

Gendered Feed Assessment Tool (G-FEAST) focus group discussion guide



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Introduction

As of 2014, approximately 500 million smallholder farmers with one hectare or less of cultivated land provide food for over two billion people worldwide. Feed for livestock is often cited as the main constraint to improved productivity for smallholder farms. Overcoming this constraint often seems an elusive goal as intervention programs tend to adopt a scattergun or trial-and-error approach which often fails to adequately diagnose the nature of the feed problem and; therefore, the means to deal with it.

The farmer-centred diagnosis methodology provides a means to systematically and rapidly assess feed resources at site level with a view to developing a site-specific strategy for improving feed supply and utilization through technical or organizational interventions.

Part of the farmer-centred diagnosis approach involves using the Feed Assessment Tool (FEAST), a set of forms and spreadsheets to help collect and analyze data related to local conditions and agricultural practices.

Components of the FEAST tool

- Group discussion guide (this document)
- Individual farmer interview questionnaire
- FEAST data template (Microsoft Excel spreadsheet)
- FEAST data template manual

When to use a G-FEAST?

The G-FEAST is a gendered version of the FEAST tool. The aim of the G-FEAST is twofold:

- Identify which aspects of gender relations in households affect animal feeding practices and the uptake of feeding interventions; and
- Identify differences in opportunities and constraints in animal feeding between different household types.

Why and when to conduct a G-FEAST?

A gendered FEAST adds value to the existing FEAST approach. Women and men farmers in a community might face different problems or constraints on livestock feeding. In addition, the adoption and uptake of agricultural technology and livestock feeding interventions are affected by gender relations. Feeding interventions can also affect women and men differently. Gender considerations can include women's labour drudgery and the benefits they gain or lose from feeding interventions. Intra-household decision making processes can also affect technology uptake and its impact. Apart from differences in problems, constraints and impacts experienced by women and men, it is also important to identify differences between male and female headed households.

It is recommended to conduct a G-FEAST when:

- you aim to identify and design livestock feeding interventions in an area that potentially target men and women.
- nutrition studies focus on gender aspects.
- you prepare for an intervention in an area or community in which there is hardly any knowledge or information available on gender relations.

The differences between the original and gendered FEAST are:

- G-FEAST has separate FGDs for women and men;
- the FGD guide includes gender-related questions;
- G-FEAST conducts individual interviews with women as well as men; and
- the individual questionnaire includes gender-related questions.

Table 1 provides an overview of the differences in the amount of data collected by the original FEAST and by the G-FEAST.

Table 1 – Amount of data collected by FEAST and G-FEAST

	FEAST original	G-FEAST
Number of FGDs	1 FGD	2 FGDs (1 FGD men only, 1 FGD women only)
Number of FGD participants	12–16 participants	20–24 participants in total (2 times 10–12 participants per FGD)
Number of individual interviews	9 individual interviews	12 individual interviews (6 interviews with men, 6 interviews with women)

In preparing your G-FEAST, you should plan for two FGDs and for 12 individual interviews. It is recommended to do both FGDs and all individual interviews on one day. Alternatively, you can take two days to do a G-FEAST. Whether you choose one day (option A), or two days (option B), will have implications for the number of people required for the team. Table 2 provides an overview of G-FEAST following a schedule of option A (one day) and option B (two days), and the required team composition.

Table 2 – Schedule options for G-FEAST FGDs and interviews

	Option A		Option B	
Number of days	1 day		2 days	
Time schedule	Group 1	Group 2	Day 1	Day 2
Morning	FGD 1 (men only)	FGD 2 (women only)	FGD 1 (men only)	FGD 2 (women only)
Afternoon	6 individual interviews (with men)	6 individual interviews (with women)	6 individual interviews (with men)	6 individual interviews (with women)
Team composition	2 FGD facilitation teams (each team has 1 facilitator and 1 note taker)		1 FGD facilitation team (1 facilitator, and 1 notetaker)	
	Total team: 4 people		Total team: 2 people	

