



## Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> small ruminant value chain multi-stakeholder platform meeting

Atsbi, Ethiopia, 6 November 2013

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## Preamble

Sheep production is an established farming activity in Atsbi-Womberta district. There are more than 200 thousand animals that generate substantial income and provide nutrition for many poor households. The Improving the Productivity and Market Success (IPMS) project introduced market oriented sheep fattening in the district between 2005 and 2010. The results showed that total forage biomass increased by about five fold following the introduction of improved management and this triggered increased numbers of fattened sheep and income increased by five-fold.

To ensure the continuity of foundation stock supply and generate income from sheep breeding and fattening, the LIVES project and ICARDA in collaboration with the Tigray Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) and the Atsbi-Womberta Office of Agriculture and Rural Development expressed their interest to jointly test community based sheep breeding as an alternative to conventional breeding.

The success of such an initiative depends not only on technologies but also on other wider innovative practices involving the creation, diffusion, adaptation and application of knowledge for economic and social transformation – which may be possible through the formation of multi-stakeholder platforms that enable the participation and empowerment of different value chain actors and service providers (see annex 3 for more background).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> small ruminant value chain multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) meeting was jointly organized by LIVES, ICARDA, TARI and the District Office of Agriculture and Rural Development (OARD). The meeting was facilitated by SNV Ethiopia. It was carried out in Atsbi town at the *woreda* Office of Agriculture meeting hall, located in the Eastern Zone of Tigray Regional Administration.

More than 35 stakeholders drawn from government offices such as the Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (BoARD), TARI (Tigray Agricultural Research Institute) and TAMPA (Tigray agricultural marketing and promotion agency), and private butchers, farmers, and Abergelle Export Slaughter PLC participated (Annex 1).

The theme of the meeting was on market oriented small ruminant value chain development. Comments, suggestions, questions, critical issues, challenges and lessons learned discussed during the MSP meeting. Marketing constraints were the hot topics of discussion and participants' forwarded possible solutions to addressing challenges value chain actors and service providers are facing. It was mentioned that LIVES and ICARDA together with their local partners, are expected to play crucial roles in making smallholder farmers' beneficiaries of the interventions on small ruminant value chain.

## Welcoming remarks

The welcoming speech was made by Ato Alembrihan Harifeyo, head of the OARD. He emphasized the importance of the MSP meeting to the Atsbi community in general and to smallholder farmers in particular.

He disclosed that the woreda has 130,000 inhabitants living in an area of 13,000 hectares. Average land holding is 0.5 hectare, as a result the income farmers get from crop cultivation is not significant and the rearing of small ruminants and other livestock plays a crucial role in maintaining their livelihoods (more than 50% of their income).

The woreda has 120,000 small ruminants which makes it a high potential woreda for small ruminants within the region. According to him, women and youths are actively engaged in livestock production and zero grazing (cut and carry system) is widely spread throughout the woreda. He mentioned that farmers are not benefiting from fattening of sheep as desired due to many reasons.

LIVES, ICARDA, and local partners can play decisive roles in realizing this huge untapped potential. He mentioned that the communities of the area are highly acclaimed for their early adoption of technologies as result; they stood first from the region in the 2005/06 EC fiscal year's overall accomplishment of development programs. He expressed his hope that the discussion will come out with important ideas and suggestions, which can be used as an input to support small holder farmers and reduce poverty. Then he announced that the floor was officially opened for discussion.



## Objectives of the meeting

Selamawit Haile-Michael, SNV value chain advisor, explained that this was the second platform meeting in the district this time addressing sheep value chains only. She also introduced the objectives of the meeting:

- To introduce the sheep value chain development in Atsbi of the LIVES project
- To share the project activities to date with the participants;
- To familiarize the participants with Multi-Stakeholder Platforms(MSP);
- To share the results from rapid market analysis; and
- To discuss challenges and opportunities in marketing and come up with a first action plan.

