

Title: Goat value chain development for empowering rural women in India

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ABSTRACT

Small land holdings, low agricultural productivity and lack of employment opportunities, have compelled over 25% of the rural population in India, to live in poverty and livestock is a major source of their livelihood. 50% of the 138.27 million rural households keep goats. 70% of the 154 million goats are maintained by the poor for milk, meat, manure and emergency cash reserve (CIRG, 2013). However, they have not been able to realize the potential of goat husbandry due to lack of veterinary services, financial support and market linkage. The only existing scheme of the Government of India during the XI Five Year Plan (2007-12), spent only 10% of the budget, due to poor interaction with goat keepers (GOI, 2013). In the absence of good extension network, new technologies could not be transferred to farmers (CIRG, 2013).

To empower poor goat keepers, particularly women, BAIF in association with ILRI, implemented a goat value chain development project in backward villages of Jharkhand and Rajasthan States, wherein women were mobilized and trained to form their groups to maintain elite bucks of local breeds and to share good management practices. Local youth, preferably women, were selected and trained as Field Guides, to serve 4-5 groups each, by organizing health camps, vaccinating against locally prevalent diseases, deworming, castration, guiding on supplementary feeding, cultivation of fodder and marketing of goats. An innovative platform was facilitated for networking among various stakeholders such as goat keepers, veterinarians, Disease Investigation Laboratory, traders, meat shop owners, pharmacists, feed suppliers and financial institutions. Regular interaction enabled them to understand the expectations of others and to focus on improving the productivity and profitability. Goat keepers understood the market needs and untapped opportunities. Local youth initiated direct marketing by transporting goats to urban markets which fetched 25-30% higher price over the local market. Goat keeping families who adopted good husbandry practices, could earn 250-300% higher income, due to birth of healthy kids of elite breeds, low mortality, high growth rate, good health, early maturity, sale of animals on weight and as breeding stock. Field Guides ensured programme sustainability by providing services beyond the project.

India has been facing shortage of mutton and the annual demand is likely to increase from 0.6 million tons in 2011 to 1.275 million in 2030, causing a shortfall of 0.25 million tons (FAO, 2012). Learning from this project, productivity of goats can be improved to meet the growing demand, if the Government can provide technical and policy support for Genetic Improvement, Disease Surveillance and Control, Feed Management, Marketing and Empowerment of Goat Keepers and Field Guides.

References:

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