EVALUATION OF THE ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION PROGRAM FOR SMALL-SCALE DAIRY FARMS IN MALAWI

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the current status of the artificial insemination (AI) program in Malawi. Data available from the Blantyre milk-shed area showed that the Government controlled artificial insemination program applies a breed substitution strategy resulting in an increase of high grade Hol-stein-Friesian x Malawi Zebu crosses (>7/8 Friesian) from n=388 in 1985 to n=1228 in 1994. The semen is locally produced at the national Al centre. Data for the estimation of breeding values of sires is not available. Pedigree breeding or rotational cross-breeding is not conducted. The annual number of inseminations per AI technician was very low (average 145 p.a.) suggesting low efficiency of the program. Logistics were the most significant constraint. Information from the study suggests that the artificial insemination program for the small scale farmers in Malawi requires a thorough revision. An inventory of the Malawian dairy cattle population and its genetic composition are recommended to provide basic information for the development of an appropriate breeding program. A cost effective recording scheme is needed to provide meaningful data on the biological and economic efficiency of dairy cattle production in the small scale sector in Malawi.

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