

# Gender Implications of the Introduction of Forage Chopper Machines

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## Introduction

The mechanization of agricultural labour processes reduces the work burden of small scale farmers and improves their production. However, to fully understand its impacts on household and community members an analysis of existing gender dynamics is needed. Technological interventions are known to be affected by the complex interplay of gender norms, gendered access to and control over resources and decision-making [1]. Thus, gender issues are to be considered in innovation in addition to deliberate capacity building. In an effort to curb the labour burden and amount of time consumed in manual feed processing among livestock keepers the USAID-funded R4D project Africa RISING introduced forage chopper machines in seven villages in Babati (northern Tanzania) in 2015. The machines were distributed to livestock keeper groups willing to engage in R4D activities.

## Methodology

An evaluation of the gender implications of the new processing practices using the chopper machine was conducted in 2016. Data were collected through gender-separate focus group discussions and participatory exercises. Respondents were selected from among the farmers' groups that were formed for the management and use of the chopper machines.



Fig 1: A researcher shows male farmers how to use the choppers.



Fig 2: Grinding different ingredients for feed rationing



Fig 3: A woman processes maize stover through manual chopping. Mechanization prompted a greater involvement of men in this activity (as the photos on the left show).

## Results and Discussion of Findings

Findings show that the technology reduces women's labour burden and decreases the time needed for livestock feeding. However, women's access and use of the choppers is influenced by various factors - among others membership and gender dynamics in the groups hosting the machines. Men tend to have greater access, which they in part justify by claiming "lower technical skills" of women. On the other hand, the benefits from improved feeding through the sale of milk and eggs have allowed some women - as they say - to become financially more independent.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The results underline that gender analysis should not only precede but accompany mechanization processes. Training and group formation activities should continuously consider potential shifts in labour and income allocation and how they relate to the well-being of various household members. Further research should explore which types of farmer groups are most promising for an equitable introduction of labour-saving technologies.

## References

[1] Van Eerdewijk, A. and Danielsen, K. 2015. Gender Matters in Farm Power. Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Amsterdam. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.2262.8566