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Decency of Women’s Working Conditions in Peri-Urban Dairy Production Systems in the District Faisalabad, Pakistan

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Abstract

Equitable working conditions and fair payment for female workers are often insufficient. To analyse the decency of women’s working conditions in dairy production systems in Pakistan, a study was conducted applying qualitative and quantitative research tools. Female workers (n=73) were asked about their on-farm activities in a semi-structured face to face interview. In addition participatory research tools were applied in group-discussions to determine problems the women are facing. The research was carried out from September to December 2011.

The workload of female family members is enormous: it is the task of women to take care of the household, the children and the livestock. Not only the high number of working hours which can take up to 15 hours, but also high physical workload like the transport of heavy material on their heads, might be considered as inappropriate. Main tasks of women are to prepare dungcakes (86.1 %), to feed the buffaloes (86.1 %), to clean the animal sheds (91.7 %), to milk the buffaloes (65.3 %) as well as doing housework and other work.

More than two thirds (69.8 %) of the interviewees related the hard work to negative impacts on their body condition. For example, 57.5 % of the interviewed women regularly suffer from temperature stress. In most cases where working women owned one or a few buffaloes (n=47), their work was performed as “unpaid family labour” while the milk was mainly produced for subsistence, informal sale to neighbours or a milkman (dhody). Female farm labourers also participated in the interviews (n=26). These women are facing similar health problems, but additionally complained about inadequate payment. Most of them (61.5 %) are not getting paid in a monetary terms: Commonly the labour (88.5 %) is compensated with non-monetary goods like dungcakes, milk, feed or food.

The combined results of the qualitative and quantitative research approaches indicate that the working conditions for female workers in peri-urban dairy production units of Faisalabad are partly not decent.

Keywords: Decent work, dungcake, women, working condition