



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

FEED THE FUTURE INNOVATION LAB FOR LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS

Joint Sharing and Planning for Improved Livestock Policies

Report on the Policy Roundtable Workshop in Rwanda

Held on September 13, 2019

by the Management Entity, University of Florida



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Acknowledgement

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Sustainably intensifying smallholder livestock systems to improve human nutrition, health, and incomes

Disclaimer

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Introduction

The livestock sector in Rwanda requires interventions that sustainably improve productivity, smallholders' income, access to markets, and the nutritional well-being especially of the most vulnerable populations. The provision of accurate, reliable and up-to-date findings from cutting edge/relevant research is essential if such interventions are to be effective and impactful. Policy makers need reliable, easy to understand evidence-based information communicated in a timely manner for formulating and implementing relevant policies. Research information should offer practical guides for use by the government and implementing partners as well as private sector actors. This includes research products that deliver meaningful evidence and easily comprehensible action recommendations on how to scale up proven innovations/technologies and approaches. However, it is also essential that researchers are made aware of the most acute information gaps for policy-making, so they can design and implement appropriate research and communicate relevant findings and recommendations.

The Enabling Policy Area of Inquiry (Policy AOI) of the USAID Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems at the University of Florida (hence Livestock Systems Innovation Lab) supports researchers and partners in the focus countries of intervention by helping to identify and promote the conditions and policy processes that are most conducive to sustainable livestock systems. One of the key issues that have become apparent in the activities of the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab is a gap between the research and policy-making worlds. On the one hand, policy-makers do not always allow the needed time or the opportunity to locate and incorporate the needed research evidence that could guide them in the process of policy formulation and implementation. On the other hand, researchers do not make sufficient efforts to communicate the relevance of their findings to the decision-makers.

The Policy AOI organized a policy roundtable in Rwanda, aimed to address some of these challenges. The event, titled "*Joint sharing and planning for improved livestock policies*", was held in Kigali in September 2019. The roundtable provided an opportunity to key policy stakeholders in Rwanda's livestock sector to explore their current collaboration and communication processes and identify new modalities for effectively sharing relevant knowledge from livestock science and contribute to more informed policy formulation and implementation. The roundtable also contributes to the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab's ongoing mission of developing human and institutional capacity in Rwanda and supporting collaborative efforts that lead to solid developmental impacts. The hope is that by following up on the recommendations that the participants in the workshop formulated together, tangible progress will occur that will strengthen the policy environment as well as improve the sustainability and growth of the livestock sector in Rwanda.

The roundtable was attended by over 40 participants, mostly stakeholders in the livestock sector in Rwanda, including representatives from different ministries and agencies within the government, universities, development partners, NGOs, producer associations and the private sector. The agenda is provided, in Annex 1. The event was held at the Hotel Park Inn by Radisson, September 13th, 2019, and facilitated by Dr. Renata Serra (Policy AOI Lead, University of Florida), Julius Nyangaga (Consultant, Right Track Africa, Kenya), Andrea Bohn (Project Manager, Livestock Systems Innovation Lab) and Felix Ngamiye (Rwanda consultant).

This report summarizes the content of the discussions as well as the recommendations that emerged from the sessions. It serves the purpose to solidify what was obtained during this first discussion phase as well as remind participants of what was agreed for follow up and implementation over the next year.

The roundtable discussion process

1.1. Objective

The Livestock Policy Roundtable consisted of both plenary sessions and group work, articulated in such ways that researchers, practitioners and policy makers in the livestock sector in Rwanda could make progress in terms of exploring ways for improving collaboration and engaging in more effective communication. At the completion of the workshop, participants were expected to have:

- Agreed on ways of promoting better dialogue among themselves, especially between researchers, policy makers and other livestock stakeholders;
- Agreed on tools that would enhance effectiveness of research communication to policy-makers and appreciated how research can be useful to decision-makers;
- Contributed to a participatory process for identifying key challenges and opportunities to implementing current livestock policies;
- Collectively agreed on recommendations and plans for improved knowledge sharing and institutional collaboration to enhance the beneficial impact of livestock policies.

