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Farm-level impacts of business development support to last-mile providers of dairy inputs and services in Tanzania

NILS TEUFEL¹, JAMES RAO², JOSUÉ AWONON³, GODFREY NGOTEYA⁴, AMOS OMORE⁵

¹*International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Policies, Institutions & Livelihoods (PIL), Kenya*

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

³*Tufts University, Economics, United States*

⁴*International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Tanzania*

⁵*International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Policies, Institutions and Livelihoods (PIL), Tanzania*

Abstract

In Tanzania, smallholder farmers, owning 99 % of livestock, face significant challenges in accessing advice as well as productivity-enhancing technologies and services, leading to stagnating productivity. Only 9 % of livestock keepers access extension services, and among these, just 17 % obtain livestock-related guidance. We propose supporting agripreneurs (APs) as entry points for technology dissemination. APs are village-based entrepreneurs operating physical shops, providing production inputs, animal health services, artificial insemination, milk aggregation, or extension services. Our intervention aims to enhance AP performance through an in-depth business development training and through a digital platform for bookkeeping, business transactions and advisory services. To test the intervention in Kilimanjaro and Tanga regions, we randomly assigned 100 screened APs to treatment (50) and control (50) cohorts at the ward level. This initial evaluation focuses on the impact of the intervention on the farmers' access to advice and technology adoption. For this we surveyed 1,132 households, with 52 % female respondents, randomly selected from the farmer registration data provided by the selected APs.

Initial results show that most APs focus on animal health services (94 % of APs), with many also providing extension (92 %). At the farmer level, the share with any AP interaction differs by 9pp (from 61 % to 70 %) between the cohorts, though this is not statistically significant ($p = 0.276$). However, treatment effects were substantial and significant for advisory services: farmers in treatment areas were 14pp more likely to receive feed advice ($p = 0.033$), 14pp more likely to receive animal health prevention advice ($p = 0.030$), and 13pp more likely to receive animal health treatment advice ($p = 0.036$) compared to control areas. Similar effects were observed for general advisory services, with a 14pp increase ($p = 0.003$). This was complemented by significant increases in general service provision (7pp, $p = 0.010$) and input supply (5pp, $p = 0.012$). However, effects on specific service delivery and input provision were more modest and often statistically insignificant. These results suggest that the intervention primarily improved the quality and range of advice offered to farmers who interact with APs during the observation period, rather than expanding the overall reach of APs and their delivery of services and inputs.

Keywords: Business development, dairy value chain, impacts, Tanzania, training

Contact Address: Nils Teufel, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Policies, Institutions & Livelihoods (PIL), Kabete, Old Naivasha Road, PO Box 30709, 00100 Nairobi, Kenya, e-mail: n.teufel@cgiar.org