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Research Article Fibre Feeds Impact on Milk Fatty Acids Profiles Produced by Smallholder Dairy Farmers

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Fibre feed is the basis of dairy cattle ration and its quality is directly related to the quality of milk, primarily milk fatty acids. The feeds quality varies between locations. This study compared fibre feed quality between the dairy cattle area and its impacts on milk production and quality. Materials and Methods: Five main fibre feed (Napier grass, natural grass, rice straw, corn stover and corn husk) from 4 dairy farm areas in West Java (Pangalengan, Lembang, Cibungbulang and Sukaraja) were evaluated on their effect on milk production and quality. Parameters observed were proximate composition, cell wall fractions, in vitro digestibility, Relative Forage Value (RFV), milk produced, milk component and milk fatty acids. The correlation between fibre feed and milk quality was investigated. Results: It was found an interaction between treatments on ash, crude protein, ether extract, silica, lignin and neutral detergent fibre digestibility parameters. Napier grass has the highest quality. The Pangalengan feeds have the highest RFV. Milk from Bogor has the best quality, high unsaturated fatty acids, conjugated linoleic acids, Hypocholesterolemic/Hypercholesterolemic (HH) ratio. Correlation analysis between feed and milk quality showed that milk production and quality are influenced positively by RFV and digestibility but negatively by CF, NDF and ADF. Conclusion: This study concluded that dietary fibre feed quality could not directly determine milk fatty acids composition.

Key words: Fibre feed, CLA, milk, fatty acids, smallholder, unsaturated fatty acids, atherogenicity index, hypocholesterolemic

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Competing Interest: The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Data Availability: All relevant data are within the paper and its supporting information files.

INTRODUCTION

Dairy cattle in tropical countries were established through government programs to improve the rural economy¹. It is characterized by its small-scale dairy system², where fibre feed is the basis of the dairy cattle diet. The fibre feed improves farm profitability by using homegrown² or locally collected fibre feed. The common fibre feeds used were Napier grass, natural grass, rice straw, corn stover and corn husks³. The feed was used in different proportions depending on their quality and availability. In a densely populated area, fibre feed utilization is lower⁴ than in a less densely area⁵. Fresh forage such as Napier and natural grass is used more frequently due to its better quality and availability. However, rice straw, corn stovers and corn husks are also used to overcome the shortage of fresh forage.

The quality of fibre feed is directly related to the quality of milk produced⁶. The quality of milk that is greatly affected by fibre feed is milk Fatty Acids (FA). The FA has been associated with human health⁷. Saturated Fatty Acids (SFAs) have been associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity and some cancers, especially the C12:0, C14:0 and C16:0 FA. While Unsaturated Fatty Acids (UFA), C18:0 have been associated with health-promoting index⁸. The C4:0 have been shown to have beneficial effects in inhibiting cancer cell growth, while the C6:0, C8:0 and C10:0 have been reported to reduce body fat⁹. Nutritional indices of milk fatty acids for human health have been assessed⁸. It included saturated and unsaturated fatty acid profiles, Atherogenicity Index (AI)¹⁰ and Hypocholesterolemic/Hypercholesterolemic (HH) ratio¹¹. Cows fed fresh forage, such as pastured cows, had a better milk quality than conserved forage such as hay or ensiled. The milk from silage-based diets typically contains lower Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids (PUFA)¹².

Fibre feeds quality varies between locations depending on soil, weather, topography and plant age at harvesting13. West Java Province is one suitable dairy cattle development area. Pangalengan District of Bandung Regency, Cibungbulang District of Bogor Regency, Lembang District of West Bandung Regency and Sukaraja District of Sukabumi Regency are some established dairy cattle areas in West Java Province. The locations are different typologically. Pangalengan is located in highland and is less densely populated. Lembang is situated in a highland but densely populated. Cibungbulang is located in less densely populated and the area is conserved for dairy estate area with private grassland. In contrast, Sukaraja is situated in lowland with a densely populated place. With the different typologies, the fibre feed quality and availability in the locations vary greatly.

However, information on the variation of fibre feed quality between dairy cattle farm area and their impact on milk production and quality has not been studied.

This study compared fibre feed quality between the dairy cattle area and its impacts on milk production and quality.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area: The study consisted of field and laboratory observations. Field observation was conducted in four main dairy cattle areas in West Java (Pangalengan district of Bandung Regency, Lembang district of West Bandung Regency, Cibungbulang district of Bogor Regency and Sukaraja district of Sukabumi Regency). While laboratory observation was conducted at Dairy Nutrition Laboratory, Department of Animal Nutrition and Feed Technology, Faculty of Animal Science, IPB University, Indonesia, from January, 2019-August, 2021.

