

## MILK PRODUCTION IN INDIA ( 1920-21 to 1959-60 )\*

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THERE is no direct estimate of milk production in our country. It has to be estimated on the basis of the number of breeding animals and the average yield per animal.<sup>1</sup>

The first task in estimating milk production is, therefore, to find the number of breeding animals. The basic source providing information in this regard is the Livestock Censuses. Some of the shortcomings of these data may be noted and an attempt may be made to improve upon the official estimates as far as possible. In the first place, the first census of livestock was held during the cold weather of 1919-20 and the second during the same period in 1924-25. But the period of enumeration, December to April, being too long, the results were probably vitiated to some extent by inter-provincial movements of cattle. The subsequent censuses were, therefore, held generally in January. But even these censuses were not held simultaneously in different Provinces and States. Sometimes a Province conducted its census one year earlier or later than the period of reference. It has not been possible to adjust the official data on this account. A second defect of the census data is their varying coverage leading to their incompleteness and non-comparability over time. We have tried here to trace the figures relating to non-reporting areas when they were reporting and have made necessary projections for these areas on the basis of these figures and the rate of growth in the rest of the country. In the third place, the census reports upto 1930 provide only data relating to cows and cow buffaloes excluding youngstock and do not give separate figures for breeding cows and cow buffaloes. We have made estimates of proportions of cows and cow buffaloes kept for breeding according to the censuses following 1930 and on the basis of these proportions as shown in table 1 it has been assumed that in the decade 1920-30 85 per cent of cow buffaloes and 80 per cent of cows were kept for breeding.

One encounters an even greater difficulty in estimating the number of milking goats. For the livestock censuses do not contain estimates regarding the number or percentage of goats kept for milk production

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<sup>1</sup> Yield rate may have different meanings. It may mean either average yield per animal in milk or per breeding animal, i.e., animal kept for breeding or milk production. Yield rate in the present study refers to breeding animals.