## Introducing two projects

### LIVES project

Yayneshet Tesfay, Regional Livestock Expert, explained that the Livestock and Irrigation Value Chains for Ethiopian Smallholders (LIVES) project is currently working to promote market oriented apiculture, dairy, poultry, small ruminants, irrigated vegetables, fruits and fodder in seven districts in the Central and Eastern Zones in Tigray.

The LIVES project focuses on the following key pillars:

1. Technological, institutional and organizational innovation
2. Capacity development for value chain actors and service providers
3. Knowledge management
4. Documentation and action research
5. Promotion of lessons learnt within and outside action districts.

Yayneshet summarized progress to date by the LIVES project. He said it is impossible to address all challenges farmers face, but LIVES is trying to demonstrate market oriented livestock and irrigation development in action districts. He mentioned the following major accomplishments of his project:

- Triggering the planting of fruits and improved forages including elephant grass and improved leguminous trees and shrubs by selected farmers.
- Capacity building opportunities, including second degree scholarships, to service providers from the BoARD.
- District level knowledge centers are established and equipped with office furniture, computers, printers, and other necessities.
- Electronic readers distributed to LIVES project focal and non-focal persons
- A series of discussions about technologies and markets held with dairy and sheep farmers, beekeepers, poultry producers, and fruit growers.

### Livestock and Fish program in Ethiopia

Barbara Rischkowsky explained that the CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish works on the development of seven sheep and goat value chains at 8 sites. The activities in Atsbi are part of this program. The following activities have already been undertaken: a rapid sheep value chain study was conducted, constraints were identified (ranked) and different trainings and meeting held. She said the program expected to have a long term effect, and is being implemented in close collaboration

with partners such as LIVES, TARI, BoARD and SNV. She emphasized that the ultimate goal of the program is to enable farmers to become more market oriented and generate higher incomes. In general the project focuses on the following pillars:

- Improving livelihood of small scale farmers through sheep productivity enhancement
- Working in close proximity with different partners
- Identify research and development interventions and act accordingly
- Facilitate learning through multi stakeholder discussions
- Capacity building of farmers, experts and researchers

Aynalem Haile explained how ICARDA in partnership with ILRI and national research and development partners, is undertaking sheep and goat value chain development at eight sites of Ethiopia. He said that Atsbi was selected based on different consultations held with respective administrative bodies and consideration of sheep potential of the area.

He reminded participants that this project has a great deal of experience in livestock genetic improvement and one of the missions of the project is to share this experience with Atsbi community and improve their livelihoods.

He explained that for Atsbi, the LIVES project will be responsible for many activities on the ground and the program will complement the LIVES' activities. He reported that the program was about to start a community based sheep breeding program. Target farmers had been already selected and community consultations were scheduled for the next day.

# The MSP approach

Selamawit from SNV gave a brief presentation on the concept of Multi-stakeholders platforms with a brief overview of the value chain approach. The presentation outlined on what a value chain approach is and the role of MSP, who should participate and what is expected from such type of forums, the success factors for establishing or strengthening MSPs. She also shared SNV's experiences in MSP facilitation where both value chain actors and value chain supporters periodically discuss on a limited number of agenda items and come up with solutions. She has identified discussion points such as what is the recommendation in making woreda stakeholder forum more functional and effective? Who should lead the MSPs? Participants were invited to comment on the presentation regarding MSPs.

## Feedback from participants

- Such discussion platforms are based on willingness so we need to think about getting legal personality ( we need to devise or adopt mechanisms )
- Rather than saying there is no market linkage in Atsbi, it is better to dig constraints further.
- The knowledge center established by LIVES is impressive and it should be scale out to other areas.
- Alongside TAMPA it is possible to disseminate market information to beneficiary farmers.
- We are lucky to get both ICARDA and LIVES in our side since both have a wide range of practical experiences in sheep breeding and marketing.
- It is crucial to talk about marketing and its constraints in detail manner
- SNV project has established honey board at regional and federal level and we can exploit this experience.
- There is possibility for LIVES and TAMPA to cooperate on collecting and sharing market information through radio twice a week and this is a good indicator of cooperation among stake holders.
- A lot of researches on sheep have been conducted in our area. What is the benchmark for ICARDA? Who conducted the constraint identification? ICARDA or other projects?

