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Peri-Urban and Urban Livestock Keeping in East Africa — A Coping Strategy for the Poor?

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Abstract

Until recently the main focus of agricultural development initiatives has been on rural areas with the view that improved food production in rural areas can supply the expanding urban population. However, recent data reveals that a significant proportion of the world's population growth expected between 2000 and 2030 will occur in urban areas (UN Habitat 2002). Rapid urbanization has not been accompanied by equitable economic growth and has resulted in increased urban poverty. As a result of this worsening of urban poverty, many low-income households suffer from extremely limited livelihood security.

Evidence-based data show that urban poor engage in urban livestock keeping as a response to limited alternative livelihood options and food insecurity. Five city case studies were selected in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia. The cities were Dar es Saalam, Kisumu, Nairobi, Kampala and Addis Ababa. The aim of the scoping study was to understand the current situation of poor urban livestock keepers, and identify areas where future research could make a contribution to the development and promotion of this activity.

The different case studies show that especially vulnerable groups, such as female headed households, children, retired people, widows and people with limited formal education are involved in urban livestock keeping as a form of social security strategy. It also provides a source of locally produced food products for people living in the vicinity of the livestock keepers. However, there are various externalities (zoonoses, environmental contamination, and product safety) which require addressing.

A main constraint revealed by the scoping study is the limited access to information and adoption of improved technologies by poor urban livestock keepers. This is made worse by the fact that existing services are not tailored to the needs and circumstances of the poor (e.g. extension services and training courses promote species, which are less relevant for the poor). In order to overcome these constraints technological and institutional innovations are required that address specifically the urban poor.

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