

Original Research Article

Optimizing dairy marketing in Karnataka: Analyzing cost, efficiency and price spread across channels

ABSTRACT

The dairy sector is recognized as a crucial element of India's agriculture, contributing significantly to rural livelihoods and the national economy. This study aimed to investigate the efficiency and cost structures of various milk marketing channels in Karnataka. Data were collected from vendors, farmers, and administrative officials, as well as secondary data from commercial dairy plants, to analyze the input-output relationships and marketing efficiency across different channels. Two major districts, Mandya and Dharwad, were selected, and ten creameries, ten milk vendors, four medium-sized dairy plants, and one large commercial dairy plant were examined. Milk marketing channels were categorized into organized and unorganized systems, and the costs and returns associated with each type of intermediary were assessed. The analysis revealed considerable variations in marketing costs and efficiency. Channels with fewer intermediaries, such as direct sales from producers to consumers (Channel-I), were found to have higher efficiency. Conversely, channels involving multiple intermediaries, like those including creameries and vendors (Channel-IV), exhibited higher price spreads and lower efficiency. For instance, Channel-V demonstrated the highest marketing efficiency of 3.94, while Channel-IV showed the lowest efficiency at 2.03. It was observed that a higher number of intermediaries correlated with a larger price spread and reduced marketing efficiency. The study highlighted the need for improving marketing channels and strengthening linkages between farmers and organized sectors to enhance overall productivity and profitability in the dairy industry.

Keywords: Dairy Sector, Milk Marketing, Cost Analysis, Karnataka, Organized vs. Unorganized Channels, Price and Producer's

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays a crucial role in the Indian economy and provides livelihoods for a significant portion of the population. Contributing approximately 18.3 percent to the national economy, the sector engages about 45.76 percent of the workforce in agriculture and allied activities (GOI, 2023). Among the various agricultural sectors, dairy farming has been pivotal in the socio-economic development of rural households. Specifically, livestock contributes 16 percent to the income of small farm households compared to 14 percent for all rural households (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, 2022). Additionally, the livestock sector supports the livelihoods of two-thirds of rural communities and employs around 8.8 percent of India's population. It contributes 5.73 percent to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts for 30.13 percent of the total Agricultural GDP. Dairy farming alone supports the livelihoods of approximately 70 million farm families.

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The success of dairy enterprises relies heavily on the efficient estimation of the input-output relationship. Due to the perishable nature of milk, especially in rural settings, farmers face challenges in disposing of milk promptly to avoid losses. This often leads to distress sales to secure a minimum price. Additionally, there is significant variability in milk production and consumption across different states and regions.

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A major concern is that the unorganized sector handles approximately 80 percent of the total milk collection in India. For the organized sector to thrive, it requires a substantial number of farmers to enhance milk productivity and ensure fair pricing. Strengthening the linkages through effective extension services is essential for achieving these goals. This study aims to explore strategies to make the dairy sector more competitive and profitable, particularly by improving livestock productivity through better management practices.

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SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To study the marketing cost, efficiency and price spread in various channels.

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METHODOLOGY

For the analysis of the objectives of the study, both primary and secondary data are utilized. The primary data have been collected from the sample respondents through the help of vendors, farmers and from the administration officials with the help of pre-tested questionnaire. The secondary data on several aspects of the activities (balance sheet, procurement etc.) of the large commercial dairy plant were collected from different sources depending on the availability of the required information for the study.

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STUDY AREA AND SAMPLING

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Two major districts out of 30 districts in Karnataka namely, Mandya and Dharwad were selected to achieve the goal of study. Hebballi block from Dharwad district and Krishnarajpete block from Mandya district were selected randomly. Both the organized and unorganized milk marketing sectors were prevailing in both of the studied districts. Therefore, all the marketing agencies involved in milk collection (formal and informal) were selected for the present study. Thus, 10 creameries, 10 milk vendors, 10 *halwais*, 4 medium size dairy plants and 1 large commercial dairy plant were selected.

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Estimation of marketing efficiency of various milk marketing channels

1 Cost Components of Market Intermediaries:

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In the present study, the cost incurred by various market intermediaries can be divided into fixed costs and variable costs. Depreciation on buildings and equipment's, interest on fixed capital, investment on transportation vehicles and other furniture included under Fixed cost. Likewise, variable cost includes expenditure on labour, milk procurement, fuel, electricity and other miscellaneous charges.

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I. Fixed Costs

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a. Interest on fixed capital

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Interest on the amount of money spent on building, equipment, transportation vehicles which were worked out on prevailing rate of interest *i.e.* 8 per cent on fixed deposit.

