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Stimulating Milk Production in Cameroon - Meeting the Challenges

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Abstract

Cameroon falls within countries with the lowest per caput production and consumption of milk. The per capita consumption of milk in Cameroon is about 15 Kg milk equivalents per year, compared to 40 Kg in Africa and 94 Kg in the world. Milk has been envisaged as a principal protein source that can raise protein consumption and hence reduce malnutrition, which is still a major problem to Cameroon, with a prevalence of 22 % in children less than 5 years. Due to urbanisation and population growth, milk production per head is expected to double by the year 2020, in order to meet demand.

This study was intended to assess the opportunities and constraints to dairy development in Cameroon. Data was collected through visits and execution of individual interviews to farmers and other stakeholders, using questionnaires.

Results showed that dairying development has a potential revealed by: availability of demand and importation of dairy products especially in urban areas, availability of processing plants, resistant cattle breeds, labour force, veterinary, research and extension services. Milk production was however dominated by Fulani herders, who owned local cattle breeds, stayed far from markets, had land disputes with crop farmers and suffered from feed shortage, especially in the dry season.

Improved feeding and livestock management could lead to a tripled average daily milk yield of local cows. Exotic breeds could produce higher amounts of milk; however, their high costs of production and low adaptability are a problem to farmers. Crossbreeding could produce better results; however, research still needs to be done to show profitable levels and acceptable scale of production. Market availability and access to extension, veterinary and credit services could stimulate milk production in rural areas.

Furthermore, the organisation of farmers into dairy cooperative groups can be recommended as a means of fostering their production, marketing and credit worthiness hence improving on income generation from dairying.

Keywords: Cameroon, Constraints, dairy development, Opportunities, Research