Increasing livestock productivity in mixed crop-livestock systems in South Asia
Abstract

Small-scale mixed crop-livestock system (MCLS) is a common, and indeed dominant form of production system in South Asia. Currently, the system is in different stages of evolution, in terms of commercialization (degree of integration with markets), species reared and adoption of available technologies. Agro-climatic, technological and socio-economic factors drive these changes. The demand for livestock products in South Asian countries has been growing, and the trend is unlikely to change in the near future, as the factors underlying the growth will continue to strengthen. Most of the future demand for livestock products will have to be met from production, by millions of smallholders in the system. Unlike in the past, when most of the increase in livestock outputs was driven by an increase in animal numbers, in the future, owing to increasing pressure on land and other resources, an increase in productivity should contribute a larger share to output growth. Low productivity of livestock in MCLS reflects the non-adoption of available technologies or their uptake has not been sustainable, because they were introduced without a proper understanding of the great diversity and complexity of the system.

To better understand the nature of small-scale mixed farming systems in South Asia, a crop-livestock system typology has been constructed for select countries, to delineate the regions of each country into homogenous crop-livestock zones/systems, that have similar agro-climatic and socio-economic constraints. Such delineation will help better target development initiatives, and existing and future technologies.

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