



Investing in rural people

## Enhancing dairy-based livelihoods in India and Tanzania through feed innovation and value chain development approaches

GRANT RESULTS SHEET

MilkIT piloted a model of smallholder dairy development involving the use of innovation platforms coupled with practical action research to test promising livestock feed interventions



Gita Kothari, crop-livestock farmer in India's northern state of Uttarakhand  
Photo: ILRI/Susan MacMillan

### Goals and objectives

The MilkIT research for development project set out to improve dairy-centred livelihoods in India and Tanzania through intensification of smallholder production focused on enhancement of feeds and feeding using innovation platforms and value chain approaches.

The project worked in the state of Uttarakhand in India and in Morogoro and Tanga regions in Tanzania. In both countries dairy has considerable potential to improve the livelihoods and nutrition of poor farming families but this potential has been underexploited. MilkIT focused on improving milk productivity through multistakeholder engagement to increase milk marketing and dairy cow feeding.

The project had three main objectives and components:

- Strengthen the use of value chain and innovative approaches among dairy stakeholders to improve feeding strategies for dairy cows.
- Develop options for improved feeding strategies leading to yield enhancement with potential income benefits.
- Strengthen mechanisms for sharing knowledge on feed development strategies at the local, regional and international levels.

The focus on stakeholder engagement through innovation platforms, coupled with simple pilot feed interventions, led to rapid improvement of dairy-centred livelihoods, especially at the Indian site. Project approaches and innovations were taken up by many local stakeholders, including those in the IFAD Integrated Livelihood Support Project.



## Facts at a glance

### Grant implementing agency

International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

### Theme

Smallholder dairy use

### Benefiting countries

India, Tanzania

### Total programme cost

US\$1,270,000

IFAD contribution: US\$1,000,000

Cofinancing: US\$270,000

### Partners

International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)

### Effectiveness and duration

2011-2014, three years

### Linkages to IFAD investment projects

- India: Integrated Livelihood Support Project, Uttarakhand
- Tanzania: Rural Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Support Programme

## Beneficiaries

The main beneficiaries of the project were poor dairy producers in India and Tanzania, especially women. Establishment of local innovation platforms provided a strong voice for women, allowing issues concerning dairy to be heard by government and other stakeholders, and for meaningful improvements to be made to dairy marketing. Uptake of simple improved feeding practices such as forage choppers and feeding troughs was strong among target farmers. Innovation platforms allowed the innovations to spread beyond these farmers through adoption into programmes by permanent local actors, including the local department of animal husbandry.

## Main results

MilkIT piloted a model of smallholder dairy development involving the use of innovation platforms coupled with practical action research to test promising livestock feed interventions. Many of the feed and marketing innovations were adopted by local stakeholders and under the Integrated Livelihood Support Project in India.

MilkIT set up a series of **innovation platforms** in each country. Dialogue in the innovation platforms and the action that followed led to rapid improvement in marketing arrangements, including establishment of producer cooperatives, milk collection centres and local milk shops in Uttarakhand. Further institutional changes followed. The national agricultural bank NABARD developed credit schemes to enable poor farmers to purchase cross-bred cows. The state dairy cooperative ANCHAL relaxed its membership rules to allow remote villagers to join and sell milk.

MilkIT used participatory approaches to decide on **feed interventions**. In Uttarakhand, this led to some very simple feeding practices, including mounted scythe choppers and concrete feeding troughs being rapidly taken up by target farmers and spreading to non-target farmers. These new practices were popular because they dealt with the key feed constraints: feed scarcity and shortage of labour.

Bringing together key stakeholders through the use of innovation platforms built early buy-in and a learning culture that allowed initiatives to spread beyond the project. MilkIT forage choppers, for example, are now being used by the animal husbandry department. The NABARD credit scheme stimulated through innovation platform dialogue is being applied well beyond the project. The IFAD Integrated Livelihood Support Project also promoted MilkIT dairy feed interventions. A local NGO partner, CHIRAG, is applying the innovation platform approach to other commodities, including vegetables and spices.

## The human dimension behind success



Research for development projects like MilkIT is often presented as rather technical and scientific, concerned with issues such as forage, animal nutrition and ration balancing. And scientists do indeed carry out research activities diligently. Yet, the human touch is absolutely critical to success – and a challenge to replicate or scale up.

MilkIT in Uttarakhand was fortunate in attracting a true expert in the art of this human touch – Dr Thanammal Ravichandran. As in most development activities around the world, it turned out that the project was really about people and relationships.

People joining together in community groups and in innovation platforms; people in government keen to learn from successes; people doing research looking for “best bet” interventions; and people in development agencies seeking impacts at scale. Thanammal combined her deep technical veterinary knowledge with interpersonal skills honed in a community-based NGO. She was able to sit down with the women farmers, share their concerns and take them to the wider group. She personally took the emerging innovations from the group to the local government, to the big development project, telling them not to miss out on a chance to join, learn and try to replicate the successes.

