



Tropentag, September 11-13, 2024, hybrid conference

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Opportunities and challenges of collecting and utilising monitoring data from livestock value chain actors

NILS TEUFEL¹, JAMES RAO¹, YANAMANI NEPALI², BRAJA SWAIN³, VARIJAKSHA PADMAKUMAR², JOSEPH AUMA¹, GUANGHONG XU⁴, GODFREY NGOTEYA⁵, JOSUÉ AWONON⁶, AMOS OMORE⁵

¹*International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Kenya*

²*International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nepal*

³*International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), India*

⁴*UC Santa Cruz, Development Economics, United States*

⁵*International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Tanzania*

⁶*Tufts University, Economics, United States*

Abstract

Improving the efficiency of value chains and the collaboration between various value chain actors are major objectives of many rural development interventions aiming to achieve market-based, sustainable changes in livelihoods. However, the available data for assessing value chain activities and interactions is often very limited. Group-based approaches can yield good insights into the basic structure of value chains and the roles of major actor groups, as well as of averages prices for various product groups along the chain. However, the heterogeneity of actors as well as the considerable variation of many indicator variables over time cannot easily be captured by such an approach. For this, continuous data collection by the value chain actors themselves is required. However, establishing robust and efficient systems for generating such data which also provide useful information for the relevant actors themselves is challenging. Within the CGIAR initiative on Sustainable Animal Productivity (SAPLING) several such systems have been developed for intensifying dairy value chains in 3 countries: Kenya, Tanzania and Nepal. They are linked to last mile providers of information, inputs and services, generically known as livestock agents, who have been supported by the initiative in the strengthening and growth of their businesses through business incubation and technical training. Monitoring systems have been developed based on their sales activities, their interactions with other actors and on the recording of livestock management and performance data. Initial results after several months of implementation show that the number of data records is greatest where a well-established data platform is an integral part of the incubation and training system as well as of sales transactions and extension activities. However, actors can contribute more to developing a system suited to their own needs if simpler stand-alone approach is selected. Monitoring data generated through the recording of livestock performance and management provides only limited insights into the progress of livestock agents towards developing their businesses. However, all three approaches presented here are maintained by outside research and development institutions.

Keywords: Data collection, livestock development, monitoring, value chains