

# Fodder Adoption Project

## Enhancing livelihoods of poor livestock keepers through increasing use of fodder



### Background

Livestock are an important pathway out of poverty for the rural poor. Worldwide, 50% of the world's poor own livestock and depend on them for their livelihoods. Livestock are living assets contributing to food security and are an important source of protein and minerals for nutritional security.

There is increasing demand for livestock products worldwide in the form of meat, milk and milk products such as cheese and butter. This presents poor livestock producers with significant opportunities to increase benefits from their livestock and raise income through livestock markets. Access to fodder and water are often identified as major constraints to livestock productivity. This inability to feed livestock adequately remains one of the most widespread global constraints in the livestock sector. Removing it would assist smallholder livestock producers to improve their livelihoods by taking advantage of market opportunities and building assets.

Past efforts to enhance smallholder livestock production have shown little evidence of widespread adoption of new technological innovations such as new fodder options or new ways of feeding livestock. This has been attributed to a range of factors including poor approaches to introducing technologies, inappropriate technologies and services relative to the needs of the poor, low sustainability of the changes introduced, inadequate local livestock-support organizations and weak linkages to markets. Recent experiences in Nigeria and India focusing on fodder issues have highlighted the importance of understanding and developing partnerships and processes and working in what is known as an "innovation systems framework" to achieve sustainable improvements in poverty reduction. In effect this involves focusing on putting knowledge to use to achieve desired social/economic outcomes. Such knowledge is held by different "actors" within the system; looking at how these actors interact, their working practices and the policy environment in which they operate can help to remove bottlenecks to development. Recent experiences in Southeast Asia with developing forage technologies with active participation of poor farmers and local extension services have shown that this approach results in high adoption rates at project sites and surrounding areas.

Furthermore, studies by International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) and their partners show that when fodder options are linked to markets for meat and milk and when they have direct effects on income generation, fodder options to support livestock production are competitive with other farm enterprises in terms of returns to land and labour. These successful experiences in fodder uptake and significant accumulation of knowledge on preferences for fodder plants, seed systems, fodder management and integration of fodder into feeding systems provide the technical platform for this project.

### Project Goals

The current project seeks to engage with a wide range of stakeholders to strengthen the capacity of poor livestock keepers to:

- select and adopt fodder options
- access market opportunities to enable them to improve their livelihoods

The project seeks to achieve these goals in ways that will ensure the sustainability of their farming systems.

The programme is framed around four overall outputs and associated activities. The project seeks to establish:

- Mechanisms for strengthening and/or establishing consortia of players in the livestock/fodder arena to allow small-scale innovations to spread across systems.
- Options for getting research off the shelf and into practice including innovative communication strategies and strategies for making changes at farm level to sustainably improve fodder supply.
- Enhanced capacity of project partners to experiment with and use fodder technologies through effective communication, improved access to technical information and training and a better understanding of the role of diverse players and their interactions in successful fodder development.
- Generic lessons with wide applicability on innovation processes and systems, communication strategies and partnerships that provide a suitable environment for fodder innovations to spread across systems.

## Geographical focus

The project is implemented in Ethiopia, Syria and Vietnam.

**Ethiopia.** The project has activities in four pilot learning sites. We are working with the *Improving Productivity and Market Success of Ethiopian Farmers (IPMS)* project (a Canadian-funded Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development project, implemented under ILRI's leadership in collaboration with national organizations and other CGIAR centres) in Atsbi, Alamata, Mieso and Ada'a.

**Syria:** The project is being implemented at El-Bab, Salameih and Tel-Amri in Aleppo, Hama and Homs provinces respectively. It builds upon previous forage introduction by ICARDA and the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform in El-Bab, and ICARDA and Aga Khan Development Foundation in Salameih.

**Vietnam.** The project is working at two learning sites. These are located in Ea Kar district, Daklak and in Ky Anh district, Ha Tinh. In Daklak, the project builds on previous introduction of forages by CIAT and Tay Nguyen University. In Ha Tinh, the project works within the project area of IFAD Loan Project 'Programme for improving market participation of the poor (IMPP)' using the lessons on fodder innovations generated at the Daklak learning site.

## Project partners in the implementation of the programme

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) is the implementing agent on behalf of the System-wide Livestock Programme. SLP provide strategic guidance and provide links with a sister project on Fodder Innovations funded by the UK Department for International Development. The programme is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). ILRI coordinates the project in the three countries, and leads activities on the ground in Ethiopia in collaboration with the IPMS project which has an ongoing programme of fodder development research. In Syria activities are led by the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) with co-operation from the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and the Aga Khan Foundation.

In Vietnam activities are led by the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) with co-operation from the Vietnam National Institute of Animal Husbandry, Tay Nguyen University, district and provincial Departments of Rural Development at the pilot learning sites and the IFAD IMPP project.

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