The day's program was articulated into four components. The first plenary consisted of introductory messages followed by presentations from research projects funded by the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab that highlighted the key policy messages. This was followed by two sessions of group work, where each group was tasked to identify and describe, respectively: the structures in place for sharing livestock research and informing policy practice; and the gaps and weaknesses in existing modalities. Finally, a panel of four experts was invited to provide, on the basis of what had been shared and discussed in previous sessions, a list of suggestions and recommendations for implementation during the next year.

1.2. Presentation of key themes and ongoing research findings and policy messages

The event opened with an ice-breaker activity led by Andrea Bohn, in which participants introduced one another, and was followed by five presentations. First, Renata Serra explained some of the reasons why the research and policy worlds are often separate, but why it is important to bridge the gap. She concluded by highlighting several ways in which research findings can be more effectively communicated and made more relevant in the eyes of decision-makers and practitioners alike. Some of these messages are also captured in two short videos that the Innovation Lab produced, and which all participants were invited to watch (see links at the end of this report).

Dr. Solange Uwituze (Deputy Director Regional, Animal Resource Research and Technology Transfer, Rwanda Agriculture Board, RAB) gave a very powerful introductory speech, informed by her decades of

experience first at the University of Rwanda as faculty and Dean, then in the private sector and now in charge of Research and Technology transfer at RAB, which is part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources. After reminding the audience how far Rwanda has come over the last years, Dr. Solange urged researchers to always ask themselves: Have we thought big? Is our research people-centered? Are we accountable and to whom? Dr. Solange – who has worked with over 100 universities all over Africa – admitted that the allegations made about universities are partially true, and that research environments do resemble ivory towers. One element that has complicated issues of accountability for researchers is the growing reliance on external donor funding. Donors have quite complex and lengthy reporting requirements, which often means researchers orient their accountability to the donors first. Furthermore, external dependence presents governments with difficult choices regarding which donors they want to be involved with. Nonetheless, Dr. Solange urged the audience to always remember they are Rwandans first and to prioritize in their work the real and tangible impact on the lives of the people. To bring home the point that research should not be shelved but put to use, she gave the example of a researcher who can speak to a grandmother in the village and explain to her how the research makes her life better. Likewise, it is essential to speak to policy-makers. Policy-makers do not always understand what P-values are, nor do they have time to read 60 page reports. Researchers must communicate to the point, understand the two worlds of research and policy-making and always be prepared to address the “so what question”.

Three presentations followed, offered by three researchers associated with the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab: Dr. Emily Ouma (ILRI), Dr. Dirk Maier (Iowa State University), and Mr. Ben Bizinde (TechnoServe, Rwanda). Each of them described briefly and in non-technical terms the research they have been conducting in Rwanda, focusing on the take-home messages for policy-makers and practitioners.

Emily Ouma, who is principal investigator for the ongoing project “Enhancing milk quality and consumption for improved income and nutrition in Rwanda”, described the main research activities and interventions to date. Her research shows that household participation in the Girinka program implemented by the government is associated with lower degree of stunting in young children; but also that social and behavioral change communication interventions are significant in enhancing the nutrition gains derived from owning a cow, through imparting knowledge to mothers about the importance of animal source food for child growth.

Ben Bizinde, who is researcher on the same project, described another set of activities, aimed to enhance performance of dairy cooperatives to improve market access for smallholder milk producers. By working closely with 20 dairy cooperatives, through two different modalities of interventions, the project aims to enhance their capacity to grow membership, access markets, and improve financial performance.