Steps in a farmer-centred diagnosis

1. **Preliminary scoping exercise:** the FEAST facilitators visit the site to:
 - Collect information, secure approval from local officials, and recruit a team to help manage the process (including men and women).
 - Identify demographically representative groups of men and women farmers according to age, wealth and type of household (male headed, female headed, female managed) to participate in the group discussions.
 - Select one or two meeting points for the group discussions. The meeting points should be easily accessible to both men and women farmers. In case two FGDs are planned on the same day, two meeting points need to be selected.
2. **Group discussions:** the FEAST facilitators schedule separate meetings with groups of 10–12 women or men to collect their input regarding local conditions, problems and potential solutions related to livestock feed resources. Using the group discussion guide, the facilitator leads the farmers in a conversation on agriculture and livestock conditions in the area, identify problems and propose solutions from gender perspectives.
3. **Individual farmer interviews:** from each group, six farmers (i.e. six from men's and six from women's FGD group) are selected to participate in one-on-one interviews to collect additional data using the individual interview questionnaire. There should be two small, two medium and two large scale farmers. However, these categories are defined during the group discussion. The total division of individual interviews by land size/wealth and gender is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Division of interviews by wealth and gender

	Men	Women
Small farm size	2	2
Medium farm size	2	2
Large farm size	2	2
Total	6	6

4. **Follow up research:** the FEAST facilitator conducts additional research on site to verify/ground-truth the data collected in the group discussions and individual farmer interviews.
5. **Data entry and analysis:** data collected during the focus group discussions and individual interviews is entered into the FEAST data template in order to generate reports and graphs to inform the development of intervention strategies.
6. **Preparation of farmer-centred diagnosis report:** the FEAST facilitator drafts a report presenting findings of research and recommendations for livestock feed intervention strategies with supporting evidence from G-FEAST data application and other data collected during the farmer-centred diagnosis.
7. **Implementation of livestock feed intervention strategies:** site specific and gender responsive livestock feed interventions are developed and prioritized based on feasibility and gendered impact. An action plan/roadmap is drafted and presented to the community and efforts are made that both women and men attend the meeting. After implementation of the intervention, results are evaluated and the plan refined on a periodic basis.

Group discussion: overview

The objective of the focus group discussion is to get the consensus opinion of the participants on the following topics:

1. **General farming system description:** gather information on local farm sizes and distribution of household types, household sizes, labour availability, rainfall patterns, irrigation, cropping seasons and types of animals.
2. **Ownership and management of livestock species:** identify the main purpose of livestock in the farming system and how it is viewed by both men and women farmers; and explore how farmers feed, manage and benefit from livestock.
3. **Problems, issues and opportunities within the livestock system:** what do men and women farmers view as the major problems related to livestock feed, production, etc. and what do they see as potential solutions? What do they view as successes and failures?

Selection of farmers for individual interviews

Based on the land/wealth categories defined in section I, farmers are selected for individual interviews (two from each category of large, medium and small). In the FGD with men, male farmers are selected for individual interviews; in the FGD with women, female farmers are selected for individual interviews. Table 4 shows an overview of the gender questions per section of the FGD guide.

Table 4 – Overview of the gender questions per section of the FGD guide

Sections FGD guide		Gender-related questions
General information		
	Number of households in the area	Male and female headed households
	FGD group	Men or women only FGD
Section I – General farming system description		
I.1	Typical farm size	
I.2	Distribution of land/wealth	Male and female headed households (in each of the categories)
	Land tenure system	Land ownership by women
I.3	Households size and migration	Migration for men, women and youth
I.4	Rainfall pattern	
I.5	Cropping seasons	
I.6	Water and irrigation	- Gendered access to water - Gender issues related to irrigation
I.7	Labour/paid labour	Costs for male and female headed households
I.8	Livestock species (and their use)	Use of livestock specified by women and men
I.9	Credit	Gendered access to credit
I.10	Land use	
I.11	Local markets	Gendered access to suppliers and inputs
Section 2 – Management of livestock species		
2.1	Housing and feeding of livestock	- Labor provided for feeding by gender (and age) - Differences in feeding styles for male and female headed households
2.2	Veterinary/animal health services	Gendered access to veterinary/animal health services
2.3	Livestock reproduction methods	Gendered access to livestock reproduction methods
Section 3 – Problems, issues, opportunities within livestock system		
3.1	Major problems and potential solutions	Specification of who is most affected by certain problems
Selection of farmers for individual interviews		
		Individual interviews with 6 FGD participants (2 FGD groups, so in total 12 individual interviews)

Facilitating a G-FEAST group discussion

A focus group discussion brings a diverse group of people—in this case, local farmers—together to share their knowledge, thoughts and opinions about a specific topic. A farmer-centred diagnosis using the G-FEAST tool, mimics the principles of a focus group discussion but the recommended group size is 10–12 people.