So often, when project success is measured in outputs, we tend to overlook that the fact these happen only when they are done by people with the right touch, a listening ear, an eye for an opportunity, persuasive arguments (and evidence!), good connections and the persistence to follow their own convictions. While IFAD and the Indian government can quite easily document and scale the impacts of the forage choppers and show why the banks and cooperatives invested their money in smallholder women dairy farmers – hoping that others may do the same – it is far more difficult to replicate and nurture the human touch. As this is one of the most significant inputs a project like MilkIT can have, it is perhaps time to examine how we build the right people into project design and implementation.

Source: ILRI (Peter Ballantyne, Nils Teufel, Alan Duncan)

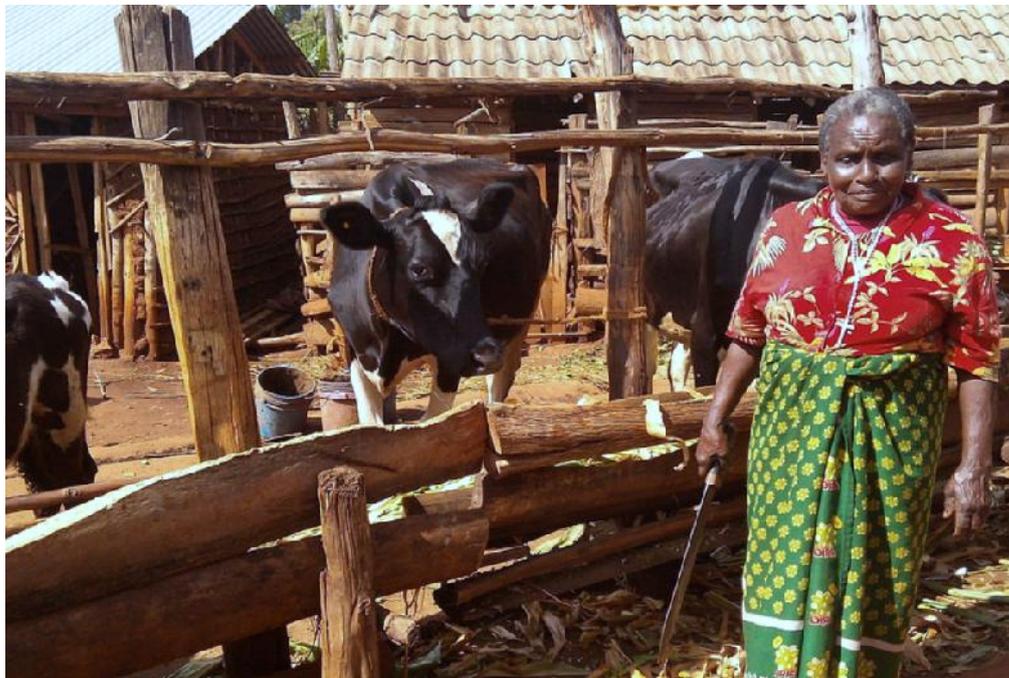
## Lessons learned

There are a number of lessons that IFAD could pick up from this work for incorporation into loan project design, including the following:

- **Innovation platforms** are very efficient in identifying solutions to dairy development constraints.
- Technical feed interventions and marketing interventions need to go hand-in-hand since they depend on each other’s success. However, the **phasing of focus on these two areas is important**. It is important to prioritize market interventions that provide the necessary incentives for farmers to invest in feed technologies.
- Feed interventions are highly context-specific. The success of these interventions depends strongly on the context in which they are applied. **Feed assessment and prioritization tools such as FEAST** have a very useful role to play in helping to understand the context and indicating appropriate technologies that have a strong chance of being adopted.

**Innovation platforms are excellent knowledge-sharing forums that allow innovations to move to scale quickly**

**Feed technologies are rapidly adopted if there is participation of local communities and dairy stakeholders**



Bibi with her fine improved cattle at Babati, Tanzania.  
Photo: ILRI/David Ngunga

## Way forward

The model of smallholder dairy development trialled in MilkIT is already showing scaling-up potential, especially in India (Uttarakhand).

A working paper has been developed outlining the key learnings from MilkIT on how innovation platforms can support widespread changes in dairy production and marketing practice.

Through MilkIT we found a range of ways in which innovations could be taken to scale. Technical innovations generated by innovation platforms at the local level sometimes spread spontaneously among farmers. In other cases, organizations involved in innovation platforms identified attractive innovations that they then mainstreamed within their programmes. In a few cases, the innovation platform process itself was adopted by local stakeholders and applied in other contexts. Especially in Uttarakhand, all these routes to scale are ongoing and the IFAD Integrated Livelihood Support Project has shown considerable interest in taking learning from the MilkIT project further and applying it in project implementation.

Now that the MilkIT project has closed, there is scope for further seed funds to ensure that the Integrated Livelihood Support Project continues to receive support in applying the methods and approaches trialled by MilkIT.

## Knowledge generated

In addition to the various project briefs and papers that can be found via the MilkIT wikispace <http://milkit.wikispaces.com/Outputs+and+reports>, the project has developed two working papers:

- Enhancing livestock productivity through feed and feeding interventions in MilkIT project sites in India and Tanzania
- Innovation platforms to improve smallholder dairying at scale: The MilkIT project in India and Tanzania

## Read more

- President's Report: <http://www.ifad.org/gbdocs/lot/2011/e/EB-2011-LOT-G-5-Rev-1.pdf>
- Project website: <https://milkit.wikispaces.com>



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