

Goat rearing, an incentive for strengthening farmer groups: Lessons and experiences from Embu, Eastern Kenya

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The Strengthening Rural Institutions project (SRI) being implemented in three countries (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, facilitated a two days field visit to 3 farmer groups in Embu, Kenya. ICRAF, through SRI, is supporting activities that provide farmers with the skills and knowledge to strengthen and promote their group activities.

A team of 6 site focal point persons and 4 ICRAF staff participated in the 2 day field trip. Discussions were facilitated by the Upper Tana Natural Resource Management (UTaNRM) project coordinator and the SRI Embu focal point person on the activities in the district, led by the farmers themselves. The group visited 2 goat rearing groups and 1 water irrigation scheme (Kirikithu Self-help Group, Kuvota Goat Rearing Group and Kamiu Kavanga Self-help Group respectively).



Goat rearing as exhibited by the two groups is an enterprise that has flourished; a litre of goats' milk selling between KSh. 70 to 120 whereas that of a cow between KSh. 40 to 60. Furthermore, the quality of goat's milk was mentioned to be much better than that of a cow as it *"offers high prices, increase IQ in children and has a high nutritional value to people with HIV and AIDS"*. This however is coupled with a challenge in adaptability since most people regard goat milk to have a bad "smell" hence would opt for cows' milk instead. The ICRAF team however got a chance to take goats milk that was served by one of the groups', countering the "smell" beliefs.

Additionally, farmers expressed their satisfaction and benefits accrued courtesy of the trainings administered by the SRI project such as leadership skills, development of group constitutions and by-laws that govern the group, goat rearing and management training including housing and appropriate

fodder.

However, various factors need to be addressed to ensure desired outcomes are achieved such as exchange visits for lesson sharing and learning, soil and water conservation technologies/ know-how, enterprise development, value addition and processing.

