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Socio-economic profile of pig farmers belonging to the Rabha tribe of Assam

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Abstract
The study was planned to appraise the socio-economic profile of 300 pig farmers belonging to the Rabha tribe of Assam and the managemental practices adopted by them in rearing pigs. The study revealed that majority of the pig farmers were female (58.67%) and belonged to the middle age group (67.00%), had high school level of education (60%). A significant number of farmers had medium family size (83.33%), with medium land holding (71.33%). Most of the pig farmers reared their pigs under extensive system (78.33%) and tethered their pigs (52.67%). Majority of the pig farmers fed only indigenous or locally available feed to their pigs (92.67%). The study emphasized the upshot of piggery largely depended on the socioeconomic status of the farmers along with the husbandry practices adopted and market demand.

Keywords: Socio-economic profile, Rabha tribe, pig farmer, management practices

Introduction
Animal husbandry plays a noteworthy role in generating employment, providing livelihood and curbing the hunger problem amongst the growing population. Pig husbandry plays a notable role in the social, economic and cultural affairs, especially of the tribal farmers of Assam. Pig rearing is much prevalent in the areas inhabited by the tribal people of Assam due to its high prolificacy, excellent dressing percentage and need of less capital investment. It is evident by the increasing demand for piggery in the state along with the fact that Assam has the highest pig population in the country (20th Livestock Census). Female farmers are more inclined towards pig rearing in the tribal areas which they do so in traditional ways and as a back up source for financial emergency. In order to help the farmers utilize the full potential of piggery, there is an immediate need of extension and veterinary services in their places of residence.

Materials and Methods
The study was carried out to appraise the socio-economic proile and the managemental
practices adopted by the farmers of the Rabha tribe in Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam. A total of 300 farmers rearing atleast two number of pigs were interviewed for the study using a specifically constructed questionnaire. The data were collated, tabulated and analyzed to ascertain the sex, age, level of education, family size and land holdings of the pig farmers. The study also revealed the approach of the farmers in terms of rearing, housing and feeding management practices. The results of the study were put together using descriptive statistics i.e, frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, range and standard error.

Results and Discussion
1. Socio-economic profile of farmers
1.1 Sex of the pig farmers
It is evident from table 1 that majority of the farmers involved in pig rearing were female (58.67%) and the rest were male (41.33%). This might be due to the reason that females stayed back at home and contributed to the household expenses with the earnings from piggery unlike males who went out of the house for various work. Pig rearing was seen to be a source of self dependency amongst the females. The findings were in agreement with that of Singh *et al.* (2019) [10] and Abigaba *et al.* (2022) [2], where majority of the pig farmers were female (54%) and (66.9%) respectively.

1.2 Age of the pig farmers
Table 1 shows that majority (67.00%) of the pig farmers belonged to the middle age group (29-52 years), 19.33% belonged to the old age group (above 52 years) and 13.67% of the farmers belonged to the young age group (below 29 years). This might be because of the major involvement of this age group in animal husbandry sector as self employment for livelihood and having more physical ability to work. The findings were in line with Singh *et al.* (2019) [10] and Majunder *et al.* (2020) [5] who reported that majority

of the farmers belonged to the middle age group.

1.3 Education level of pig farmers

The result in table 1, reveal that 30% of the pig farmers had high school level of education. 28.33% of farmers went to middle school, illiterate (28.33%), 11. 67% went to primary school and 1.67% had higher secondary and above education. The results showed that 28.33% of the farmers were illiterate and did not get any formal education. The findings are in agreement with findings reported by Singh *et al.* (2019) [10] and Shokeen (2021) [11] where majority of the pig farmers had high school level of education.

1.4 Family size of pig farmers

The results in table 1 depicts that 83.33% of the pig farmers had medium family size (3-5 members), followed by 12.67% large family size (more than 5 members) and 4.00% small family size (less than 3 members). The average family size was 4.33±0.09. The increase in awareness of family planning initiatives taken by the government and moving of the young generations from rural to more urban areas for better job opportunities may have resulted in majority of the farmers having 3-5 numbers of family members. The present findings are similar to the findings of Payeng (2011) [8] who reported that 61.25% of the farmers in his study had medium family size (5 members) and Kirima *et al.* (2017) [4] who found that 70% of the households had between 2 to 5 members.

1.5 Land holdings of pig farmers

Table 1 shows that majority of the farmers had medium land holding (71.33%), followed by small land holding (15.00%) and large land holding (13.67%). The average land holding was 2.85±0.08. This could be due to the reason that the farmers under the study were from rural areas and as a result they had sufficient cultivable and non-cultivable land holding for farming as compared to the urban areas. The current findings were in agreement with Tochhawng *et al.* (2013) [12] who reported that 48.89% of the farmers had marginal land holding (0.1-2.5 acres) and 23.33% had small land holding (2.6-5.0 acres).

