PART C - THE VILLAGE LAITIER PROJECT

Part B titled ‘The Village Laitier and Other Production Systems / Models’ (02.09.05) contained the presumed objectives and a brief conceptualisation of the project idea.

This paper will attempt to consolidate the concept, with a better definition of the objectives and some immediate, implementable measures / actions targeted at existing production structures / units with the overall objective of maintaining the ‘acquis’ in the milk sector as far as possible, while preparing the way to a transition of these towards the ‘Village Laitier’ or other dairy development models / projects.

The objectives of the ‘Village Laitier’ project would be:

(i) to increase fresh milk production and ensure its effective integration with the manufacturing / processing sector;

(ii) to enhance employment opportunities through an increasingly diversifying agro-industrial sector and optimization of land use;

(iii) to serve as a pilot project demonstrative of:

(a) production facilities transitioning towards sustainable (profitable and environment-friendly) and scaled-up agri-business systems that may be replicated;

(b) organized and coherent delivery of State services concomitant with a collective, cooperative and responsible participation and improved farm management practices of breeders.

We are faced with the 4 strategic choices as listed in Paper A (Dairy Chain Strategy for Mauritius, p.7)
(a) **Traditional system-level intervention**

This has involved alternatives (a) and (d) (with slight alterations in objectives), tried over many years without any significant progress. One amongst the many major constraints (see SWOT in Part A) is **spatial / land limitation**, given that most of the traditional sector is being operated in the backyard, residential areas which simply do not allow for any expansion, notwithstanding all the other stumbling blocks.

Yet, as mentioned, for economic and socio-political, even cultural necessity, the **traditional sector cannot just be ignored**.

Hence the need for a **support package** for this sector, to consist of the following (most of these already existent - may need reorganization): **training; tailored incentives** (inciting expansion and professionalisation); optimization of technical and institutional backup; Vet (AI Services); R & D and Extension (AREU); quality aspects (Dairy Chem), physical / feed and breeding stock inputs (APD); and incentives for private land owners to positively consider dairy or related activities such as fodder production, etc.

(b) **Strategic Choices (b) & (c) (Paper A)**

These become significant in any future plan of an **ambitious dairy supply chain for Mauritius**, with (b) constituting a **quick starting-point / nucleus** of one variant of the ‘Village Laitier’ project that could be immediately initiated.
Improving and expanding existing (emerging) ‘modern’ forms of production

Under this category would fall two Livestock Cooperatives that we have interacted with so far, that hold great potential for further development if some constraints (weaknesses are removed), other target groups will continue to be investigated for similar development.

(i) The Northern Livestock Cooperative Society

This Society includes 12 cowkeepers in the regions of Triolet and Morcellement St. André, with average herd-size exceeding 10 animals per unit. Although the generic SWOT analysis of Part A applies here, the crucial elements for this Crop Society are the following:

(a) Strengths and opportunities briefly summarized as follows:

Experience of the sector; more professionalised system of production; the cohesion of the group acquired over the past 5/6 years of operation and the collective desire to continue and expand on a full-time basis.

(b) Weaknesses & Threats

Major constraint is limitation of the land space for the construction and expansion of their operations, and the threat that may disappear with the statu quo if the environmental norms are applied harshly.
The only land ‘closest’ to their residences that may be made available for continuation of the cooperative society dairy activities is SALAZIE. It is recommended that availability of extent of SALAZIE lands be determined and long-term leasing possibility considered to enable this Livestock Cooperative Society to become one of the several nucleus for start-up of the Village Laitier project.

Terms and conditions of lease should be reviewed to include the ‘Cahier des Charges” determining the environment under which the Society would have to operate.

(ii) The Nouvelle Decouverte Livestock Cooperative

This one started with 16 operators in 1999, and has about 10 active members now, with average land size also above ten heads per unit.

Their strengths are similar to those of the Northern Cooperative Society, in addition to the fact that they already hold about 70 Arpents of leased State-lands for their activities.

But they suffer from a host of weaknesses from the very start. (A detailed SWOT Analysis for this group is being undertaken following a site visit, which will be the basis for formulating an appropriate strategy and plan for making this society another focal point for dairy development in the form of the ‘Village Laitier’.

(c) Introducing new and modern systems to cohabit with traditional ones

& (d) Introducing capital and technology into the emerging systems at (b) and (c) (instead of the traditional systems) at such a rate that complete transformation into modern production systems is achieved.
These two strategies have now become crucial to achieve any significant level of dairy development in Mauritius.

It is here that external inputs from India and possibly France may be sought, in terms of designing the dairy business models appropriate to our context, derived from the integrated models existent mainly in India.

It is recommended that technical support from India, even including joint ventures with India dairy companies / Indian investment in our dairy sector be sought by Government of Mauritius. Such support and input will also be directed to strategic choice (d).

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