

## Madurai: Bigger cooperatives deduct commission, incentives, say dairy farmers

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MADURAI: Stating that bigger units deduct commission and the incentive offered by Aavin is not reaching them, many small milk cooperative societies sought transfer of ownership of bulk milk coolers (BMC) from bigger milk cooperatives to the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers Federation (Aavin).

According to official records, over 870 milk cooperative societies are registered under the District Cooperative (Dairy) department in Madurai district. In order to safeguard milk, around 51 BMC units have been established in Madurai to collect milk from cooperative societies.

Speaking to TNIE, Vadikovil Milk Cooperative Society president V Govinda Pandian said, "The establishment of BMC units was a good move by the state government, through Aavin, as it helps prevent the milk from spoiling. The capacity of BMCs ranges from 1,000 litres to 10,000 litres.

Some milk cooperatives installed these units and took care of the maintenance of these units. However, they are not providing the details to each farmer after milk procurement. While Aavin announced Rs 35 per litre for all categories, to all milk farmers through milk cooperatives, each milk farmer gets Rs 32-33 per litre directly. Milk cooperatives that own and maintain the BMCs charge Rs 1-2 for themselves. They claim that this is taken as a maintenance charge for the BMC units. Therefore, we seek transfer of ownership of the BMC unit to Aavin (Madurai) administration."

An office bearer of a milk cooperative said, "BMC units are owned by big milk cooperatives. They claim that the cost of BMC units is around Rs 20 lakh to Rs 30 lakh, and the cost is indirectly recovered by small milk cooperatives through the farmers. Some of the bigger cooperative societies have a good influence over a number of societies and Aavin. The voices of small cooperative milk societies are unheard."

A top official from Aavin (Madurai) said, "There are 51 BMCs in Madurai district, but seven of them are not operational since the storage of milk has been reduced. Besides, there is a serious shortage of manpower in the Madurai division. So, the BMCs are maintained by a few milk cooperatives. There are no major issues in the system."