Dirk Maier’s presentation focussed on initiatives aimed to break aflatoxin contamination cycles in livestock feeds in Rwanda. Aflatoxins, which are naturally produced by fungi in field crops and in stored crops, have been detected in several feed items in Rwanda, as in many other places around the world. His current project activities are examining the use of binders to decrease toxin bio-availability and reduce its secretion into milk. This research, which is conducted with the University of Rwanda, intends to show practical, realistic and feasible solutions to tackle toxin contamination – both pre-harvest and post-harvest.

1.3. What do we have in place?

The introductory presentations as well as the findings and related recommendations from current livestock research projects provided a telling background on the importance of strengthening the research-policy relationship and provided the backdrop for the group discussions that followed. The participants were divided into four groups, such that each included a diverse mix of experts coming from the government, the university, the private sector, civil society/associations, and development NGOs and partners. Each group was provided with flipcharts and markers and had to nominate a presenter.

Groups were asked to: discuss and visually represent on flip charts the existing collaborative communication systems and processes; identify the successes and weaknesses inherent in such systems; and finally think of new ways and modalities for improving existing processes and making communication and collaboration more effective. After a session of group work, another followed in which the representatives from each group shared, in turn, the main results from their discussion. The following sections summarize the key points emerging from the four group discussions, by topic.

Relevant key actors

A starting point for group work was the visualization of actors that are engaged, or expected to engage, in livestock research-development communication. While each group drew their own chart, there were a lot of commonalities between them. Figure 1 captures the main common features that the groups presented about the key actors and their relationships. The figure shows that not only are there several actors on each side of research and development, but also that these actors do have structures in place that allow communication and sharing. Furthermore, the groups also discussed the extent to which researchers and policy-makers relate to the community of farmers, the private sector and civil society.

What is in place – the positives

The following is what was presented as positives in the research-policy relationship. Similar points, however, were also presented as weak links when they were not functioning as expected.

In Rwanda, there is a well laid out decentralized system that allows easy flow of information across all tiers, but mostly between policy-makers and actors at the community level. This has ensured good communication between farmers and policy makers, i.e. farmers are able to present their ideas and issues to policy makers during forums such as National dialogue meetings (in which the president participates). Similar workshops and meetings are organized by policy makers (local authorities) at community level.

The Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) was a platform developed by the Ministry of Local Government in 2007 for information exchange, experience sharing and inter-institutional contacts between partners from the three sectors - civil society, private and public sectors (MINALOC, 2011).

The Government of Rwanda also works through Sector and Technical Working Groups. These forums are a combination of various stakeholders from the government, development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs) and private sector. The groups provide opportunities within a conducive environment for researchers and other actors to discuss and share policy issues and research results.

