



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2013, Stuttgart-Hohenheim  
“Agricultural development within the rural-urban continuum”

## Working Conditions for Hired Labor at Peri-Urban Dairy Farms in Pakistan: Comparing Lahore and Faisalabad

SAADIA HANIF<sup>1</sup>, NILS TEUFEL<sup>2</sup>, EVA SCHLECHT<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*University of Kassel / Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Animal Husbandry in the Tropics and Subtropics, Germany*

<sup>2</sup>*International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Kenya*

### Abstract

In Pakistan, peri-urban milk production is an important economic activity in all major cities. The market-oriented dairy farms are very labour intensive; they employ large numbers of uneducated and unskilled laborers from the fragmented and informal labour market. Laborers are often exposed to conditions below standards formulated by the International Labor Organisation (ILO). To evaluate the discrepancy between ILO standards and dairy workers' reality, we analysed the working conditions for hired laborers on 107 peri-urban farms in Lahore and Faisalabad. Laborers were asked about their work tasks, working hours, wages, and rights at work in semi-structured face to face interviews conducted during 08/2012–01/2013.

Results show that work at dairy farms is precarious due to the handling of heavy cattle and buffaloes (risk of injury), unhygienic conditions, lack of health protection and lack of job security. Rights such as wage negotiations, granted holidays, fixed working hours and health insurance are lacking and even not stipulated by law. Such issues therefore depend on informal agreements between employer and worker, and are limited to the fixation of wages in cash or kind. The average monthly wage in Lahore and Faisalabad, respectively, was 5,500 Pakistani Rupees (PKR) and 5,000 PKR, which is less than the official national minimum wage (8,000 PKR per month  $\approx$  58.40 €). In Lahore, workers at 79% farms reported to receive in-kind benefits such as daily meals, milk or dung cakes; in Faisalabad this applied to 54% of the farms only. Female workers were hired only part-time for cleaning at 7% of the farms in Lahore and 32% in Faisalabad. In case of sickness, workers on 7% and 13% of the farms in Faisalabad and Lahore, respectively, received financial and social support from the employer. In both cities no employer offered fixed working hours, a weekly day off or paid holidays.

From our insights we conclude that working conditions for dairy workers are similar in major cities of Pakistan and the precariousness of farm work is structural rather than individual. To ensure workers' rights and improve their working conditions, regulations at national level are required.

**Keywords:** International labour standards, social security, wages, working hours