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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Farmers from Iporá and Neighbourhood, Goiás State, Brazil

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Abstract

The official data of the Brazilian government has reported that the economy of Iporá and neighbouring municipalities has been based primarily on dairy farming and secondly on beef cattle raising. The objective of the present study was to carry out the diagnosis of the socioeconomic characteristics of farmers from Iporá and neighbouring municipalities. Two hundred and forty farmers were interviewed between April 2013 through April 2014 in rural communities meetings, agro dealer stores, during the campaign of vaccination against the foot and mouth disease and in the 28th Agricultural Exhibition of Iporá. Out of total people interviewed, 146 families have lived on the farm (60.8 %), 139 farmers have used exclusively family labour (57.9 %) and 146 farms have a total area of up to 100 ha (60.9 %). The participation of family members in the daily work of the farm has been high with predominance of spouses (n=136) and sons/daughters (n=104). Dairy farming has been the agricultural activity that mostly contributes to family livelihood (n=165; 63.2 %), followed by beef cattle raising (n=109; 55.6 %). Rural retirement (n=42; 34.5 %), social programs (n=14; 30.7 %) and jobs outside the farm (n=71; 47.3 %) have had a greater contribution than fruit-growing (n=4; 22.5 %), vegetables (n=5; 34 %) and fish (n=4; 15 %) production. The association of dairy farming with the remaining agricultural activities has been low, which disagrees with the concept that family farms have a more diversified production. A small number of farmers is organised in associations (n=74; 30.8 %) or cooperatives (n=97; 40.4 %). This disarticulation has reflected in the market access, which has been reported by 81 interviewees as the second most difficulty to remain in the agricultural activity. Most of the farmers have utilised agrochemicals (n=125) and fertilisers containing nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (n=139). We concluded that farmers from Iporá and neighbouring municipalities have mostly depended on dairy production for the livelihood of their families and have faced difficulties to access the market due to disarticulation, besides the high dependence on agricultural inputs for food production. Additional research and efficient extension services are needed to improve the socioeconomic aspects of farmers from Iporá and neighbouring municipalities.

Keywords: Dairy production, family farming, livelihood