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## Stimulating Market Led Livestock Production through Information Communication Technologies: Experiences from Pastoral Areas of Eastern Africa

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**Presenter Information**

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## **Stimulating market led livestock production through information communication technologies : experiences from pastoral areas of eastern Africa**

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**Key words** : livestock , information , communication , technology

**Introduction** A reliable livestock market information system is a key element in supporting decision-making of traders , middlemen and policy makers and contributes to the development of the livestock sub-sector . It enhances the capacity of producers and traders to anticipate and plan for their livestock business transactions . Policymakers will make use of the information as an integral component of their planning processes as countries strive to improve the capacity of the livestock sub-sector to contribute to enhanced livelihoods and improved economic conditions . The objectives of the Livestock Information Network and Knowledge System (LINKS) are to report livestock price and volume data consistently and in time , avail information through various media to stakeholders in livestock marketing , establish a livestock marketing database for reference in planning , research and monitoring of marketing trends , and to provide early warning information for disaster preparedness .

**Materials and methods** The spatial location of markets facilitates the integration of markets into a reporting network both nationally and across different countries is the basis for building a regional decision support system based on spatial models of livestock movement and marketing off-take . Livestock market monitors are typically drawn from collaborating national institutions of each major livestock market location (Stuth , et al . , 2006) in each country . They collect data on livestock prices and volumes through interviews with traders during the peak of a market day . The data is coded and sent using short message service (SMS) , E-mail or posted directly to the web .

**Results and discussion** Through collaboration with all stakeholders , LINKS technologies were adopted and integrated in developing national livestock marketing information systems for Kenya , Ethiopia and Tanzania . This resulted to a basic network of national , regional and international organizations integrating livestock marketing information in their systems . Training workshops was carried out to sensitize the stakeholders . The focus of the training was to make them understand the importance of livestock price information and equip them with simple , workable , evidence-based systems for data collecting and analysis , coupled with user friendly information delivery mechanisms . This led to an establishment of an effective and sustainable livestock market information system designed to serve the needs of producers , consumers , traders , processors and policymakers and elicit appropriate marketing behaviour . Currently we have 14 , 17 and 32 active livestock markets in Tanzania , Kenya and Ethiopia respectively . In Kenya at market level , training of traders , middlemen and producers were conducted in 33 markets within 15 districts reaching out to over 5 ,000 people with over 10% as women . It was noted that women participate in decision making in livestock issues , but they are nevertheless less visible due to cultural constraints .

Livestock market information is now continuously generated and disseminated using print media , internet (<http://www.lmiske.net> (Kenya) ; <http://www.lmiset.net> (Ethiopia) ; <http://www.lmistz.net> (Tanzania) and mobile phones accessible in all the three countries . There is evidence that stakeholders are benefiting from us of the LINKS services as there is increasing demand for the products .

**Conclusions** Basic communication technologies such as SMS can play a major role in improving connectivity among markets and this can help communities of livestock producers identify markets for their livestock and improve their knowledge of prices in those markets . Developing the technical and human capacity to meet market information needs and decision support for livestock producers helps to bridge the gap between markets and producers .

### **Reference**

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