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PURCHASING PATTERNS LOWLANDS OF LESOTHO

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Abstract

1. Introduction

Food purchase patterns and preferences are key factors in determining new production and marketing of agricultural commodities. The divisions of Agricultural Research, Livestock and Animal Husbandry are involved in providing detailed recommendations to individuals wishing to develop milk and poultry production enterprises. Some types of small scale animal production will likely require transport of animal products to processing and marketing centres for slaughter and sale, examples being lamb and mutton or swine production. In these cases the products will be transported infrequently and thus efficiently to the processing centres. For other products, such as milk and poultry, which are produced more often and for small scale production, transportation costs from the rural area to population centres can represent an excessively large share of total production costs. For this reason production of milk and poultry is more profitable if the animal products can be sold locally.

The problem with localized marketing of agricultural products is that these markets can saturate the demands of the low population levels. This results in difficulties of either as unsold product which spoils, depressed prices in the case of broiler chicken, longer maintenance of animals, higher feeding costs.

The purpose of this survey was to obtain some baseline information on milk and poultry consumption by rural populations.

2. Survey methods and area description

An area surrounding the village of Ha Nchela was chosen for survey as it was targeted for development of intensive production. This area is classified as lowlands. Ha

Table 1. Summary of Average Milk Purchases

	Amount (Litres)	Price (M)	Monthly Households Total Population
All Milk	4.50	7.1	
Fresh Milk	1.03	1.1	
Long Life	2.96	5.5	
Pasteurized Fresh	0.10	0.1	
Other Liquid Milk*	0.41	0.4	

* Mostly sour milk

2.2 Expenses

School fees averaged per month at M 16.82, most households spending less than M 5.00 per month. This compares to M 7.59 for inflated Bureau of Statistics (1987) figures. Monthly spending on food and fuel amounted to an average of M 86.05, with most spending M 50.00 or less. Expenditures at this low level leaves little to be used for purchasing milk. Total household expenditures were M 126.79 per month. This is significantly lower than the inflated figure from Bureau of Statistics (1987), M 240.

3. Results - Milk purchasing patterns

Approximately half the households said they purchased milk on a regular basis. Of those which did not purchase milk regularly, 13 per cent already owned cows, 11 per cent thought milk was too expensive, 7.7 per cent did not want it, 1.9 per cent said it was unavailable, and the rest gave no reason.

Total expenditures on milk per month per household averaged M 7.18 among all households, the milk-purchasing households spent M 13.95 per month, see Table 1. This indicates that those households which buy milk spend a sizable amount of their food and fuel budget on milk.

3.1 Fresh milk

Purchase of fresh unpasteurized milk purchases averaged 1 litre per month per household across the population. Those that purchased fresh milk bought 7.3 litres per month per household, giving an average expenditure of M 8.03 per month. Half of the buyers of fresh milk purchased 5 litres per week. These people constituted 14 per cent of the population. Average price for fresh milk was M 1.10 per litre.

3.2 Long life milk

Monthly purchases of long life U.H.T. (Ultra High Temperature) milk averaged 3 litres per household in the sampling area spending an average of M 5.50. Purchasers of this milk bought 9.1 litres per month per household, giving an average expenditure of M 16.77 per month. Half of the purchasers of long life milk bought 5 litres or less per week. These people constituted 32.7 per cent of the population. Long life milk was the highest priced of the four liquid milk types surveyed.

3.3 Fresh pasteurized and other types of milk

Only 2.5 per cent of the population bought pasteurized milk. These households bought an average of 4 litres per month. In the category of "Other Milk", monthly household purchases were 0.4 litres. Most of this milk was "Mafi" or sour milk. Only 5.6 per cent of the population, indicated they purchased

