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Strategies to increase beef cattle production and retain farmer participation in beef cattle farming in the Solomon Islands.

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A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Applied Science in Agricultural Systems and Management
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ABSTRACT

Beef cattle farming in the Solomon Islands is important, it provides meat for domestic consumption, creates employment for farmers, and is an alternative weed control method for coconut plantations.

Back in 1978, beef cattle numbers were at their highest level (around 25,184 head) and have declined to an estimate of 6,600 in 1996. An annual decline of 7-8% since 1990 led to a shortage in beef cattle production for the local market. This caused concern and led the Solomon Islands' government to consider revitalisation of the beef cattle industry.

This study provides insight into the declining cattle situation, and recommends strategies to improve the beef and to retain farmers participation.

In 1996, a survey was carried out amongst extension workers and beef cattle farmers, and semi-structured interviews of ten key informants from the Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces were conducted. The aim of this research was to obtain an insight in the constraints and problems with the revitalisation of the beef cattle industry.

Common themes were derived from the semi-structured interviews and a data analysis of the two survey questionnaires was carried out using the "SAS" statistical programme at Massey University. The statistical analysis method were descriptive, which included; frequency distributions, cross tabulations and calculations of correlation coefficients.

The study shows that lack of extension support for the cattle industry during the 1980s-1990s contributed to the decline of beef cattle numbers and less farmer participation in the cattle industry.
The Livestock Development Authority’s reduction of marketing and production services also contributed towards the decline of the Solomon Islands’ cattle industry. Furthermore, the lucrative prices from cashcrops encouraged farmers to go into crop farming and out of beef cattle farming during the 1990s.

Also, the study shows that farmers are still interested in cattle farming and they would like to see that institutional support services are set up to revitalise the cattle industry. Furthermore, farmers and extension workers require adequate training in farm management and animal husbandry to gain a better knowledge of beef cattle farming practices. Also any institutional support for beef cattle development in the future should be more focused on improving the medium and large commercial cattle farming sectors, in order to create sufficient good breeding stock.

In conclusion, this study recommends that improvement of the both smallholder and large commercial sectors is necessary for increase of cattle numbers and farmer participation. The Solomon Islands’ cattle industry requires consistent support during its development stages in order to sustain production and consolidate.

**Key Words:** Solomon Islands, extension, beef cattle, agriculture.

**Title:** Strategies to increase beef cattle production and retain farmer participation in cattle farming in the Solomon Islands.

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my sister Ann Iaipuro who ceased in 1976, while at Su'u Secondary School. For she did not stay on to see the results of her years in school, but today she is enjoying the fellowship with her God in Heaven.

To my wife Josephine and our four children: Willie, Jane, Lazarus and Burns. For their support and comfort while with me in New Zealand.

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COMMON ABBREVIATIONS USED

BGM - Black Gold Management Limited
CDC - Common Wealth Corporation
DBSI - Development Bank of the Solomon Islands
LCL - Livestock Corporation Limited
LDA - Livestock Development Authority
LPPL - Levers Pacific Plantation Limited
MAF - Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries
MET - Ministry of Education & Training
SICHE - Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SIPL - Solomon Islands Plantation Limited
Std Dev - Standard Deviations
WW II - World War
UNITS OF MEASUREMENT USED

Ac - Acre
(AU) $ - Australian dollar
°C - Degree Celsius
Ha - Hectare
hd - head of cattle
kg - Kilogram
km² - Square kilometre
m - Metre
mm - Millimetre
(n = ) - Number of Respondents
S.I $ - Solomon Islands dollar
% - Percentage