The job of the facilitator is to let the participants lead the discussion, while keeping the conversation focused on the topic at hand, making sure all major topics of concern are addressed and enforcing the ground rules.

Guidelines for successfully facilitating a FEAST Group Discussion include:

1. **Study the materials in advance** to ensure that you are familiar with the discussion guide and the data that needs to be collected for later analysis.
2. **Reconfirm the availability of the meeting venue** and make sure all invited farmers know the time and place of the meeting. Double-check that any necessary audiovisual equipment is still available and functioning, even if you checked it before. Allow extra time at the beginning to observe local social customs and give people time to arrive and settle in. If two FGDs are held on the same day (option A), reconfirm that you have two meeting locations (one for each FGD group).
3. **Assign roles to members of the FEAST Technical Team.** There should be at least one lead facilitator to guide the discussion, one or more note takers, a time keeper and someone to operate the audiovisual equipment (some of these roles can be combined, but there should be at least one full-time facilitator and one full-time note taker). It is strongly recommended to ensure that team members speak the local language; this saves time, because translation in FGDs can be time consuming. If two FGDs are held on the same day (option A), you need to have two facilitator teams (in total four people). If possible, have both men and women on the team.
4. **Consent for recording:** If a voice recorder is being used, please seek consent before recording the discussion.
5. **Arrive as early as possible** to the meeting site to prepare, before the scheduled start time.
6. **Make introductions** including farmers and visitors / team members.
7. **Explain the purpose of the meeting**, i.e., to gather information about agriculture and livestock conditions in the area, identify problems and propose solutions. Assure the participants confidentially and explain how data is going to be used. When necessary, explain that the reason to have separate FGDs with women and men is that it allows for a space where both are comfortable to speak and can freely express their ideas.
8. **Explain the process** – the facilitator will ask an initial question to start a conversation, then the farmers will discuss and try to reach consensus. When consensus is required but cannot be reached, a vote may be taken.

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9. **Summarize the timetable**, i.e., that the meeting will last roughly 3 hours and six farmers from each group will be asked to stay an extra hour for individual interviews.
 10. **Outline the ground rules**, particularly that participants must respect each other's views even if they don't agree and not interrupt when it is someone else's turn to speak
 11. **Ask open-ended questions** to get conversation started then follow up with probing questions when clarification is required. Probing is important to improve the quality of the data. Also, gender issues might need further reflection and probing. It is especially important for gender issues to disentangle norms and actual practice; how things should be, and how things are actually happening.
 12. **Keep the meeting on topic** to make sure all major points in the focus group discussion guide are covered
 13. **Help resolve conflicts**, should any arise, by remaining calm, asking questions and insisting that participants respect each other and the ground rules

General information

Venue:

Country:

Name of district (sub-region):

Community (e.g. village):

Number of households in the area:

Male headed	<input type="text"/>	Female headed	<input type="text"/>
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To be considered a household, the dwelling must have a kitchen.

GPS coordinates of meeting location:

Latitude: Longitude:

It is facilitator's responsibility, not participants', to determine GPS coordinates (if possible).

FGD type (circle one)

Women	Men
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Number of participants

Date:

Start Time: Finishing

Other attendees

I. General farming system description [60 minutes]

Objective: obtain a general picture of the farming and livestock system

I.1. Roughly how many households are in the community/village?

Number of households

I.2. What is the typical (or average) household size? On average, how many people have been living continuously in each household for the past 6 months?

- Elicit responses from farmers and allow farmers to debate the responses and reach a final consensus.
- Where consensus is difficult to reach, taking individual household size of farmers present may help give an indication of household size in the village

People per household

What is the proportion (%) of household members who are migrating out of the village for one reason or the other?

Men

 %

Women

 %

Youth

 %

Record reasons for migration.