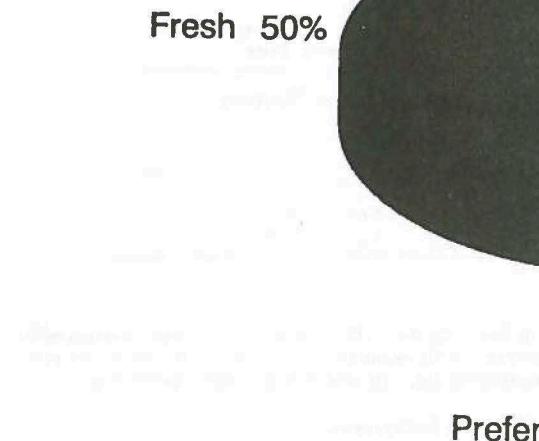


Figure 1: Preferred type of milk indicated by respondents

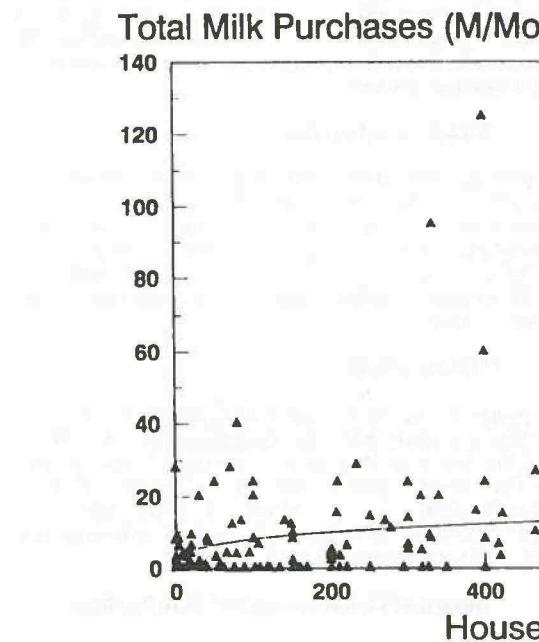


Figure 2: Relationship between total household purchases of milk and household size

4. Results - Poultry purchasing patterns

Broiler chickens were regularly purchased by only 37 per cent of the households. The reasons cited by most people who did not regularly buy chicken were "they already owned chickens" 40 per cent, or that they felt chickens were "too expensive" 14 per cent. This latter reason is expected since the purchase of one chicken equates to an eighth of the average monthly income and fuel budget. Less than one percent did not purchase chicken because of a lack of availability. Total expenditures on chicken per household were M 9.37 per month, see Table 2. Of the chicken-buying households, expenditures were M 28.7 per month.

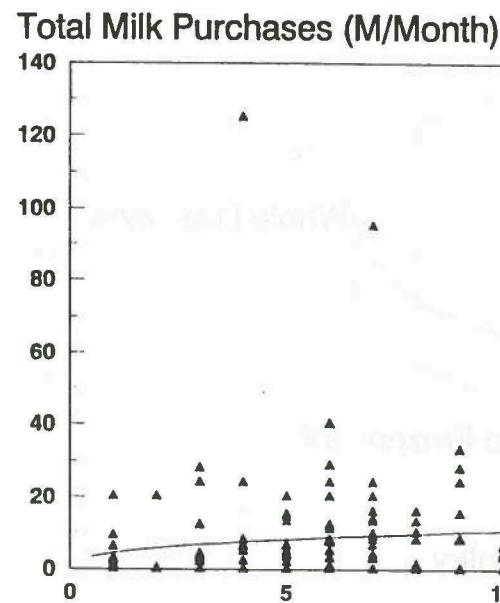


Figure 3: Relationship between household size and total milk purchases

Table 2: Summary of Average Poultry Purchases

Type of Chicken	Amount (Units)	Purchased (Maloti)	Monthly Household Population
All Chicken	N/A	9.37	
Whole Live	0.66	6.45	
Whole Frozen	0.22	1.95	
Breast or Leg Parts	0.32	1.04	
Head or Feet	0.00	N/A	

4.3 Chicken breast, leg, thigh and other parts

Average purchases of the breast, leg and thigh (BLT) parts were 0.32 packets per household per month. The purchasers of BLT parts bought an average of 5 BLT packets per month. The size of the packets of BLT parts varies considerably and they are sold based on weight. No one in the survey indicated they purchased the head, feet or offal. Although these parts are available in the local cafe's they apparently are purchased by a relatively small segment of the population.

