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Small holder dairying

This chapter

Describes features of small holder dairy systems, their descriptors and benefits of their intensification.

The main points in this chapter:

- small holder dairying flourished in peri-urban areas but shortages of roughages have forced farmers into high concentrate usage
- rural areas provide greater roughage supplies, which generally reduce feed costs thus increasing profitability
- there are many descriptors for small holder dairy systems – these can be categorised as physical, farm family/financial and institutional
- intensification provides many benefits to farmers but requires certain prerequisites to be sustainable.

3.1 Features of small holder dairy systems

Milk is a cash crop for small holders, converting low value forages and crop residues, and using family labour, into a valued market commodity. Small holder dairy systems are common throughout the developing countries of Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. The main difference between systems is whether they are pasture-based, as in most parts of Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, or if dairy production is a part of crop–animal systems, which is more common in Asia.

Devendra (2001a) categorises small holder dairy production systems into three systems:

- 1 traditional, usually with ad hoc marketing arrangements, such as many peri-urban farms
- 2 cooperative, formed from natural aggregation and concentration of farms