

IDEA-NEW project yields higher income for thousands of livestock farmers

IDEA-NEW

The 30th November 2013, DCA-VET successfully wined up the IDEA-NEW livestock project, which started in April 2010. The Incentives Driving Economic Alternatives for the North, East and West (IDEA-NEW) was a programme funded by USAID-Afghanistan and implemented by DAI and its sub-contractor ACDI/VOCA. The purpose of this five-year programme was to assist Afghan farmers in eliminating their dependence on the opium poppy economy. Primary target beneficiaries were farmers located in poppy prone districts of Balkh, Samangan, Sari Pol, Jawzjan, and Faryab provinces.

Objective

At the start of the IDEA-NEW livestock project, a network of animal health clinics (Veterinary Field Units) was already available, so farmers had easy access to veterinary services. The objective of this project was to expand the services provided by the VFUs to achieve higher livestock productivity and also to develop value chain for livestock products to maximize the benefit for producers.

Training

The 95 VFU staff received refresher training on different topics including basic laboratory techniques, pregnancy diagnosis, livestock extension, poultry husbandry, business skills, and training on the DCA-VET large and small ruminants extension packages. These courses enabled them to upgrade their technical knowledge and to increase their income through diversification of their technical interventions. Fifteen new paravets were trained to replace weak VFU staff or to fill in gaps in the VFU network. Additionally, 68 Basic Veterinary Workers were educated to assist the VFU staff in providing vaccinations, de-worming and other basic veterinary interventions in remote villages of the VFUs.

Extension

Besides training, extension was an important component of the project. The 88 VFU staff in Balkh, Sari Pol, Jawzajan and Faryab, as well as the twenty Local Female Extension Workers already available, as also eight newly trained Extension Workers were involved in this livestock outreach. Each of them established extension groups of 15 male or female farmers and trained them monthly on livestock husbandry. In total 144 farmers' groups were formed to upgrade the awareness on animal health conditions and to increase animal production.

Cashmere value chain

Cashmere campaigns were conducted in spring 2012 and 2013. In total, 5500 improved combs for cashmere harvesting were purchased and distributed to the farmers through the VFUs and local extension workers. The farmers were trained in cashmere harvesting and linked to the local cashmere buyer to sell their cashmere at a fixed market price to increase their income.

Karakul value chain

At the advice of an experienced karakul consultant, DCA-VET experimented with the innovative Namibian method of processing the karakul pelts, using metallic frames with hessian cloth. This method yields clean, shiny, pelts without wrinkles that can be sold at a higher price than the pelts being washed and dried according to the traditional Afghan methods. Almost 2000 VFU staff and farmers were trained in this Namibian drying method and 1500 metallic frames were distributed.

Feed banks

As feeding conditions in the winter often are an important bottleneck in livestock production in Afghanistan, 25 feed banks have been established in coordination with the local shura and local government. As an initial investment, 8 tons of feed were provided. The feed is sold to the farmers at market prices, and from the sale of the feed the feed bank can be re-supplied.

Impact

The IDEA-NEW project reached 291,000 benefitting farmers, and succeeded in introducing 530 women to the livestock sector, who are now proudly contributing to the family income. An impact survey revealed that the project greatly enhanced farmers' awareness on animal health/the need for vaccinations, and animal feeding. Where at the beginning of the project only 64% respectively 50% of the farmers knew about the importance of timely vaccinations and good feeding measures, at the end of the project 96 resp. 97% of the farmers were aware. As a result, lambing rate increased from 79% to 91% and family income increased by 17% of the original income.

