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"Prosperity and Poverty in a Globalised World—
Challenges for Agricultural Research"

Animal Source Foods and Nutrition During Early Life

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Abstract

In Ethiopia, most food supplies are derived from plant products, in particular cereals, pulses and root crops. Only 7 % of the daily energy intake comes from animal products such as milk, eggs, meat. Animal-source foods (ASF) provide not only energy and high quality protein but are also excellent sources of bioavailable micronutrients. The extremely low consumption of ASF (milk, eggs, meat, and liver) can be assumed to be a contributing factor to the poor nutrition and health of Ehiopian infants and young children.

The ongoing, longitudinal study on animal source foods and nutrition during early life in Ethiopia evaluates the possible link between livestock keeping, food intake and nutritional status of young children (6 — 18 months old) in resource poor areas. Fieldwork started in March 2005. A total of 302 low income families (with small livestock n = 108, without livestock n= 194) with 6 months old infants have been recruited into the study in the Debre Zeit area, 50 km from Addis Ababa. During the bi-monthly visits during one year information about dietary intake and — in particular - the introduction and consumption of ASF is collected and growth of the child is monitored. In parallel, information about agro-economic factors is collected to link the households' economics with the consumption of ASF. At the end of the study, a blood sample is drawn to assess the prevalence of anemia in the study population.

Preliminary data show that consumption of ASF is very low. However, cow milk had been introduced to more than half of the children by 6 months of age. The most common complementary foods are cereal based gruels, biscuits, and injera, a staple food made of fermented Teff (*eragrostis tef*).

Keywords: Agricultural economics, animal source foods, Ethiopia, infants, nutrition

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