

ABSTRACT

The Jamaican Beef and Dairy Industries : Their Spatial and Structural Organization, Linkages, Problems and Prospects for Development

Rohan Othneil Kirk-patrick Campbell

Over the last 30 years there have been marked spatial and structural changes within the Jamaican beef and dairy industries, which have failed to engender the sustained growth and development of both industries. In fact, both industries have been characterized by fluctuating output trends in recent years and only minimal long term growth. As a result, there has been a reduction in the national level of self-sufficiency within both industries. After peaking at 86% and 36% in 1992 and 1980 respectively, the Jamaican beef and dairy industries were only 62% and 25% self-sufficient in 1996. This worsening situation came about even though the local milk output expanded by 45% between 1978 and 1996, while the beef output grew by 20% between 1968 and 1996. Thus, the gap between local output and the increased demand has been increasingly filled by imported beef and dairy products - imports of beef products soared by 170% between 1968 and 1996.

In order to assess the lacklustre performance of the Jamaican dairy industry, 25 medium-sized dairy farming operations were sampled in a selected study area in the parish of Clarendon. In addition, one large dairy farm and 34 surrounding small dairy farms were sampled in the parish of St. Thomas. For the beef industry, 38 small farms in Westmoreland, 12 large farms in St. Elizabeth plus 28 small and seven large farms in St. Ann (85 in all) were sampled. Generally, the problems identified and the recommendations made by the sampled farmers were quite similar to those of the experts. The main problems for both industries were the inadequacies of government as was manifested in macroeconomic instability, inadequate trade policy and the diminution of institutional, technical and support services, private sector greed, inefficient farm operations and landlessness especially for the smaller farmers. In addition, the alleviatory measures which were recommended by the farmers and experts have been presented and analyzed.

The study revealed that the government, private sector and the farmers all contributed in different ways to the demise of both the Jamaican beef and dairy industries and so they all have shared responsibility and each has a specific role to play in engendering the sustained development of both industries in the future. There is a justified place for both industries in the Jamaican economic mix during the fast approaching 21st Century as their full potential has not heretofore been realized. This can be achieved with a new unified vision and collaborative action by all the players involved in both industries.