



Beyond food safety: Socio-economic effects of training informal dairy vendors in Kenya



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ABSTRACT

The informal dairy sector in Kenya contributes to nutrition security, health and livelihoods. Concerns over milk safety have seen the sector delegitimized. Strategies, such as training, that build capacity of those operating in the sector can deliver on multiple development outcomes. We conducted focus group discussions with trained and untrained dairy vendors in two locations in Kenya to understand the incentives and challenges to operating in the informal dairy sector and the perceived benefits and socio-economics effects of training. A survey and milk testing of informal dairy vendors was done to assess milk safety and handling practices and its relation to training. We provide recommendations on how to maximize the potential of capacity building activities in the informal sector to achieve improved health and livelihoods.

1. Introduction

Kenya has one of the highest levels of milk production and consumption in Africa. In 2016, Kenya produced 4 million tonnes of milk (FAOSTAT, 2018), of which the highest amount was produced by smallholder farmers. This feeds a population of about 46 million people (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009; WHO, 2015), who consume between 50 and 150 litres of milk per capita per year (Bosire et al., 2017), depending on location and socio-economic class. Consumption is not homogeneous, and low-income communities are reported to be drinking well below recommended levels (Dominguez-Salas et al., 2016; Schneider, 2018) even though in Kenya milk is in general a price-inelastic food product, meaning that households are likely to buy it even when prices go up (Schneider, 2018; Cornelsen et al., 2018). The dairy sector fulfils many important roles: milk and dairy products are a rich source of essential nutrients (e.g. protein, calcium, vitamin B12 and riboflavin), especially for young children and pregnant women and is one of the most affordable nutritious products. Moreover dairy value chains are a primary source of livelihoods for rural populations and women in particular. In East Africa, milk is one of the few resources that is usually under the control of women, both as a food product for the family and a source of earnings from its sales. This is central to the link between dairy production, consumption and nutrition, because women are also generally in charge of household nutrition, are the main

preserves of food cultures, and some studies have suggested they tend to prioritize expenditures in high-quality and high-nutrition foods more than their male counterparts (Rogers, 1996; Smith et al., 2003; UNICEF, 2011).

Most of the milk produced in Kenya is commercialized by the so-called informal dairy markets (Box 1). These are dairy supply chains where, commonly, traditional processing, products and retail practices predominate; infrastructure including water, electricity, sanitation and refrigeration is limited; food escapes effective health and safety regulation; some operators are not licensed nor pay taxes; and little support is provided from the public sector (Grace, 2015). Yet, in the past decades, the informal dairy sector sold 86% of the milk consumed in the country, generated 70 per cent of the 40,000 jobs in dairy marketing and processing, and supported nearly a million people (Leksmono et al., 2006; A. Omore et al., 2004). More recent estimates are not available, but discussions with dairy stakeholders indicate that these estimates are likely to remain relevant these days (Kenya Dairy Traders Association and Kenya Dairy Board, personal communication). Informal outlets are also much more common and widely distributed than formal sector alternatives, meaning they play a key role in helping meet the nutrition needs of many households.

Despite the important contribution of the informal dairy sector to livelihoods and household nutrition security, the attempts of developing countries to adjust to international policies on food safety has

Abbreviations: TC, Training and certification; FGD, Focus group discussions; KDB, Kenya Dairy board; SDP, Smallholder Dairy project

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Box 1

Key definitions.

Informal dairy sector. Dairy value chains that commercialize not-industrially processed dairy products, including raw, boiled and traditionally pasteurized milk and milk-derived products. It includes both legally licensed and unlicensed businesses. **Formal dairy sector.** Dairy value chains that commercialize industrially processed and packed dairy products. Packaging and branding are key features of the formal sector food products. It includes only legally registered businesses. **Informal sector dairy vendors.** Businesses in the informal sector selling milk or dairy products directly to consumers. This includes milk-bars (selling only milk, dairy products and eggs), corner-shops (selling milk in addition to other products, having a fix premise), street vendors (operating on the side of the road with no fix-premise) and mobile vendors (selling milk in different locations, including door-to-door, typically moving with a bicycle or motorbike).

