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“Development on the margin”

The Emerging Small-scale Dairy Cattle Farming Sector in the Khorezm Province of Uzbekistan

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Abstract

Since independence in 1991, reforms in the agricultural sector of Uzbekistan initiated small-scale private, instead of large-scale governmental farming. Yet, even during the Soviet Union era half of the cattle stock used to be reared by individual households. Presently the state regulates the number of cattle head per agricultural area and imposes some mandatory crops in private livestock and crop farms, respectively. A survey in the Khorezm province analysed livestock management and production in 56 private livestock (LF; on average 22 ha) and 80 household farms (HH; on average 0.2 ha). Dairy cattle in the irrigated mixed farms were fed a range of on-farm produced feeds. The main component was stover amounting to 69% in HH and straw amounting to 67% in LF. Green fodder with 14% and silages (22%) came next whilst broken grains and agro-industrial by-products added another 16% in HH and 11% in LF to cattle diets. The sporadic grazing along irrigation canals could not be quantified. While LF produced more metabolisable energy and crude protein than required by their ruminants, the feeds produced by HH covered less than half of the requirements. The HH farmers were however (in part) remunerated in-kind with feed as wage compensation for labour in private crop farms. The HH farms generated higher relative crop yields than their LF counterparts, while cattle productivity of both was similar, albeit low. Cattle mortality was not prominent because of a good access of the HHs to village veterinary centres and efficient contracting arrangements of LF with private veterinarians. Despite their very limited farm size, the HH farmers actively took part in the commercial farming sector, purchasing inputs for cattle and crop production and trading products. The long-term development potential of the HH farms needs further attention given their small size and since the income from livestock often is only an additional, but highly important source of income to them. At present HH farms are the key provider of livestock products.

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