A description of the educational services available to dairy farmers in the north coast of Honduras

Elena María Toro, University of Florida
Nick T. Place, University of Florida

Introduction

The dairy industry in Honduras produced 585 million liters of milk during the year 2000 (Compendio Estadístico Agropecuario, 2000). Milk production is the third most important commodity in the country. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística of Honduras, there are approximately 85,000 dual-purpose operations in the country. A recent study conducted in the north coast of Honduras exposed the type and quality of services available to dairy farmers.

Method

Using photos and primary data from a study conducted during the summer of 2003 the objective of the poster is to: 1. Describe educational services available to dairy farmers in the north coast of Honduras. 2. Portray farmer’s perceptions about current services available 3. Illustrate farmer’s perceptions of services needed in order to improve milk production.

Points of Information

- Milk production is a very important economic activity in the north coast of Honduras.

- Educational services are limited and scarce. The national extension service lead by DICTA does not offer programs on a regular basis for farmers. Farmer associations act as facilitators and sponsor programs offered by input suppliers and agricultural universities. Farmer associations do not have trained personnel to follow up training provided by other organizations. The quality of these services is extremely variable.

- The number of trained professionals limits veterinary and consulting services throughout the country.

- Most input suppliers lack personnel with the technical expertise to offer quality services. Ironically, they are an important source of information for less educated farmers.

Lessons learned

The need for educational and input supply services is imperative. Service suppliers need to assess client needs and select appropriate methods to serve their customers adequately. There is need to train salesmen, farm workers and farmers. Additional services, such as feed and forage analysis labs, need to be brought into the country. In addition to this, the extension organization must seek for opportunities to improve existing programs in order to become an important educational service provider for commercial dairy farmers.

Educational Importance

Identifying services that farmers perceive as important to improve production is a priority in this crucial time for the dairy industry of Honduras. Farmer’s ability to become competitive is limited by the type and quality of services available to them. All farmers do not see the existing gaps in existing services; however, all farmers feel their consequences.