

## Ration Balancing Programme (RBP) – Expanding coverage for benefit of farmers

Feeding not only accounts for more than 70% of the total cost of milk production but is also responsible for realizing the genetic potential of milch animals. Therefore, it is necessary that the dairy animals in all stages of life are fed a balanced ration in adequate quantity, to ensure that the animals produce milk commensurate with their genetic potential. By and large, animals in India are fed on locally available feeds and fodder which do not provide all essential nutrients required for optimum milk production and reproduction. As a result, all categories of animals produce milk far lesser than their genetic potential.

National Dairy Development Board of India has developed a user friendly computer software, based on which milk producers in the villages are advised to balance the ration of their animals with locally available feed resources and area specific mineral mixture, with the help of the village based trained local resource person. Under the programme, more than 2,00,000 animals have been covered so far which indicates that on providing a balanced ration, there is net increase in daily income between Rs.15-25 per animal, through increase in milk / fat and / or reduction in cost of feeding. In addition, it is also possible to reduce the incidences of various metabolic disorders on feeding a balanced ration. Above all, it is also possible to reduce methane - a potent greenhouse gas, by 10-15% per litre of milk production. Thus, energy lost through methane is channelized for milk production and the programme is environmentally sustainable. Under NDP-I, it is proposed to cover 2.7 million animals in 40,000 villages.

Considering the monetary benefit accrued from the implementation of RBP by way of increasing milk production and reproduction efficiency, it is desirable that the programme should be implemented in all potential areas by using extension network and existing infrastructure and also the funding support available through various state and centrally sponsored schemes. For this purpose, a suitable mechanism would need to be evolved so that large number of milk producers are covered under the ration balancing advisory services and the benefit of this unique programme reaches large number of beneficiaries.