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Local Fodder Resources in the Feeding Management of Smallholder Pig Producers in Mountainous Regions of Northern Viet Nam

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Abstract

Due to unfavourable agricultural production conditions and land scarcity in the uplands area of northern Viet Nam, livestock husbandry in general and pig husbandry in particular appear as an important opportunity to sustain livelihoods for smallholder farmers. Widely varying management practices of small-scale pig producers are leading to different levels of pig performances. With the increasing utilisation of improved local as well as exotic breeds accompanied by new husbandry management practices, smallholders increasingly rely on external inputs. Due to the uncertainty of future resource availability, the use of local fodder resources and management practices adapted to the specific small-scale farm production conditions are necessary to optimise resource utilisation.

The seasonal availability of fodder resources and their utilisation were evaluated applying a seasonal calendar. Data were collected by group discussions in nine villages belonging to three production systems differing in production intensity, remoteness and ethnicity.

A high number of different feedstuffs are used in pig feeding in all systems. The most important fodder components are maize, cassava, banana stem and sweet potato leaves. Throughout the whole year smallholders of all systems supply also concentrate feed to the pigs and little seasonal variation was observed. The utilisation of local fodder resources shows a higher variation caused by system and season.

While maize and cassava compete for use as human food, animal feed, and for marketing, banana stem and sweet potato leaves are agricultural by-products with no or low opportunity costs. However, fodder ranking reveals a high importance of maize and cassava in all systems.

It was concluded that the feeding management of pigs in different systems applied by small-scale farmers in the uplands shows a high variety. In particular farmers of the resource driven system are highly dependent on local fodder resources due to financial constraints to purchase supplement fodder.

However, there seems to be scope to improve the pig feeding management of smallholders by optimising the utilisation of farm produced crops and alternative local fodder resources.

Keywords: Local fodder resources, pig, smallholder farming, Viet Nam