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Transforming Agriculture through Technology

Veterinarian uses innovation to improve livestock



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Livestock in Menz, Amhara Region

As a result of the training, he did many things differently, including seeking an innovative technology with the potential to help his clients increase milk production and raise their incomes.

It has been less than a year since Alemu Admas, the General Manager of the Amhara Livestock Resource Development Promotion Agency, received USAID-Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security (CIAFS) leadership training, and he has already seen this training have an impact on his day to day work and in the lives of his clients.

As a newly appointed MoA official, Alemu, a skilled veterinarian, had little knowledge or experience in management and leadership. “However, that training changed everything,” he recounts. “I participated in my capacity as a General Manager of the Livestock Resource Development Promotion Agency. I was charged with setting up the agency to achieve high performance. It [the training] couldn’t have come at a better time.”

Upon return from USAID-CIAFS training, Alemu shared the important lessons he had learned with his colleagues. Using the strategic planning methodology introduced in the training, they critically reviewed key performance indicators and found that livestock productivity in their region was too low to meet Growth and Transformation Plan goals. For example, average milk yields of both conventional and hybrid cows in the region were very low (less than one liter/day and four liters/day respectively). Upon investigation, they determined that the root cause of low productivity was that farmers did not have control over the delivery schedules of their cows. If a cow delivers a calf during the dry season when forage is scarce, milk yields are very low. If the delivery occurs during the rainy season, however, cows in Amhara can produce up to 10 liters/day of milk. To address the problem, Alemu and his team quickly identified a state-of-the-art technology for hormone synchronization and sex selection, with the potential to control delivery dates and radically improve milk production in the region.

Alemu used his “newly-acquired skills in strategic thinking and advocacy” to create a sense of urgency for piloting the technology in Amhara. He successfully rallied political will and raised funds within the MoA to pilot the technology with 586 cows. Results showed that 98.2 percent of cows in the pilot group would deliver their calves during the rainy season, increasing milk productivity by at least 50 percent. Based on this success, the agency is preparing to scale-up the activity to involve 25,000 cows in 2012.

The strategic planning, agricultural innovation, and advocacy implemented by Alemu, thanks to USAID-CIAFS training, have already started to have an impact on dairy farmers in Amhara. The Livestock Resource Development Promotion Agency expects to see Amhara milk production rise significantly in 2012, increasing farmer incomes and dairy availability in the region.

Telling Our Story

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