

ABSTRACT

The dairy sector in Rwanda plays a key role in improving nutrition and generating income mostly for rural households. Despite the Rwandan 1994 genocide that left around 80% of dairy cows decimated, the dairy sector has experienced significant growth in the past two decades through government, development organisations, and donor programs, and through the nascent vibrant public-private partnership. In this paper, we reviewed and documented the evolution of the dairy policies, programs, and regulations in Rwanda and how they have contributed to the development of the dairy sector. The policy change has impacted the provision and use of inputs and services that have shaped the sector's milk production and productivity, milk quality, and demand. The results suggest that various policy- and program-level interventions have positively contributed to the growth of the dairy sector and improved the livelihoods of low-income households. This has been achieved through increased access to inputs and services, enhanced capacities of the public and private sector to deliver services, strengthened dairy cooperatives' governance, and increased value proposition to members of various farmer groups and promotion of milk consumption. We find that some of the implemented policies and programs, such as the "Girinka" (one cow per poor family) program, Rwanda Dairy Competitiveness Program II, and Rwanda Dairy Development Project, have resulted in improved farmer access to improved cow breeds and improved milk quality and cow productivity through enhanced health inputs and other services. While the dairy policies, programs, and regulations in Rwanda have paved the way for the development of the dairy sector and contributed to the provision and use of inputs and services, there are still challenges that need to be addressed. Accessibility and use of veterinary and artificial insemination services are limited by the quality of veterinary products, while the inadequate quality of feeds leads to low productivity of improved cow breeds. Consequently, farmers' uptake and use of inputs and services can be enhanced through a strengthened capacity of milk collection centres and health and animal feed policies that guide and control the quality of veterinary products and feeds sold in the markets.

Keywords: Rwanda; dairy; inputs; policies; regulations; services.