## Responses to the feedback

- Gap in market information was mentioned during ICARDA's sheep rapid value chain study. It was farmers perception, but digging a little further is mandatory and it can be achieved through coordinated efforts, for example involvement of TAMPA.
- Establishment of honey bee board in SNNP was achieved after many ups and downs so we have to expect challenges and we have to work really hard to make such boards realistic.
- ICARDA identified major constraints of sheep production in Atsbi woreda. That was the benchmark for us and we want to intervene accordingly.



## Rapid value chain study of Atsbi sheep

Getachew Legesse, ICARDA consultant, made a short presentation on the rapid value chain study conducted some months ago. He showed the marketing channels of Atsbi sheep and explained that the types of sheep that farmers commonly sell included: rams (castrated and intact) and ewes (old and young). Intact rams are highly demanded by consumers, old ewes by hotels and castrated ones during ceremonies. Major market places are Atsbi, Wukro, Dera (village market), roads and Hayeki Meshal.

- The buyers of Atsbi sheep are traders (45%), farmers (25%), individual consumers (20%) and hotels (10%)
- Determinants of demand and prices of sheep are festivals, seasons, diseases, household expenditures and personal preferences ( color, age, etc.)
- The market routines where Atsbi sheep headed to are Adigrat(15%), Wukro (45%) and Mekelle (40%)
- Major constraints of marketing sheep are:
  - Lack of transportation facilities
  - Lack of quality sheep supply
  - Gaps in marketing linkages ( horizontal and vertical)

The value chain study also revealed the below listed constraints that were reported and ranked by farmers:

- Lack of input supply ( e.g. drugs)
- Diseases and parasites
- Feed shortage
- No selection of animals for breeding purpose
- Low dressing percentage of Atsbi sheep
- Lack of market linkage and information

These constraints will be addressed by a number of interventions:

- Improving animal health services in a joint manner with different stakeholders
- Introduction of intensive forage development strategies
- Incorporating community based breeding programs
- Engaging in capacity building programs

After the marketing presentation, the floor was opened for comments and feedbacks.

### Feedback from participants on Atsbi sheep marketing

- With regard to different quality criteria, It is better to see the export and local market on a separate context
- Atsbi sheep has a preferential niche in the market and this should be traced
- There are collectors of sheep in Atsbi what they do is they transfer the animals by welfare but, the problem is in Mekelle there are no collection centers.
- I think there is no market information problem, but the information life span ends up on shelf so the problem is related to dissemination.
- Mekelle as a market place should be mentioned in the rapid value chain presentation.
- Health aspect of Atsbi sheep needs crucial attention since it is affecting the export market. For example, Abergelle abattoir has been found many defects with red offal. Hides and skins also need special concern.

## Reflections from market actors: questions and answers

1. Abergelle abattoir
  - What type of sheep do you buy?
  - What are the reasons for downsizing of your staff? Is it currently functional?
  - Transportation is a bottle neck for shoat marketing why do not you establish collection centers in different woredas?
  - The price is unfair how could this be fixed?
2. Traders
  - Where, when and how do you buy your sheep
  - What are the common challenges you face? What are the solutions you suggest?
  - Who are your major customers?
3. Collector/fatteners
  - What feed resources do you feed to your animals?
  - Do you think you are getting what you deserve?
4. Butchers
  - Where, when and how do you buy your sheep?
  - What are the common challenges you face? What are the solutions you suggest?
  - Who are your major customers?