Sample preparations: Five main fibre feed used in four dairy farm areas in West Java have been collected. The feeds were Napier grass, natural grass, rice straw, corn stover and corn husk. From each area, four farms were sampled randomly as replications. The 4 kg of each sample was collected. The samples were dried under the open sun for 48 hrs and then, 48 hrs in a 60°C Eyela NDO 400 (made in Japan). The dried samples were ground using a Huayi FFC 15 (made in Japan) blender at medium speed and filtered to pass a 1 mm screen. The samples were stored in a plastic container for further analysis.

Fibre feed analysis: The fibre feed samples were analyzed for their proximate composition and fibre fraction to determine Dry Matter (DM), ash, Crude Protein (CP), Ether Extract (EE), Crude Fibre (CF), Neutral Detergent Fibre (NDF), Acid Detergent Fibre (ADF), Acid Detergent Lignin (ADL) and silica. In vitro digestibility to measured Dry Matter Digestibility (DMD) was followed by fibre fraction residue analysis to determine NDF and ADF digestibility. The fibre feed analysis following a similar procedure as used by Despal *et al.*³. Relative Forage Value (RFV) was calculated according to Rocateli and Zhang¹⁴:

> Dry matter intake (DMI) (%) = $\frac{120}{NDF(\%)}$ DMD (%) = $88.9-(0.799% \times ADF)$ $RVF = DMD (%) \times DMI (%) \times 0.775$

Milk analysis: Milk produced was measured volumetrically. The 250 mL milk sample from each farm was collected from morning and afternoon milking, stored in the coolbox and transported to the laboratory. The milk fat, protein, lactose, SNF and density were measured using Bulgaria's Milkotronic milk analyzer serial I-17-817. Milk fatty acids were measured using an Agilent G4350B Gas Chromatography (GC) with a Flame Ionization Detector (FID) and HP-5 capillary column (30 m length, 0.320 mm diameter, 0.25 µm film thickness from Agilent Technologies, Palo Alto, CA, USA. The procedures were similar to those by Martha et al ¹⁵ and validated with near-infrared reflectance spectroscopy (NIRS) (Buchi NIRFlex N-500 Solids Cell made in Switzerland).

Data analysis: A completely randomized factorial design was used for fibre feed data analysis by applying a multivariate test from SPSS version 21. The first factor was locations $(L_1 =$ Pangalengan, $L_2 =$ Lembang, $L_3 =$ Cibungbulang and L_4 = Sukaraja). The second factor was type of fibre feeds $(F_1 =$ Napier grass, $F_2 =$ natural grass, $F_3 =$ rice straw, $F_4 =$ corn stover and F_5 = corn husks). A completely randomized design

Table 1: Proximate composition of fibre feed from different dairy farm areas

was used for milk data analysis. Analysis of variance followed by Tukey's test was run to compare between mean. The correlation between forage value and milk quality was investigated. Regression analysis was made to estimate milk quality from fibre feed quality.

RESULTS

The proximate composition of fibre feed from the different locations is shown in Table 1. The table shows that the CF content between the fibre feed type was not different but between areas. The CF content was lower in fibre feeds from Sukaraja. There was a significant interaction between locations and fibre feed factors in DM, Ash, CP and EE parameters. Rice straw from Sukaraja and corn stover from Pangalengan were drier than other fibre feeds, while Napier grass from Lembang is the moistest fibre feed observed. In all locations, ash contents in rice straw were higher than corn stover and corn husks. While in the Napier and natural grasses, the ash contents varied greatly. In all locations, CP content in Napier grass was higher than rice straw and corn husks.

DM: Dry matter, CP: Crude protein, EE: Ether extract, CF: Crude fibre. Mean value with a different superscript in the same parameters show a significantly different interaction location×feed fibre types at p<0.05

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Table 2: Cell wall fractions of fibre feed from different dairy farm areas

NDF: Neutral detergent fibre, ADF: Acid detergent fibre, ADL: Acid detergent lignin. Means values in the same row with different superscripts differ significantly (p<0.05)

Natural grass and corn stover, however, vary between locations. The EE content in Napier grass from Lembang is higher than Napier grass in Pangalengan and Bogor, natural grass in Bogor, Lembang and Sukaraja, rice straw in Pangalengan, Lembang and Sukaraja, Corn Stover in Bogor, Lembang and Sukaraja. The EE contents in corn husks from all areas were not different from other feeds from all locations.

