

## Management Practices and Economic Performance of Smallholder Dairy Cattle Farms in Southern Vietnam

**Authors :** Ngoc-Hieu Vu

**Abstract :** Although dairy production in Vietnam is a relatively new agricultural activity, milk production increased remarkably in recent years. Smallholders are still the main drivers for this development, especially in the southern part of the country. However, information on the farming practices is very limited. Therefore, this study aimed to characterize husbandry practices, educational experiences, decision-making practices, constraints, income and expenses of smallholder dairy farms in Southern Vietnam. A total of 200 farms, located in the regions Ho Chi Minh (HCM, N=80 farms), Lam Dong (N=40 farms), Binh Duong (N=40 farms) and Long An (N=40 farms) were included. Between October 2013 and December 2014 farmers were interviewed twice. On average, farms owned 3.200m<sup>2</sup>, 2.000m<sup>2</sup>, and 193m<sup>2</sup> of pasture, cropping and housing area, respectively. The number of total, milking and dry cows, heifers, and calves were 20.4, 11.6, 4.7, 3.3, and 2.9 head. The number of lactating dairy cows was higher ( $p<0.001$ ) in HCM (15.5) and Lam Dong (14.7) than in Binh Duong (6.7) and Long An (10.7). Animals were mainly crossbred Holstein-Friesian (HF) cows with at least 75% HF origin (84%), whereas a higher ( $P<0.001$ ) percentage of purebred HF was found in HCM and Lam Dong and crossbreds in Binh Duong and Long An. Animals were mainly raised in tie-stalls (94%) and machine-milked (80%). Farmers used their own replacement animals (76%), and both genetic and phenotypic information (67%) for selecting sires. Farmers were predominantly educated at primary school level (53%). Major constraints for dairy farming were the lack of capital (43%), diseases (17%), marketing (22%), lack of knowledge (8%) and feed (7%). Monthly profit per lactating cow was superior in Lam Dong (2,817 thousand VND) and HCM (2,798 thousand VND) compared to other regions in Long An (2,597 thousand VND), and Binh Duong (1,775 thousand VND). Regional differences may be mainly attributed to environmental factors, urbanization, and particularly governmental support and the availability of extension and financial institutions. Results from this study provide important information on farming practices of smallholders in Southern Vietnam that are useful in determining regions that need to be addressed by authorities in order to improve dairy production.

**Keywords :** dairy farms, milk yield, Southern Vietnam, socio-economics

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