

4 GOAT AND SHEEP REARING

SHEEP AND GOATS ARE VALUABLE ASSETS THAT CAN BE A POWERFUL SPRINGBOARD FOR INCOME DIVERSIFICATION AND FURTHER ASSET ACCUMULATION FOR FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS.

Tigray's hilly landscape and availability of bushes and shrubs make the area suitable for sheep and goat grazing. There is a long tradition of goat and sheep rearing in the woreda, but mostly by households headed by men. Farm Africa's project helped female-headed households living in extreme poverty build their household assets and escape food insecurity by engaging in rearing sheep and goats. Women taking part were each given a 'package' of three sheep or goats and technical training on forage management and how to care for their animals, on the understanding they would each pass on three of their goats' or sheep's offspring to another woman in need.

Beneficiaries were selected in a participatory fashion by 'Community Care Coalition Committees', whose members were drawn from a range of social groups including women, young people, the elders, male household heads, and religious representatives. These committees have been formally delegated by the Government to ensure all development expenditure (including Farm Africa's) is transparently deployed.

Once the list of households was approved by the Committee general assemblies, the women were organised into groups of about 20, each with an assigned leader. The groups regularly met so the women could receive their training, exchange experiences on rearing and marketing of their animals, and organise the transfer of the offspring.

"I was selected by the community leaders in 2014 to receive three goats. I lost my husband in the war and earning income and having enough food to eat has been hard ever since.

"Having received the goats, I was committed to looking after them well. I felt honour-bound to do a good job. The community had put their faith in me and I needed to provide for my children. Before I received the goats my children had to drop out of school and I had to send them away to other families to ensure they could eat. Now, they have moved back in with me and I can afford to send them to school."

– Aster Fasil

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FOR IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY IN TIGRAY, ETHIOPIA

Land in Tigray's rugged mountains is scarce, and many farm sizes are very small. Many women, especially widows, and young people who have little access to land struggle to produce enough to feed their families. With funding from Irish Aid and the UK Department for International Development, Farm Africa worked directly with nearly 6,400 women and landless young people in Tigray's Ahferom woreda, providing them with the knowledge and skills to successfully bolster their food security and incomes through farming and rearing livestock.

This booklet is one of a series of six focusing on each of the project's key components:

1. Integrated watershed management
2. Fruit and vegetable production
3. Poultry production
4. Goat and sheep rearing
5. Honey production and marketing
6. Small-scale irrigation



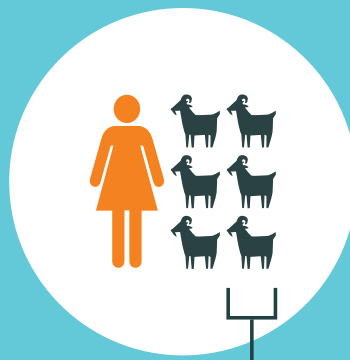
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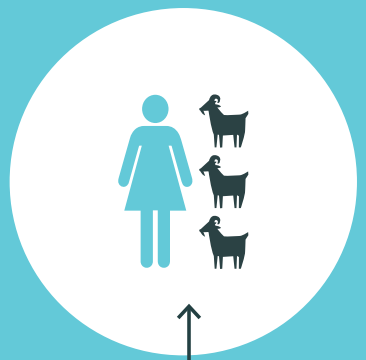
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Aster received three pregnant goats from Farm Africa.



Aster gave three of the goat's kids to Embrafash, who will also give three kids to another woman in need.



THE REVOLVING MECHANISM

After the technical training had been delivered, Farm Africa field staff negotiated the schedule and procedures for transfer of animals to beneficiaries, as well as the 'pass-on' mechanism. Each beneficiary received three pregnant goats or sheep, which were all local breeds, and found in the local markets. The animals were bought by a purchasing committee drawn from the woreda livestock husbandry expert, woreda animal healthcare expert, one project staff member, community leaders (for clients from their own kebeles) and the benefiting households themselves. The client was placed in charge of the final purchasing decision, with the purchasing committee providing technical advice on the status of pregnancy, breeding potential and overall condition. The committee was also responsible for ensuring that each animal was vaccinated prior to being taken home.

Another element of the revolving mechanism was a group insurance fund. This fund, denominated at 7% of the cost of the herd bought by the group, was established with a 5% contribution from clients and a 2% contribution from project resources. The fund was deposited in the respective kebele rural savings and credit cooperative (RUSACCO) in the name of the goat group. The purpose of the fund was to replace any animals lost due to unforeseen circumstances prior to giving birth. The groups took careful control of these funds, and agreed the criteria for the replacement of lost animals. One key advantage of this fund was that it helped the group members to formalise relations with the RUSACCOs, familiarise themselves with the services and procedures of the RUSACCOs, and pave the way for them to become potential clients.

The repayment mechanism for group members was carefully discussed and agreed prior to the purchase of the animals. Primary beneficiaries were obliged to repay three kids within two years of receiving three pregnant goats or sheep. These three kids were paid in kind to a second tier of beneficiaries, once the kids were six to eight months old. The procedures for selecting the second-tier beneficiaries, and enforcement of the mechanism, was managed carefully by the same community development committee using similar procedures to the first round.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GOAT SCHEME

In phase 1 of the programme, 487 female-headed households benefited from the package of three pregnant goats or sheep. During phase 2, a total of 3,593 households (of which 3,565 or 99% of are female-headed) benefited from the goat scheme, with 2,788 receiving packages directly from the project, and 805 households receiving transfers from primary beneficiaries.

