



Scaling Improved Sheep Fattening Practices and Technologies in Ethiopian Highlands

Report on Strengthening Sheep Fattening Communities of Practice



December 2019

Introduction

ICARDA initiated the formation of Communities of Practice (CoPs) for Menz, Bonga and Doyogena in 2018 to support sustainability in scaling improved sheep fattening practices and technologies. They are intended to be powerful organizational instruments that can help ICARDA accomplish its approach to out-scale market-oriented sheep fattening. The core team of members of the CoPs comprise Government experts, extension and development agents, National Agricultural Researchers. The main objective of the CoPs is to garner support from regional and local Administrators for an enabling environment to promote market-oriented sheep fattening. At inception, the CoPs underwent [training in Entrepreneurship Skills Development](#), to equip them with skills to support the sheep fattening youth groups and cooperatives in their localities to enhance creativity, innovation, self-employment so that they engage in profitable business ventures. Workshops to strengthen the CoPs were held in the 3 project sites, Menz, Doyogena and Bonga in December 2019 with an aim to elaborate on the scope of the sheep fattening project; strengthen the partner relationships with CoPs and buy-in their inputs; to identify the major challenges and opportunities and develop an action plan; to elaborate on functions of the CoPs.

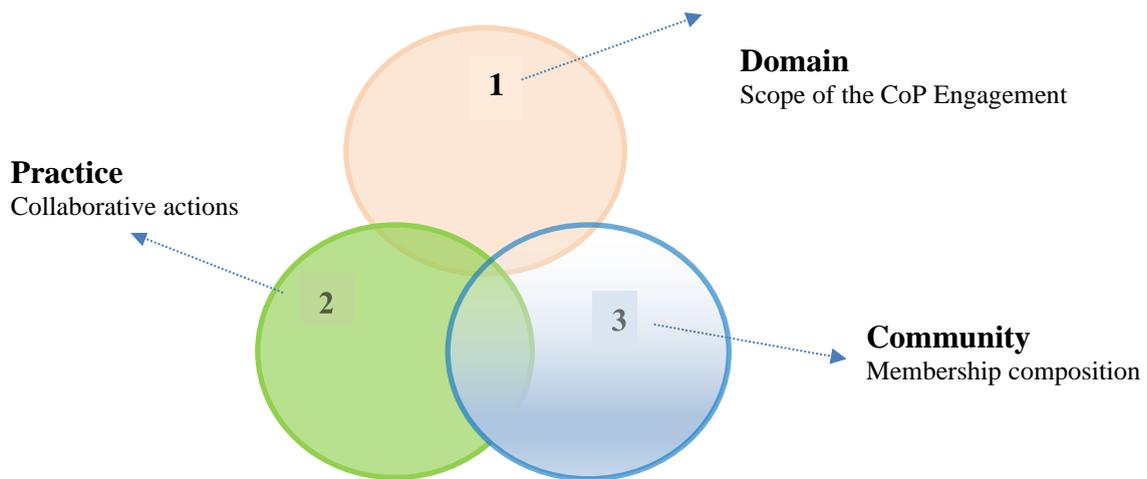


Fig 1: Principles of CoP formation

The CoPs are currently under the leadership of the NARS researchers in all sites. CoPs are particularly active in Menz and Bonga whereby additional members from Micro-Finance Institutions have been incorporated. The MFI had representatives in the meeting held.

ICARDA undertook workshops in the 3 project sites as follows:

- Bonga: December 7, 2019
- Doyogena: December 14, 2019
- Menz: December 21, 2019

During discussions, CoP members evaluated the sheep fattening scaling activities in relation to the mission and strategic plans of their departments. They shared their understanding on how they would engage with the project and discussed potential constraints and opportunities in the functioning of the CoPs. The framework on which the discussions of the workshops were based and on which continuity of strengthening functionality of the CoPs will be based is shown in Fig. 1 and Table 1 below.

