



Linking Fodder Production with Commercial Livestock Production

Fodder Roundtable meeting

The Third Fodder Roundtable was convened on the theme “Linking Fodder Production with Commercial Livestock Production” on 15th of October, 2009 at the International Livestock Research Institute, Addis Ababa. The roundtable discussions were facilitated based on oral presentations covering a range of issues including fodder markets in Tigray, dairy value chain development, links between expanding export markets for livestock with smallholder production, addressing livestock feed requirements through commercial feeds, opportunities and challenges in commercialization of feed production in pastoral areas and strategies for scaling out of feed technologies to support intensification of smallholder livestock production. The presentations and ensuing discussions uncovered a range of interesting issues around the whole area of feed as a component of livestock value chains in Ethiopia.

Background

Livestock production in Ethiopia is largely a subsistence enterprise. With increasing demand for livestock products (the “Livestock Revolution”) there is considerable potential for smallholders to access markets and enhance their livelihoods through intensification. However, there are significant barriers to smallholder participation in markets, one of which is the whole issue of feed scarcity. There are various initiatives involving large scale commercialization of livestock production (e.g. export abattoirs, milk processors etc) and some commercial fodder production. Are there lessons that can be drawn from these initiatives that can translate into smallholder production for livelihood benefits? Are there linkages that can be created between larger-scale commercial production and smallholders/pastoralists that can benefit their livelihoods? What is the potential for enhancing small-scale commercialization of livestock production as a route to create the environment for new feed technologies to take root? With these questions in mind the third meeting of the Ethiopian Fodder Roundtable was convened.

Issues raised

The meeting culminated in a synthesis discussion on the steps required to enhance commercialization of smallholder livestock production in Ethiopia. The discussion was structured according to the steps required for different groups of actors including farmers, research, extension, policy makers, local institutions and the

Fodder Roundtable itself. The following narrative summarizes the discussion:

Farmers/processors are currently locked into a subsistence mode of operation. To move to more market-oriented production a range of obstacles to overcome were identified including finding mechanisms to mitigate risk, improving input supply, improving market information, overcoming the hand-out culture and enhancing collective action to enhance bargaining/marketing power.

Regarding the research sector, participants were clear about the need for a change in emphasis from simply generating technical solutions to becoming involved in a wider range of issues, including social issues, through increased interaction with farmers and other value chain actors. Commercialization of smallholder production will require much greater interaction with private sector players and a stronger livelihood focus if the research sector is to support smallholder livestock commercialization in a meaningful way.

Turning to consideration of the extension sector, a range of interesting issues arose. Participants advocated for much greater interaction between the research and extension sectors. Extension agents should move away from their traditional linear technology transfer way of working towards knowledge brokerage and a focus on the value chain. Although the extension infrastructure is widespread there are significant operational hurdles to overcome including lack of resources such as transport, problems with management structure at local level as well as a difficulties associated with young and inexperienced extension agents offering extension advice to farmers with long experience.

A range of issues requiring more attention from policy makers were identified as being key to creating an enabling environment for smallholder livestock intensification. Pockets of success at local level in restricting free grazing and moving to cut-and-carry systems need policy support at local and national level. Livestock are generally neglected in development initiatives despite their crucial importance in mixed systems and this needs to be addressed. Transitions from public to private sector ownership of key resources such as ranches need to be handled more effectively.

Attention then turned to the role of local institutions such as kebeles, water users' associations, credit groups etc. Participants agreed that the role of such local institutions was key to facilitating the transition from subsistence to market-oriented production through their important functions in local conflict resolution, organizing farmers to increase their voice and power, and forming a focal point for interaction with higher level formal institutions.

Finally, participants considered what the Fodder Roundtable could do to foster commercialization of smallholder livestock production. The Roundtable was endorsed as a useful forum for knowledge sharing across sectors but it was felt that it should be more closely aligned with formal national institutions if it were to have a voice in influencing policy. A number of ideas for improving the sustainability of the platform were suggested including convening a steering committee, developing themes to structure discussion over longer timescales and producing publications for wider readership.

List of organisations represented

National institutions

- Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Tigray Agricultural Research Institute
- Holeta Agricultural Research Center
- Ethiopian Meat and Dairy Technology Institute

Private sector

- Ethio-Feed PLC
- Crop/Cow Grow

International research organizations

- International Livestock Research Institute

NGO sector

- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Livestock and Meat Marketing Program Programme
- Utah State University/PARIMA
- Save the Children USA,
- SNV
- Oxfam GB
- Agri-Service Ethiopia
- CAFOD/Trocaire/SCIAF
- SOS Sahel Ethiopia

The meeting was funded under the IFAD Technical Assistance Grant 853 "Enhancing livelihoods of poor livestock keepers through increased use of fodder" also called the Fodder Adoption Project.

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