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Small Ruminant Milk as Sources of Protein and Poverty Alleviation among Women in Rural Areas of Nigeria

O.O. ADEWUMI

University of Agriculture, Department of Animal Production and Health, Nigeria

Abstract

The rate of infant mortality and maternal death in Nigeria has reached a stage that efforts have to be made to improve nutritional status of the mother and the child. More than half of Nigerian children are stunted in growth due to the declining intake of adequate nutrients. To meet the mandate of the millennium development goals, it is essential to reduce infant mortality and maternal death, and improve food production in order to accelerate the eradication of poverty and hunger, especially among children and mothers. Milk is a good source of protein but the consumption of milk is very low in Nigeria because of the acceptance of cattle as the only sources of milk, low awareness on the potentials of small ruminant as source of milk and most of the citizen cannot afford imported milk. Women's contribution to household food and nutritional security is of tremendous importance since they are the primary actors in feeding the family and influencing the nutritional status of the children. It is therefore essential that consumption of protein most especially from small ruminants be encouraged. Small ruminants outnumbered other domestic animals and women keep more of small ruminants than other domestic animals as sources of meat but not as sources of milk. Therefore, this paper highlights the economic importance of small ruminant and the superiority of their milk over that of other ruminants. Recent trends in upgrading the milk yield and consumption of small ruminant milk in Nigeria were discussed. The need to develop small ruminant dairy industry in the rural areas in Nigeria was emphasised and the strategies that could be used to create awareness among the rural women in Nigeria were discussed.

Keywords: Milk, poverty alleviation, protein, rural area, small ruminant, women