### Responses to feedback

- The types of sheep Abergelle abattoir buys includes: one or two years old, uncastrated and male. The company has down sized its staff due to shortage of skilled man power, but it is partially functional. There are complains in quality of packing and meat. Competition from domestic market is affecting the volume of export. There are limitations in penetrating to the international market.
- In response to the buying price, the company believes it is fair and farmers or suppliers can supply year round and this will secure their livelihood. According to representative of Abergelle abattoir, farmers tend to sell their sheep during festivals and religious ceremonies, but this will not guarantee sustainable benefit, instead they can be more beneficial through year round sell to the company( win win approach)
- According to the traders they buy sheep from Atsbi, Dera and Hawzien market places and main suppliers are farmers. The age of sheep they buy depends on the purpose of fattening i.e., 6-9 months for longer fattening purpose while for short period fattening one year and year and half aged ones are purchased. The volume of purchase depends on market demand especially when festivals and religious ceremonies are nearer, but on average it ranges between 10-15 sheep per week. The average selling price of fattened sheep is 800 birr for medium sized sheep while 1000-1400birr for well fattened ones.
- Lack of shade (land) was mentioned as major constraint by the traders. They urged immediate solution of woreda administration.
- The butchers responded that they buy the sheep from farmers. They visit Atsbi and Dera market places. According to them, costumers prefer fatty meats rather than lean meat and Atsbi sheep are acclaimed for this quality. During periods of feed gap this demand reduces significantly.
- Collectors (fatteners) complained that they are not getting fair market and traders are the one become beneficiary (advantageous). Gap in market information, lack of cooperatives, veterinary services and absence of feed suppliers are mentioned as bottle necks. They feed their animals with locally available feed resources like grasses, crop residues and local beverage leftovers "Atella". They allocate some land for grazing. There is a difference in price when they directly sell to individual costumers and traders: they get fair price in the first case while traders set (fetch) lower prices.

- There were such efforts from woreda administration bodies to shorten the marketing chain in order to enable farmers to get better prices. They provided lorry to supply to Abergelle abattoir, but things were interrupted. The administration gives land to large scale fatteners so farmers should form cooperatives.
- According to woreda marketing experts, Atsbi supplied 37,000 sheep and 56,000 goat hides and skins last year. It was mentioned that 51% of Atsbi community's livelihood is based on animal production.
- It was highly emphasized that farmers should sell their animals to Abregelle abattoir on regular basis rather than selling on festivals and religious ceremonies. This will guarantee year-round income on sustainable basis.
- The major bottlenecks mentioned are:
  - lack of cooperatives,
  - diseases,
  - market information gap,
  - feed shortage
  - capacity building



## Group discussions

All participants of the MSP meeting were assigned to two groups and discussed on major constraints, prioritized as most determinant bottle necks, in sheep marketing in the woreda. They came up with feasible solutions or suggestions.

### Group one: Formation of cooperatives

Issues arising: If they sell their sheep on individual basis, the bargaining power of farmers can be weak leading to lower prices. The following points were mentioned as advantage of forming cooperatives:

- Increasing the bargaining power of farmers
- Linking sheep fatteners with Abergelle Export Quality Slaughtering PLC and increasing the quantity and quality sheep
- They can purchase wheat bran and other feeds in large amount from Mekelle by renting trucks
- They can get loans from microfinance and other administrative bodies in the form of package.

Actions identified are listed in the table below.

Activities	Responsible agents	When
Developing common interest and vision	Farmers	December
Selection of members	PA administration, DAs	December
Getting legal body	BoA, woreda administration	January
Action plan preparation	Farmers, BoA, LIVES	February
Capacity building training and experience sharing	LIVES	February
Getting unsecured inputs(loans, land, feed etc)	Administration bodies, Dedebit microfinance, BoA, LIVES	

### Group two: Market information and capacity building

Group members came up with the following solutions or suggestions.

#### 1. Capacity building

Issue	Activities	Responsible agents	When
Marketing training	Selection of individuals and cooperatives who invest on fattening and related trainings	Woreda and PA administrative, BoA	December
Breeding training	Farmers who engage in sheep production will be consulted on community based breeding program	ICARDA, TARI, BoA	December
Breed selection (pure breed)	Awareness creation, ram selection and management of breed	ICARDA, TARI	November
Animal health aspects	Training related to control and prevention of internal and external parasites, vaccines and diseases	Abergelle export abattoir and woreda veterinarians	December
Fattening activities related training for	Awareness on feed preparation, housing	LIVES, TARI, Abergelle abattoir, BoA	December

farmers	management and feed formulation to relative participants		
Cost benefit analysis of fattening	Training on the essence of fattening	LIVES, TARI, and Abergelle abattoir	December