1.3. What is the typical farm size? What is the minimum, maximum and average cultivated land per household?

- 'Farm size' is considered to be cultivated land
- Also consider additional lands that may be leased or shared.
- Elicit responses from farmers and allow farmers to debate the responses and reach a final consensus.
- Where consensus is difficult to reach, taking individual land sizes of farmers present may give an indication of land sizes in the village

Minimum: Acres | Hectares | Local Units (circle one)

Average: Acres | Hectares | Local Units (circle one)

Maximum: Acres | Hectares | Local Units (circle one)

If local units, name of local unit:

1 hectare = Local units

1.4. Distribution of land/wealth [30 minutes]

Objective: determine the ranges for small, medium and large farms, and the proportions of male and female headed households.

(This also supports the selection of participants, at the end of the FGD, from each category for individual interviews.)

1.4.1. Proportional piling exercise

Give the group 100 seeds; and invite them for proportional piling exercise:

Step 1 – ask participants to distribute downward the 100 seeds over the four land size categories: landless, small, medium and large.

Step 2 – then ask them to divide the seeds horizontally between male and female headed households within each category.

- Ranges / cut-off points between categories should be determined by the farmers.
- Use the average farm size as determined in section 1.1 as a starting point.
- For the purposes of this section, only consider land utilized for farming

Category	Range of land size (lower and upper limits)	% of households that fall in category (Step 1)
Landless	0	
Small		
Medium		
Large		
Total		100

% of male headed and female headed households that fall in category (Step 2)		
Male headed	Female headed	Total
		100
		100
		100
		100

I.4.2 What are the common land tenure systems in the village?

Can women own land?	Yes		No	
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Is the land tenure system a constraint to livestock and fodder production? If so how? Does it affect men and women farmers differently?

1.5. On a scale of 0–5, where 0 = no rainfall and 5 = heavy rainfall, how does the rainfall pattern vary over a year?

- Help farmers relate to the rainfall scores by explaining the range of scores and giving examples e.g. number of days receiving rainfall in a month as an indicator of amount of rainfall.
- Initiate a discussion about rainfall distribution throughout the year. Allow farmers time to debate and arrive at a consensus.
- Note that there could be differences in rainfall pattern even within a village depending to geographical factors such as altitude (high and lowlands), proximity to water bodies, mountains etc. where these are obvious construct more than one rainfall pattern e.g. for low and highlands.
- Guiding questions could include:
 - During which months do you receive the most rainfall here?
 - During which month do you receive the lowest amount of rainfall?
 - What score would you give for the amount of rainfall in those months?
 - Follow on to probe farmers for scores to all the months throughout the year.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall (0–5)												

1.6. Name the cropping seasons that occur in this area. In which months do the various seasons occur (tick the appropriate boxes in the table below).

- Farmer will often relate cropping seasons to rainfall and dry seasons. With this in mind:
 - Ask farmers to name the cropping seasons as they are locally known.
 - Ask farmers to indicate which month these cropping seasons occur
Also indicate the dry season months even though cropping may not be occurring.
- Farmers may make reference to the type of crops grown or activities that occur during these cropping seasons during their discussions. Please record these crops /activities and months during which they are grown/occur.

Season	Farming activities	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1.													
2.													
3.													

1.7. Availability of water and irrigation

1.7.1. Is water for watering livestock available in the area?

What percentage (%) of households have access to water for watering livestock? %

What types of water sources are available and distances covered in the area? Who has access to it?

- For who has access to water sources: consider male and female headed households, as well as women and men. Also take into account ethnicity, background, farm size, location, etc.
- For distance: estimate distance for most of the villagers.

Source	Seasonality	Who has access?	Distance

I.7.2. Is irrigation available in the area?

What percentage (%) of households have access to irrigation?

	%
--	---

Are there specific constraints for men and women?

(Probe on which households and groups are more likely to be excluded from irrigation)

What types of irrigation are available in the area? What are the main sources of water for irrigation?

--

What crops (including fodder) mainly benefit from irrigation? (Specify crops mostly grown by men, women and youth)

--

On a scale of 0–4; where 0 = low and 4 = high, how would you score the availability of water for livestock (including fodder production)?