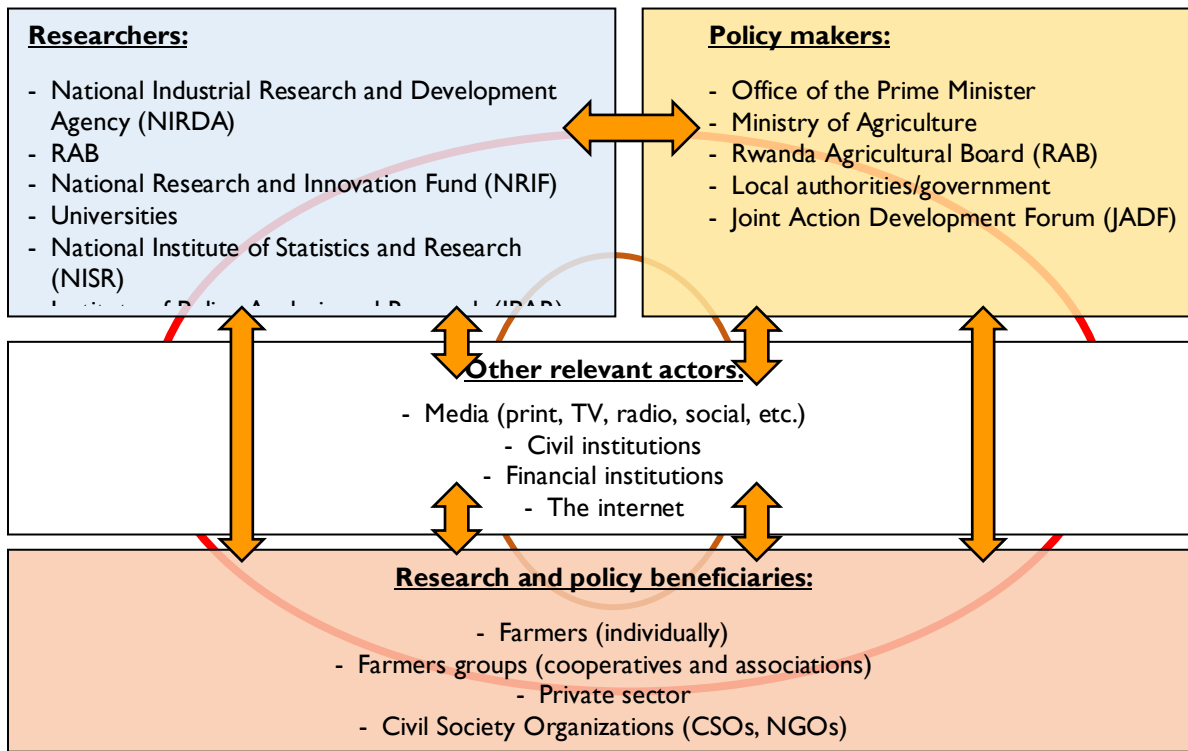


Figure 1: Key actors and their relationships

In several actor-based collaborations, RAB, government ministries and universities use MoUs for collaborative communication, and sharing of resources and information. NGOs provide internship opportunities to research students through such agreements.

The contribution of research to this policy-stakeholder nexus is viewed as limited but still functioning. RAB (as a research body) presents farmers with extension and innovation platforms for (research) feedback. Other universities reported that they conduct community outreach and extension to reach out to farmers.

The media evolution has also contributed to improved information flow. Media in all forms (radio, TV, social networks, etc.) is now playing a significant role in supporting communication between farmers, policy makers and government. Farmers are able to get rules and regulations from policy makers through such media channels.

What is in place – the weaknesses and gaps

According to working group reports, despite the positive developments, there are a few constraints that limit the extent to which existing structures of communication and collaboration operate. One dominant observation by many participants is that institutions continue to work in “silos”, even when in principle pursuing the same objectives. This causes duplication and inefficiency. Some local authorities are so preoccupied with fulfilling plans and meeting immediate requirements that they may pass on novel

approaches that could enhance their social impact. In the JADF the private sector joins hands with NGOs, but the linkages to other actors are regarded to be weaker.

One working group characterized the communication between private sector, NGOs and the Local Government as mostly ‘self-interest-driven’ (based on financial interest and uni-directional). It was noted that there are very few outreach and communication agents (or agencies) and, where they exist, their scope is limited by inadequacy of operational and human resources. Inefficient procedures of communication and a lack of familiarity with messaging and influencing techniques seem to hinder the connections between policies, visions and practice.

Another key limitation that was pointed out is that, while researchers collect data on a regular basis, there is limited feedback to farmers, private sector and other research users on what the resulting information means or how it could be interpreted and utilized. Language and other communication barriers hamper the dialogue between researchers and users of the research. The most popular dissemination method of sharing research findings via the internet, does not help farmers since they may not be technology savvy, or the information may be too detailed and complicated. In additions, researchers often do not effectively communicate their findings to policy makers, thus preventing them from being used in formulating appropriate policies.

Finally, some participants expressed the opinion that Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), management of outputs, rights of publication and access to information and sharing of benefits from research are handled in a way which may benefit international bodies more than national ones. One example cited was the complex legal clauses that limit access and user rights to information in partnership contracts between national institutions (RAB and universities) and international or multi-national bodies.

