



Tropentag, September 18-21, 2016, Vienna, Austria

“Solidarity in a competing world —  
fair use of resources”

## Participation of Female-Headed Households in Sheep Fattening in Ethiopia

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### Abstract

The study evaluated the participation of female-headed households (FHH) 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). 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 showed that 14.4% of sheep farming households were female-headed. Female-headed households had significantly higher ( $P < 0.05$ ) years of fattening experience of 6.95 years compared to male-headed households (MHH) with 6.55 years, however, MHH owned more fattening sheep (8.49) compared to FHH (7.84). There was no significant difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) in educational status between the households. The 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. Female-headed households are confronted by heavy domestic workload and subsequent 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 MHHS, they were unable to realize substantial profits due to their low levels of business experience and participation in local markets. There is need to enhance the capacity of FHH to identify, evaluate and participate in market opportunities. Collective action may hold the potential for FHH to actively engage in sheep fattening as a business.

**Keywords:** Ethiopia, farmer, rural, sheep fattening, smallholder, women headed