

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

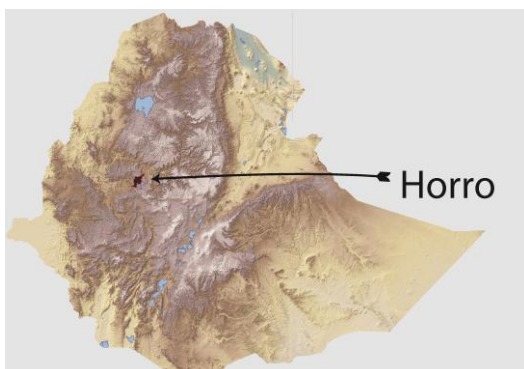


Background

Horro is a highland district in Western Ethiopia. Most inhabitants are Orthodox Christians hence sheep production and sales are influenced by national and religious holidays. The three main lambing periods are in December to January, April to June and November. The predominant production system in this region is mixed crops and livestock.

Value chain challenges

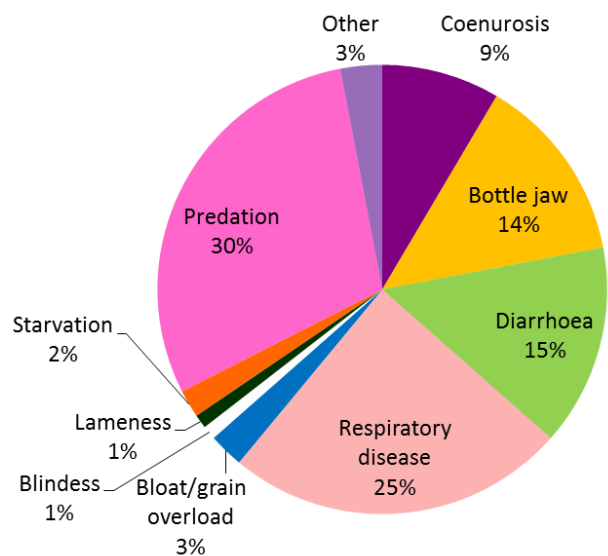
The main meat production constraints are diseases followed by starvation (Figure 1). Religion plays a role curtailing meat sales during fasting periods (almost 70% of the year). This leads to demand peaks in April, September until October and December and January. Limited cash availability also influences meat consumption.



Livestock mortality

The main reason of livestock deaths in the region are diseases with about 64%. This trend is reinforced by the absence of veterinary services. Education on disease control is not common. Many grazing grounds are in swampy areas which further promotes the spread of diseases.

Figure 1: Reasons for livestock mortality



Food safety

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

- Trauma and stress to the animal before slaughter is avoided, which favours better meat quality.
- Butchering is done carefully, offal and muscle meat are kept apart. It is reported that very poor people or those of low social standing may consume dead animals under extreme circumstance.
- Meat that seems risky is usually boiled. Generally, local people like to consume lightly cooked meat.

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: market-oriented sustainable sheep production and sufficient meat consumption in the diets of the value chain actors.*

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