

Abstract

Farmer Perception and Resources for Calf Fattening Under Smallholder Production System [†]

Humera Iqbal ^{1,*}, Anam Afzal ¹, Khizar Hayat ¹, Emma Hand ² and David McGill ³

¹ Dairy-Beef Project, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore 54000, Pakistan; anamafazal46@gmail.com (A.A.); haider78633@gmail.com (K.H.)

² Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation, School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga 2678, Australia; ehand@csu.edu.au

³ Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences, The University of Melbourne, 250-Prince Highway, Werribee VIC 3030, Australia; david.mcgill@unimelb.edu.au

* Correspondence: humera.drdf@gmail.com

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Abstract: In Pakistan, smallholder farmers are primarily engaged in dairy farming while keeping beef animals as secondary products. Farmers experience poor production due to lack of focus on beef farming, traditional calf rearing practices and limited resources. The objective of this study was to understand the perceptions of smallholder farming households of beef production and the available resources for farmers to engage in beef fattening to increase overall farm profitability. Data was collected using a focus group discussion approach, from farming households in villages across Punjab (n = 7) and Sindh (n = 8). An integrated framework incorporating gender and value-chain considerations was used as a tool to assess farmer interest, goals and resources for rearing livestock. The data was analyzed using content analysis. The majority of farmers interested in calf fattening were more resource rich, with livestock as their primary source of income. A smaller proportion of farmers, with limited resources, also took interest in calf fattening. Women from a few villages mentioned that they were reluctant to be involved in beef businesses due to an emerging focus on childhood education as well as a lack of agency for livestock sales and control over income. Another factor contributing to farmer perceptions of beef included their enterprise focus (dairy or cropping). Overall, smallholder farmers perceived that calf fattening could be a profitable business if calves were reared properly, had adequate feed resources and good market return. Training and farm support targeting these areas is critical for calf fattening to become a profitable market strategy.

Keywords: calf fattening; beef; resources; smallholder; farmers; production system; Pakistan

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