Field testing of the tool for rapid assessment of small ruminant value chains in Soghd Province, Tajikistan

Makhmud Shaumarov and Barbara Rischkowsky

The CGIAR Research Program Dryland Systems is introducing the value chain approach to identify constraints and opportunities along goat and sheep meat value chains in agropastoal systems in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The purpose is that in addition to lessening or resolving constraints in production to also address gaps in access to input supplies, services and markets, and thereby to achieve higher productivity and incomes for rural households and other value chain actors. The first step in this process will be conducting a Rapid Value Chain Assessment (RVCA).

Makhmud Shaumarov, ICARDA's national staff, was trained on RVCA for small ruminants in Ethiopia from 6-11 October 2014. The training focused on the toolkit for rapid assessment of small ruminant meat value chains developed for Ethiopia under the CGIAR Research Program Livestock and Fish and the lesson learnt from its application in Ethiopia and Pakistan. Subsequently the toolkit was adjusted to Tajik and Uzbek conditions.

This was followed by on-the-job training of the scientific staff from the Soghd branch of the Tajik Livestock Research Institute (TLRI) for applying the tool in the target villages in the Soghd Province in Tajikistan. A two-day field training was held in the first week of January 2015. On the first day of the training in Khujand, the ICARDA researcher presented a general overview of the RVCA and introduced the survey checklists to the scientists of the TLRI - Dr. Matazim Kosimov, the Director of the Soghd Branch of TLRI and his research assistant, Mr. Alisher Kosimov. Primary data collection methods such as Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews, and Observations on the small ruminant production systems were discussed in details with the participants. Selection of respondents, primary data recording, and report writing techniques were also broadly discussed and tested.

The second day of the training was organized in Oshoba village located 130 km north-east from Khujand. The scientists were introduced on how to practically select key respondents and how to conduct a RVCA survey among rural households. The training session started with Focus Group Discussion, by inviting seven volunteer women from local households who own at least 3 animals. TLRI scientists gained practical experience on effective facilitation and moderation of the FGD sessions. It was a participatory learning-by-doing experience for all participants where each voice was heard and respected. At the end of the session, participation of the local women group in testing the tools was highly appreciated and it was agreed to revise the RCVA survey based on the feedback received.

Fig.1: Focus Group Discussion with women of Oshoba village.

A Key Informant Interview was practiced with livestock feed supplier during the second day of the field training. The respondent openly discussed market related challenges in feed stocking and distribution among livestock owners, as well as general dynamics of the feed market competition and need for continuous improvements.

Fig.2: Key informant interview with forage supplier of Oshoba village.

At the end of the field training, TLRI scientists have learned practical techniques on how to collect data for RVCA, to systematically organize data records, to analyze data and to write reports based on agreed outlines. The researchers found the training useful to successfully assess value chains of Angora goat meat and fiber produce in selected sites of Tajikistan. After the field testing the toolkit was revised and uploaded *("Toolkit for rapid assessment of small ruminant value chains in Central Asia")*. In 2015 the toolkit was also translated into Russian language which will be made available online soonest.

In January and February 2015, the TLRI researchers conducted the RVCA in two districts, namely Asht and B. Gafurov, and four villages from each district were selected. The RVCA report is currently under internal review.

The application in Tajikistan proved the usefulness of the tool for Central Asian conditions. It will now be used by KRASS to conduct the RVCA in Karauzyak region