

Vanishing pastures a threat to state's dairy, meat economy'

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Ahmedabad: Thanks to rapid industrialization, grasslands across the state have been fast diminishing, posing a major threat to the health of pastoral animals and in turn, the livelihoods of pastoralist community. According to statistics from the centre for pastoralism, 75% of the total milk produced across the country comes from indigenous buffalo and cattle—pastoral breeds—which are developed by pastoral communities.

The issue was discussed at an exhibition – Living Lightly – organized by Centre for Pastoralism, an initiative by a Gu-

jarat-based NGO, Sahjeevan. “The importance of pastoral breeds lies in developing animals by keeping them in natural grasslands where they can consume a diversity of feed rich in different nutrients, facing climatic variations and getting a lot of exercise. With fast deforestation and faster diminishing of grasslands, our pastoral breeds don't get enough nutrition and in turn, the quality of milk they provide suffers,” said Jesangh Rabari, a pastoralist from Modsar village of Kutch district who was present at the exhibition.

With a major quantity of country's milk produce co-

ming from pastoral breed, the animals and the community of breeders who develop them hold a key significance in the country's dairy economy. Similar is the contribution of pastoralists towards the meat economy wherein 90% of the sheep and goat meat is produced by pastoralists.

“90% of the feed of sheep and goat comes from the commons; village gauchars, forests, grasslands and pastures. The total contribution of animal husbandry to the GDP is 4.11%, where the role of pastoralism is rarely recognised,” said Sandeep Virmani, mentor, Centre for Pastoralism, on the sidelines of Living Lightly.