--

1.8. When is labour most required?

How much does it typically cost to hire daily paid labour by gender and activity (e.g. ploughing, seeding, weeding, harvesting, etc.)?

Activity	Male	Female

How much does the cost of labour vary throughout the year?

Maximum:

Minimum:

Are labour costs affordable for most households? Specify type of Households.

For male headed households:	
For female headed households:	

Are many people leaving the farm to work in the city/town or seek education? Which member of the household usually leave? Why?

On a scale of 0–4; where 0 = difficult and 4 = easy, how easy is it to hire casual labour as and when required?

1.9. What livestock are raised within the area? What are the animals mainly used for?

- Complete the table only for livestock species that are relevant to the survey area
- List use(s) for men and women separately

Livestock species	Primary use (e.g. production of milk for sale, production of milk for household consumption, meat production, draught, manure production etc.)		% of households that own species	Average number of animals per household
	Men	Women		
Local dairy cows				
Improved dairy cows				
Local dairy buffalo				
Improved dairy buffalo				
Draught cattle				
Draught buffalo				
Fattening cattle				
Sheep				
Goats				
Pigs				
Poultry – village				
Poultry – commercial				
Camels				
Horse				
Donkeys				

1.10. What are the main sources and types of credit for livestock/cropping activities?

Source	Seasonality	Purpose (For which activity?)	Who mostly has access?	
			Men	Women

What are the shares (%) of formal/informal credit?

Formal

%

Informal

%

What are the conditions for obtaining cash/credit for crop/livestock production?

What percentage (%) of local farmers have access to credit?

%

What groups of people find difficulties in accessing credit? (think of male headed households, women in male headed households, female headed households)

What % of FGD participants aspired to access credit in the last two years?

 %

On a scale of 0–4; where 0 = difficult and 4 = easy, how easy is it to access credit when required?

1.1.1. Is land area available for cultivation increasing or decreasing, and why?

Is land used for more than one crop per year?

If fallowing is practiced, how much land is cultivated vs. how much is put to fallow? (Enter N/A if fallowing is not practiced.)

Cultivated:

%

Fallow:

%

This is the amount of uncultivated land.

What is the reason for land being left fallow? Is the land being put to fallow increasing or decreasing, and why?

What is the cost to lease one ha of land?

For the average household, what % of land is used for fodder vs. subsistence (staple cereals) vs. cash crops? (This may be individually owned in intensive systems or communally utilized in extensive systems.)

Fodder:

%

Subsistence:

%

Cash Crops:

%

In case of extensive systems, is there enough land for supplying forage?

Is land for cultivation in short supply?

On a scale of 0–4; where 0 = low and 4 = high, what is the availability of land for fodder cultivation?

1.12. What is the distance/travel time to the local market?

What is the cost of travel to the local market?

Are roads accessible throughout the year or there are certain times of year or weather conditions when the roads are not accessible?

Who are the main suppliers of crop/livestock and farm inputs in the area? Who has access to these inputs?

Supplier	Input type	Who mostly has access to these inputs?	
		Men	Women

How available are crop/livestock and farm inputs in the local markets when required? On a scale of 0–4, where 0 = never available and 4 = always available

'Inputs' include items such as fertilizer, farm implements (hoe, sickle, plough etc.), seeds, feeds, animal health drugs, acaricides, water pumps/pipes, plastic sheeting, irrigation equipment etc.

2. Management of livestock species

Objective: assess how livestock are managed within the area

2.1. Housing and feeding of livestock

What types of structures are used?	
Are feeding troughs provided?	
Is bedding provided?	
Are animals housed throughout the day or partially?	
Are animals housed together or separated (by age, class, sex or type)?	

What is the style of feeding (stall fed, tethered, open grazing or combination)? Who provides the labour, does the feeding?

- For amount of time required: estimate whether it is a high, medium or low amount(as perceived by FGD participants).

Type of livestock	Feeding style	Who does it?	Time required? (high, medium, low)

If grazing, which areas are utilized?

Are there seasonal differences in style of feeding?

What proportion (%) of farm households process feed for livestock in the area?

 %

- Feed processing includes this includes chopping, urea treatment, mixing etc.

What types of feed are processed?

Do farmers mix homemade rations from processed feeds?

