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Understanding Gender Relations of Smallholder Farmers to Improve Pig Feeding in Uganda

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Abstract

Pig production is rapidly growing in Uganda, but generally research on pig production systems is just beginning. Information lacks on gender-based constraints and benefits experienced by pig-keeping households. Emphasizing smallholder farmers in rural areas with predominantly 1-3 pigs, this study aimed to understand current gender relations and how they dictate access to and control of land, labor, purchases and sales of pigs and the pig production system as a whole. Gender dynamics in pig production relate to feeds, (planted improved) forages and feeding, consequently, to dynamics of technology adoption.

Focus group discussions guided by the Feed Assessment Tool (FEAST, <http://www.ilri.org/feast>) and unstructured individual interviews in two sub-counties each of Masaka and Kamuli Districts in June and December 2014 were used for information gathering. Pigs typically feed on collected herbs, weeds, and crop and kitchen left overs. The pig feeding job is mostly women's duty. Time to collect feeds can be as short as 30 minutes in the rainy season when vegetation abounds; however, it can take up to 4 hours during the dry season. In most cases, women gather the feeds and, hence, do the feeding. Culturally, men hardly feed pigs even if they may own one or two, which are fed together with the women's pigs and that of the child/youth if there is any.

In a pig-keeping household, pigs can belong to husband, wife and at times teenagers. Concerning management (feeding, cleaning and ensuring their health), it is often the wife who is in charge of all the pigs in the homestead irrespective of ownership. Whoever owns pigs keeps the income from sales irrespective of gender. Most of women's income from pigs goes to family expenditures, while men's and young people's incomes more often go to their personal needs. The highest expenditure serviced by income from pigs is education in most households, followed by health. Thus, women pig farmers contribute substantially for family welfare. Women attributed pigs' contribution to family incomes to 20% and above, while men attributed lower percentages. Pig-keeping women have to negotiate spaces to plant forages with their husbands who are the land owners.

Keywords: Feed assessment, forages, gender, livelihood, smallholder agriculture