in goat selling in Puducherry

3.4 Purchasing constraints

The primary purchasing constraint reported by farmers was the absence of loan facilities (40%). Seller malpractices including misrepresentation of age and health, deceptive weighing, price-fixing collusion and exaggeration of goat qualities accounted for 20% of buyer concerns. Another significant constraint was the lack of market regulation, reported by 15% of farmers. Additionally, 13.33% of buyers cited challenges related to middlemen in the market (Figure 6). A small proportion of farmers indicated that they did not face any specific purchasing constraints. These findings highlight key issues within the goat market that necessitate regulatory attention to ensure fair trade practices and improved market access for buyers (Table 3).

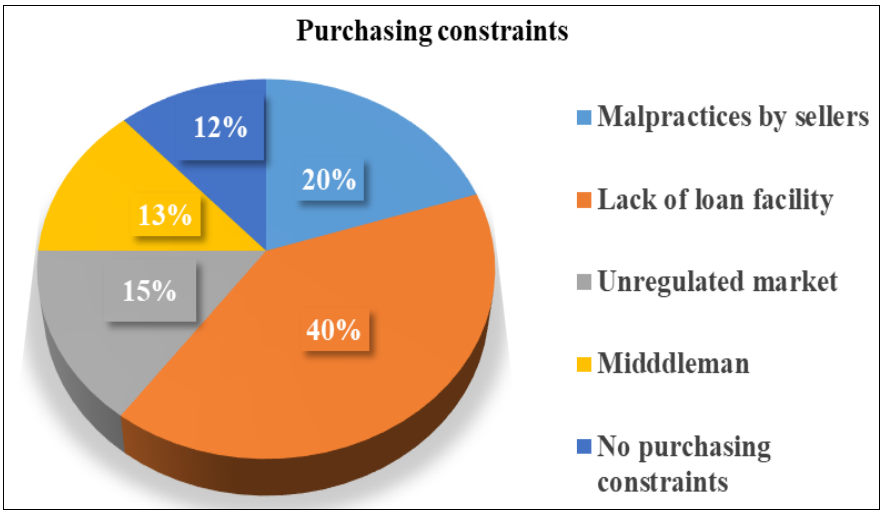

Fig 5: Pie chart depicting key challenges in goat purchasing among farmers in Puducherry

3.5 Marketing price

In the present study, nearly 50% of the goat farmers were hesitant to disclose the selling price. Among those who did, pricing was primarily based on the live body weight of the animals. Specifically, 21 farmers reported prices ranging from ₹400 to ₹600 per kilogram of live weight, while 11 farmers indicated prices between ₹600 and ₹800 per kilogram. Only one farmer mentioned receiving a price exceeding ₹800 per kilogram. This variation in pricing could be attributed to several factors, including the characteristics of the goats-such as breed, age and sex-as well as the marketing skills of the owners, particularly their negotiation abilities and the nature of the marketing venues they accessed.

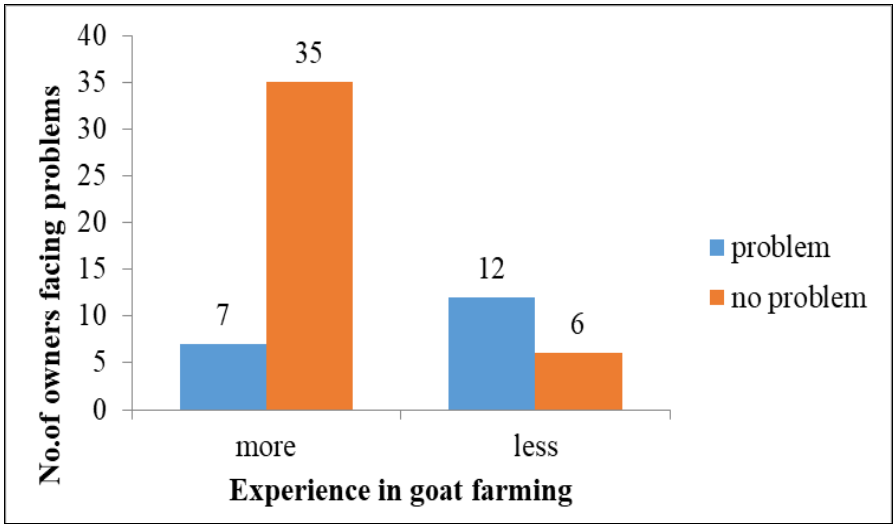

Fig 6: Bar chart illustrating how farming experience influences middlemen issues in goat marketing

3.6 Statistical association of experience with middlemen challenges

The relationship between the experience of goat owners and the occurrence of middlemen problems as a selling constraint was analyzed using Chi-square analysis, which revealed a statistically significant association between the variables (p<0.001). This level of significance indicates that more experienced owners tend to face fewer middleman-related issues, whereas less experienced owners are more likely to encounter such problems due to higher commission demands from middlemen, which ultimately affects their profit margins.

4. Discussion

The study on goat marketing in Puducherry highlights several critical challenges faced by rural goat farmers. A significant portion of this community consists of middle-aged individuals with limited formal education, which restricts their exposure to new technologies and modern marketing practices. This educational gap often hinders the adoption of innovative approaches that could enhance productivity and profitability. Many goat farmers rely on limited land resources and are constrained by economic hardships, viewing goat farming primarily as a supplementary income source rather than a main occupation. Without access to land, many farmers struggle to benefit from government schemes or institutional support meant to enhance livestock production. They are also often unaware of opportunities for value addition that could improve their income. As a result, they become heavily reliant on middlemen for selling their animals, which limits their control over pricing and significantly reduces their profit margins. The lack of land not only restricts their ability to expand production but also forces them into less favorable marketing practices, ultimately undermining the overall sustainability and profitability of their farming efforts. Marketing practices are largely localized, with pricing based predominantly on physical appearance and live body weight, which restricts access to larger, more competitive markets. The overreliance on village-level sales and middlemen further limits profitability. The findings underscore the urgent need for improved market infrastructure, enhanced financial support and farmer education and training programs. Such interventions would help farmers adopt scientific goat-rearing practices and better navigate marketing dynamics. Addressing these constraints could significantly improve the sustainability, efficiency and profitability of goat farming in rural Puducherry.

5. Conclusion

Goat marketing in Puducherry remains largely unorganized and is predominantly regulated by livestock traders and butchers, with minimal government involvement or oversight. A significant number of farmers prefer to sell their goats within the village itself-despite receiving lower prices-mainly due to inadequate and unaffordable transportation options. Traditionally, Puducherry's coastal regions have favored marine product marketing over goat farming. However, in recent years, goat farming has seen growing interest and is emerging as an important component of the local rural economy. With strategic support and structural reforms, goat farming has the potential to become a more profitable and sustainable livelihood option for small and marginal farmers in the region. There is a clear need to upgrade goat farming in Puducherry through the standardization of management & marketing practices, stronger government involvement, and the effective implementation of relevant schemes and projects. Additionally, introducing targeted social training programs can encourage greater public participation in goat farming, particularly among youth and aspiring entrepreneurs, helping transform it from a subsistence activity into a more sustainable and profitable livelihood.

6. Data Availability

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study were collected from six revenue villages-Embalam, Seliamedu, Ariyankuppam, Villianur, Thuthipet, and Sivaranthagam in Puducherry. The original data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

7. Author Contributions

SM, MM and VC were responsible for data collection, statistical analysis and drafting of the manuscript. KR provided overall supervision, critical review and final editing of the manuscript. ND, DS, AA and PV contributed to manuscript review and provided valuable corrections. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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9. Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest relevant to the content of this study.

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