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Constraints for Cattle Production of Small-scale Farmers in Kampong Cham Province, Cambodia

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Abstract

Almost all cattle raised in Cambodia are produced by small-scale farmers in rural areas. Small-scale farmers commonly use native grasses and crop residues as feed for their animals. Feed resources for cattle have become a constraint as the cattle population and area cultivated with crops have increased; this has resulted in low animal productivity. Suggested alternative: Nutrition has been identified as the single most important constraint to cattle production in Cambodia. Increasing demand for red meat has meant that cattle production represents an important opportunity for Cambodian farmers. This study reports a survey which was conducted to identify constraints to cattle production of small-scale farmers in Cambodia. 60 randomly selected households raising cattle in Kang Meas and Tbong Khmum districts in Kampong Cham province were interviewed in late 2008.

Most (80 to 90%) household income was derived from the farm (only 10 to 20% of income was from off-farm sources). Cattle production represented 20% of farm income, on average. The mean number of cattle per household was 5. Overall cattle production was assessed as very low, with average inter-calving interval estimated at 18.3 months and mean growth rates of non-lactating animals at less than 100 g/d. Farmers reported that cattle were mainly used for draught, breeding and selling. This is a significant shift from the traditional approach of using cattle for draught and breeding only, indicating that farmers were responding to market demands.

Farmers rated feed availability as the most important constraint to cattle production, followed by diseases. In the survey villages cattle production was severely constrained by the lack of feed resources which caused low animal productivity. Providing locally available feed (natural grasses and crop residues) for cattle is a major challenge for farmers, requiring high labour inputs. Planting alternative feeds such as forage grasses is an attractive opportunity for small-scale farmers to improve their cattle production.

Keywords: Animal productivity, cattle production, crop residue, feed resource, grasses, small-scale farmer