4.4 Poultry Preferences

There was a clear preference for the purchase of live chickens, see Figure 4. Respondents preferred live to frozen six to one and preferred live to BLT parts 75 to 1. This preference does not match closely with the buying patterns which are two or three to one in favour of live chickens. It suggests that new local sources of live chickens would compete strongly against the current supply of frozen chickens and parts.

4.5 Broiler Points of Purchase

One of the tasks of this survey was to determine the amount of poultry which was being imported to the survey area and the amount which was locally produced. To accomplish this villagers were asked where they purchased poultry and where the poultry seller got the chickens. Across all types of poultry, live,

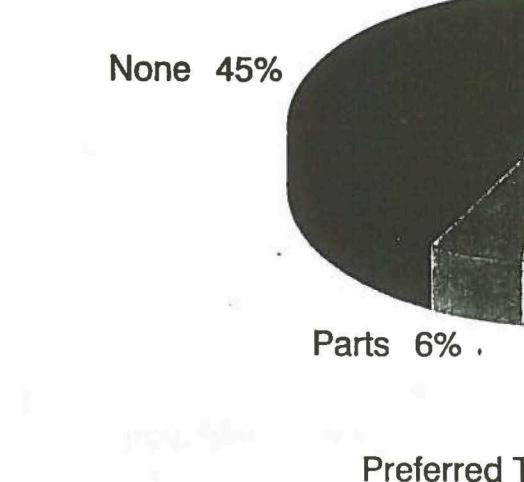


Figure 4: Preferred type of poultry indicated by households

Total Poultry Purchases (M/M)

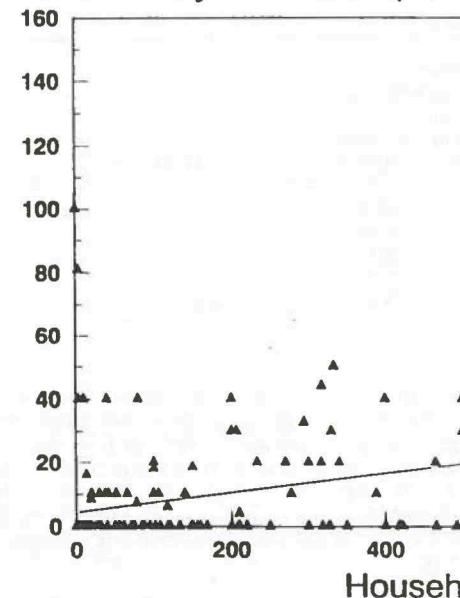


Figure 5: Relationship between total household purchases of poultry and total household income

4.8 Household Characteristics and Poultry Purchases

Relating the total purchases of poultry to the household income shows an imprecise but expected increase in purchases as the income increases, see Figure 5. If households which do not purchase any poultry, because of their production were removed, the relationship would be even more evident. Poultry purchases appeared to be more income than milk purchases. Household per capita income, surprisedly, salary income correlated less than total household income. This suggests that income from the non-salaried sources (sale of beer, crafts, and business) included in total income preferentially spent on poultry.

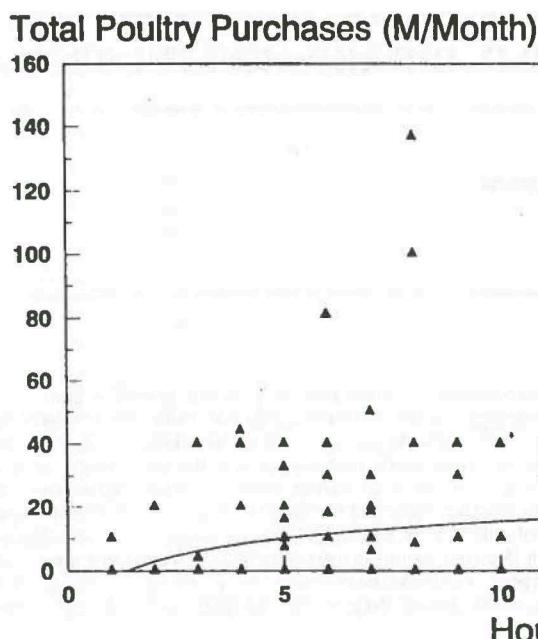


Figure 6: Relationship between household size and total poultry purchases

Note

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