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The Impact of Management Practices on Pre-mortem Meat Quality Along the Colombian Cattle Value Chain

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Abstract

Cattle production is the most important activity in the Colombian rural sector. However, the Colombian cattle value chains show high levels of disarticulation at all stages, which limit the involved actor in achieving substantial increases in competitiveness and sustainability. On the other hand, this also leads to low levels of compliance with current environmental, animal welfare or food safety regulations resulting in limited access to more formal national and international markets.

With the aim of identifying critical points in terms of pre-mortem management practices, this study examined the degrees of compliance with national norms among the cattle value chain actors at pre-mortem stages (primary production, animal transport and animal trading). The study was carried out in 2016 and 17 and the methodology followed a three-stage process: 1) by consulting the Resolution 20148 (2016) issued by the Colombian Agriculture and Livestock Institute (ICA), a checklist was developed and applied with small and medium-scale cattle producers in the Colombian Cauca Department, that allowed measuring the degree of compliance with the norm. 2) Through interviews with animal transporters and traders, the different animal marketing channels were identified and the transporting and trading practices were evaluated regarding their compliance with national regulations. 3) A profound literature review was conducted in order to identify the magnitude of negative impacts of different management practices on meat quality and to develop strategies for improvement.

First results show that practices leading to compliance with animal welfare regulations are the ones being less regarded by the actors (5% compliance level), whereas practices leading to compliance with animal health and biosafety regulations are the ones of most importance to the actors (<23% compliance level). The results will help to identify gaps in terms of the regulatory framework and its application at pre-mortem value chain stages and be of high value for the involved value chain actors and decision makers in order to develop the value chain and achieving access to more formal national and international markets.

Keywords: Animal trading, animal transport, cattle production, checklist, value chain