

B-149: Present status of milk production and marketing in Uda Walawe Irrigation and Settlement Scheme

L M Abeywickrama¹, Asoka Gunawardene², L G L Sisira Kumara¹
(¹Dept of Agricultural Economics, ²Dept of Animal Science, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Mapalana, Kamburupitiya)

Traditional livestock sector, which played a dominant role in the left bank area of the Uda Walawe Irrigation Scheme, is confronted with a new set of problems raised by the mechanized agricultural activities and social changes associated with development projects. This study focuses to reveal the present status of production and marketing of milk and milk products in Uda Walawe.

The left bank command area (Suriyawewa & Kiri Ibbanwewa) of Uda Walawe irrigation scheme was selected for the study, due to scattered presence of a large number of herdsmen. Basic information of their distribution, marketing channels and management were collected mainly from Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka and other key informants such as government officers and leaders of the society in the area. Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques were administered to reveal the priorities of the constraints. Indiscriminately selected 100 herdsmen were interviewed for detailed information.

Among the herdsmen, majority (76%) rear the neat cattle, and 88% of the herds of neat cattle consist of less than 10 animals representing small herd size. Production parameters were below the standards (Average milk yield = 0.8 l/day, average number of lactations = 3, average lactation length = 5 month). In addition to the marketing problems, low productive local breeds, conflict between the herdsmen and paddy farmers, inadequate feeding grounds, poor veterinary facilities and lack of knowledge were the dominant problems. All neat cattle herdsmen try to minimize the costs but not to maximize the return or profit. Majority of the herdsmen (55%) receive less than Rs.500 per month from livestock products. The profit margin taken by the middlemen coming from urban areas is about Rs.11 per litre of milk.

The conflict between the paddy farmers and the village based herdsmen is mainly due to the disintegration of the livestock sector with other farmer groups. Vertical and horizontal integration of milk marketing process through existing Farmer Organizations would help to solve many dominant problems in order to improve the milk industry in Uda Walawe area.