
Part 3. Recommendations from the Buffalo Workshop

1. Animal recording is a prerequisite for any serious effort to develop livestock production at farm, industry or national level.
2. Data collected through recording activities can be used for:
 - extension services (feeding requirements, reproductive patterns, health-care) at farm and industrial level;
 - estimation of breeding values, selection of bulls and bull mothers at farm level and national level;
 - planning improvement strategies for buffalo in the country once data have been entered into a national database.

Nine important recommendations resulting from the Buffalo Workshop are given below.

Farmers should be made aware of the benefits derived from recording activities. They should be told that when a milk recorder visits his farm for a monthly visit, they receive advice on breeding, feeding, management and health care of animals from the milk recorder. It should be explained to the farmers that no culling or selection decision should be taken without recording performance of individual animals.

In the situation where the majority are smallholders they see no advantage in receiving management information for individual animals as they know everything about their animals. One should think about providing data at village level to encourage farmers to see their performance in relation to other farmers in the village and improve their own performance adopting the good practises followed by the better performing farmers. It also helps in the culling decision.

Providing an incentive to smallholders in the form of free concentrates, vaccines and semen doses, is also a good means to promote the recording activity.

**At farmer
level**

At national level

- 1) Policy-makers should be made aware that no genetic, productivity or quality improvement can be pursued in any country or region without implementing milk recording. The government must provide financial support for implementation and maintenance of recording systems, at least in the early stages of implementation of recording systems. Financial support could also be obtained from international agencies and through international development programmes. Farmers could also be asked to pay for the recording and selection services after they see benefits of recording. In any case it is very difficult to convince farmers to pay for recording. If farmers form dairy cooperatives and such cooperatives are run at a profit then as shown by Indian experience, such cooperatives can support recording activities through the profit made from the milk business.
- 2) It is necessary to develop a low cost, simplified, low frequency recording system to cut down the recording costs. Some research trials can be carried out to evolve the required low cost recording systems.
- 3) Development of a good infrastructure for artificial insemination is a pre-requisite to any buffalo improvement programme. Developing an infrastructure to identify good bulls is one thing, but using identified bulls maximally in the base population is another thing. Dissemination of genetic material is possible only with a good artificial insemination infrastructure.
- 4) In the case where developing an infrastructure for milk recording and for artificial insemination is not feasible in any country, then a breeding programme could be organized within nucleus herds, where all tools of the genetic improvement could be applied. In this case, research institutions could be given the responsibility to implement the programme as they can offer scientific/technical expertise at all levels. It is recommended, however, that research institution's help must be sought to sensitise policy-makers on the need to initiate a recording and genetic improvement programme in the country.
- 5) The "national-scale" nature of the breeding programme should be emphasised to ensure sufficient data for accurate genetic evaluation and consequent genetic progress.
- 6) There could be a possible role for ICAR, FAO, the Working Group on Buffalo Recording, the Buffalo newsletter and the Task Force for a Developing Fund to support ICAR member organizations to establish and maintain their own breeding programme.
- 7) Coordination and close cooperation among various recording organizations within the country is essential to ensure uniformity and optimum utilisation of scarce local resources.
- 8) Exchange of experiences among buffalo recording organizations of different countries is also essential.