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Knowing Your Allies: Profiling Urban Dairy Farmers in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Demand for animal produce is expanding in developing countries because of a growing population, progressive urbanisation and rising per capita income levels. Given the projection that half of the African population will live in cities by 2035, the possible contribution of urban agriculture (UA) cannot be underestimated. Especially not in Eastern Africa which is believed to become the world’s most rapidly urbanizing area in the coming decades.

To be able to fulfil future milk demand, the Ethiopian government launched the Livestock Master Plan in August 2015 to promote the take-off of the dairy sector. The ambitious target is set to double domestic cow milk production by 2020. Urban dairy production systems will play a key role in achieving this goal during the first development stages as milk markets are still poorly developed in Ethiopia due to high transaction costs. But (urban) farmers don’t look alike, they have different motivations, skills and ambitions, are in different development stages and experience different constraints, resulting in a variety of management profiles of these small ‘enterprises’ i.e. which inputs/outputs are used/generated, from/to who inputs/outputs are sourced/sold, production scale etc. Therefore it is imperative to gain insight in the profiles of urban dairy farmers before setting out appropriate interventions and policies.

This paper aims to (1) classify urban dairy farmers based upon production performance and coping strategies during the multiple fasting periods of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church which alter the country’s national milk demand, (2) to characterise the identified clusters, (3) to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each cluster and (4) to put forward appropriate interventions tailored to each farmer group to improve urban milk supply.

Keywords: Cluster analysis, farm classification, farm efficiency, farm resilience, urban agriculture