

Assessment of social and economic aspects of dairy farm sustainability in Australia and Canada

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Indicators of economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability for dairy farms have been developed using participatory approaches in Quebec, a province of Eastern Canada, in a multi-faceted research program. This paper reports on an element of this research in which the same or similar instruments were applied to a sample of dairy farmers in Queensland, Australia, with the aim of gaining new knowledge about (1) the social aspect of sustainable agriculture including entrepreneurship and (2) the linkages between the social and economic aspects of sustainability assessment. Economic indicators developed through a Delphi process in Quebec were found to be compatible with indicators from the Queensland Dairy Accounting Scheme (QDAS) in Australia. The French language survey exploring social aspects of sustainability in Quebec was translated into English and implemented successfully in Queensland. Preliminary results with descriptive statistics from both countries are presented and briefly discussed in terms of implications aims stated above. It is concluded that there is good evidence for links between human, social and economic aspects of sustainability at farm-level, and further that in dairy farm management there is a constant trade-off between different types of capital.