International Livestock Research Institute

Thesis possibilities Mozambique (Vilanculos) and India (Rajasthan and Jharkhand)

Small ruminant value chains as platforms for reducing poverty and increasing food security in dryland areas of India and Mozambique (imGoats)

Introduction

The imGoats project aims to transform the lives of goat keepers in India and Mozambique by turning their subsistence level goat production into a viable and profitable enterprise. The project goal of imGoats is to increase incomes and food security in a sustainable manner by enhancing pro-poor small ruminant value chains in India and Mozambique while the objectives are two; (a) to pilot sustainable and replicable organizational and technical models to strengthen goat value chains in India and Mozambique that increase incomes, reduce vulnerability and enhance welfare amongst marginalized groups, including women and (b) to document, communicate and promote appropriate evidence-based model(s) for sustainable, pro-poor goat value chains.

The target zones in Mozambique are the semi-arid areas in the Northern Inhambane province. The target group is about 500 vulnerable households in Inhassoro district, of which 25% will be FHH and 20% households living with HIV and AIDS. In India, the project operates in Udaipur district of Rajasthan state and Dumka district of Jharkhand state, covering a total of 5000 scheduled caste and scheduled tribe and landless households. CARE International in Mozambique and BAIF in India are leading the development aspects and local administration in their respective project sites.

More information on the project can be obtained at www.imgoats.org

Possible Msc research areas in Mozambique and India

Gender analysis

Gender equity is central to overall project implementation. It is important to ensure that; (a) women, female headed households and disadvantaged groups participate and benefit from project support and, (b) as goat enterprises becomes more economically attractive, women do not lose control. Careful targeting and continuous monitoring is essential to avoid such unintended outcomes. As an M Sc student you can design research to understand these dynamics and the potential consequences of transformation of goat production and marketing systems in the project areas.

There is a large number of Female Headed Households in Mozambique and they have limited access to resources, inputs and services (especially knowledge and advisory services). In India, the two states in which the project operates are significantly different socio-culturally and with regard to gender roles and dynamics. It would be important to understand what kind of strategies and interventions help include women and female headed households effectively in value chain development process and ensure that they benefit from the participation in diverse socio-cultural situations.

A baseline gender analysis is being conducted and report will be available shortly. The quantitative and qualitative data generated can complement the data to be collected by you.

Economic analysis (value chains)
The project focuses on goat value chains. There are several options to conduct economic analysis related to this value chain, for example, analysis of economic viability of service provision within the chain; economic modelling of integrated productivity measures to determine more precisely best-bet production strategies under different settings of resources and markets; analysis of current Business Development Services in the goat value chains and prospects for improvement through better organization. Another research question to be answered through scenario building: What are the potential enhanced value added and benefits to actors in the value chain if different packages of technical and institutional interventions are tried?

Sustainable intensification (environmental assessment)
By increasing the relative profitability of goat production, the project interventions are expected to influence targeted goat keepers to intensify and increase production. However, it is very important that this occurs in a sustainable way, i.e. 'sustainable intensification', particularly from an environmental perspective. There is limited data available on environmental sustainability, so as an M Sc student you will be collecting and analysing environmental data (e.g. using LCA). The research question to be answered: What are the potential environmental implications if the current subsistence goat production systems are transformed into commercial or semi-commercial goat systems in the project areas?

Innovation and multi-stakeholder processes
Goat value chains are complex and comprise many different sets of people and organizations with diverse interests and incentives. Innovation platforms provide spaces for value chain actors to interact, communicate and act to improve performance of the value chain and the resulting benefits to the actors. It involves continuous learning and capacity building – both in terms of innovation capacity and specific technical or organizational capacities. Relevant research questions in this area are for example; What factors enhance and constrain innovation in the goat value chain? What triggers innovation in goat value chains in different contexts? What are the incentive systems that attract private sector participation in the multi-stakeholder processes to improve goat value chains? What determines collective action by multi-stakeholder coalitions for goat value chain development in the areas of production, marketing, value addition and addressing environmental concerns? How do actor networks evolve in response to mechanisms like Innovation Platforms and various other value chain development interventions?

Goat housing, reproduction, health and feeding
Through different technical interventions the project contributes to improve goat production and productivity. To start with, technical interventions - which may be relevant in the context of goat production in project sites – need to be identified. This entails more 'technical' research questions related to animal health, housing, feeding and breeding. As an M Sc animal science student, you can identify possibilities for enhanced performance in terms of goat health, feeding, reproduction or housing practices. For example, a feed resource assessment should be conducted to design feeding strategy interventions. In addition, it is important to assess how different technical interventions contribute to increases in productivity of the goat systems.

Other areas

During the project, new research questions may come up, which give opportunities for other thesis possibilities. In addition, the project is open to students who come up with their own ideas or research proposal which fit within the imGoats project.

Requirements

- Bsc and/or Msc courses in one (or more) of the following areas; agricultural economics, animal production, rural development, innovation studies, rural sociology, animal nutrition, animal health, sustainability assessment, value chains.
- Basic knowledge of Portuguese or Spanish language is recommended as all field communication is in Portuguese in Mozambique.

Conditions

- Based in Vilanculos Mozambique (CARE office); or in Udaipur (Rajasthan) or Deogarh (Jharkhand)
- Co-supervision of ILRI researcher and your university
- Financial support for students of developing countries. Students from developed countries depend on personal (or other) funding.

Any other novel, relevant and appropriate ideas would also be very welcome!

More information:

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