

Trends in Malawian Smallholder Dairy Farming



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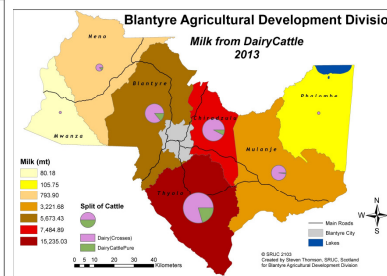
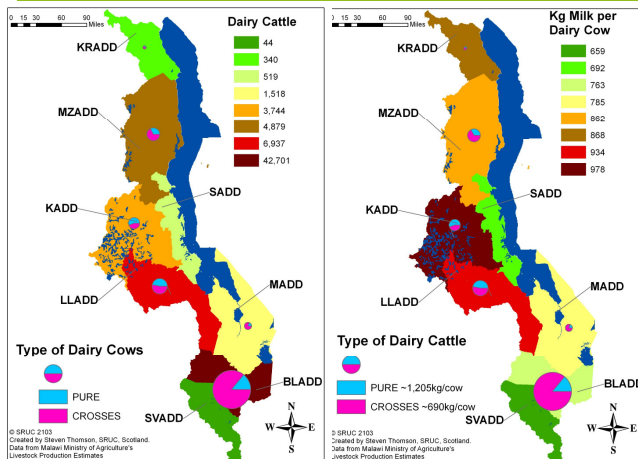
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Introduction

There has been considerable interest and growth in smallholder dairy farming in Malawi in recent times. There is, however, significant difference in the relative importance of smallholder dairy farming across Malawi's eight Agricultural Development Divisions, with Blantyre (BLADD), Lilongwe (LADD), Kasungu (KADD) and Mzuzu (MZADD) being most important.

The Malawi Department of Agriculture's *Livestock Production Estimates* provided us with secondary data that helps to highlight the very regional dimension of dairy farming within Malawi and developments since 2008/09.

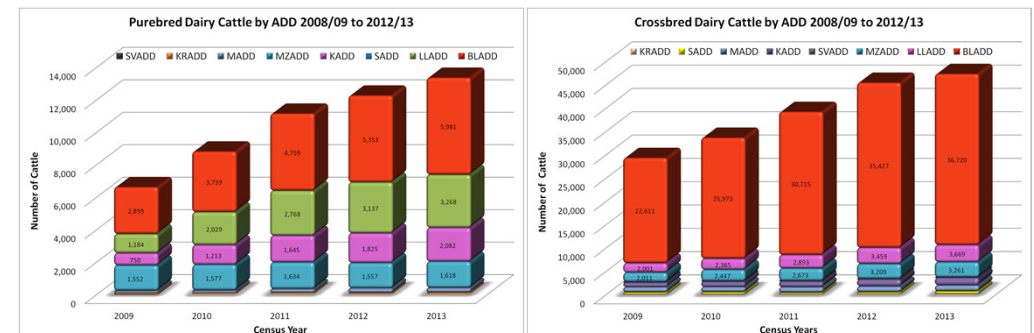
Findings



BLADD is the most important dairy region accounting for 68% of Malawi's dairy cattle in 2013. Within BLADD the districts of Thyolo and Chiadzulu are strategically important, collectively accounting for 47% of Malawi's dairy cattle. LLADD is the second most important region having grown in importance between 2008/09 and 2013 (from 8.4% to 11% of the national herd) whilst MZADD has fallen to the third most important region (from 9.4% to 7.8%).

Average milk yields are lower in BLADD compared, in particular to KADD and LADD but this is simply a reflection of the relative proportion of purebred to crossbred dairy cattle present, and reflects Aid programme investments within the central region focusing on purebred animals.

Findings (continued)



Between 2008/09 and 2012/13 Malawi's dairy herd grew by over 65%. This remarkable growth has been achieved through (a) the donation of animals through, and support for breeding centers by, international Aid Programmes, and (b) through natural breeding cycles and the retention of heifers (and growth in dairy farmers through "pass-on" initiatives).

The 78% growth in purebred dairy cattle (Friesians, Holsteins and Jerseys) across the country was heavily influenced by the change in BLADD (106%) but more so by the regions covered by the Central Region Milk Producers Association, namely LLADD (176%) and KADD (177%). The crossbred dairy herd also continued to rise rapidly (57% over the period), again most notably in LLADD (83%) and KADD (68%) with BLADD and MZADD both having 57% growth.



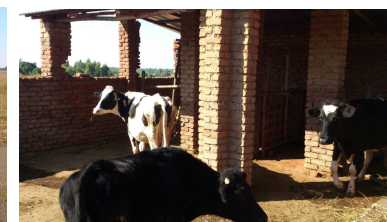
Rollins Chitika and Mizeck Chagunda discuss the merits of crossbreeding native Zebu cattle with Holsteins with a farmer at World Milk Day, Blantyre 1st June 2013. (Photo: S. Thomson)



Illustration of differences in semen prices to farmers for locally produced semen and imported semen (June 2013) advertised in MBGs by Shire Highlands Milk Producers Association. (Photo: S. Thomson)



Farmer transporting feed by bicycle near Thuchira MBG.



Dairy cattle housed in 'up-market' khola at Chisomo MBG. Photos: S Thomson



Heifers grazing at Thuchila dairy breeding centre. (which is closing).

Acknowledgements

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