Table 1: Framework for Strengthening CoPs

Dimension	Focus	Measure	Indicators
Socio-psychological	Community – Members of the CoP	Awareness	Common interests
			Sense of belonging in the CoP
			Willing to take part in CoP activities
			Comfortable in the meetings
		Relationship	Building relations among each other and networking
			Exhibiting knowledge-sharing behavior Breaking down communication barriers
Professional-structural	Practice	Directions	Having a clear domain
		Methods	Leveraging knowledge management tools
		Outputs	Generating tangible communal resources
		Facilities	Having a friendly communication platform
	Domain	Competencies	Having competency in knowledge management tools
		Work relevance	Receiving capacity building in areas of work
Institutional-operational	Identity	Negotiation	Perceptions of leadership
			Perceptions of ease of entry and participation
	Enabling environment	Support	Evidence of strategic thinking
			Resource allocation

Socio-psychological

CoP members in all sites were fully aware of their roles and contributions to the sheep fattening project.

- They appreciated the project activities and showed a common interest and willingness to participate in the CoPs. The participants highlighted that there are many jobless youths who can be involved in sheep fattening as a business.
- Members found project activities particularly relevant to their current job activities. Representatives from the Livestock offices stated that due attention was already given to providing support to smallholder sheep farmers and unemployed youth and improving productivity and commercialization of products was a major task for their department. The new approach targeting youth in market-oriented sheep farming held promise in transforming the sheep sector. Other offices (Job Creation office, Cooperative office, Livestock office, gender and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) also explained their roles in targeting youth, though admitted that their efforts are not synergistic.

- Members were concerned that they currently have loose relations among each other, each office largely working independently. They expressed hope that CoPs will help to build closer working relations towards a common agenda of empowering rural youth.

Professional-structural

- In most cases, the participants shared similar ideas, they appreciated the approaches and the interest in youth, which is also their objective. However, it was agreed that there is need to develop a common scope so as to enable a common focus, since shared competencies were rare among members.
- They concurred that CoPs as communication platforms would allow them to maintain momentum.
- CoPs as constituted have a strong link to the organizational competencies that the project needs.



CoP meeting in Bonga. Photo credit/Nahom Ephrem

Institutional-operational

- They lack financial and technical skills to support the youth groups at this point- they suggested that MFIs fill the financial gap and NARS-ICARDA support extension, capacity building and other technical needs.
- CoPs members repeatedly mentioned their limited budget, resources and technical capacity to arrange CoP-sponsored activities.

- Members suggested the creation of committees within the broader CoPs, to assess individual issues and strategize how the issues can be presented to higher administrative bureaus to obtain additional policy support.
- Leadership of the CoPs would be rotational and leadership for 2020 was assigned to the NARS in all sites.

Implicated challenges and opportunities

- Regular transfers and reshuffles of government officers across regions and/or offices results in low commitment to goals.
- Currently, there are no community champions driving any knowledge sharing and learning processes, to assist members gain a sense of identity.

Conclusions

- CoPs may need to incorporate representatives from higher offices, i.e zonal level who would carry forward key issues to regional levels. Bonga CoP have already incorporated zonal level leaders. Bonga and Menz need to consider the same.
- CoP need to identify and incorporate other value chain actors. Menz and Bonga have already incorporated representatives from Micro-finance institutions.
- In view of limited financial resources, there is need to identify a creative way for the CoP to sustain regular meetings.
- CoP members need to be constantly reminded that their role is not to offer trainings but to provide enabling environments.

Way forward

- Members agreed to have meetings regularly, on a quarterly basis. Next schedules in 2020 were slotted for Bonga, February 23-25; Doyogena, February 29 and Menz, February 23-25.
- On request from youth group leaders, the CoPs agreed to meet members of youth groups in their localities prior to their next meetings as follows: Bonga- January 3; Doyogena -January 6; Menz - 23-25th January.



