Gender relations in adoption of Brachiaria fodder grass in Muhoroni, Rongo, Mbooni and Kilome sub-counties in Kenya

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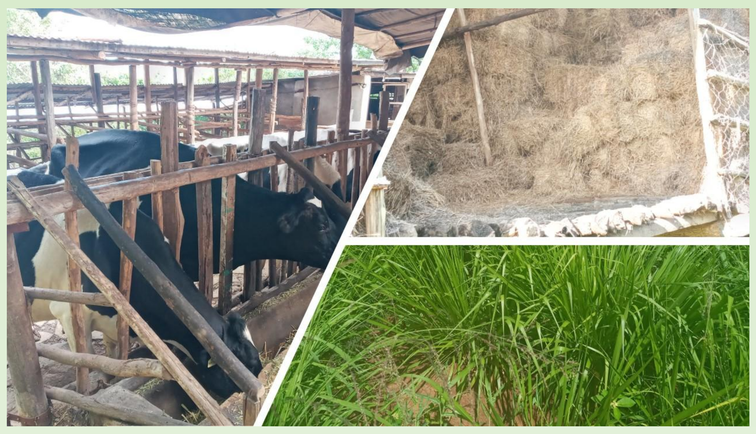
BACKGROUND

- Livestock is an important asset for livelihood of farmers in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and has the potential to empower women
- Insufficient and poor-quality feed limits this potential
- Uptake of cultivated forages by farmers is being increasingly promoted by governments and development organizations in collaboration with research institutions, as one way of addressing the problem of livestock feed scarcity
- Brachiaria (syn. Urochloa) is a valuable alternative to Napier grass, the dominant forage in Kenya.
- But little is known about women and men farmer's access to and adoption of Brachiaria.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

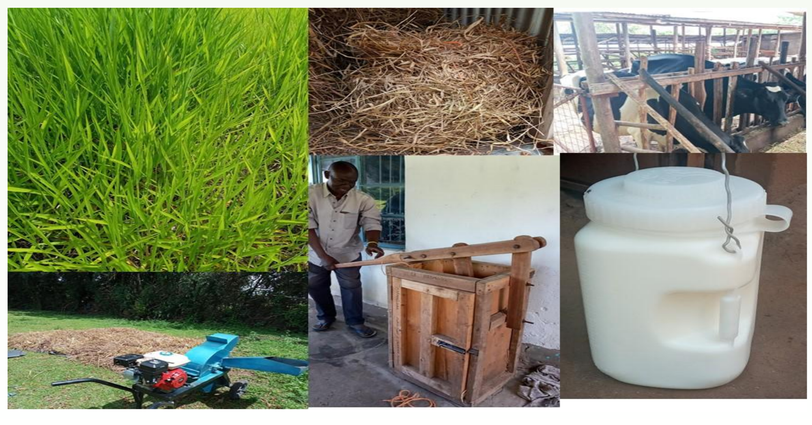
Main research question: 'What are the gender dynamics influencing Brachiaira uptake and commercialization among women and men of dairy cooperatives in four sub-counties in Kenya?

Sub-questions:

1.'What is the rate of adoption and commercialization of Brachiaria among women and men farmers?'

2. 'What are the determinant of adoption?

3. 'does adoption of feed technology contribute to women's economic empowerment?



METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative and quantitative study in 2019 and 2020
- 16 single-sex focus group discussions and a household survey with 260 respondents (59 women and 201 men) belonging to a household where at least one individual is a member of dairy cooperative.
- 8 key-informant interviews with two livestock production officers and four leading Brachiaira adopters (all who were men), and two dairy farmer associations (DFAs) officers

FINDINGS

- Brachiaria is accessible to both women and men. Dairy cooperatives are important means for women and men to access extension services, useful information, and planting materials, but only few women are cooperative members.

- Men face constrains owing to small land areas, rather than the ownership and access problems that constrain women. These challenges privilege men as de facto owners of resources while subordinating women and disfranchising them in terms of adopting this technology.

- Overall, there are three main potential pathways offered by Brachiaira- and possibly other forage varieties –towards the economic empowerment of the respondents. These pathways concern:

  i) the sale of Brachiaira planting materials- and hay bales,

  ii) the sale of the increased of milk obtained when cows are fed with Brachiaira (which is particularly effective for women who control milk income), and

  iii) the training of other farmers as another, more limited way of generating revenue from Brachiaria.

CONCLUSIONS

- Cooperative membership for men should be supported while at the same time gender norms that reduce women's engagement with cooperatives, and their access to and control over land, should be challenged.

Link to the publication:
https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fanim.2023.1113243/full

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