What proportion (%) of farm households offer concentrate feeds to their animals?

 %

Are there differences in animal feeding style between male and female headed households? If yes explain.

Is there any other seasonal variation in management methods? Capture any seasonal variations amongst men and women if applicable.

2.2. Veterinary/animal health services

What are some common types of health problems in the area that warrant veterinary attention?

What are the types of services available and who provides them?

Service	Providers	Average distance	Average price	Who mostly has access?	
				Men	Women

How common are traditional veterinary practices? Who mostly uses it and why?

2.3. Livestock reproduction methods

What type of livestock reproduction services are available (artificial insemination and/or bull service)?

What proportion (%) of local farm households use each type of service?

Artificial insemination: % Bull: %

For artificial insemination (AI) services:

- For availability, rate as follows: 0–5, 0 = difficult, 5 = easily available

AI provider(s)	Availability	Average price (semen and transport)	Rate of repeat service	Who has access?	
				Men	Women

For bull service:

- For availability, rate as follows: 0–5, 0 = difficult, 5 = easily available

Provider(s)	Type(s) of bulls used (local vs. improved breeds)	Availability	Average price	Who mostly has access?	
				Men	Women

Are there any other problems/issues associated with bull services?

3. Core feed issues

Objective: identify the relative importance of core feed issues

Exercise: Think through the main difficulties faced in supply of feed and score the following 4 categories (0 = no problem, 4 = severe problem)

Issue	Score (0–4)
Seasonality/dry or cool season feed scarcity. Do farmers struggle to find enough feed for animals during the dry or cool season?	
Seasonality/growing season feed scarcity. Do farmers struggle to find enough feed for animals during the growing season e.g. because animals are confined to avoid damage to crops?	
Overall feed availability. Is there a general problem of feed scarcity throughout the year? Are animals routinely in poor condition?	
Overall feed quality. Is most of the available feed of low quality e.g. crop residues and poor quality collected feed? Is it difficult to source concentrate feeds and to grow planted forages?	

4. Problems, issues and opportunities within livestock system [60 minutes]

Objective: determine if women/men farmers recognize feed as a major factor limiting animal production, and what potential solutions they see.

- 4.1. List the major problems faced by men/women farmers in the area with reference to livestock production. What do farmers view as the solution to these identified problems?
- First identify and list five major problems faced by women and men farmers
 - For each problem, discuss who is affected most (small farms, medium size farms, large farms, landless; as well as male headed households, women in male headed households, female headed households, young people and children in households)
 - For each problem, identify possible solutions suggested by farmers
 - Rank the problems by voting and group consensus

SL	Problem	Who is affected most?	Solution(s)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

-
- 4.2. Complete pair-wise comparisons for the problems in the table below. For each comparison, record which problem is identified as the more important of the two.

Pair	Problem considered more important
Problem 1 vs. Problem 2	
Problem 1 vs. Problem 3	
Problem 1 vs. Problem 4	
Problem 1 vs. Problem 5	
Problem 2 vs. Problem 3	
Problem 2 vs. Problem 4	
Problem 2 vs. Problem 5	
Problem 3 vs. Problem 4	
Problem 3 vs. Problem 5	
Problem 4 vs. Problem 5	

Rank problems based on number of times they were selected as more important in the pairwise comparisons (highest number = most important)

Problem	Number of times chosen as more important	Ranking (1 = most, 5 = least)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Selection of farmers for individual interviews

- Based on the table in section 1.2, select two (2) group participants from each category (small, medium and large).
- A third person from each category can be selected optionally.
- Try to select individuals whose land holdings would place them near the middle of their category.
- A total of six (6) individuals, two from each household type, should be selected for further interview.
- For each FGD, six individuals are selected for interviews. That means that in total, 12 individuals are interviewed (six from each FGD group).

Category	Names of farmers	Contact number
Small	1.	
	2.	
	(3.) (optional)	
Medium	1.	
	2.	
	(3.) (optional)	
Large	1.	
	2.	
	(3.) (optional)	

This is the end of the focus group discussion.

Thank the unselected farmers for their time.

Explain that the data will be analyzed to identify major issues and potential solutions related to livestock feed, and the findings and recommendations will be shared with the community once the study is complete.