

## Goat Farming & Economic Development of Marathwada: Opportunities & Challenges

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### **Abstract**

*Goat farming has a special place in the rural economy of Marathwada because it can be practiced with limited land, modest capital and family labour. In a region where rainfall uncertainty, fragmented holdings, seasonal migration and crop income instability are common concerns, goats work as a living asset for many small and marginal households. This paper examines goat farming as a livelihood and economic development activity in Marathwada with a focus on opportunities, constraints and policy needs. The study is based on secondary data and published literature from 2014 to 2025. The analysis shows that the region has a strong goat base, local breed advantage, rising demand for meat, scope for women participation and possibilities for value addition. At the same time, farmers face challenges relating to fodder shortage, disease management, unorganized markets, limited training, weak insurance coverage and dependence on middlemen. The paper argues that goat farming can become a stronger pillar of rural development if it is supported through breed improvement, veterinary access, farmer collectives, scientific feeding, credit support and organized market linkages.*

*Keywords: Goat farming, Marathwada, rural economy, Osmanabadi goat, livelihood, economic development, opportunities, challenges.*

### **1. Introduction**

Marathwada is a region where agriculture is deeply connected with livelihood, identity and household survival. However, the economy of many villages remains vulnerable because crop farming is exposed to low rainfall, uneven irrigation, changing prices and rising production

costs. In such a setting, livestock is not only a supplementary activity. It is often a practical safety net. Goat farming becomes especially relevant because it can be started at a small scale, managed by household members and sold quickly whenever cash is required. The importance of livestock in India has grown steadily in recent years. The livestock sector contributed 5.50 percent of total GVA in 2022-23 at current prices, and its share in agriculture and allied sector GVA increased from 24.38 percent in 2014-15 to 30.23 percent in 2022-23.<sup>1</sup>

For Marathwada, this national picture has direct meaning. Many farmers in the region cannot rely only on crops. A few goats can provide milk for home use, manure for fields and income through the sale of kids or adult animals. Goat farming also requires less space than large ruminants and can use crop residues, tree leaves and common grazing resources. This makes it suitable for landless labourers, women, small farmers and families with dryland farming conditions. Maharashtra also has a strong goat resource base. The 20th Livestock Census reported 106.04 lakh goats in the state, with goats forming about 32 percent of the total livestock population of Maharashtra.<sup>2</sup> This paper therefore studies goat farming not as a side activity alone, but as a possible route for local economic development. Its strength lies in the fact that it can generate small but regular income, encourage self employment and support rural households during periods of agricultural stress.

## **2. Definitions of Key Terms**

- ❖ **Goat farming** refers to the rearing and management of goats for income, meat, milk, manure and breeding purposes. It includes feeding, breeding, housing, health care, marketing and record keeping.
- ❖ **Economic development** means improvement in income, employment, productivity, market participation and overall standard of living. In the present paper, economic development is understood mainly in the rural and household context of Marathwada.

## **3. Review of Literature**

**3.1. Siddiky (2017)** edited a South Asian volume on sustainable goat farming and livelihood improvement. The work emphasized that goat farming is strongly linked with small and marginal farmers, landless families and women. It highlighted that goats are well fitted

into mixed farming systems because they require lower investment and can support rural income under uncertain agricultural conditions.<sup>5</sup>

**3.2.Sharma et al. (2018)** studied goat rearing as a pathway for livelihood security among farm women. Their study observed that goat rearing supports income generation, nutrition, knowledge development and empowerment when farmers receive proper technical guidance. The review is useful for the present paper because Marathwada also has a large number of women who participate in animal care at the household level. If their role is formally recognized through training and credit, goat farming can become more inclusive.<sup>6</sup>

**3.3.Singh et al. (2020)** reviewed the present situation of goat farming and pointed out that goats have economic and managerial advantages over other livestock because of lower initial investment, low input requirement, shorter generation interval and ease of marketing. The study also described goats as a ready to use asset during crisis periods. This is very relevant for drought prone and semi dry regions where farmers need flexible sources of cash.<sup>7</sup>

**3.4.Soodan et al. (2020)** examined the effect of goat rearing on farmers income in Jammu. The study used an action research approach and found that introducing goats significantly improved the income of poor rural farmers. Although the study area is different from Marathwada, its conclusion supports the idea that small goat units can contribute to livelihood security when they are backed by breed support, breeding services and basic management guidance.<sup>8</sup>

#### **4. Problem Statement**

Goat farming is widely practiced in Marathwada, yet it is still largely treated as a traditional and informal household activity. Many farmers keep goats without systematic breeding plans, proper health records, fodder planning or market information. Because of this, the full economic potential of goat farming remains underutilized. The region has a suitable climate for hardy breeds and has a strong demand for meat, but farmers continue to face high kid mortality, seasonal feed shortage, disease risk, price fluctuation and dependence on local traders. Veterinary services are not always available at the right time. Insurance and formal credit coverage are also limited. Therefore, the main problem is not the absence of goat

farming, but the absence of a strong support system that can convert goat rearing into a sustainable rural enterprise.

