

IMPLEMENTING MILK RECORDING AND DAIRY HERD MANAGEMENT SERVICES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Valacta, the Quebec centre of expertise in dairy production, formerly known as Dairy Herd Analysis Service, has been assisting, since 1986, several developing regions to establish milk recording operations. The Canadian International Development Agency has been the major financial partner supporting these initiatives, acknowledging that recording performance of dairy animals is required to provide information for proper decision-making at the farm, but that “it can also serve as an important platform for economic and community development” (FAO, 1998).

Our activities involve education and training of farmers and field technicians, building laboratories for milk analysis and data processing centres, performing collaborative research with local universities, training academic staff and students at Valacta and McGill University, and strengthening the local dairy sectors.

Starting in 1987, in the southern state of Paraná, Brazil, our mission was to upgrade and restructure milk recording operations and to develop farm management services for dairy farmers (PARLPR), through partnerships with the Federal University of Paraná and the local breeders’ association. Outreach activities took us to the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina. More recently, Valacta and McGill University have been involved in the creation of PROGENE, the dairy herd management program of the Northeast region of Brazil, and collaborating in the design of the milk recording services for the state of Pará, northern Brazil.

In Argentina, in the province of Santa Fe, one of the country’s main milk producing region, we assisted ALECOL, the provincial milk recording agency, in the building of a centralized laboratory for milk analysis and a data processing center, and on the training of field professionals to ensure a proper use of the information produced by the service. We also participated in national workshops and forums and assisted the provinces of Entre-Rios and Córdoba on the development of similar services for their farmers.

In Paraguay, we are helping Fecoagro, the conglomerate of dairy coops, producing 80% of the national milk production, in monitoring the recently opened milk analysis lab and preparing a plan for data processing and the capacitation of the coops’ field staff.

Since 2009, Valacta and McGill have been asked to assist on the development of the dairy sector of two provinces of Ukraine, Lviv and Dnipro. This is a major project aimed to expand to other provinces of the Ukraine.

Critical issues faced have been ensuring long term partnership after phase out of the international external donor funding, sustainability of the implemented services, stability of the new highly qualified personnel, self-financing of the laboratorial services, knowledge transfer and proper translation or transliteration of documentation.

key words: dairy, milk recording, milk quality, developing countries