

20. RECORD KEEPING AMONG SMALLHOLDER DAIRY PRODUCERS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS OF TANZANIA

Laisser, E.L.K., MSc (Agric) (1997)

Supervisor: Dr. G. C. Kifaro

This study was carried out in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania to evaluate the extent of farmers involvement in herd recording, type of records kept, utilization of records at farm level and constraints of dairy herd recording under smallholder conditions. The work comprised administering a structured questionnaire and personal observations to 140 project farmers, 20 non project farmers, 74 recorders and 2 small scale dairy development project (SSDDP) officials. Results showed that project farmers keep supplementary herd records to a greater extent (32.1%) as compared with non project farmers (20%). Type of records kept differ from one individual to another. The common type of records kept by all farmers were daily milk production, breeding records and financial records particularly milk sales and input purchases. The survey at farm level showed that all project farmers were keeping health, milk production, reproduction and feed records. However, the records were not well utilized at farm level in the improvement of dairy cattle production. Personal observations showed that with exceptional of few farmers who kept supplementary records, most farmers kept herd records for official use only since they were only made available when an official needed them or visited the farm. Among the constraints that limit farmers to take herd records as identified by the recorders included lack of experience (2.9%), negligence (17.6%), low educational level (32.4%) and farmers being busy (85.3%). The constraints on recorders side were absence of farmers when visited to take records and lack of working bears such as gumboots and transport. However, about 95% of the farmers themselves could not identify any constraints on recording. The rest (5%) identified inefficiency of private recorders as the major constraint. It is apparent that the potential of smallholder farmers to take dairy records is high. Therefore, for efficient collection, interpretation and utilization of dairy records farmers

training on how to take records independently is important. A large number of farmers can be incorporated by bringing together extension officers from the existing schemes (Kagera, Tanga and SSDDP) so that they may share experiences in recording and find ways to unify some of the records which appear to be common to all schemes.