## **5. Objective of the Paper**

The objective of the paper is to analyse the role of goat farming in the economic development of Marathwada by studying its livelihood importance, district level goat population, major opportunities and practical challenges. The paper also aims to suggest measures for improving goat productivity, market access and income generation among small and marginal farmers in the region.

## **6. Significance of Goat Farming in Marathwada's Rural Economy**

Goat farming is significant because it fits the social and economic structure of Marathwada. A farmer does not need a large shed, expensive machinery or high recurring expenditure to begin. Even a small flock can grow over time. This is why goats are often called a moving bank in rural areas. They can be sold during festivals, emergencies, school fee periods or farm input seasons. Another important factor is labour use. Goat rearing can be managed along with crop farming. Women, elderly members and youth can participate in feeding, cleaning, grazing and caring for young animals. This creates family based employment without disturbing the main occupation of agriculture. It also helps in keeping money within the village economy, because feed, labour, medicines, transport and trading activities create local circulation of income.

The Osmanabadi goat gives Marathwada a natural regional advantage. The breed is associated with the semi arid areas of Maharashtra and has a distribution covering several Marathwada districts such as Osmanabad, Latur, Nanded, Parbhani, Hingoli, Beed, Jalna and Aurangabad.<sup>4</sup> This local breed advantage can be used more effectively through selective breeding, farmer training and conservation of indigenous germplasm. When local breeds are improved without losing their hardiness, farmers gain better returns with lower risk.

## **7. Statistical Overview of Goat Population in Marathwada**

The statistical picture confirms that goat farming has a meaningful base in Marathwada. The eight districts together accounted for 22,11,151 goats in the 20th Livestock Census 2019. Within the region, Beed and Aurangabad had the largest numbers, followed by Nanded and

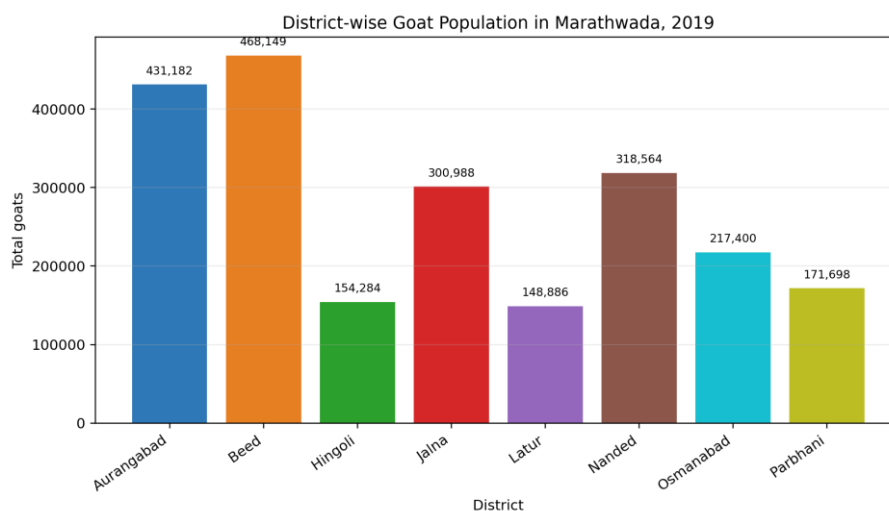
Jalna. The data also show that female goats form a major part of the population, which is important for breeding, milk and flock expansion.

**Table 1: District-wise Goat Population in Marathwada, 20th Livestock Census 2019**

District	Male Goats	Female Goats	Total Goats	Share (%)
Aurangabad	41,882	389,300	431,182	19.50
Beed	57,928	410,221	468,149	21.17
Hingoli	16,588	137,696	154,284	6.98
Jalna	47,124	253,864	300,988	13.61
Latur	18,956	129,930	148,886	6.73
Nanded	40,937	277,627	318,564	14.41
Osmanabad	27,184	190,216	217,400	9.83
Parbhani	19,376	152,322	171,698	7.77
<b>Total</b>	<b>269,975</b>	<b>1,941,176</b>	<b>2,211,151</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Compiled by the author from Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, District-wise Goat Population, 20th Livestock Census 2019.<sup>3</sup>*