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b. Depreciation

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It included annual depreciation on equipment's, buildings and transporting vehicles. The depreciation was worked out with the help of capital recovery cost (CRC) method.

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I. Variable costs

a) **Purchasing cost of milk**

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The cost of quantities of raw milk actually purchased per day was multiplied by their prices paid to estimate the purchasing cost of milk.

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b) **Fuel cost**

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Fuel cost included expenses on petrol for the vehicle, wood and matchbox.

c) **Electricity cost**

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Electricity was used for running electric equipment's like fan, light, fridge, mixer grinder etc.

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d) **Labour cost**

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Wage prevailing in the area was taken as labour cost and total expenses on labour was estimated by multiplying the prevailing wage rate with total number of labours were engaged in the business.

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e) **Miscellaneous cost**

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Miscellaneous cost included the cost of repair of equipment's and vehicles, cost of gunny bags, cost of chemicals used for making milk products, cost of small glassware etc.

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Estimation of Marketing Efficiency

Information on milk marketing channels, cost and returns of marketing agencies, producer's share in consumer's rupee and price spread was collected and analyzed to calculate marketing efficiency.

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I. Price spread

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The price spread of an agricultural commodity helped to calculate the economic efficiency of marketing system. Price spread maintained inverse relation with the efficiency therefore smaller price spread would be desirable for higher efficiency of marketing chain. The difference between the price paid by the consumer and price received by the milk producer defined the price spread (Acharya and Agarwal, 2009).

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It was calculated as, $P_s = P_c - P_f$

Where,

P_s is the Price spread

P_c is the Consumer's price P_f is Producer's price

II. **Producer's share in consumer's rupee**

It is the price received by the farmers and expressed as a percentage of the price paid by the consumer (Acharya and Agarwal, 2009). The producer's share was calculated with the following formula.

$$P_s = (P_f / P_c) * 100$$

Where,

P_s is the Producer's share in consumer's rupee P_f is Producer's price

P_c is the Consumer's price

III. **Marketing Efficiency for different marketing channels**

Marketing Efficiency of different channels was calculated by using the following formula.

$$MME = FP / (MC + MM)$$

Where,

MME is the Modified Measure of Marketing Efficiency FP is price received by producer

MC is marketing cost MM is marketing margin

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. **Milk marketing channels**

Marketing channel consists of a number of intermediaries through which various commodities are transferred from producer to consumer. Milk marketing channels were categorized into organized or formal and unorganized or informal channels depending upon the intermediaries involved, mode of milk procurement, provision of various assistances to producers as well as the net return obtained by the producers and market intermediaries. The analysis informal marketing sector of milk involving various intermediaries like creameries, and milk vendors has been conducted in this section.

The informal milk marketing channels which were found to be active in the study area are:

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1. Producer- Consumer
2. Producer - Creameries - Consumer
3. Producer - Milk Vendor- Consumer
4. Producer- Milk Vendor- Creameries- Consumer
5. Producer- co-operatives- Consumer

The investment pattern of intermediaries, cost incurred and returns obtained by the market intermediaries and marketing efficiency of the marketing channels involved in the study area were also worked out and reported in this section.

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2. Average quantity of raw milk handled in the study area

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Data was collected from the market intermediaries by personal interview. They were found to collect milk from other dairy farmers besides the 100 sample milk producers. The average quantity of raw milk handled per day was found to be highest in case of creamery A (208 liters/day) as they were procuring milk directly from the farmers for comparatively less procurement price. On an average, creamery B, vendor A and vendor B were handling 204 liters, 162 liters and 156 liters of milk per day (Table 1). Santhosh (2018) documented that the highest quantity of milk was handled by Channel-III (Milk Producer-DCS -Processing Unit-Milk Parlour-Consumer, ₹1,251 l/day) followed by Channel-I (Milk Producer-Consumer, ₹486 l/day).

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Table 1: Quantity of milk handled by different market intermediaries(lit/day)

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Market intermediaries	Average quantity of milk (lit/day)
Creamery A	208
Creamery B	204
Vendor A	162
Vendor B	156

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3. Investment pattern of various market intermediaries

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Investment on a dairy enterprise depends upon the initial and working capital, scale of business, type of business according to various market intermediaries and different types of equipment's used etc. Average initial investments by different market intermediaries are represented in the Table 2.

