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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Refocusing Livestock AR4D to Address Food and Nutritional Security Challenges

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Abstract

Livestock research conducted by the International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA), the International Laboratory for Research on Animal Diseases (ILRAD) and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) has largely focused on the main productivity constraints that limit the ability of the poor to use livestock to improve their livelihoods through more efficient farming systems and higher income. With the 2007 food price scare and increasing awareness of the challenge of feeding the projected world population of 10 billion by 2050, this traditional focus has been expanding to consider how livestock research will ensure that developing-country populations in 2050 have adequate access to affordable animal-source foods for an adequately nutritious and diverse diet.

This reorientation leads to two fundamental questions to sharpen our research agenda: (1) Will smallholder production and associated small-scale marketing systems have an important role in feeding the future? (2) If yes, can we enable these small-scale production and marketing systems to respond to rapidly growing demand in a context of decreasing resources? That the poor largely source their animal-source food locally and that small-scale systems are still, and projected to remain, important and competitive in supplying these foods argues the pragmatism of maintaining a focus on these systems and facilitating their transition to commercial scale. To produce the needed growth in better quality animal-source foods, these small-scale systems must intensify and add value. The contribution of research to improving productivity in livestock systems, especially in Africa, has been disappointing. To improve the focus and impact of livestock agricultural research for development (AR4D), we describe a value chain approach that consolidates lessons learned over the last four decades.

Keywords: Animal source food, intensification, livestock research, smallholder