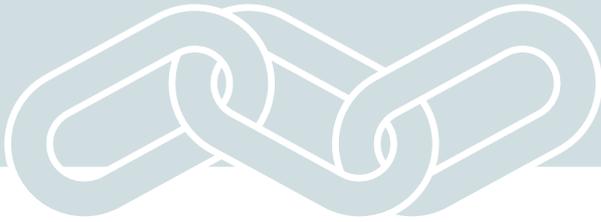




Aik Saath



ایک ساتھ

'Together'

AVCCR Brief

Improving smallholder dairy and beef profitability by enhancing farm production and value chain management



There are 8.8 million smallholder dairy farmers in Pakistan, most owning fewer than 10 animals. These cows and buffalo are vital to food supply and the economy, at both household and national levels. The animals are mainly kept for milk, but there is a growing demand for beef in the country, which could help farmers increase their profits. There is also great potential to improve farm practices and efficiency. A new 4.5-year project (ACIAR project no. LPS/2016/011, 'Improving smallholder dairy and beef profitability by enhancing farm production and value chain management') is seeking to address these issues within a value chains framework. The project is under the Agriculture Value Chain Collaborative Research (AVCCR) program.

AVCCR goal

Rural poor, particularly women, living in the Punjab and Sindh significantly and equitably benefit from improvements in strategic value chains.



BUILDING ON EARLIER WORK

The project is building on the results of a previous project, titled 'Strengthening dairy value chains in Pakistan through improved farm management and more effective extension services', which was part of the Agriculture Sector Linkages Program (ASLP). The ASLP project addressed on-farm issues such as animal nutrition and health, husbandry, calf rearing and fodder production. It also identified new opportunities that could help farmers increase their profits, such as adding value to dairy products for example by making cheese and yoghurt, and working together in groups to better supply the markets.

The project also demonstrated a new method for extension – the system for sharing knowledge with farmers. The 'whole-family approach', where men, women and children in a household were all involved in learning about new practices, proved highly successful. Engaging women and young people as well as men resulted in better adoption of practices, at the same time as contributing to empowerment of these groups within the community.

PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The project goal is to improve the profitability of smallholder dairy farms, in the Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan, through on-farm efficiency gains and development of dairy and beef market opportunities.

The objectives of this research are:

- To promote whole-family extension approaches and assess the organisational uptake and their impact on smallholder farmers;
- To map the current beef industry structure in Punjab and Sindh with a focus on identifying market opportunities for smallholder farmers;
- To improve the efficiency of smallholder dairy and beef production;
- To support smallholder dairy/beef farmers in engaging in more profitable value chain opportunities.



Researchers working on a calf-rearing trial to determine the most profitable feeding strategies for male calves.

MOVING FORWARD WITH A VALUE CHAIN PERSPECTIVE

The new AVCCR project has been designed to take forward these promising results and work to scale them up, while also looking at opportunities for a stronger focus on producing beef on dairy farms. Rearing male calves for beef instead of selling or slaughtering them may be a profitable enterprise for smallholder dairy farmers, but there will be trade-offs between meat and dairy production which the project will explore. The project will also assess how the dairy and beef value chains – the chain that links producers to markets and consumers—can be developed to ensure that smallholder livestock farmers fully benefit.

One of the main activities is promoting the whole-family extension approach with key partner organisations. The project will build on the strong partnerships already developed with government, non-government and private sector groups in Punjab and Sindh. The project will first investigate institutional arrangements within the extension system, to support successful integration of the new approach. Alongside building knowledge and capacity for this new approach within the extension services, it is conservatively estimated that 5,000 farming households will learn about the new practices and opportunities during the life of the project.

The project will develop a more holistic view of the roles of women and men in the smallholder livestock sector, including their access to resources (including education and information)

and their decision making or leadership roles. The project will work to support and empower women, for example through their participation in assessing and developing business opportunities such as specialist calf-rearing enterprises or processing milk into higher value products.

Value chain studies will include mapping traditional livestock chains in selected districts of Punjab and Sindh, and detailed analysis of selected chains. The team will seek to better understand decision making by all actors along the chain. They will also look at private sector participants, and opportunities for greater private sector involvement. The findings will contribute to the development of innovative beef and dairy value chains that actively include and benefit smallholder farmers.

To reach high-value markets farmers need to work together to be able to supply the quantities demanded by the markets. The project will support existing and new farmer groups, particularly through capacity building in areas such as agribusiness management and farm financial analysis – essential skills for male and female farmers who want to realise new market opportunities.

The research team comprises experts from Melbourne and Charles Sturt universities in Australia, the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Lahore and Sindh Agricultural University. Other key partners include the Livestock Departments of both Punjab and Sindh, non-government organisations and private sector partners.

AVCCR—THE AGRICULTURE VALUE CHAIN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

AVCCR is a research-for-development program in the Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan, that focuses on enhancing selected agricultural value chains for the benefit of the rural poor, particularly women. This is one of four AVCCR projects. The program was launched in December 2015 and is scheduled to run to September 2020. It is jointly funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), with ACIAR also providing technical management. Total funding for the program is A\$12,850,000.

The Urdu phrase **Aik Saath**, meaning “Together” has been selected as the everyday name for the AVCCR program. This signifies the many linkages and partnerships encompassed in the program, including between men and women in smallholder families.

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