The cell wall fractions of fibre feed from the different locations are shown in Table 2. The table shows that the cell wall fractions were significantly influenced by locations and type of fibre feeds. The NDF content in corn husks was the highest and in Napier grass was the lowest. The NDF in fibre feeds from Pangalengan and Bogor were higher than Sukaraja. Similar patterns were also found in the comparison of ADF parameters between locations. However, comparing the types of feeds, we found that ADF in rice straw was significantly higher than in other feeds. Locations did not significantly influence ADL contents but the variety of feeds. Corn husk was significantly higher in comparison to others. Silica content in the feeds was not different between location and feed types except for rice straw which was higher than others.

Digestibility and forage value of the fibre feeds from different locations are shown in Table 3. The table shows that the digestibility of dry matter (DMD), NDF (NDFD), ADF (ADFD) and RFV values were significantly influenced by feed types and locations. Still, there was no interaction between the two factors. DMD of Napier grass and Corn Stover were significantly higher than rice straw and corn husks. The feeds from Sukaraja were significantly higher than Pangalengan. The NDFD parameter was not significantly influenced by locations but feed types. The NDFD of Napier grass was significantly higher than natural grass and rice straw. The ADFD parameter was also not affected by locations but feed types. Rice straw ADFD was significantly lower than others. Locations and feed types influenced the RFV parameters. The RFV of rice straw and corn husks was significantly lower than others. The fibre feeds from Sukaraja have significantly higher RFV in comparison to Pangalengan and Bogor.

Milk production and quality from the different locations are shown in Table 4. The table shows that milk from Sukaraja was significantly lower than in other places. The milk components (SNF, density, lactose, protein and fat) were not significantly different between locations. The C11:0, C13:0, C17:1 cis10, C18:1, C18:1 trans9, C18:2 trans n6, C18:3 and C>20 fatty acids were not significantly different. The CLA content in milk from Lembang and Sukabumi was higher than Bogor and Pangalengan. Milk from Bogor contained lower SFA and higher UFA in comparison to milk from other locations. The milk from Pangalengan has higher AI and lower HH in comparison to other locations. Some odd C-chain fatty acids and Long-Chain Fatty Acids (LCFA) were not detected in some areas.

The correlation between fibre feeds quality with milk production and quality is shown in Table 5. The table shows

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Table 3: Digestibility and forage value of fibre feed

DMD: Dry matter digestibility, NDFD: Neutral detergent fibre digestibility, ADFD: Acid detergent fibre digestibility, RFV: Relative forage value. Means values in the same row with different superscripts differ significantly (p<0.05)

Table 4: Milk production and quality from different dairy farm areas

Location

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Table 4: Continue

Density value expressed as: 1+(0.01*x), SNF: Solid non-fat, CLA: Conjugated linoleic acids, SFA/UFA/PUFA/MUFA: Saturated/unsaturated/polyunsaturated/ monounsaturated fatty acids, AI: Atherogenecity index, HH: Hypo/hypercholesterolemic ratio

Table 5: Significant correlation between fibre feed and milk quality

CLA: Conjugated linoleic acids, SFA/UFA/PUFA/MUFA: Saturated/unsaturated/polyunsaturated/monounsaturated fatty acids, AI: Atherogenecity index, HH: Hypo/hypercholesterolemic ratio

that milk production only correlated with the CP content of fibre feeds. Lactose was also correlated only with ADL. CP and ADL of fibre feed determine milk protein. Milk fat correlated with CP, EE, DMD, NDFD and ADFD. The CF, fibre fractions (NDF, ADF and ADL) and RFV correlated with many milk fatty acid parameters. In contrast, CP had only a correlation with unsaturated fatty acids C14:1, C17:1 cis10 and C18:3. EE in fibre feeds influenced milk fat, C6:0, C18:1, C18:2 cis, C23:0 and C24:0. The ADL influenced the short-chain milk fatty acids.

DISCUSSION

The insignificant difference in CF content between the fibre feed types shows that all the fibre feed used by the farmer provides sufficient fibre (29-33%) for dairy cattle. However, there are differences in CF content between locations. Fibre feeds used by the dairy farmer in Sukaraja have lower CF content in comparison to other areas. The high CF content in Bogor, due to higher sunlight intensity, stimulated plant growth and increased stem proportion¹⁶. The high fibre content in feeds from Pangalengan might be caused by lower rainfall, slower plant growth, advancing harvesting age and increased CF, NDF, ADF and lignin contents in the plant¹⁷.