## 2. Market information

Issue	Activities	Responsible agents	When
Study of livestock market price information	Collection of market information	Producers, woreda market experts	December
Introduction of SMS mobile technologies	Training about the technologies and inputs	ICARDA	January
International livestock market information	Information on meat price and demand	Abergelle abattoir	January
Experience sharing	Field visit	Woreda; LIVES and ICARDA	January



## Feedback on group reports

The following comments and suggestions were provided by participants:

For group one presentation:

- In the beginning, it is better to start as informal cooperative rather than being formal, as the process of getting legal status often takes time.
- Size of members should be manageable: it is advisable to start with small numbers and new ones can join as the marketing group is strengthened and broadened.
- Prioritizing capacity building training and experience sharing tours.
- The cooperative should be functional as soon as possible; otherwise eagerness and commitment of team members can fade as time goes on.
- Closer support and follow up should be provided by the district OARD, LIVES and the Cooperative Desk Office

For group two presentation:

- Dissemination of market information through radio is expensive, so projects should be sponsors
- It is better to say gap in dissemination of market information rather than saying market information gap. The previous one is specific while the later one seems general and ambiguous.
- ICARDA will bring its marketing expert and provide capacity building training in Atsbi.
- Abegelle abattoir should update farmers with international market information and quality parameters in demand. This will improve quality of live animal supply and farmers' income.

## Final steps and closing remarks

The participants selected stakeholder leaders for next meeting. The OARD will lead the MSP while ICARDA and LIVES will play supportive roles. Besides, the platform will be held every four months. The next meeting will take place in March 2014. Ato Alemayehu Fekadu, from the woreda Administration's Communication and Public Relations, was selected as the facilitator for next meeting.

The closing remark was made by Alemayehu Fekau, Atsbi-Womberta district Communication and Public Relations Officer, He said Atsbi was lucky to host the MSP meeting and woreda administration bodies are always ready to work with both projects. He underlined that the meeting of the day was fruitful in terms of:

- Major sheep marketing constraints were clearly identified and discussed
- Valuable suggestions and comments were interacted among participants
- Possible assignments were given to respective bodies
- Team spirit and partnership was developed

Finally he thanked all participants and announced that the meeting was officially closed.

## Annex 1: List of participants

Name of participant	Kebelle	Position
Abreha Berhe	Atsbi	Trader
Hagos Girmay	G/kidan	Collector/fattening
Mitslal G/meskel	G/kidan	Collector/ fattening
G/medhin G/hair	Atsbi	Trader
Kalyu G/yowhans	Atsbi	Collector/ fattening
Berhe Girmay	Atsbi	Trader
G/kiross G/selama	Atsbi	Livestock expert
Adhanom Baraki	Atsbi	Veterinarian
Yirgalem G/hiwet	G/kidan	Collector/ fattening
Birhane Kahsay	Atsbi	Quality control expert
Birhane Gebre	G/Naele	DA
Almaz Meles	G/Naele	Collector/ fattening
Alembirhan Harifeyo	Atsbi	Woreda Agricultural Adm
Selomon Berihu	Atsbi	Super visor
Woldu Mezgebe	Atsbi	Woreda Administration
Alemayo Fikadu	Atsbi	Information desk
Tekle Hiluf	Atsbi	Dedebit Miro finance
Nuguse berihu	G/Naele	Collector/ fattening
Kasahun Meresa	Atsbi	Budget planning
W/ro Abriha Muruts	Habes	Collector/ fattening
W/ro Muzey Mezgebo	Habes	Collector/ fattening
Dawit W/Mariam	ILRI-LIVES	Zonal coordinator
Aynalem Haile	ICARDA	Scientist
Barbara Rischkowsky	ICARDA	Senior Scientist
Weldeyesus G/yowhens	TARI	Researcher
G/medhin Abreha	Mekelle	Production
Solomon Negash	BOARD	Expert
Getachew Legesse	ICARDA	Consultant
Selamawit Hailemichael	SNN	Advisory
Yayneshet Tesfay	ILRI -LIVES	Livestock expert
G/medhin G/Wahid	ILRI-LIVES	Regional coordinator
ZeraTsion Fiseha	Mekelle	TAMPA
Birhane Alemu	Mekelle	Driver TAMPA
Mengistu Regassa	TARI	Researcher
Haile W/gebrial	Mekelle	Driver TARI
Solomon Gizaw	ILRI	Consultant



