

Drought Resilient Dairy Farming

Uva Wellassa University & IPID in collaboration of Oxfam Sri Lanka

Project: Enhancing Gender Inclusive Socio-economic Development.

Location: dairy farms Siyambalanduwa DS division, Monaragala.

Sri Lanka produces about 42% of the national milk requirement of 750 million liters of which about 74% is still produced by small-scale dairy farmers with 2-6 heads of dairy cattle. The small Holders (SHF) manage their dairy under semi-intensive and extensive systems mostly in the dry zone areas of the country. Dairy farming in the dry Zone accounts for about 55% of the total cattle population in the country and the breeds of cattle reared here are comprised of indigenous cattle, called Zebu cattle and their cross breeds and their per cow production is as low as 1.8 liter per day. The high number and the resilient characteristics, can make a huge difference in national milk production when the management system in the dry zone could be changed with the adjustments being made about the breeding, feeding, and focus given on cow comfort and welfare, economic benefits accruing to the dry zone dairy farmers.

Dairy farming in these areas faces several limitations, which cause the dry zone dairy to underperform in milk production, such as low rainfall, high evapotranspiration rates in the animals, seasonal availability of good quality feed, especially fodder, for their cows, heat stress during the daytime when the animals are let on the grassland for free grazing. Therefore, dairy cows' lactation and reproductive performances are low during the dry season. they are focused on measures that could be easily adapted by the dairy farmers in the dry zones to mitigate such challenges.

Considering the potential and the challenges exerted by the harsh climate prevailing in the area, Oxfam Sri Lanka, under the EU-funded EGSD project, conducted a study in the Siyambalanduwa DS division in collaboration with Uva Wellassa University, to draw guidelines for the dry zone dairy producers that make the dairy farming more resilient and when they are put in practice, could address most of the problems faced by the dry zone farmers in Sri Lanka.

The study was undertaken in the dairy farms in Siyambalanduwa which is one of the dry zone areas in the EGSD operation area. The guidelines were handed over to the Ministry of Livestock and the Department of Animal Production and Health as the technical agencies in Sri Lanka and a farmer manual was released recently with the participation of the University Academics, Representatives of the department, and dairy processors.

The manual released is expected to help promote Drought Resilient Dairy farming as a viable and profitable economic activity in the dry zones of Sri Lanka and to increase the family income of the smallholder farmer community in particular and that of the nation at large.