Interaction between locations and fibre feed factors in DM, Ash, CP and EE parameters showed that nutrient content in feeds varies between areas depending on species, soil, weather, topography and plant age at harvesting¹³. The DM content in plants is influenced by age at harvesting. Older plants resulting from increasing the cutting interval increased dry matter and nutrient yields significantly¹⁷. Raising temperature increased DM yield¹⁸ and declined forage quality¹⁹. Advancing lignification of plant material²⁰ lowers CP and digestibility¹⁷. Lower DM in Napier grass compared to rice straw because Napier grasses were harvested at a younger age (40-60 days of cutting interval)¹⁷ compared to rice straw collected after the rice plant's ripening stage (110-115 days)²¹. Lower DM in fibre feeds from Lembang might be caused by the shorter cutting interval of Napier and Natural grass¹⁷. A higher dense population puts higher pressure on land and increases the stocking rate. Farmer increased the use of agricultural by-products such as rice straw, corn stover and corn husk.

The CP content in natural grass from Sukaraja (9.0%) was lower than other areas (12%) but higher than natural grass used by Despal $et al.²²$, which were collected from the area around the Darmaga district of Bogor regency. The CP content in natural grass depended on its species type and proportion23. Sukaraja is less densely populated in comparison to Lembang. The area available for natural grass is higher, which resulted in a lower stocking rate and longer collecting interval of the natural grass, advanced its maturity and decreased its CP content¹⁷.

The ash content in Napier grass from Lembang was higher than Pangalengan and Bogor. It might be caused by its location in the volcanic area of Tangkuban Perahu. Although volcanic ash soils create a productive and comfortable environment, they serve essential functions in accumulating large amounts of organic carbon and nitrogen and plentiful water storage²⁴. Still, volcanic areas physically impact plants from the additional weight of ash on leaves²⁴. Ash deposited on soil altered soil chemistry, nutrient content and water content and lowered soil pH, detrimental crop survival²⁵.

The fibre fractions (NDF and ADF) in rice straw were significantly higher than others. As a late mature plant component, lignification was advanced 20 , as shown by the higher amounts of ADL, lignin and silica. Fibre is needed by ruminants such as dairy cows to maintain their rumen health and provide more acetate and butyrate in rumen fermentation as precursors for milk fat synthesis²⁶. However, the cow needed digested fibre from cellulose (ADL-ADF) and hemicellulose (NDF-ADF). Lignin and silica reduced the digestibility of cellulose and hemicellulose²⁷. Lignin bound cellulose and hemicellulose²⁸ made the cellulose and hemicellulose undigested.

The RFV value of fibre feeds from Sukaraja is significantly higher than Pangalengan and Lembang. It resulted from lower fibre fractions (NDF and ADF) and higher digestibility. The fibre feeds from Sukaraja with an average RFV of 92% can be categorized as forage grade 3, while forage from other areas can be classified as grade 4 with an RFV value less than 75-85%29. Napier grass, natural grass and corn stover can be used as primary forages in dairy cattle with grade 3 quality but rice straw and corn husks should not be used as the primary forage because of their lower quality. Forage quality should express the potential of forage to produce milk. In a dairy ration, roughage or fibre in the proper quantity and physical form is needed to maintain normal milk fat percentages. The feeding system can affect milk fat content and composition³⁰. The use of large quantity low roughage such as rice straw and corn husks reduced nutrient availability such as protein and energy, especially in high producing dairy cows³¹.

The RFV of fibre feed from Sukaraja was higher than in other areas but its milk production was the lowest. According to Krämer-Schmid et al.³², milk yield increased with enhanced fibre feed (maize silage) quality (NFD digestibility). They reported that a 0.01 increase of the NDF digestibility improved daily milk yield by 82 g. In this study, fibre feeds quality did not significantly influence milk production. It might be due to the different fibre feed types used. According to Hammond $et al.³³$, cows fed maize silage produced more milk than grass silage. Analysis of correlation (Table 5) showed that milk production was only correlated with the CP of the fibre feeds, which are different between location and fibre feed types. It is suggested that fibre feed quality alone cannot determine milk production. Many other factors influenced milk production, such as genetic, nutrient intake and sufficiency, stage and period of lactations, environment and cow's health¹.

The milk components (SNF, fat, protein and lactose) were not significantly different between locations. Large variations between farms within the areas might cause it. The fat component was the most varied³⁴. The milk components found in the study were comparable to those reported by Anzhany et aI^{35} and Hasanah et aI^{36} but lower than Molavian31. The lower components found in this study were protein and lactose contents.