CoP members in Doyogena discuss with farmers and youth group members after the workshop. Photo credit/Nahom Ephrem

Annex 1: List of Participants in Bonga, Menz and Doyogena Communities of Practice

<i>Bonga</i>			
<i>Date: Saturday, December 7, 2019</i>			
<i>Venue: Boka, Kebele multipurpose hall</i>			
No.	Name of Participant	District	Organization/Position
1	Melese Wodajo	Bonga	Head of Kaffa Zone Administration Office
2	Melaku Woldesenbet	Bonga	Kaffa Zone Enterprise and industries Development Office – Market Linkage Expert
3	Ephrem Sisay	Bonga	Kaffa Zone Enterprise and industries Development Office – Vice Head
4	Tegegnework Salilihe	Bonga	Kaffa Zone Livestock and Fisheries Office
5	Mulugeta Tadele	Bonga	Kaffa Zone Cooperative Office- Training and Education Expert
6	Getachew Alemayehu	Bonga	Omo Microfinance-Bonga District Loan portfolio
7	Girma Abebe	Bonga	Kaffa Zone Women, Children and Youth Office Coordinator
8	Endrias Simon	Bonga	Omo Microfinance- Saving and Credit Expert
9	Abera Abate	Bonga	Kaffa Zone Livestock and Fisheries Office – Sheep Fattening Expert
10	Muluken Zeleke	Bonga	Bonga ARC Director and Nutrition Researcher
11	Zelalem Abate	Bonga	Bonga ARC Livestock Department Coordinator and Animal Breeding Researcher

<i>Doyogena</i>			
<i>Date: Saturday, December 14, 2019</i>			
<i>Venue: Doyogena District Bureau of Agricultural</i>			
No.	Name of Participant	District/Site	Organization/Position
1	Temesgen Alemu	Doyogena	Head of District Livestock and Fisheries Office
2	Mulatu Handore	Doyogena	Areka ARC Veterinary Assistant
3	Estifanos Endrias	Doyogena	Areka ARC-Forage Researcher
4	Tessema Erchafo	Doyogena	Areka ARC-Socio-economics Researcher
5	Tesfaye Abiso	Doyogena	Areka ARC-Animal nutrition Researcher
6	Tesfaye Abidaie	Doyogena	Head of District Coop. Office
7	Markos Obola	Doyogena	District Coop. Establishment Expert
8	Tesfaye Hadano	Doyogena	Head of District TEVT Office
9	Mesele Markos	Doyogena	Head of District Women, Children and Youth Office
10	Dawit Anjore	Doyogena	Head of District Job Creation Office
11	Takele Obola	Doyogena	Areka ARC Veterinary Assistant
<i>Menz</i>			
<i>Date: Saturday, December 21, 2020</i>			
<i>Venue: Menz Gera District Bureau of Agriculture</i>			
No.	Name of Participant	District/Site	Organization/Position
1	Biru Yeshidenber	Menz Gera	Head of District TEVT Office
2	Asrat Eshete	Menz Gera	Head of District Livestock and Fisheries Office
3	Shewalefa Lasho	Menz Gera	Head of District Women, Children and Youth Office
4	Zinabu Atilaw	Menz Gera	Head of District Cooperative Office
5	Shewafera Chere	Menz Mama	Head of District Cooperative Office
6	Marta Yirga	Menz Mama	Head of District Women, Children and Youth Office
7	Eshetu Alayu	Menz Mama	Head of District Livestock and Fisheries Office
8	Tibebu Tefleta	Menz Mama	Micro-Finance
9	Tesfa Shewarega	Menz Mama	Head of District TEVT Office
10	Tesfa Getachew	DBARC	Feeds and Forage Researcher
11	Asfaw Bisrat	DBARC	Animal Breeding Researcher

Consent Statement: “Personal information including Name, Business title, Email, Phones, Images and GPS points included in this report have been authorized in writing or verbally by the data subject” **J. Wamatu**