In 2016, a mid-term report concluded that goat and sheep clients were able to earn average annual incomes of ETB 4,218 from the goat scheme, higher than Farm Africa's other packages of support, which were small-scale irrigation (ETB 3,279 or £111), beekeeping (ETB 2,604 or £88), and poultry (ETB 2,010 or £68). The mid-term report survey also demonstrated that the goat/sheep package beneficiaries were able to fill the food gap by an average of one month compared to the situation before the project.

Dietary diversity of beneficiary households also improved. During the mid-term review, household dietary diversity was measured by analysing the nutritional intake of the household members in the previous 24 hours, using a tool called the Household Dietary Diversity Index (HDDI). The food groups assessed included cereals, root crops, vegetables, fruits, meat/beef, egg, fish, pulses and others. Households that had eaten fewer than four food groups during the last 24-hour period were considered as least nourished (lowest); those who had consumed four to five food groups were medium nourished; and those who consumed more than five food groups were better nourished (high). The survey result showed that a significant proportion of the male and female household members (over 60%) achieved medium nourished level. Earlier analysis applying the Integrated Household Method confirmed this figure.

The mid-term report findings show that the majority of participants have now increased their goat/sheep herd size from nil to at least six animals. Some beneficiaries managed to accumulate as many as 15 goats during the project lifetime. Income for women usually comes from the sale of an average of two offspring annually to cover their basic needs. Usually these cover agricultural inputs, schooling for children, household consumption, buying more valuable assets (eg cattle) and improvements to the home. People are now better able to participate in savings and credit schemes.



Farm Africa / Nichole Sobocki



“Before, I couldn’t afford to buy livestock and no one would lend me any money to improve my situation.

I had to sell any livestock I had after my husband died just to survive, I couldn’t afford to feed the animals, so slowly but surely any livestock I hadn’t sold died. Without investment, I couldn’t replenish my stock or get out of the cycle of poverty I was trapped in.

At first I didn’t trust the community leader and didn’t believe that Farm Africa could deliver what they said. But once I received my goats and returned to my little homestead, I was determined to look after them, and eager to show Farm Africa that I appreciated their support. I feel happy that I have a herd now, now people will lend me seeds or money because I have assets. I am proud that the goats are truly mine.

Being able to hand over three goats to another woman made me really proud and happy that I could hand the benefit on. I want women who benefitted from the project to come together, a club of sorts so they can work together.

The drought last year was hard, but thanks to the goats I know I have something to fall back on. I sold two goats so I could buy grass and feed to get through any drought.”

– Aster Fasil

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPANSION OF THE GOAT SCHEME

Goat and sheep rearing is well suited to the landscape and culture in Tigray and has significant potential to reduce poverty there.

There is a significant degree of experience of goat and sheep rearing among communities.

Provided that farmers are committed to the use of cut and carry grass, there are large areas of hillsides and closure areas that provide potential sources of feed throughout the woreda, especially due to efforts by Farm Africa and others to restore watersheds.

At woreda and kebele level, there is a body of committed livestock husbandry and animal health experts who are keen to deliver advice and support to the community.

In Ahferom in particular, many potential beneficiaries are not too far from main roads and potential market areas (Axum, Adwa, Adigrat, Mekelle) as well as institutions who may want to buy in bulk such as universities, hospitals and military camps.

LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCALING UP

For the sake of maximising reach of the intervention, beneficiaries received local breeds of goats and sheep that had limited meat potential and very little milking potential. There was a challenge with availability of improved breeds, experience of their husbandry in the woreda, as well as a desire to reach as many households as possible. A switch to high-yielding dairy varieties could increase the potential income generation benefit of goat rearing, and the scope for households to improve their nutrition through consumption of goats' milk.

At the beginning of the project, the team did not pay sufficient attention to availability of feed – either cut and carry, or browsing on restored landscapes. Over time, this improved, but it compromised the productivity of the earlier herds distributed, especially when there were periodic droughts.

Again, in the earlier phase, insufficient attention was paid to vaccination of animals, and ensuring households had access to basic animal health services, which in some cases led to deaths of animals. This has been largely addressed both through pre-

emptive vaccinating of animals, and through woreda investments in animal health capacity in recent years.

There will always be a market for sheep and goats, but as with elsewhere, prices fluctuate wildly depending on the season. Investment in improved breeds, possibly even dairy breeds, as well as farmer level coordination on marketing, could make a significant difference to the revenues households can earn from sale of animals.

Some of the beneficiaries of the goat package tended to maintain large herds of animals for a long period of time. In addition to being an inefficient use of feed, and detrimental to the environment, this is a highly risky form of savings. Future rollout of the scheme should encourage households to make use of savings services by RUSACCOs, and invest in diversified livelihoods or asset bases to minimise risk.

Most of the clients were extremely happy to transfer three goat kids to the next level of beneficiaries. However, there were some who resisted. This was mostly down to lack of clear process and expectation management among the kebele development committees, and areas where the outreach on the scheme with communities was perhaps rushed, compromising their ownership of the process.

During the close-out phase, the project team conducted intensive consultations on the goat transfer mechanism with key stakeholders (representatives of beneficiaries, community leaders and woreda line bureau representatives). The key conclusion was that the in-kind mechanism is most appropriate for the poorest of the poor, and once all eligible poor households have been reached with the in-kind revolving mechanism, means will be sought to incorporate them into the formal microfinance system to meet additional household investment needs. During these consultations, it became clear that the Ahferom Woreda Agriculture and Rural Development Office, Cooperatives Promotion Desk, as well as community leaders plan to sustain the goat revolving scheme after the closure of the Farm Africa project.

The project team has also established a revolving grant guideline including for the goat scheme, which has been agreed, signed and shared by all stakeholders.

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