

Cow and Panchgavya-Based Economy of India

1. India's Dairy Growth Story

- 1.1 India reached an all-time high of 239.30 million tonnes of milk production in 2023-24.
- 1.2 This marks a 63.5% rise since 2014-15, with a CAGR of 5.62%.
- 1.3 Per capita milk availability has increased to 471 grams per day, exceeding the global average.
- 1.4 The top five milk-producing states - Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra - contribute nearly 54% of total output.
- 1.5 This impressive growth reflects the strength of India's cow-based economy, where dairy is not only a source of nutrition but also a key driver of rural livelihoods and income.

2. Dairy as a Pillar of Rural Economy

- 2.1 Dairying provides regular secondary income to millions of small and marginal farmers.
- 2.2 Cattle in India primarily consume crop residues, helping recycle agricultural waste efficiently.
- 2.3 In return, they provide milk, ghee, curd, dung, and urine (Panchgavya) - used in food, organic farming, fuel, and traditional medicine. In this way, the cow is central to India's rural economy and sustainable farming practices.
- 2.4 The growth in dairy has also contributed significantly to nutritional security, providing protein-rich food at a time when dietary patterns are rapidly changing due to urbanisation and rising incomes.

3. Cooperative Model and Government Support

- 3.1 Much of India's dairy success has come from its cooperative model. The best example is Amul, which started as a farmer-led cooperative and is now a

global brand. Cooperatives ensure fair farmer prices, organise milk collection and processing, and return profits to producers.

3.2 Looking ahead, India is taking this model further through initiatives like the upcoming Sardar Patel Co-operative Dairy Federation, which aims to unite 02 million dairy farmers across 20 states.

3.3 The government is also promoting Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) to help smallholders gain access to markets, inputs, and technology.

3.4 Schemes like the Rashtriya Gokul Mission, aimed at improving indigenous cattle breeds, and the Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF), which funds modern dairy infrastructure such as chilling plants and processing units, are crucial in boosting productivity and ensuring better quality.

4. Unlocking Export Potential

4.1 Despite leading in production, India ranks only 45th in milk exports. Most of its dairy exports are limited to neighbouring and Middle Eastern countries.

4.2 Challenges like limited cold storage, quality certification, and a lack of value addition prevent India from tapping global markets. Developing Dairy Export Zones (DEZs) and linking them with Agriculture Export Zones (AEZs) could bridge this gap. These zones can promote value addition, ensure food safety standards, and help build a cold chain network.

4.3 Such infrastructure will be critical in reducing wastage, improving export competitiveness, and allowing farmers to benefit from global demand. With targeted support, improved infrastructure, and a focus on quality, India can transform its cow-based rural economy into a strong export-oriented sector.

5. Globalising the concept of a Cow Economy

5.1 India can take the lead in fostering a regional coalition with Nepal, Sri Lanka, and other countries where the cow holds deep cultural and religious significance, by framing cooperation around both tradition and sustainability. Nepal, where the

cow is the national animal and protected under the constitution, and Sri Lanka, which partially banned cattle slaughter in 2020, already share strong cultural alignment with India.

5.2 Similarly, in Myanmar and Thailand, where large Buddhist populations consider cows sacred, beef consumption is traditionally discouraged. In Indonesia, regions like Kudus in Java hold taboos around beef rooted in local religious traditions, while in China, historical dynasties once prohibited beef consumption due to its cultural sensitivity.

5.3 Beyond Asia, in some communities like the nomadic Maasai tribe in East Africa, cows symbolize not only food and livelihoods but also a spiritual connection to heritage and land.

5.4 By bringing these countries together, India could propose collaborative initiatives on sustainable dairy production, organic farming practices using cow by-products (such as dung for biogas and natural fertilizers), and eco-friendly alternatives rooted in traditional knowledge.

5.5 Just as India gave the world Yoga, it can propose an International Cow Day to celebrate the cultural and economic significance of cows worldwide. This day would highlight the “cow economy” through sustainable uses, such as biogas and organic farming, while honouring the deep cultural and spiritual connections many societies share with cows.