



Tropentag, October 5-7, 2011, Bonn

“Development on the margin”

Dairy Goats in Rural Development: Determinants of Viability and Sustainability of a Breeding Programme

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Abstract

Dairy goat development projects and programmes are increasingly justified and funded solely on their potential to aid the poor. However, the acceptance of dairy goats is highly dependent on the assumed benefits and risks attached as well as personal perception and attitude of the individual farmer. This study established viability and factors that drove the viability of dairy goats as an enterprise. Data was collected by a survey on 71 farmers selected by random sampling in three provinces of Kenya (*i.e.*, Coast, Nyanza and Rift Valley) using a set of pre-tested structured and semi-structured questionnaires. Using gross and net margins from dairy goat farming as an indicator of economic viability, dairy goat beneficiaries of the Heifer Project International-Kenya were separated into viable or non-viable enterprises. A logit model based on the dependent variable of a farm being viable or non-viable was used to determine main factors that determined a dairy goat's enterprise economic viability. Results indicated that 54.9% of the farms were viable at the gross margin level and 47.9% at the net margin level. Differences in gross and net margins across agro-ecological zones were attributed to milk prices. The model results indicated that older farmers, a higher education level and longer distance to the market had a negative effect on economic viability while a large family size, longer distance to veterinary centre and hired labour had a positive effect. Female recipients tended to perform better than the men. To enhance success of the dairy goat breeding programme, labour, markets, linking activity to gender, age and good husbandry practices require serious attention. Besides, farmers' awareness of the market demands within and outside the community is important in establishing production goals, and may be crucial to achieving a positive gross margin. Despite the existence of non-viable enterprises, the few present suggest the possibility of obtaining reliable incomes from the enterprise. Redoubling of effort or re-orientation of production to match the local and external requirements would, however, be necessary.

Keywords: Breeding programme, dairy goats, development, viability