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Can Livestock Production Contribute to Consumption of Animal Food Sources? A Case of Rural Tanzania

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Abstract

Inadequate consumption of animal source foods, is a common problem in developing countries, Tanzania is inclusive. It is linked with persistence of Protein Energy malnutrition in the country. This study examined the extent of livestock production and consumption of animal source foods from diets consumed by rural households of Dodoma and Morogoro region, Tanzania. A cross-sectional survey involved 663 households. A questionnaire tool and measurement of food intake were administered to mothers/caregivers in the households. interviews and focus group discussions were applied to study livestock production and consumption. Data were analysed using SPSS version 20 and Microsoft excel version 10. Results indicated that, cattle were the most important species kept by majority of households in Dodoma region while in Morogoro chickens were kept by majority of households. The study revealed a mismatch between livestock production and consumption in all the regions. On average more than half (52.4%) of the surveyed households owned livestock, however this was not reflected in consumption of animal source foods. The intake of foods rich in animal sources were significantly low in terms of frequency and quantity for the entire sample. Only 4% consumed milk and its products and 10% consumed meat and 2% consumed eggs. However, of those few who kept and consume animal source foods their dietary diversity was significantly higher compared to their counter part ($p = 0.02$). Focus group discussion revealed that majority of households kept livestock as a copying strategies such as pay for school fees, medical fees and other necessary household expenditures. Despite the relatively high animal production in all the surveyed regions, consumption of food from animal source were low. Inadequate nutrition knowledge on the importance of including animal source food to the meal, poor livestock keeping practices and lack of diversified agriculture production were found to be among the constraints of consumption of animal source foods. Therefore, empowering rural household members with appropriate knowledge and skills on adequate production and consumption especially on animal source foods will be a key for achieving optimal nutrition and health status of rural households

Keywords: Animal source foods, consumption, production and livestock