1.4. What do we envisage for the future?

Collaboration, inclusive sharing of research experience and plans

Most participants commented that, in order to break the “silo” attitudes, a change in attitudes and practices is needed towards collaboration for common interests and goals. To develop and disseminate relevant national policy strategies, it is important that all the appropriate stakeholders are engaged. Suggestions included that actors combine formal and informal platforms to discuss and agree on goals, values, opportunities and constraining barriers. Stakeholders could capitalize on the existing Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and ensure adequate flow of information (up and down). The presence of high-level organizations in the TWGs could support cross sharing of information between different sectors, for example across health, nutrition and agriculture during dissemination. These will further support joint grant-application, resource-pooling, and research-policy communication systems. Public Private Partnership can support collaborative research processes and should be promoted. In many cases, they are already effective in supporting and implementing communication between institutions. Farmers should be also represented within national level structures.

Demand-driven communication relationships and methods

The research-action-policy nexus requires functional communication systems, which serve demand and supply of data and information. Participants insisted that the information should not only be relevant but also easily accessible by various audiences. Projects should develop ways to increase feedback from the end users (e.g. farmers) to inform research questions and objectives and setting of priorities. Since most farmers are illiterate, researchers should use practical demonstrations (e.g. farmer field schools), rather than written materials.

The relationship between researchers and practitioners could be fostered to encourage understanding of research findings and adoption of research recommendations when formulating interventions. This process can work if the information is communicated in a timely fashion, and in languages that can be appreciated and understood. One example given was that misunderstanding due to limited and poor communication affects the relationship between farmers and financial institutions, because the latter *“do not understand the (financial) needs of farmers”*.

One group from the workshop recommended the use of rural social forums (such as ‘Parents Evenings’¹) to share research findings and inform about agricultural practices. Local government agents should also be involved in these, since they deal directly with farmers. Social media and other interactive platforms are also growing and should be considered as they are attracting attention and interest.

Dissemination of research findings to local communities should be supported by resources from both national government and development partners. As one participant observed *“Results are mostly only disseminated at national level and there is normally no budget for communicating the results at the community level”*.

Local ownership of research programs and data

The issue of local ownership of both research and policy-making attracted much interest during discussions. One suggestion is that the government should increase funding allocated to research to decrease dependence on research donors. Government funding is thought to have a greater impact since public resources are regarded as subject to greater domestic accountability. It was observed that many researchers conducting projects today in Rwanda are not local and there is thus a need to develop the research capacity of Rwandan nationals.

Calls were also made to introduce more courses in Agricultural Education and Extension to develop adequate (human) capacity. The universities should build the capacities of the private sector and the NGOs (who are service providers) in research and management of communication.

Platforms for data availability and accessibility by all stakeholders should be developed or strengthened for more informed decision-making. While the Ministry of Agriculture has such a system, it is still underdeveloped and not as efficient as expected. Cooperatives and associations can also support or develop databanks for their respective specific sub-sector.

¹ Locally referred to as *“Umugoroba n’ababyeyi”*. This is an informal village forum (held in the evenings) for parents and leaders (and sometimes their children) to discuss challenges and solutions faced by their families. For more details, read <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/189190>.

Recommended next steps

A panel of four experts² who had participated in the morning working groups and represented different parts of the livestock sector were invited to lead the final session, which was tasked to discuss how to move forward. The following gives a summary of the proposed steps, which the four panelists and the other workshop participants, recommended for follow up into 2020.

1.5. Empower technical working groups to lead research priorities and objectives

Before a research project is started, there should be a phase of formative research that guides the actual research design. It was suggested that Technical Working Groups establish a process for generating demand for on-going programs through consultations with communities to identify issues that will inform the research. The consultative forums or platforms should arrange to have local presence to ensure that the research is relevant. The Technical Working Groups could partner with the University of Rwanda as a starting point.

