

ANTICIPATING RANGE LAND DEVELOPMENT IN THAL (PUNJAB)

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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to assess the prospects of rangeland development in Thal tract of Punjab, Pakistan. At local level 64 respondents comprising 16 each of large, medium, small landholders and landless respondents were interviewed. Range personnel working in the tract were also interviewed. The number of livestock kept by respondents was highly correlated with the size of landholdings. Major source of income was livestock rearing. For grazing purpose, the dependence of respondents on vegetation of govt. rakhs varied from 94 to 100 percent. More than 41 percent forage requirements of livestock of all respondents remain unmet after grazing. Majority of graziers were facing problems like low carrying capacity of rakhs, lack of drinking water and protection measure forced by the Forest Department. The major constraints in range development efforts were lack of funds, and disinterest of range personnel working in the field. Other constraints were half hearted implementation of existing range management regulation and inadequate research.

Key words: Range management; Respondents; Range personnel; Grazing problems; Livestock feeding; Thal.

INTRODUCTION

The most serious problem for human being during the next 50 years would be the huge increase in population that can reach upto 11 billion before stabilizing (Chrispeels and Sadava, 1997). This accelerated population growth calls for development of resources including rangelands to cope with the increasing demands. Worldwide, rangeland contributes about 70% of the feed needs of domestic ruminants (Holechek *et al.* 1998). In African and South American countries, it provides over 85% of the total feed needs of ruminants (cattle, sheep and goats). In Ethiopia, it represents a valuable resource to the pastoralist and to the nation. Some indicators are that about forty percent of the national cattle, 50% of the small ruminants, and almost all camels are found in the pastoral areas (Hogg, 1997). In Pakistan, more than 60% livestock feed requirement are met from rangelands (Anon, 2010). Throughout the world, rangelands are the major source of feed for both domestic and wild ruminant animals and play an important role in supplying animal products to human population (Miller and Craig, 1997).

Rangelands in Pakistan occupy about 70% of total area of the country and are the mainstay of country's livestock industry. Livestock contribute 11.5 % towards GDP and affects the lives of 30-35 million people in rural areas (Government of Pakistan, 2010-11). Of this contribution, about 54 percent comes from livestock raised on rangelands (Muhammad, 1984). Thal tract of Punjab includes Mianwali, Bhakkar, Leiah, Muzaffargarh districts and some parts of Khushab, Sargodha and Jhang districts stretching over an area of

2.5 million ha, extending North-West to South-West along the Indus and Jhelum river. Rangeland accounts for 60.8 percent of Tibetan Plateau, 19.4 percent of Pakistan, 9.7 percent of Afghanistan and 8.7 percent of India.

Since the Range Management has not been accorded adequate priority so far, great national loss is being suffered in form of poor livestock both in quantity and quality. This loss is also reflected in low living standard of rural people who depend mainly on these rangelands. Little information is available about the impact of rangelands on socio-economic condition of the stakeholders and prospects of their participation in rangeland development. This study was therefore conducted to anticipate rangeland development in Thal in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the stakeholders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two types of questionnaires were devised to obtain the required information of this study. Questionnaire No-I was used for local people residing in the vicinity of state-owned rangelands (rakhs) and Questionnaire No-II was used for range personnel working in Range Management Division Thal, Bhakkar. Prior to conducting the actual survey both the questionnaires were pre-tested and irrelevant questions were deleted. The categories of respondents were made for interview as shown in Table-1.

The detail of each rakh was obtained from the office of Divisional Forest Officer Range Management Bhakkar. Four rakhs namely Dagarkotly, Goharwalla,