B-03: Smallholder dairy farming in the Mid Country of Sri Lanka

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The objective of this study was to obtain detailed information on present management and feeding practices in the mid-country of Sri Lanka. Sixty smallholder dairy farmers were selected from four farm types (male or female; with or without off farm income) and information on feeding and management of dairy cows were recorded monthly for a period of one year. Feed and refusal samples were also collected from individual farms so that digestible organic matter and crude protein offered per farm types can be compared. According to the results, the average herd size was similar for men (1.6AU) and women (1.63AU) farmers, but smaller for farmers with (1.44AU) than without (1.81 AU) off-farm income. Farmers without off-farm income also fed a larger amount of total feed dry matter as compared to farmers with an income. Crude protein intake of animals was higher for male farmers without income (23g/kgw$^{0.75}$/d) compared to other farm types, however metabolizable energy intake was higher for farmers without off farm income (0.24 Mcal/kgw$^{0.75}$/d) compared to farmers with an income (0.22 Mcal/kgw$^{0.75}$/d).

There was no effect of season on milk production. However, production was affected by farm type. For the lactating animals, the mean production of animals kept by women farmers was similar to that of animals kept by male farmers without an off-farm income. The proportion of lactating cows was higher for male farmers without off farm income (64%) than for other groups (50-54%). Mean production of all cows was significantly higher for men than for women farmers. On average cows gained 53g/day and the differences between farm types were not significant.

Both the difference between income groups and the interaction of that with gender, indicate that the availability of labour was the major determinant of herd size and feeding of animals.