

A Preliminary Study on Current Status of Dairy Cattle Farming in Mannar District

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Dairy cattle farming in Sri Lanka has a direct impact on income generation, poverty alleviation and provision of animal proteins to households. Hence, it plays a vital role in areas such as Northern Province, which is recovering from a conflict period. Therefore, the objective of the current survey was to study the present status of dairy cattle farming in Mannar district of Northern Province. The study was designed to assess the dairy farming practices and its constraints. A pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect data from 254 dairy farmers whom were selected using stratified and simple random sampling from 5 veterinary regions of Mannar district. The highest number of farms had local cattle breeds (89.37%). Sahiwal crosses (9.05%) and Jersey crosses (0.78%) were observed in less number of farms. Most of the farms (92.9%) used stud bulls for cattle breeding. Average herd size of cattle farms was 34 animals. Yet, average proportion of milking cows from herd was 35.34%. Major source of forages were from wild and roadsides (71%). Concentrate and mineral supplementation were given to animals only by 12% and 10% of farmers respectively. Extensive management system (66.9%) was observed as the major dairy cattle rearing system in the area. Hence, cattle sheds were not available for 62% of the farms. Average milk production of the area was 1.59 ± 0.442 L/cow/day. Significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) milk production was observed in Manthai West (2.1 L/Cow/day) and the lowest was observed in Musali (1.3 L/cow/day). Even though most of the farmers (72%) had more than 5 years of experience in cattle farming, their knowledge level on dairy farming was observed to be poor. Major constraints identified were; lack of improved cattle breeds, poor knowledge level on dairy farming, lack of improved forages and poor extension facilities. In conclusion, to alleviate the poor status of dairy farming in Mannar District, strategies should be aimed to address aforementioned constraints.

Keywords: Dairy cattle, Milk production, Local breeds, Sahiwal