The odd C-fatty acids (C11:0, C13:0) and unsaturated LCFA (C17:1 cis10, C18:1, C18:1 trans9, C18:2 trans n6, C18:3 and C>20) were not significantly different between locations. It might be caused by the low concentration of the fatty acids in milk and made it challenging to determine³⁷. The SFA was lower and the UFA was higher in milk from Bogor than other locations, resulting in lower AI and higher HH. It indicated that milk from Bogor was healthier than in other areas. Saturated Fatty Acids (SFAs) have been associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular, obesity and some cancer diseases 38 . However, newer research showed that not all SFA were unhealthy, just C12:0, C14:0 and C16:0. The short-chain SFA (C4:0 C6:0, C8:0 and C10:0) and LCFA (C18:0 and oleic acid) have been reported to have a positive correlation on human health⁹. The healthier milk from Bogor might be caused by the high CP and fibre fractions in the feeds. The result in Table 5 showed many correlations of fibre fractions (CF, NDF and ADF) to milk fatty acids. High fibre in dairy ration such as cow raised on pasture-based increased the milk's beneficial compounds and reduced the less desirable saturated fatty acids³⁹.

Unlike milk from Bogor (lowland), milk from Pangalengan (highland) has higher AI and lower HH. It has resulted from high SFA and low UFA in the milk. However, Collomb et al.⁴⁰ reported that milk from higher altitudes was healthier than lowland due to its diverse grass mixtures but it found the contrary in this case. Dairy farms in Bogor are located in a conservated area of Cibungbulang where every farm have their forage land. Moreover, the area was less densely populated, which made natural grass more available. Pangalengan is located in horticulture and tourism areas where land is competitive; therefore, both cultivated grass such as Napier grass and natural grass was less available. Farmer used more agriculture by-products such as rice straw, corn stover and corn husks which vary in quality. Farmer in Pangalengan increased the use of concentrate, especially during the dry season.

Although the SFA was high and the UFA was low in milk from Lembang and Sukaraja, their AI and HH were similar to milk from Bogor. It suggested that milk from Lembang and Sukaraja were also healthy milk. It resulted from the different calculations of the fatty acid profiles. SFA and UFA counted based on the carbon chain, while AI and HH were calculated based on their impact on human health³⁸. Not all SFA were unhealthy and related to cardiovascular risk⁹. Low AI and high HH in milk from Lembang and Sukaraja caused by the high C18:0 (LCFA). The short- and medium-chain FA (SMCFA, C4-C14) and half of the C16 are synthesized de novo, whereas the rest of the FA, including 50% of C16 and other long-chain FA (LCFA) are derived from triglyceride in the blood or Non-Esterified Fatty Acid (NEFA) mainly during negative energy balance⁴¹. It indicated that cows in both areas are experiencing a negative energy balance.

The CLA content in milk from Lembang (1.67%) and Sukaraja (1.83%) were higher than Pangalengan (1.31%) and Bogor (1.24%). The CLA content in the milk found in this study was higher than the standard $(0.34-1.07%)^{42}$. Small holders used a high proportion of fibre feed to minimize feed cost⁴³ resulted in higher CLA in milk⁴⁴. A high proportion of tofu waste in the ration is also related to high CLA in milk due to its high linoleic acid Damanik et al.⁴⁵ as a precursor for CLA synthesis Fiore et al.¹⁴.

This finding can be used as a guide for farmers and extension workers to select main fibre feed feeds that support milk production and quality. Consumers can choose healthier milk based on the milk fatty acid profiles. The limitation of the study is that the fibre feed quality tested could not directly determine milk fatty acids composition. It is suggested to study the combination of fibre feed and concentrate effect on milk fatty acids composition.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that fibre feeds quality from Sukaraja is better than other areas with an average grade of 3 (RFV 86-100). Napier, natural grass and corn stover can be used as primary fibre feed sources in the dairy diet. The RFV did not determine milk production. Based on the milk fatty acid profiles, milk from Bogor, Lembang and Sukaraja are healthier than Pangalengan. Fibre fractions (CF, NDF and ADF) correlated with many milk fatty profiles.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

This study explores the quality of fibre feeds from different dairy farm areas in West Java and their relation to milk production and milk fatty acid profiles. This study will help the researcher uncover the relationship between fibre fractions in feeds with milk fatty acid profiles produced by smallholder dairy farmers in tropical areas.

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