

By Anjali Bhattacharya

IT is a strange paradox that while we talk of self-sufficiency and even surplus in foodgrains, millions of people below the poverty line are starving. In the ever expanding draught-hit areas of Orissa, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, human beings are sold for a pittance to ward off hunger. Similarly, despite the tall claims of self-sufficiency in milk production by 1985 by Operation Flood, there is great scarcity of milk. Most of the milk that we are getting in cities is a mixture of imported milk powder and butter-oil, mainly from the European Economic Community countries, because we are destroying our own source of milk — the cattle. In villages, the situation is even worse. A recent survey in Haryana villages showed that in the cattle rich State, people were getting only black tea and no milk.

For the last 15 years, the EEC is

EEC dairy aid eroding self-reliance efforts

supplying India with large amounts of dairy aid for the National Dairy Development Programme called Operation Flood. The official aim of this programme is to make the country self-sufficient in milk production. Instead of it the country is now more dependent on imports than ever before. India is exporting large amounts of highly nutritive concentrate feed to the EEC, while there is a serious shortage within the country itself. With this feed India could produce many times the amount of milk that it has received as dairy aid for Operation Flood. The dairy aid has brought down local milk price while export are shooting up the price of feed concentrates.

Though as part of Operation Flood,

a cross breeding programme of Indian cows with western dairy animals is being implemented, the programme will lead to a reduced availability of coarse food grains, concentrate feed, and animal draught power.

The donated milk powder and butter oil is processed into milk and sold in cities, at prices beyond the reach of the majority of the poor and in the rural areas, even this is not available. The proceeds of this are being used for building dairy and cattle feed plants, transporting milk to the cities and building large dairy co-operative farms. Only the big and rich farmers generally benefit from such large co-operative farms to the detriment of

Continued on page 24

EEC aid eroding self-reliance efforts

Continued page 22

small farmers as the latter lack the resources of animal feed etc. Food aid is criticised by the European Commission and particularly by the European Parliament, as harmful in the sense that new consumer habits are generated that would lead to commercial imports in future and, eroding self-reliance. Therefore, the following measures are recommended by the **India Committee of Netherland (ICN).**

One of the main objective of Operation Flood-II was to create a self-sustaining dairy industry by 1985. Instead India is now more dependent on imports than ever. 55 per cent of the total milk output of Operation Flood dairy plants in New Delhi are made up from skimmed milk powder and butter oil. In Calcutta this is 74 per cent. Between 1979 and 1985 India received 20,000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder (SMP) in excess of the earlier agreed amount. In 1984, India imported more than 25,000 tonnes of SMP from the US. More than three quarters of this were commercial imports at dumping

prices and the rest was donated.

The EEC is now in the process of reducing its dairy surplus. Five more years of unconditional dairy aid will probably confront India with a situation in which dependency on dairy aid will be increased with no more dairy aid available and world market price of dairy products rising heavily.

Dairy aid for manufacturing expensive baby foods, chocolates, ice creams and other exotic food should be discouraged in a country like India, where majority of the rural poor are victims of malnutrition due to non-availability of milk.

One of the main objectives of Operation Flood is rearing a National Milk Herd by 1990 of about 15 million cows and buffaloes with a high milk production potential. It will have far reaching consequences for small farmers in particular. Indian cows and buffaloes are very well adapted to the heat and humidity of most regions in India. Cross-bred cows are much less suited to Indian conditions. They need good shelter, a lot of clean water and

are susceptible to tropical diseases.

Research also shows that a cross-bred milk animal is a risky and hardly profitable investment for a small farmer or a landless labourer. The cross-breeding programme, if fully executed, will cause a considerable reduction in the number of suitable (male) draught animals. The male progeny of cross-breed cows are generally less fit as draught animals and need 50 per cent more feed.

A number of organisations and scientists in India have sharply criticised the cross-breeding programme. In spite of this cross-breeding programme is going on, aided by the Dutch Ministry of Development Corporation.

India must stop feed export mainly to the EEC countries, because of its scarcity in the country and its consequent high price which is especially detrimental to the small farmer or landless labourer, who have very little or no crop residues.

An appropriate dairy policy for India would be one where animal husbandry (including dairying) and food crop production supplement each other and do not compete for land and other means of production. More attention should be given to the breeding of "dual purpose cattle" suitable as draught animals and more productive milk animals.