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Table 2: Average initial investment by market intermediaries (₹)

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Particulars	Investment on		Total
	Vehicles	Equipment's	
Creamery A	37000 (56.92)	28000 (43.07)	65000 (100.00)
Creamery B	37000 (57.82)	27000 (42.18)	64000 (100.00)
Vendor A	46000 (96.47)	1680 (3.53)	47680 (100.00)
Vendor B	50000 (96.75)	1680 (3.25)	51680 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of total investment)

3.1. Investment by creameries

Creameries in the study area were found to collect milk directly from the producers or from the private milk vendors and then further supplied milk to the consumers. They also converted the milk into different products in a small scale and then sold to the local consumers. The creameries were classified as creamery A and creamery B as per the process of procurement of milk. Creamery A collected milk directly from the farmers, whereas creamery B was found to procure from private milk vendors as per their demand. Total average initial investment of creamery A was worked out to be ₹65000/- which comprised of vehicles (₹37000/-) and equipment's (₹28000/-). The proportion of the average investment on vehicles was found to be higher (56.92%) in comparison to the equipment's (43.07 %). Total average initial investment made by creamery B was estimated to be ₹64000/- out of which ₹37000/- had been invested

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upon vehicles, whereas ₹27000/- (42.18%) had been invested on equipment's. In case of creameries, the initial investment on equipment's was found to be higher as compared to other intermediaries since they require a large set of equipment's (refrigerator, cheese production lines, blenders, weighing balance, furniture, etc.) for setting up of a creamery unit.

3.2. Investment by vendors

Private milk vendors are usually engaged in procurement of milk from the producers and supplying the milk directly at the consumers' doorstep or to other market intermediaries involved in the milk marketing chain. In the present study, vendors are classified as vendor A and vendor B. Vendor A was involved in directly supplying the milk to the consumers, whereas vendor B was supplying milk to the creamery units as per their demand. They made various initial investments on vehicles (motorcycles) and equipment's (aluminum or plastic milk cans, weighing balances etc.). The average initial investment was found to be higher for vehicles in comparison to equipment's in case of both vendor A and B. Total initial investment in case of vendor A was worked out to be ₹47680/- which comprised of vehicles (₹46000/-) and equipment's (1680/-). The proportion of average investment in case of vendor A on vehicles was estimated to be 96.47 per cent, followed by equipment's (3.53 per cent). Total average initial investment of vendor B was found to be 51680/-, out of which 50000/- and 1680/- were invested on vehicles and equipment's, respectively. The share of vehicles in average initial investment was found to be higher (96.75%) in comparison to equipment's (3.25%).

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4. Costs and returns of milk market intermediaries

Costs and returns obtained by different market intermediaries depend upon their investment, operational expenses as well as scale of marketing of milk. The costs and returns incurred by the market intermediaries involved in informal sector of milk marketing are represented in the Table 3.

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Table 3: Costs and returns incurred by different market intermediaries (₹/liter)

Particulars	Creamery-A	Creamery-B	Vendor-A	Vendor-B
a) Vehicle	0.10	0.10	0.13	0.10

Depreciation	b) Equipment	0.07	0.09	0	0
Total fixed cost (TFC=A)		0.17	0.19	0.13	0.11
Milk cost (B)		37	37	36.60	35.80
Fuel		0.42	0.41	1.23	1.04
Electricity		0.23	0.21	0	0
Labour		0.6	0.50	0	0
Miscellaneous		0.24	0.24	0.26	0.30
Total variable cost (TVC=C)		1.49	1.36	1.49	1.34
Milk marketing cost excluding milk cost (D=A+C)		1.66	1.55	1.62	1.15
Total milk marketing cost (B+D)		38.66	38.55	38.22	36.95
Consumer's price		46.80	47	47.80	46.20
Returns		9.80	10	11.20	10.40

4.1. Costs and returns incurred by the creameries

Creameries involved in milk marketing channels in the study area were classified as creamery A and B depending upon their mode of procurement of milk from farmers and milk vendors,

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respectively. Creamery A, on an average handled 208 liters of milk per day. The average procurement price of milk for creamery A from the milk producers was ₹37. Fixed cost incurred by creamery A comprised of depreciation values on vehicles and equipment's which were found to be ₹0.17 and ₹0.19 per liter of milk. Total marketing cost was estimated to be ₹1.66 per liter out of which fixed cost was ₹0.17 and variable cost was found to be ₹1.49. The total milk marketing cost was worked out to be ₹38.66 and average selling price of milk of creamery A to the consumer was ₹46.80 by which the net return obtained by creamery A was estimated to be ₹9.80 per liter of milk. On an average, creamery B was handling 204 liters of milk per day which was procured from the private milk vendors at an average cost of ₹37 per liter of milk. Total marketing cost was estimated to be ₹1.55 per liter of milk which comprised of both fixed costs (₹0.19) and variable costs (₹1.36). The total milk marketing cost was worked out to be ₹38.55. Average selling price of milk was found to be ₹47 per liter of milk which helped the creamery B to obtain a return of ₹10 per liter of milk.

