Milking and milk consumption habits and practices among smallholder producers in Bihar, India

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Introduction

Milk consumption habits and practices of smallholder dairy producers in Bihar, India, are not well understood. As they get direct access to farm fresh milk, their consumption habits may be different from general consumers, who buy milk from market. This may either be positively or negatively correlated with the risk of food-borne zoonoses. Therefore we conducted a study to understand the milk consumption habits and practices of smallholder producers.

Methods

- Cross-sectional survey of 3 districts of Bihar, India in autumn 2015.
- In each district, 1 rural and 1 urban block was selected.
- From each block, 38-44 households: in total, 292 HH.
- All selected HH interviewed using a structured questionnaire
- Evaluated by using descriptive statistics.

Findings and interpretations

- Average milk production 9.1 L/HH; 3.6 L consumed and 15.5 L sold. Most HH both consume (99.3%) and sell their (87%) milk.
- <1% consume pasteurised milk.
- Milk mostly boiled before consumption (98% of producers)
- Many consume raw milk (15.1%) and raw milk products (38.0%)
- Only 5.8% producers aware of brucellosis, leptospirosis and Q-fever
- <2.0% farmers knew these could be transmitted to human.

Most sell (64.0%) or consume (62.3%) milk from animals that are diseased or under treatment. Only 16.8% producers reported that milk obtained from sick animals were discarded or offered to dogs/calves.

Poor knowledge about food-borne pathogens might be one of the reasons behind consumption of raw milk or milk products. In conclusion, there is a need to further characterize the risks with milk-borne diseases in Bihar.

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