1.6. Promote and fund more research nationally

Limited funding, coupled with low level human and institutional capacity, is a constraining factor when it comes to research presentation, communication and uptake. There was a commitment to allocate 2% of GDP to research, but this provision has not been followed through. Government ministries, especially the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance, could and should collaborate further to increase funding for agricultural research and improve mechanisms for translating research findings into applicable development solutions.

As a result of limited resources, researchers are not incentivized to share their findings with the government and policy makers. It would be important to also sensitize parliamentarians and involve them in research communication, since they play an important role in decisions regarding budget allocations. One recommendation from the panel was that both the Ministries of Finance and of Economic Planning should consider the establishment of a research department, which can provide a useful basis for policy planning and guidance in the policy process.

1.7. Establish innovative platforms for research dissemination

Researchers were asked to develop online platforms for sharing their outputs for Continued Professional Development (CPD) based on new research findings. This will be through the professional Councils and Associations.

Another recommendation for researchers and development partners was to engage private sector actors since they better understand consumer needs and are able to leverage market-based factors for effective

² The four panelists were: Mrs. Angélique Barong (Program Manager at Send A Cow Rwanda); Mr. Andrew Butare (Chairperson at Rwanda Poultry Association); Dr. Martin Ntawubizi (Head of Nyagatare Campus & Dean SVM at University of Rwanda) and Dr. Wilson Rutaganira (Independent Consultant and Former RAB staff).

communication systems. One key step from the perspective of development partners is to promote successful innovations adopted elsewhere. Private sector actors could identify areas that would benefit from innovative pilot research solutions and would be amenable to scaling up.

The University of Rwanda (UoR) has already initiated an in-house publication venture, to promote research conducted in Rwanda. The Rwanda Journal has been launched, which is peer reviewed and available online. However, it was noted that very few papers have been published so far, and there is low awareness among researchers, and thus a low submission rate. UoR was tasked to promote the journal and make it accessible to colleagues within and outside the country.

1.8. Reward extension efforts and research use/application

Universities should develop systems that reward faculty members for engaging in extension. In the current system, the focus for faculty is mainly to undertake research and publish – and quantity of publications is often emphasized more than quality. Participants agreed that there should be a conscious investment in the development of research outreach activities, which translate research into useable knowledge to the benefit of farmers, the private sector and other stakeholders. Public and private institutions should provide incentives that support technology transfer processes, the application and commercialization of inventions, and the emergence of enterprises that promote adoption of innovations. Good institutional models should be identified that can be drawn on to manage conflicts of interest and other concerns.

Concluding reflections

The Policy Roundtable event involved the active participation and engagement of over 40 people representing different organizations in the livestock sector of Rwanda. Few points are worthy emphasizing as concluding reflections. First, the discussion made clear that several collaborative communication structures and systems are already in place, such as the Technical Working Groups, and institutional MoUs. The key challenge appears to be less about creating new structures than to make existing ones work more effectively.

Second, when considering the opportunities and gaps for better communication between researchers and policy-makers, the working groups insisted, it is important to also address the knowledge gaps and needs of farmers, CSOs, and the private sector. Indeed, these other actors require access to reliable and timely information from both researchers and policy-makers, if they are to substantially improve their production activities and their economic performance. It is not surprising that the recommendations that emerged from the Roundtable focused on the need to improve capacity for communication and extension systems more widely.

Finally, while the discussion and activities were very useful and engaging, it was not possible for the workshop participants to develop action plans for practical implementation beyond the workshop. These will require the participation and commitment of national agencies that have the appropriate mandate and resources. The next step, after the Roundtable, is therefore the packaging of relevant recommendations into

briefs and concept notes for consideration by those who have higher authority. Meanwhile, the participants will hopefully continue to promote the knowledge that they have acquired in the process in various ways, including in their daily practices and through locally organized forums.

There was a general expectation at the end of the workshop that such steps will be undertaken and that a second Policy Roundtable may be useful sometime in 2020, at which participants will be able to analyze the extent to which progress has occurred.