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4.2. Costs and returns incurred by the milk vendors

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Vendors were classified as vendor A and B as per their disposal of milk directly to the consumers or to the creameries in the study area. The average procurement price of vendor A from the farmers was ₹36.60 per liter of milk. Fixed costs and variable costs were estimated to be ₹0.13 and ₹1.49 per liter of milk, respectively. Therefore, the total milk marketing cost per liter was estimated to be ₹1.62 and average selling price of milk was found to be ₹47.80 by which vendor A earned a return of ₹11.20 per liter of milk. Similarly, vendor B was involved in disposal of the milk to some creamery units. The average purchase price of milk by vendor B from the farmers was ₹35.80 and the total marketing cost was estimated to be ₹36.95 per liter of milk. They sold milk to the creameries at a rate of ₹46.20 per liter of milk; hence, earned a return of ₹10.40 per liter of milk marketed.

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5. Producers' share in consumers' rupee

Producers' share in consumers' rupee is defined as the price received by the farmers in terms of the percentage of the price paid by the consumers. The share of producers and other intermediaries in the consumers' price in case of all the four channels involved in milk marketing in the study area is presented in Table 4.

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Table 4: Producers' share in consumers' price in different marketing channels

Intermediaries	Marketing channels
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	Channel-I	Channel-II	Channel-III	Channel-IV	Channel-V
Producer	37 (100.00)	37 (79.05)	36.60 (76.56)	36.20 (73.87)	33.50 (79.76)
Creamery	0	9.8 (20.94)	0	4.80 (9.70)	0
Vendor	0	0	11.20 (23.43)	8 (16.32)	0
Co operative	0	0	0	0	8.50 (20.24)
Consumers' Price	37	46.80	47.80	49.00	42

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of consumers' price)

In channel-I, since the milk was directly sold to consumers by the farmers, complete amount of the consumers' price received by the producers i.e. ₹37. Therefore, producers' share in consumers' rupee was found to be 100 per cent. In case of channel-II, the average price received by the producer from creamery A was ₹37 and price paid by consumer was ₹46.80. Therefore, producers' share in consumers' rupee was worked out to be 79.05 per cent and the share of creamery A was found to be 20.94 per cent. In channel-III, average price received by the producer from vendor A was ₹36.60 and average price paid by consumers was found to be ₹47.80. In this channel, the producers' share was estimated to be 76.56 per cent and vendor A accounted for a share of 23.43 per cent in consumers' rupee. In case of channel-IV; involving both the creamery B and the vendor B, average price received by the producer was worked out to be ₹36.20 and price paid by the consumer was ₹49.00. Here, the producers' share was worked out to be 73.87 per cent and share of creamery B and vendor B was estimated to be 9.60 per cent and 16.32 per cent of the consumers' rupee, respectively. In case of channel V producers share in consumers rupee was found to be second highest. The average price received by producer from cooperatives was 33.50 and price paid by the consumer was 42. Therefore, producers share in consumers rupee was worked out to be 79.76 per cent and the share of cooperatives was found to be 20.24 per cent.

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The producers' share in consumers' rupee was observed to be highest in case of channel-1 (100%) due to absence of any intermediaries and it was least in case of channel-IV (73.87%) due to interference of two intermediaries i.e. creamery B and vendor B in the marketing channel. Hence, producers' share in consumers' rupee was found to be varied indirectly with the presence of a number of intermediaries which means that higher is the number of intermediaries

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throughout the marketing chain, lower will be the producers' share in consumers' rupee. Similar findings were reported by Agrawal and Raju (2021) and Bhargav *et al.* (2022).

Price Spread

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Price spread is defined as the difference between price paid by the consumer and price received by the producer for an equivalent quantity of a product. It is an effective tool to measure the economic efficiency of marketing system of a commodity. Table 5 represents the marketing cost, marketing margin and price spread involved in corresponding milk marketing channels.

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In case of channel-I, the price spread was zero due to absence of any intermediaries and direct disposal of milk from producer to consumer (Table 5). Price spread was estimated to be ₹14.40, ₹16.20 and ₹17.80 in case of channel-II, channel-III and channel-IV, channel V respectively. In case of channel-II, creamery A was involved and price spread was found to be (₹14.40).

