



## Success Story from the FEED THE FUTURE INNOVATION LAB FOR LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS



Stakeholders gathered in Ethiopia for an Innovation Platform meeting in January 2017.

### Innovation Platform Method Fosters Engagement and Consensus in Setting Research Priorities

How do grant-awarding entities choose their research priorities, which then turn into funding opportunities? Add the need to engage stakeholders from six countries on two continents, and the task seems colossal.

The solution: Ask the experts in each country to be your guide. That's the approach of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems and their Innovation Platforms. Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems is a USAID-funded project that aims to improve human health, nutrition, and incomes through improved technologies, practices and policy support. The Innovation Platforms are annual, structured stakeholder gatherings.

Previous gatherings enabled livestock sector stakeholders in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Nepal, Cambodia, Burkina Faso and Niger to debate, list and rank research priorities, based on the highest needs. These stakeholders include representatives of the government, research, extension and educational

organizations, the private sector, producer organizations, USAID, and other development projects.

Some common priorities emerged across continents, while others were country-specific. All six countries agreed on two priorities: 1) increasing the quantity and quality of livestock feed, and 2) control of transboundary animal diseases.

Creating stakeholder engagement in collaborative, multi-year research projects is vital for development success. The project's Innovation Platforms do this in three distinct stages. In year one, stakeholders gather in their nation's capital to generate priorities for research. In the next year—after projects have been selected based on those country-specific priorities—researchers share project plans with attendees, who become project mentors. In subsequent years, the community continues to track and support the research projects, including discussing scaling up of their findings.

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Leaders from the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems did not arrive empty-handed at the first Innovation Platform. They shared literature reviews and proposed draft priorities, drawing upon previous in-country visits. Discussion and debate led to an agreement on final priorities after only two days. All priorities received an additional level of stakeholder engagement through reviews by Ministries of Livestock or Agriculture.

The first, priority setting Innovation Platform meetings in FY 2016-2017 connected with 340 stakeholders, representing 184 organizations. The second meetings in Nepal, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Cambodia in FY 2017 alone included 130 participants from 68 organizations.

The priorities developed, although a significant investment of time and effort, truly reflect stakeholder consensus on the most important, researchable issues in the animal-source food value chains for each country. They therefore continue to be valuable for the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems as it strives to expand its reach and depth. As these priorities are communicated more widely, we expect that their value will extend beyond this Lab, and inform prioritization and planning of other initiatives.