Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems
Background

Animal-source foods (ASF) are commonly lacking in the diets of the poor and vulnerable in developing countries, particularly children and women who need them most. Due to their high content of quality protein and bioavailable micronutrients, increased consumption of ASF can improve the nutritional status as well as the growth, psychomotor functions, cognitive development, and health of children, especially infants under the age of two.

Important causes of low ASF consumption include low productivity and profitability of smallholder livestock systems, resulting from low quality and availability of feeds, poor genetics, limited culling rates, high disease incidence (including food-borne and zoonotic diseases), and limited market access or engagement, among others. By generating new and adapting existing innovations, our research for development and capacity building activities will help spur sustainable intensification of livestock systems, which will improve household nutrition, food security, and incomes in addition to the competitiveness of smallholder livestock systems.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) funds to establish the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems. This five-year program (October 2015 to September 2020) supports USAID’s agricultural research and capacity building work under Feed the Future, the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative. The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) is the UF/IFAS partner in the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab.

Vision

Our vision is to sustainably intensify smallholder livestock systems in order to improve the nutrition, health, livelihoods and incomes of the poor.
Our core portfolio

Our competitively selected research for development projects address priorities set in a participatory manner with in-country stakeholders. They support ongoing USAID, government, and other partner efforts. In each country, we have established Innovation Platforms to facilitate dialogue with research, development, private sector and policy stakeholders that help bridge the research to development and policy making gaps.

Target Countries:
- Ethiopia and Rwanda (East Africa)
- Burkina Faso and Niger (West Africa)
- Nepal and Cambodia (Asia)

Types of projects: Multi-year Reach projects engage multiple partners and employ integrated, multidisciplinary approaches. One-year Focus projects are proof of concept, or research for development bridging studies. Targeted Catalyst and Strategic Partnership projects address research gaps in our portfolio and engage additional partners.

Focus areas: Our core portfolio spans across four Areas of Inquiry and three Cross-cutting Themes. Topics covered involve (1) Improving the quality and safety of livestock feeds and diets, (2) Analyzing markets and demand of animal-source foods, (3) Improving milk and meat quality and safety, (4) Improving animal disease surveillance and (5) Increasing ASF consumption. Capacity building efforts focus on diverse livestock actors including researchers, extension staff, and producers.

Expanding our reach

We continually seek ways to expand our scope and impact through wider engagement in research and capacity building activities that contribute to achieving our vision.

Peste des Petitis Ruminants (PPR) Vaccine project: This three-year project (February 2017- February 2020) in Kenya and Uganda is funded through a USAID Associate Award. It contributes to the global efforts to eradicate PPR. The focus is on developing innovative approaches to controlling this highly infectious viral disease of sheep and goats, which has devastating impacts on the livelihoods of poor livestock producers. Approaches used involve a thermostable vaccine, community based vaccination systems, participatory epidemiology and modeling to target vaccination.
How we work

We fund and implement integrated research and capacity building projects that: (1) alleviate key constraints to ASF production and consumption and (2) take advantage of the increasing demand for ASF to improve food security and reduce poverty. Our work covers all livestock species and systems dominant in developing countries. Projects integrate One-Health, food systems (including value chain), and climate-smart agriculture approaches.

The Management Entity at UF/IFAS supports and integrates efforts across the target countries, crystallizing and sharing knowledge generated across four Areas of Inquiry and three Cross-cutting Themes. Technologies, practices, and policies are analyzed in the context of future impacts and drivers.

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Key: Cross-cutting Themes  Areas of Inquiry