

Participation of Female-headed Households in Sheep Fattening in Ethiopia

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Background

Sheep production in Ethiopia is largely traditional and mainly undertaken by smallholder farmers in various agro-ecological contexts. Sheep fattening contributes to both subsistence and cash income generation. However, current sheep fattening activities at smallholder level are characterized by low growth rates and returns. Rearing and ownership of small stock is an important socio-economic activity for women in rural households. Therefore, this study aimed to understand how female-headed households compare to male-headed households in sheep fattening activities as a basis for formulating appropriate recommendations for interventions towards improving the role and productivity of women in the sheep fattening livestock sub-sector.

Materials and Methods

The participation of female-headed households in sheep fattening activities in small holder farms in rural areas of four regional States in Ethiopia, namely Amhara, Tigray, Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) was evaluated.

In each region, three districts were selected based on agro-ecological zones. Three villages in each district were purposively selected based on fattening experience, sheep population, distance from urban markets and infrastructure.

Probability proportionate to size technique was used to determine the number of sheep farmers to be studied. A total number of 432 respondents were interviewed using semi structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics (mean, percentage and frequency) were employed for data analysis using Statistical Analytic Software (SAS) ver. 9.2.

Results and Discussion

- 14% of sheep farming households were female-headed.
- There was no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) in educational status between the households.
- Female-headed households (FHH) had significantly ($P < 0.05$) longer fattening experience (6.95 years) compared to male-headed households (MHH, 6.55 years).
- MHH owned more fattening sheep (8.49) compared to FHH (7.84).
- MHH owned more ($P < 0.05$) land for grazing and cultivated fodder than FHH.
- Better sheep fattening performance in terms of body condition and average daily gain was observed in FHH. However, on average, MHH reported significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher profits from sales of fattened sheep.
- FHH are confronted by heavy domestic workload and resulting time constraints as well as limited access to resources such as land, credit and production inputs.
- Although FHH exhibited better skills in sheep husbandry compared to MHH, they were unable to realize substantial profits due to their low levels of business experience and participation in local markets.



Future Research

- To test **strategic technical interventions** to increase profits from sheep fattening in FHH.
- To enhance the **capacity of FHH** to identify, evaluate and participate in market opportunities.
- To determine whether **collective action** holds potential for FHH to actively engage in sheep fattening as a business.

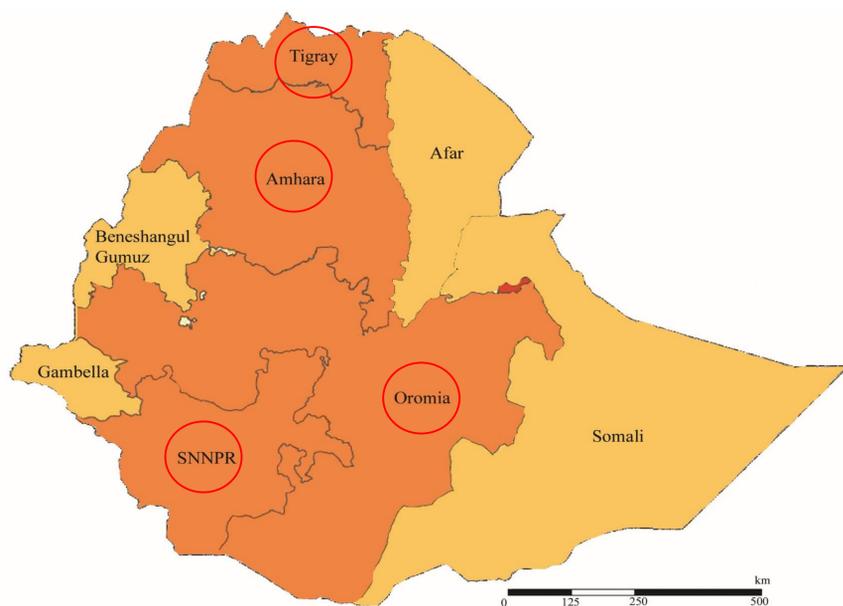


Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia: regions targeted in the survey (in dark orange)