2. Management practices

2.1 System of pig rearing

The results (table 2) show that majority of pig farmers (78.33%) reared their pigs under extensive system followed by semi-intensive system (13.67%) and intensive system (8.00%). The reason for these findings may be because the farmers prefer rearing pigs in the method or system where minimum effort and investment is required and because of their unwillingness to adopt to scientific ways of rearing and inclination towards traditional rearing practices. The present findings are in agreement with Mohakud *et al.* (2020) [6] who reported that 58.8% urban and 45.45% peri-urban farmers commonly adopted free-range or scavenging system of pig rearing followed by semi-intensive and intensive system. Majunder *et al.* (2020) [5] reported that in rural areas mostly extensive system (52.08%), semi-intensive (38.54%) and intensive (9.38%) system of pig rearing were seen.

Extensive system of rearing

Intensive system of rearing

2.2 Housing of pigs

Table 2 shows majority of the pig farmers (52.67%) practiced tethering, followed by housing in kaccha hut (17.67%), bamboo enclosure (12.67%), concrete sty (7.00%) and 10.00% farmers never housed their pigs. This may be because of the unwillingness or lack of financial source of the farmers to invest into permanent construction for the pigs. The findings may also indicate the positive attitude of farmers towards the traditional rearing practices. The findings are in agreement with the findings of Tudu *et al.* (2015) [13] who found that 66.92% of pig farmers reared pigs by tethering. Nath *et al.* (2012) [7] observed that 95% of the farmers constructed their pigsty/pig houses with locally available materials such as wood or bamboo.

Tethering of pig

KACCHA hut for pig

Temporary shed using old GI sheet

Concrete sty for pig

2.3 Feeding practices

The results from the study (table 2) shows that majority of the pig farmers (92.67%) fed only indigenous or locally available feed to their pigs, 2.00% fed only balanced concentrate feed and 5.33% fed both indigenous or locally available and balanced concentrate feed. The results of the study also revealed that 65.67% of the pig farmers provided both cooked and raw feed to the pigs, 22.33% gave only raw feed and 12.00% provided only cooked feed to the pigs. The reasons for the same could be that pigs could readily consume majority of the feedstuff and indigenous or local feed were easily available and less expensive when compared to balanced concentrate feed. Farmers found that cooking certain feedstuff increased the palatability and certain feed could be given directly in raw form thereby reducing the time and labour investment. The findings were supported by Haldar *et al.* (2017) [3] who reported that the farmers fed their pigs mainly with a mixture of rice bran and fermented rice beer (choak). Nath *et al*. (2012) [7] reported that majority of the farmers fed kitchen waste to their pigs, whereas only 5% of the pigs were given concentrate feeds. Patra *et al.* (2014) [9] reported that the most common feed were kitchen waste, concentrate mixture of wheat bran, broken rice, rice brew and maize along with locally available feedstuff such as colocasia, tapioca, sweet potato, non conventional grasses and certain tree leaves and were provided either in raw or cooked form to the pigs.

Raw potatoes as pig feed

Cooked kitchen waste as pig feed

Table 1: Socio-economic parameters of pig farmers of Assam of the Rabha tribe Total no. of farmers under study= 300

Sl. No.	Socio-economic parameters of farmers	Category	n	%
1.	Sex	Female	176	58.67
		Male	124	41.33
2.	Age	Young (< 29 years)	41	13.67
		Middle (29-52 years)	201	67.00
		Old (> 52 years)	58	19.33
3.	Education	Illiterate	85	28.33
		Primary school	35	11.67
		Middle school	85	28.33
		High school	90	30.00
		Higher secondary and above	5	1.67
4.	Family size	Small (< 3 members)	12	4.00
		Medium (3-5 members)	250	83.33
		Large (> 5 members)	38	12.67
		Mean±SE = 4.33±0.09		
5.	Land holding	Small (< 0.90 acres)	45	15.00
		Medium (0.90-4.00 acres)	214	71.33
		Large (> 4.00 acres)	41	13.67
		Mean±SE = 2.85±0.08		

Table 2: Livestock management practices adopted by the farmers Total no. of farmers under study= 300

Sl. no.	Management practices	Category	n	%
1.	System of rearing pigs	Extensive	235	78.33
		Intensive	24	8.00
		Semi-intensive	41	13.67
2.	Type of housing provided	Concrete sty	21	7.00
		Bamboo enclosure	38	12.67
		Kaccha hut	53	17.67
		Tethering	158	52.67
		Never housed	30	10.00
3.	Type of feed given	Balanced concentrate feed	6	2.00
		Indigenous/ locally available feed	278	92.67
		Both concentrate and indigenous/locally available feed	16	5.33
4.	Method of feeding	Cooking/boiling of feed	36	12.00
		Raw feed	67	22.33
		Both cooked/boiled and raw feed	197	65.67

Conclusion

Pig husbandry plays a notable role in the social, economic and cultural status of the tribal farmers of Assam. The Rabha community and their traditional system of pig rearing is intricately woven and have been passed down from generation to generation particularly in the rural areas. The farmers of this tribe have been rearing pigs as a tradition, with little to no scientific mediation. Even so, the demand and importance of piggery entrepreneurship has been gaining momentum in these areas and more and more farmers are inching towards this sector. The upshot of piggery largely depends on the rearing methods, housing and feeding practices, market demand and most importantly the management aspect adopted by the farmers. These indigenous practices are farmer oriented and evolved by and with the farmers and hence may be incorporated as an alternative, a substitute or even a complement to modern and scientific practices which may establish a bridge between scientific and traditional approach in order to help sustain their livelihood and also care for the ecosystem.

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