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Table 5: Marketing cost, marketing margin & price spread in channels (₹/liter)

Particulars	Marketing channels				
	Channel- I	Channel-II	Channel- III	Channel- IV	Channel- V
Net receipt to producer	37	37	36.60	36.20	33.50
Marketing cost	0	2.60	3.98	5.18	2.70
Marketing margin	0	7.20	12.22	12.62	5.80
Consumers' price	37	46.88	47.80	49.00	42
Price spread	0	8.68	16.20	17.80	8.50

In channel-III, price spread was worked out to be ₹16.20 involving vendor B. It was found to be highest in case of channel-IV due to involvement of both creamery B and vendor B in the marketing process. Therefore, more is the number of intermediaries involved in the marketing channel, higher will be the price spread and lower will be the efficiency of the marketing channel. In case of channel V due to involvement of a smaller number of intermediaries

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involved, lower will be the price spread and higher will be efficiency compared to the other marketing channels. The marketing cost was found to be highest in case of channel-IV involving creamery B and vendor B (₹5.18), followed by channel-III (₹3.98) and channel-II (₹2.86). Marketing margin was observed highest in case of channel- IV (₹12.62) as compared to channel-III (₹12.22), channel-II (₹11.54) and channel V (₹5.80). Gangwar *et al.* (1989) reported on milk economics development and consumption of various farm sizes in Haryana state. The price of milk earned by all farmers, stated to be ₹ 3.00 per liter, whereas the total cost of milk production for large farms was the highest in all the three, i.e., 2.62, 2.60 and 2.70 ₹, respectively. Brar *et al.* (2017) studied the efficiency of milk marketing channels. Price spread was found to be the lowest in Channel-II (Producer-Cooperative Milk Plant-Consumer) for small as well as medium-sized dairy farms. Price spread was found to be the highest in Channel-V (Producer-Milk Vendor-Sweet Shop/Creamery-Consumer) for small and medium-sized dairy farms.

6. Marketing efficiency of the marketing channels involved in milk marketing

Marketing efficiency is important to analyze the degree of market performance of a commodity. Assessment of marketing efficiency of the marketing channels involved in disposal of milk is essential to improve the performance of the market intermediaries for raising the income level of the farmers and intermediaries as well as consumer satisfaction. Table 6 represents the marketing efficiency of different channels involved in informal marketing sector of milk.

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Table 6: Marketing efficiency for different milk marketing channels

Channels	Marketing cost + Marketing margin	Price received by farmer	Marketing Efficiency
Channel-I	0	37	-
Channel-II	9.80	37	3.77
Channel-III	16.20	36.60	2.25
Channel-IV	17.80	36.20	2.03

Channel-V	8.50	33.50	3.94
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The marketing efficiency was estimated to be 3.77, 2.25, 2.03 and 3.94 in case of channel-II, channel-III, channel-IV and channel V, respectively. The results indicated that channel-V was most efficient (3.94) and channel-IV was least efficient (2.03) due to involvement of highest number of market intermediaries (creamery B and vendor B). This is due to the fact that efficiency of the marketing channel is indirectly related with the number of market intermediaries involved in the channel. The minimum price received by the farmers (₹33.50/liter) and maximum price paid by the consumers (₹37/liter) in case of channel-IV makes the channel least efficient. The result obtained in case of marketing efficiency of the channels was found to be in accordance with the research conducted by Singh (2016). Mahida (2018) conducted a study on comparative analysis of the technical efficiency of cooperative member and non-member farmers in Gujarat and concluded member farmers (83.27 %) were more efficient than the non-member farmers (75.31 %).

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CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals critical insights into the efficiency of milk marketing channels in Karnataka, underscoring the pivotal role of intermediary structures in determining both cost and profitability. Channels with fewer intermediaries, such as direct producer-to-consumer sales, were found to be significantly more efficient, demonstrating lower price spreads and higher returns for producers. Marketed surplus of milk was found to be 82.89 per cent and was highest for large category households (84.15 %) followed by medium (82.63 %) and small category households (80.76 %).

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Marketing efficiency was observed to be highest in case of channel-V i.e., Producer- Co-operatives-Consumer while least in case of Channel-IV (Producer - Milk Vendor- Creameries - Consumer). This suggested that the producers should dispose of their milk through those channels in which minimum marketing agencies were involved, i.e., Channel-V as it is the best channel which gave higher returns to the producer farmer in comparison to other channels in the study area. More than 25 percent of the respondents were selling the milk through various marketing channels other than co-operative structure. Major reason was the distant locations of primary milk producer's co-operative societies in rural areas. Need to establish a greater number of primary milk producer's co-operative societies in nearby producing areas. To

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optimize dairy sector performance, it is crucial to streamline marketing channels and foster stronger connections between farmers and organized sectors.

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