## Annex 2: Program

Time	Program item	Who
08:30	Registration	LIVES/ICARDA
09:00	Welcome	Ato woldu chief administrator
09:10	Introductions and objectives of the meeting	Selamawit(SNV)
09:15	Introduction to the project	Barbara(ICARDA)/Yayneshet(ILRI)
09:30	Progress to- date	Aynalem (ICARD)/ Yayneshet(ILRI)
09:55	Why MSP?	Selamawit(SNV)
10:10	Discussion	
10:30	Tea break	
11:00	Presentation on marketing in Atsbi	Getachew/Embaye
11:25	Reflection from actors	Sheep collectors, butchers, experts, producers, and Abergelle Export Slaughter PLC
12:00	Discussion	
13:00	Lunch	
14:00	Group discussion	Selamawit (SNV)
15:00	Tea break	
15:30	Report back from group	
15:50	Action plan for the next 6 months	
16:50	Report back on the plans	
17:00	Closing	

## Annex 3: Platform background

In May 2013, LIVES established a small ruminant platform in Atsbi-Womberta district. This platform is narrowly focused on those value chain actors and service providers involved in sheep fattening in selected PAs. As LIVES is a partner with ICARDA and TARI on small ruminant value chain development in Atsbi, it is essential to broaden the focus to include wider sheep production objectives and more targeted PAs. Therefore, the small ruminant platform needs to be reformed to include other stakeholders residing in the district and beyond. Moreover, it is also felt that providing basic facilitation skills is essential for sustaining platforms. In this regard, SNV staff members expressed their interest in sharing their experience in the successful establishment and management of platforms, and equip platform members with facilitation and brokering skills.

### Potential platform objectives

The objectives of the small ruminant platform in Atsbi-Womberta district will include the following:

- Facilitating the sharing of resources, knowledge, skills and experiences in community based sheep breeding and value chain based sheep fattening among platform members;
- Empowering local communities and actors to analyse their own constraints and opportunities and improve the performance of Atsbi sheep;
- Discussing emerging technical, marketing and policy challenges in relation to sheep production and suggesting possible solutions;
- Carrying out advocacy works on key issues that affect sheep production (e.g., inputs, services and market information provision by private and public sectors; market policies and regulations);
- Scaling up/out of best practices and lessons learnt within and outside Atsbi-Womerta district.

### Expected outcomes

The expected outcome of such a platform is to contribute to the genetic improvement and income generating capacity of Atsbi-sheep by creating human and social capital needed to sustain creative thinking and innovative practices, and institutionalizing the culture of knowledge and skill sharing.

### Sustainability

Local ownership is a critical factor in sustaining the continued functioning of commodity platforms. Thus, the leading role will be left to the local public service providing institutes and the community at large, and LIVES and ICARDA will have limited power in the initial formation and facilitation of the platform. To ensure full ownership of the platform, division of roles and detailed work plans will be developed together with other actors of the platform. Effective facilitation skills, and building trust, confidence and understanding among the platform members are also important in sustaining a functional platform.

### Participants, place and frequency of meeting

Although membership of the platform will be flexible, all the actors involved in sheep breeding, small scale fattening, marketing and research will be brought together to discuss constraints and opportunities. Participants representing farmers, private veterinary suppliers, feed traders, Dedit Credit Service Institute, live sheep collectors, local butcher houses, Abergelle export quality slaughter PLC, livestock and marketing experts, development agents, Women's Office representative, and local authorities will be invited in the initial platform meeting.

The platform meeting will be convened in Atsbi-Womberta Office of Agriculture and Rural Development or in the local administration's meeting hall. The frequency of platform meeting will be between 3-4 times per year, subject to changes as proposed by the platform members.

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