

Dairy goat project improves women's welfare in Afghanistan

Goat husbandry offers a good entry point for rural development interventions in Afghanistan for two reasons – goats are a major source of livelihoods, and are generally owned by women. An IFAD-funded project (2006-2009) introduced simple technologies to improve dairy goat production. A 2010 study conducted in 14 villages in Baghlan and Nangarhar provinces of Afghanistan showed that the project had generated huge impacts.

Low-cost technologies

The greatest impact came from deworming and vaccinating goats against diseases. Mortality and abortion rates fell from 20-25% to 4%. Milk yields increased by 10-15%. By 2010, all households which had received goats from the project, and half of households which had not, had vaccinated and dewormed their animals. In Nangarhar province, after seeing the results in project villages, 30-40% of farmers in neighboring villages have also begun to vaccinate their goats.

Before the project, dairy processing methods were usually unhygienic and inefficient, and mastitis was widespread.

The project introduced new processing methods and improved hygiene. The shelf life of milk doubled. The number of households producing cheese increased by one-third. The market price of butter and cheese increased by 20% and the price of female goats (does) by 10%. The incidence of sub-clinical mastitis fell from 27% to 4%.

For each technology – vaccination and deworming, improved hygiene and efficient

processing – the financial benefits were almost double the costs.

Creating development platforms

The project distributed does to poor women under a 'pass on the gift' scheme: recipients would give the first female kid to another woman in the village who would do the same in turn. Two hundred women have received does either directly from the project or through this scheme. Community leaders are continuing the scheme even after the project closed.

Women's associations were established in each village to improve marketing and information sharing. The associations now have nearly 550 members in the target villages, and neighboring villages are setting up similar groups. Government agencies and NGOs are now using the associations as platforms for implementing community development programs.

Partners

- Livestock Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Afghanistan
- Ministry of Women's Affairs, Afghanistan
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- Dutch Committee for Afghanistan
- Serve Afghanistan
- International Fund for Agricultural Development