

Milking the data: Measuring Household Milk Production in Extensive Livestock Systems. Experimental Evidence from Niger

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Milk production data are difficult to collect in household surveys because: Milk can be produced daily, but with seasonal patterns; Milk varies depending on the lactation stage; It can be fed to calves; Productive/lactating animals may be present but not necessarily being milked. For these reasons, the quantification and valuation of milk production is particularly difficult in household surveys, introducing possibly severe biases in the computation of full household incomes and farm sales, as well as in the estimation of the contribution of livestock (specifically dairy) production to agricultural value added and to the livelihoods of rural households. This paper presents results from a validation exercise implemented in Niger, where alternative survey instruments based on recall methods were administered to randomly selected households, and compared to a 12-month system of physical monitoring and recording of milk production. The paper discusses the results of the validation exercise, implications for survey design and fieldwork implementation, as well as for the analysis of the resulting datasets. Implications for future survey design are drawn and recommendations presented.

Key Words: Questionnaire design; Livestock; Dairy; Living Standard Surveys