Preface

According to the 17th Livestock Census released in January 2005, India owns one of the largest livestock populations in the world. It accounts for 57 per cent of the world’s buffalo population and 16 per cent of the cattle population. It ranks first in respect of cattle and buffalo population, third in sheep and second in goat population in third world. While a majority of the animals continue to be reared under suboptimal conditions, still India is the largest producer of milk in the world.

Total export earnings from livestock, poultry and related products was Rs.5,120 crore in 2004-05, of which leather accounted for Rs.2,660 crore and meat and meat products for Rs.1,720 crore. Besides, the sector also plays an important role in utilization of agricultural by products, such as hay, which are unfit for human consumption. The livestock sector produced 90.7 MT of milk, 45.2 billion eggs, 2.12 MT of meat and 44.5 million kg of wool in 2004-05.

An Intensive Dairy Development Project (IDDP) was launched in the country in the non-operation flood, hilly and backward areas with the objectives of development of milch cattle, increased milk production by providing technical input services, procurement, processing and marketing of milk in a cost effective manner, ensuring remunerative price to the milk producers and generating additional employment opportunities in the rural areas. The programme is currently being implemented in 25 States and one Union Territory. 62 projects with an outlay of Rs.334 crore have been approved since inception of the scheme and an expenditure of Rs.234 crore has been incurred up to end-March 2005.

Anantapur district is located in rain shadow zone, accounting for the lowest rainfall of 544 mm per annum in the state and the district has the dubious distinction of standing in the second place for the lowest rainfall in the entire country and it is next only to Jaisalmar in Rajasthan. The lowest rainfall holds a limited agricultural
prosperity. Hence, agricultural needs to be diversified to promote income and employment opportunities in the agricultural sector; sheep and goat rearing activities come as handy tools in this regard.

The district stands second place in respect of sheep and goat population in the state. The sheep and goat population activities provides direct employment to one lakh households and another one lakh persons have been indirectly find gainfully employment. The sheep and goat flesh provides animal proteins to the people in the district by way of generating Rs.175 crore of annual income to the district economy. The purpose of the present study is to assess socio-economic background of sheep and goat rearer who are engaged in contribution of significant income to the district economy on a regular basis. The sheep and goat rearing has a significant bearing in the context of drought prone and famine conditions prevailing in the district.

I have great pleasure in expressing a deep sense of gratitude to my esteemed Research Supervisor Prof.G.Satyanarayana, Dept of Economics and Applied Economics, S.K.University, Anantapur for his guidance that has been an intellectually exciting and rewarding through out the preparation and completion of this research study.

I thank the university authorities, Dean, Social Sciences and faculty members, in the Department of Economics for providing me an opportunity to complete the study.

I am beholden to my beloved parents, Smt.A.Eralamma, my mother and Sri.A.Narayana, my father for all the sacrifices they have made in making me what I am to-day. Iam thankful to, Sri.P.Beerappa my uncle and Mr.A.Ravi my brother and Kumari A.Silpa, my sister who carried on all household duties when I was deeply engaged in my research study.

This apart, many directly and indirectly have helped me in successful completion of this study; I thank them all. However, I would like to thank the following
in particular for their valued co-operation in this regard: P.Lakshmannna, (Retd) Assistant Director Department of Animal Husbandry, Anantapur; Mrs. Dr. P.Veena, Assistant Professor, Sri Venkateswara Veterinary College, Tirupathi; Dr.C.Swaruparani, Assistant Director, and Revered Sri J.Venkateswarlu garu, Senior Assistant, Department of Animal Husbandry, Anantapur and the Chief Planning Officer and staff, Anantapur, for providing data for the study.

I also thank my co-scholars; Dr.K.Krishna Reddy, Mr.S.Subbarayudu, Mr.G.Sivaiah, Mr.C.Tirupal and G.Raju and Mr.M. Naga Prasad, Junior Assistant in the Department of Economics.

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