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Smallholder Cattle Production in Northern Mountainous Viet Nam in Relation with the Poverty Status of the Household

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Abstract

In Viet Nam, cattle are mainly raised in household farms. The potential for beef production is assumed high in uplands. The government aims to improve beef production in the North. The northern uplands have the highest poverty incidence, particularly in remote areas. Ethnic minorities live there in less productive areas with poor infrastructure and low accessibility to market and off-farm work. The aim of the study is to investigate the relation between poverty level of household farms and beef cattle keeping and production.

This study was conducted in 20 villages, both lowlands and highlands, in the mountainous Yen Chau district, Son La province. Data on livestock production of randomly selected 299 households of different ethnic groups were collected by using standardised questionnaires. The relative poverty status of the household was assessed using terciles based on accurate indicators of their wealth status. Analysis of variance with SAS software version 9.1, PROC GENMOD, was used to process quantitative data.

Investigated farms were grouped into cattle keeping and non-cattle keeping farms. Cattle keeping farms comprised 44% of the total investigated households and had bigger family and farm sizes compared with non-cattle keeping farms. Cattle keepers consisted of more farms of the richest and middle terciles than of the poorest (41% and 37% compared to 22%, respectively). Among cattle keepers, farms keeping less than 3 cattle (an average of 1.4 cattle per farm) were representative for the small farms, with the medium farms keeping from 3 to 12 cattle (an average of 4.8 cattle per farm). The medium farms consisted mainly of the richest and middle terciles (91% of the total), while 83% of the poorest farmers keeping cattle were presented in the small farms. Cattle keeping was more prevalent among households with advantages in providing family labour and crop residues for cattle rearing. The poorest households kept no cattle at all or a small number of cattle mainly for working force.

Keywords: Cattle production, household farm types, mountainous regions, poverty rate, Viet Nam