

Milk production in the country meets only 20% of domestic milk consumption. At present, all raw milk produced is processed to be ready to drink (RTD) milk. Total RTD milk production of the country in 1988 was 141,000 tons or 386 tons daily.

Potential for Thailand's Dairy Industry

Due to the continued support from the government and the increasing acceptance by investors, dairy farming has spread rapidly into many new regions of Thailand including the north, the south and the northeast.

It has great potential for success if expansion in the drier regions like the northeast are located close to dams and water availability for stock and irrigation. The north also has potential for further expansion in the region of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai because of the growing market of Chiang Mai, Thailand's second largest city.

There has been an increase in private sector investment due to the profitability of dairy farming and the booming national economy of Thailand. Opportunities exist to improve the standards, the quantity and quality of dairy products due to the availability of capital from the private sector.

There is potential for more economic milk production if the dairy farmer bases his feeding programme on the establishment and proper management of improved pastures. This would reduce the current reliance on expensive meal concentrate for milk production, reducing the largest component of the dairy production costs. This can only be achieved through better management of high-quality, leafy pasture.

Constraints

1. The relatively high rainfall and temperature of the tropics can produce a high quantity of forage grown per unit area for livestock, but the major problem is feed quality. Tropical pastures are generally low in quality, relative to temperate pastures, which can adversely affect forage intake and animal production. Efficient pasture management is essential to ensure that the forage is controlled to maximize the quantity of green, leafy pasture.
2. Another factor causing problems is infertility and low conception rates in the cattle. This contributes to the additional insemination costs, but more importantly, delayed calving means loss of milk and loss of income.
3. The Thai dairy industry farmers are in need of education and management expertise in all areas of soil, plant, animal and financial management related to dairy production and the integration of all these factors into a successful farm management system.