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Importance of Small Animal Production as Animal Source Food for the Nutritional Wellbeing of Children in Resource Poor Households in Central Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of small animal production on household level animal source food (ASF) consumption and its association with nutritional status of children and their biological mother.

Keeping a few numbers of small animals with the exception of chickens for eggs had an insignificant contribution to household ASF consumption. Egg consumption in households keeping small animals was larger ($p < 0.05$) than in households without. Significant quantities of chickens and eggs consumption of small animal producers were from their own production. Annual per capita consumption of egg was 1 kg, chicken 0.7 kg, red meat 3.7 kg, and milk 18.5 kg. There was a positive and strong ($p < 0.05$) association between per capita milk and egg consumption and child nutritional status. Average per capita income increased the likelihood that household members consumed a large ($p < 0.001$) quantity of ASFs, whereas consumption decreased with larger family size ($p < 0.05$) the consumption. Mean z-score values for stunting (HAZ, height-for-age) was -2.32, for wasting (WHZ, weight-for-height) -0.70, and for underweight (WAZ, weight-for-age) -1.63. All the indicators were better ($p < 0.001$) for urban sample children than rural. Per adult equivalent food expenditure and biological mother's education are positive and strongly ($p < 0.05$) associated with HAZ and WAZ, while body mass index (BMI) is significantly ($p < 0.001$) associated with WHZ and WAZ. Living near public institutions like clinic, school and market is positively associated with child's nutritional status, indicating the importance of these infrastructures.

The findings of this study showed that the per capita ASF consumption of sample households was low, highlighting the modest contribution of small animal keeping to household animal source food consumption. Nevertheless, there was a significant positive association between nutritional status of children and per capita milk and egg consumption. Thus, to effectively tackle undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, production of own ASF especially by the resource poor community complemented with nutrition education could be an effective approach.

Keywords: Animal source food, child nutrition, small animal production