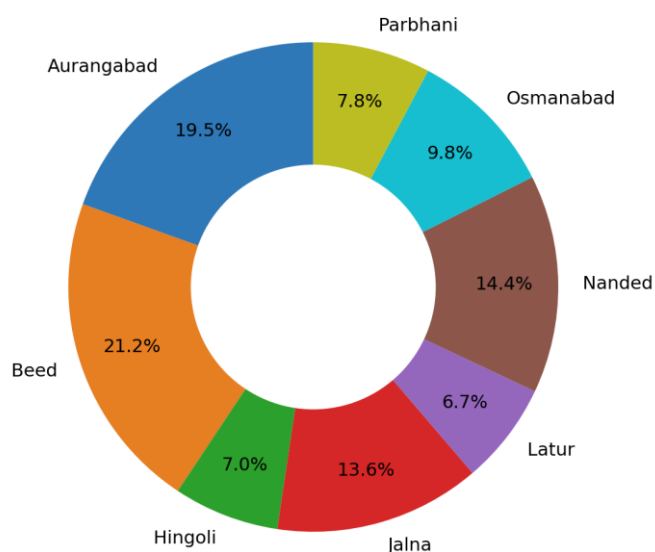
**Graph 1: District-wise Goat Population in Marathwada**



*Source: Compiled by the author from Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, District-wise Goat Population, 20th Livestock Census 2019.<sup>3</sup>*

**Graph 2: Share of Districts in Marathwada Goat Population**

Share of Districts in Marathwada Goat Population, 2019



**Source:** *Compiled by the author from Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, District-wise Goat Population, 20th Livestock Census 2019.*<sup>3</sup>

## 8. Opportunities and Challenges in Goat Farming

The first opportunity is rising demand for goat meat. Goat meat has a strong consumer preference in many local markets and during festivals. Farmers can benefit from this demand if they receive fair prices and if direct market linkages are created. Organized weekly markets, digital price information and producer groups can reduce the gap between farmer price and consumer price. The second opportunity is the possibility of low cost enterprise development. Goat farming can be scaled gradually. A farmer may begin with two or three goats and expand after gaining confidence. This makes it more accessible than many capital intensive agricultural activities. Goat manure also supports crop production, which creates a useful link between livestock and farming. There are also clear challenges. Fodder shortage is common during summer and drought periods. Disease outbreaks can quickly reduce flock value if vaccination and veterinary care are delayed. Many farmers also lack scientific knowledge about deworming, balanced feeding, shed hygiene, breeding cycle and kid care. Marketing is another concern because prices are often decided by traders and not by transparent weight based methods. A practical challenge is that farmers often treat goat farming as a small side activity, so they do not maintain records of cost, birth, death, sale and treatment. Without records, it

becomes difficult to calculate profit or to approach banks, insurance companies and government schemes. This is where extension support is needed most.

## **9. Research Methodology**

**9.1 Type of Data:** The present paper totally relies on secondary data. The data have been collected from livestock census reports, government publications, journal articles, books, research papers and relevant online sources published between 2014 and 2025.

**9.2 Type of Research:** The research type for the present paper is descriptive and analytical.

**9.3 Period of Research:** The period of study is from 2014 to 2025.

**9.4 Research Gap:** Existing studies discuss goat farming, farmer income, breed performance and livestock development, but there is limited focused discussion on goat farming as a regional economic development tool for Marathwada. There is also a need to connect district wise goat population with practical challenges such as fodder, veterinary services, marketing and farmer organization. The present paper attempts to address this gap in a simple analytical manner.

## **10. Recommendations**

- First, goat farming should be promoted as a planned micro enterprise rather than only a traditional household activity. Farmers should be trained in breed selection, feeding, breeding, vaccination, deworming, housing and record keeping. Short village level training programmes can make a major difference.
- Second, veterinary and extension services should be made more accessible. Mobile veterinary clinics, vaccination camps and helpline based advisory services can reduce mortality and improve farmer confidence.
- Third, fodder security must be improved. Farmers should be encouraged to grow drought tolerant fodder crops, use crop residues scientifically and prepare simple fodder banks at village level. This is especially important for summer months.
- Fourth, goat farmer producer groups should be encouraged. Collective marketing can help farmers sell animals on weight, quality and age instead of distress bargaining. Producer groups can also support bulk purchase of medicines, feed and insurance.
- Fifth, special attention should be given to women goat rearers. Credit, training and ownership records in the name of women can improve household income as well as participation in decision making.

## 11. Conclusion

Goat farming has strong potential to support the economic development of Marathwada. It is suitable for the region because it works well with small landholdings, dryland farming, family labour and local market demand. The district level data show that Marathwada has a substantial goat population, which means that the activity already has a natural base. What is needed now is better organization, better health care, better feeding and better market access. The future of goat farming in Marathwada depends on converting scattered traditional practices into a more scientific and income oriented rural enterprise. This does not mean making it complicated for small farmers. It means giving them timely guidance, fair prices, healthy breeding stock, veterinary support and simple records. If these measures are taken seriously, goat farming can become a practical tool for reducing rural vulnerability and improving local economic resilience in Marathwada.

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