Links to video resources

Serra, R. 2019. Video. Bridging Research and Policy Through Engagement and Communication. Part 1. Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA.

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/691e01460be74b23a9daabbac312209c1d>

Serra, R. 2019. Video. Bridging Research and Policy Through Engagement and Communication. Part 2. Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA.

<https://mediasite.video.ufl.edu/Mediasite/Play/cb93668b57b14d02bf544dbff232997e1d>

Annex 1 Agenda

Livestock Policy Roundtable

September 13th, 2019, at the Park Inn by Radisson Hotel

WHAT

The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems conducts Livestock Policy Workshops in collaboration with national partners. Rwanda is the first country in which this kind of workshop is being offered and the title is: “JOINT SHARING AND PLANNING FOR IMPROVED LIVESTOCK POLICIES”.

WHY

The **purpose** of this workshop is for the key policy stakeholders and researchers in the livestock sector to learn and reflect on the benefits of bridging the gap between policy and research worlds; as well as to collectively identify, through a participatory process, ways in which the main actors in Rwanda can enhance the sharing of knowledge about specific aspects of livestock sciences, and expand the space for collaboration leading to improved and effective livestock interventions.

Specific objectives: At the completion of the workshop, participants will have:

- Promoted better dialogue among themselves, especially between researchers, policy makers and other livestock stakeholders;
- Learned the tools of how to enhance effectiveness of research communication to policy-makers and appreciated how research can be useful to decision-makers;
- Contributed to a participatory process for identifying key challenges and opportunities to implementing current livestock policies;
- Collectively agreed on a series of recommendations for improved knowledge sharing and institutional collaboration to enhance the beneficial impact of livestock policies.

The outcomes of the workshop will also inform the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab’s ongoing engagement to develop human and institutional capacity in Rwanda, to ensure that the Lab’s research and collaborative efforts have practical relevance and lead to solid developmental impacts.

WHO

Participants: This workshop is intended for key stakeholders in the livestock sector in Rwanda, e.g. representatives from different ministries within the government, Universities, development partners, NGOs, and representatives of producer associations and private sector.

Facilitators: Dr. Renata Serra (University of Florida) will present the scope of the workshop and represent the Policy Team of the Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems. Julius Nyangaga, from Right Track Africa, Kenya, will co-facilitate the event. Local consultant Felix Ngamije (Email: fngamije2005@gmail.com. Tel: +250 788308670) will provide logistical support and be the on-the-ground point of contact for all participants.

WHERE

The Policy Roundtable will be held at the Hotel Park Inn by Radisson
Address: Avenue de Kiyovu & Res des Parcs Plot 5457, Rwanda
Phone: +250 788 132 500

Program

Time	Session	Activity
8:30 – 9:00	1. “Joint Sharing and Planning for Improved Livestock Policies” Introduction and objectives	Impromptu networking: Andrea Bohn and Felix Ngamije Workshop agenda: Julius Nyangaga Aims and rationale: Renata Serra
9:00 – 9:40	2. Welcome Address	Address by Dr. Solange Uwituze, Deputy Director General, Animal Resource Research and Technology Transfer, RAB
9:40 – 10:30	3. Presentation of research findings and policy messages	Presentations by Drs. Emily Ouma and Dirk Maier, and Mr. Ben Bizinde
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00 – 11:45	4. What do we have in place?	Group work to identify successes and weaknesses of existing sharing and collaboration structures
11:45 – 12:15		Groups report back
12:15 – 12:45	5. What do we envisage for the future?	Group work to identify ways of making the current systems/processes more effective or innovate
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch Break	
13:45 – 14:15		Groups report back
14:15 – 14:45	6. Next Steps and Action Plan	Panel session
14:45 – 15:00	7. Closing	Dr. Renata Serra concludes
Group Picture after which coffee and light snacks will be served		



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