increasingly seen governments developing and implementing policies that criminalize and try to repress the informal sector. For example, Uganda banned raw milk commercialization in 2014. Kenya launched in 2015 a campaign to promote the consumption of “processed (pasteurized), packaged milk” in their attempts to promote formalization of the national dairy sector. However, despite increased efforts to develop formal processing of milk, small-scale informal dairy markets continue to dominate the dairy sector in the region (Baker et al., 2013). Experiences and research in low and middle-income countries (Brown and McGranahan, 2016; Lindahl et al., 2017; Smallholder Dairy Project (SDP), 2004) show the importance of embracing and supporting the informal sector in order to meet the demand for dairy products in these countries and support the many actors whose livelihoods depend on this sector. Strategies that aim to engage and build capacity of operators in the sector can deliver better food, safer food and help legitimize value chain actors that would otherwise remain outside food safety regulatory frameworks (Blackmore et al., 2015). One example is the Training and Certification (TC) scheme led by the Kenya Dairy Board (KDB, regulator of the milk sector) in the early 2000s to engage small-scale milk vendors in the informal sector through training and certification (Box 2). Studies have shown country wide economic benefits derived from changes in policy resulting in lower transaction costs (Kaitibie et al., 2008). Short term assessments and anecdotal evidence showed improvements in milk quality and business profits for traders participating in the scheme (A.O. Omoro et al., 2000). Similar initiatives that contribute to increased capacity of those operating food businesses have been shown to also improve food safety (Soon et al., 2012). Less evaluated are the broader societal benefits that capacity building activities targeting food value chain actors can bring to food business operators and their communities. These benefits may include increased access to food (food security), healthier food products in the markets (food safety), and improved incomes (livelihoods).

This study aimed at investigating the medium- and long-term effects of this TC and of similar food safety capacity building initiatives in the informal sector in Kenya on the safety of milk and on the handling

practices of milk vendors, as well as the broader social and economic benefits the initiatives bring, as perceived by the participants. Conducting a rigorous impact assessment was outside the scope and capacity of this study, which was designed as an exploratory study. The study also explored the perceptions of traders regarding those capacity building activities and how they could be improved to achieve long-term sustainable impact. Finally, the study provides recommendations on how such initiatives can be improved to maximize their effects and make them more inclusive, sustainable and scalable.

2. Methods*2.1. Focus groups discussions*

We conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) with traders selling milk to consumers in the informal sector (i.e. selling unpackaged dairy products) in two urban areas in Kenya: Kisumu and Eldoret. In each location, 4 FGDs were completed, disaggregated by gender and whether participants had received any dairy-specific training (e.g. milk hygiene, milk safety, value addition). Number of participants ranged from 5 to 8 in the male groups and from 3 to 7 in the female groups. Participants included operators of milk-bars, corner shops, street and mobile vendors and producers, all of them selling milk directly to consumers. The FGDs followed a structured guide that explored the following aspects: reasons for engaging in the informal dairy sector, challenges faced, benefits derived from training and constraints to participation and ideas on how to improve the informal sector. A list of traders in both locations was generated in consultation with local extension agents and the KDB local offices. Randomly selected traders from those lists were then contacted and invited to participate. As only a few trained traders were identified through this process, further individuals were identified in consultation with business development service providers and through snow-ball sampling. Informed-consent was obtained from all participants on the day of the meeting. Ethics approval was obtained from ILRI's Institutional Research Ethics Committee (reference number ILRI-

Box 2

Training and Certification scheme – brief description of the project.

The Training and Certification (TC) scheme is an approach to professionalizing the informal sector developed under the Smallholder Dairy Project (1997–2005) in Kenya, as a way of supporting smallholder market access, safeguarding the supply of affordable nutritious food to the poor; and improving milk safety. It was designed as a mechanism to progressively upgrade the milk handling and hygiene practices of those operating in the dairy informal sector and at the same time help support their livelihoods and their legitimization in front of authorities. Traders that engaged in the TC received– against payment of a fee – training on milk quality and hygiene and business skills, provided by KDB-trained Business Development Service providers (private extension service providers). Upon completion of the training, participants received a certificate that facilitated access to a dairy license from the KDB. The development of the TC was led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (former Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development) in Kenya, in collaboration with the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute and ILRI. The TC was piloted with the support of a local NGO (SITE Enterprise Promotion) between 2006 and 2008 in two locations in Kenya, and then left to scale-up without active external support. It is unclear how active the TC has been since its launch and, if active, whether its characteristics have evolved from its original design. It is proposed as a model for improving food safety where developed country approaches based on regulation do not work, having potential to achieve impact at scale. The model has been extended to India and Tanzania.

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