The acceptability of camel milk and milk products from north eastern province in some urban areas of Kenya

B. A. Akweya¹, C. G. Gitao²* and M. W. Okoth¹

¹Department of food science nutrition and technology, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya.
²Department of veterinary pathology and microbiology, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya.

Accepted 12 July 2010

A total of 138 households were interviewed on various aspects of camel milk and camel milk products using a single-visit multiple-subject diagnostic survey in Garisa, Wajir and Eastleigh the main urban centres with high camel milk consumption. 75% of the respondents generally take camel milk or milk products every day. Raw and sour milk are the most popular products. The most important purchasing criterion for raw camel milk was taste (19 and 18%) while packaging was more important for pasteurized milk (18, 18 and 16%) for Wajir, Garisa and Eastleigh respectively. For Yoghurt, the most important purchasing criteria were taste (18%) and aroma (19%). The taste of sour milk is the most important attribute in both Garisa (30%) and Eastleigh (24%). To enhance marketing of camel milk, the appropriate attributes demanded by customers needs to be seriously addressed. Promotion of camel milk and products to non-conventional consumers should be done in order to increase their consumption.

Key words: Acceptability, raw camel milk, yoghurt, sour.

INTRODUCTION

Camels (Camelus dromedarius) are multipurpose animals increasingly kept for milk and meat (Abdurahman, 2005). According to Muli et al. (2008), camel milk production in Kenya in 2007 was estimated to have stood at over 340 million litres. Only about 12% of the milk is marketed, the bulk of which is sold in raw form to rural consumers (10%) and only 2% reaches urban consumers. From the remaining milk (88%) that does not reach the market, 38% is directly used by camel keeping households and their herders as part of their food requirements and the remaining 50% (or 170 million litres) goes to waste representing a great opportunity for commercialization and enhanced incomes for communities in pastoral communities.

The milk is becoming popular due to its claimed therapeutic property (Rao et al., 1970; Yagil, 1982, 1985) which is attributed to the fact that camels browse on various plant species. The active agents with therapeutic properties from these plant species are secreted into the milk of camels (Muli et al., 2008). Camel milk is also of high nutritional value, with vitamin C, three times more than the cow’s milk, iron content ten times and B vitamins present in reasonable amounts (Barbour et al., 1985; Elagamy et al., 1992; Arrowal et al., 2005)

There is an increasing acceptability of camel milk among non-traditional camel keepers as sometimes the milk turns to be the only one available in arid lands during drought periods or as a result of the frequent extended dry periods. The milk in most market segment is generally consumed in raw form; either fresh or naturally fermented (Yagil, 1982; Alhadrami, 2003). The demand for camel milk by most consumers in urban areas is claimed to be driven by perceived superior quality compared to cow milk in both flavor and need for little milk: water ratio when making tea (Muli et al., 2008) as well as the acclaimed medicinal value. Urban dwellers are quite sensitive to what they consume and any food product especially milk is affected by a number of factors. Understanding of the acceptability of camel milk will help to process quality camel milk and camel milk products that will meet the demand of consumers. This will increase the volume of milk sold as well as diversify the...