Gender and forage resource use in the transitional zone of Ghana

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Background

- Small ruminant rearing is only an adjunct to crop farming in the transitional zone of Ghana, although the zone abounds in ruminant feed resources
- Despite the gendered nature of agriculture worldwide, little is known about the gendered nature of forage use that is necessary for interventions that can enhance small ruminant production

Materials and Methods

- Farmers (22 men and 19 women) in two villages were asked to list anything that small ruminants eat (and what they themselves feed to their stock
- Feeds listed were put into categories and percentages per category calculated
- Pairwise ranking of feed categories was done using male and female focus groups, and feeds were analyzed for salience to each sex

A women focus group discussion
Source: Stephanie Duku

Objective

To determine which forage resources are of importance to men and women farmers in the transition zone of Ghana to enhance small ruminant production

Results

- 175 items were listed as feed: 37 wild browse species, 37 natural pasture spp, 19 cultivated trees and shrubs, 28 crops, 38 crop residues, and 12 crop by-products
- Men free-listed 145 items and fed 22 of them; women free-listed 134 items and fed 27 of them
- Natural pasture species were ranked as the most used by stock. Men did not feed any to stock; but these represent 22.2% of what women fed
- Crops were ranked as the least used by stock, but maize grain was the most salient feed for both men and women
- The most salient feeds for men and women in each feed category are shown in the table below, with *Manihot esculenta* peels and *Ficus umbellata* of more salience to women than men, and *Margaritaria discoidea* and *Musa sapientum* leaves of more salience to men

Feed category	Feed	Smith's Salience for men	Smith's Salience for women
Crop	*Zea mays* (grains)	0.749	0.657
Wild browse	*Margaritaria discoidea*	0.398	0.278
Crop by-products	*Manihot esculenta* (peels)	0.361	0.646
Crop residue	*Musa sapientum* (leaves)	0.254	0.138
Cultivated multipurpose trees	*Ficus umbellata*	0.209	0.309

Conclusions

- Men and women farmers have knowledge of more feeds than they feed to their stock
- Despite its reported limited use, the high salience of maize grain lies in its use to tame stock
- Women rely mostly on feeds obtained near the homestead, such as crop by-products, natural pasture species and cultivated multipurpose trees
- Men also rely on feeds obtained further away from the homestead, such as browse and crop residue
- These results are relevant for institutional interventions in small ruminant feeding particularly for labour constrained and female headed households.

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