Food safety and animal health in the Doyogena sheep meat value chain, Ethiopia

Background
Doyogena District is located in the South of Ethiopia. It is a highland region. The main lambing periods are in December, January, April to June and September. Sheep production and sales are mainly influenced by national and religious holidays. The main production is a mixed crop-livestock-system. Food shortages do not affect the region very much. Sheep are fed with crop residues and by-products from false bananas and sugar cane production.

Value chain challenges
Diseases are one of the main meat production constraints in the region. Fasting is not a major issue as most inhabitants are Protestants. However, meat intake is restricted due to lack of cash.

Livestock mortality
The main reason for an overwhelming 68% of livestock deaths in the region are diseases, which are attributed to inadequate veterinary services. In Doyogena, sheep are also kept in shared grazing, which helps to spread diseases from one farm to the other. Diarrhoea is second with 13%.
Food safety

Doyogena people care about food safety. They have some knowledge they use to mitigate foodborne zoonoses. Some observations include:

- The smell, colour and texture of the meat are used to assess its quality and safety. Despite these safety measures, there are reports of emergency slaughter and consumption of sick animals.

- Suspect meat is usually cooked thoroughly, but sometimes consumption of raw or lightly cooked meat or offal occurs.

- Animals with grain overload are often subjected to emergency slaughter and consumption. Animals with other diseases are not usually eaten. Although slaughtering is done very carefully to avoid contamination, Albendazole residues are often found in the meat. The drug is used to combat parasitic worms and often used and overdosed during fattening.

- Lesions are usually trimmed off the meat and the remainder is boiled; fresh meat is often stored in poor conditions until the next day. Dulet, a dish comprising lamb tripe and liver, is regularly consumed raw.

Future goals

During the value chain assessment process and subsequent discussions (early 2013), stakeholders from the district identified the following vision for their part of the small ruminant value chain development program in Ethiopia: By 2020, to have increased household income and nutrition (livelihoods) of value chain actors through an efficient specialized (trade-marked) and sustainable Doyogena sheep value chain.
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