



Australian and Brazilian sub-tropical dairy industries, where farmers will last longer?

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture does not have the same role and may differ even in the same historical period for different industries among countries or regions. The stages of agricultural evolution can be divided into: a) subsistence, b) commercial agriculture for internal consumption, and c) commercial agriculture for exports. Australian and Brazilian dairy regions are pasture based production systems, but different groups of farmers have different strategies to stay in business.

The objective of this paper was to discuss about differences, particularly Brazilian small dairy farmers and Australian sub-tropical specialized dairy farmers aiming to increase their 1,000 or more liters per day. Three regions were studied: one in northern New South Wales Australia and two in south of Brazil. The methodology used was data collection, “stay on a farm” and semi-structured interviews. These three regions have majority of cows producing 16 to 19 liters per day.

The Australian dairy has been established longer than the Brazilian regions, which were originally soybean, corn and wheat. It was found clear differences: in average, Australian farms had about 200 cows and producing 2,800 liters per day, while the Brazilian farms had 33 cows, producing 520 liters per day. However, it was observed that Australian farmers were more “scared” to leave the industry than Brazilians.

Due to more diversified, in the Brazilian small farms, with activities such as soybean, corn and pork, farm management became a key issue. However, by producing almost all the food the family need, they were able to minimize house expenses. The Australian farmers rely almost entirely on the scale of milk production to buy there day-by-day needs, even food; returns from dairy is re-invested in the activity and nothing else is produced in the farm. Where farmers will last longer depends on issues other than such as industry police.

Key words: farming strategies; size; small farm; specialization; diversification.

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