Thesis possibilities Mozambique (Vilanculos) and India (Rajasthan and Jharkhand)

Small ruminant value chains as platforms for reducing poverty and increasing food security in dryland areas of India and Mozambique (imGoats)

Introduction
The imGoats project aims to transform the lives of goat keepers in India and Mozambique by turning their subsistence-level goat production into a viable and profitable enterprise. The goal of the imGoats project is to increase incomes and food security in a sustainable manner by enhancing pro-poor small ruminant value chains in India and Mozambique while the objectives are two: (a) to pilot sustainable and replicable organizational and technical models to strengthen goat value chains in India and Mozambique that increase incomes, reduce vulnerability and enhance welfare amongst marginalized groups, including women and (b) to document, communicate and promote appropriate evidence-based model(s) for sustainable, pro-poor goat value chains.

The target zones in Mozambique are the semi-arid areas in the Northern Inhambane province. The target group is about 500 vulnerable households in Inhassoro district, of which 25% will be female-headed households and 20% households living with HIV and AIDS. In India, the project operates in Udaipur District of Rajasthan State and Dumka District of Jharkhand State, covering a total of 5000 scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and landless households. CARE International in Mozambique and BAIF in India are leading the development aspects and local administration in their respective project sites.

More information on the project can be obtained at www.imgoats.org

Possible MSc research areas in Mozambique and India

Gender analysis
Gender equity is central to overall project implementation. It is important to ensure that (a) women, female-headed households and disadvantaged groups participate and benefit from project support, and (b) as goat enterprises become more economically attractive, women do not lose control. Careful targeting and continuous monitoring are essential to avoid such unintended outcomes. As an MSc student you can design research to understand these dynamics and the potential consequences of transformation of goat production and marketing systems in the project areas.

There are many female-headed households in Mozambique and they have limited access to resources, inputs and services (especially knowledge and advisory services). In India, the two states in which the project operates are significantly different socio-culturally and with regard to gender roles and dynamics. It would be important to understand what kind of strategies and interventions would help include women and female-headed households effectively in value chain development process and ensure that they benefit from participation in diverse socio-cultural situations.

A baseline gender analysis is being conducted and the report will be available shortly. The quantitative and qualitative data generated can complement the data to be collected by you.
Economic analysis (value chains)
The project focuses on goat value chains. There are several options to conduct economic analysis related to this value chain, for example, analysis of economic viability of service provision within the chain; economic modelling of integrated productivity measures to determine more precisely best-bet production strategies under different settings of resources and markets; analysis of current business development services in the goat value chains and prospects for improvement through better organization. Another research question to be answered through scenario building is: What are the potential enhanced value added and benefits to actors in the value chain if different packages of technical and institutional interventions are tried?

Sustainable intensification (environmental assessment)
By increasing the relative profitability of goat production, the project interventions are expected to influence targeted goat keepers to intensify and increase production. However, it is very important that this occurs in a sustainable way i.e. ‘sustainable intensification’, particularly from an environmental perspective. There are limited data available on environmental sustainability, so as an MSc student you will collect and analyze environmental data (e.g. using life-cycle assessment). The research question to be answered is: What are the potential environmental implications if the current subsistence goat production systems are transformed into commercial or semi-commercial goat systems in the project areas?

Innovation and multi-stakeholder processes
Goat value chains are complex and comprise many different sets of people and organizations with diverse interests and incentives. Innovation platforms provide spaces for value chain actors to interact, communicate and act to improve performance of the value chain and the resulting benefits to the actors. They involve continuous learning and capacity building, both in terms of innovation capacity and specific technical or organizational capacities. Examples of relevant research questions in this area include the following: What factors enhance and constrain innovation in the goat value chain? What triggers innovation in goat value chains in different contexts? What are the incentive systems that attract private-sector participation in the multi-stakeholder processes to improve goat value chains? What determines collective action by multi-stakeholder coalitions for goat value chain development in the areas of production, marketing, value addition and addressing environmental concerns? How do actor networks evolve in response to mechanisms like innovation platforms and various other value chain development interventions?

Goat housing, reproduction, health and feeding
Through different technical interventions the project contributes to improve goat production and productivity. To start with, technical interventions – which may be relevant in the context of goat production in project sites – need to be identified. This entails more ‘technical’ research questions related to animal health, housing, feeding and breeding. As an MSc animal science student, you can identify possibilities for enhanced performance in terms of goat health, feeding, reproduction or housing practices. For example, a feed resource assessment should be conducted to design feeding strategy interventions. In addition, it is important to assess how different technical interventions contribute to increases in productivity of the goat systems.
Other areas
During the project, new research questions may come up, which give opportunities for other thesis possibilities. In addition, the project is open to students who come up with their own ideas or research proposals which fit within the imGoats project.

Requirements
- BSc and/or MSc courses in one (or more) of the following areas: agricultural economics, animal production, rural development, innovation studies, rural sociology, animal nutrition, animal health, sustainability assessment, value chains.
- Basic knowledge of Portuguese or Spanish language is recommended as all field communication in Mozambique is in Portuguese.

Conditions
- Based in Vilanculos, Mozambique (CARE office); or in Udaipur (Rajasthan) or Deogarh (Jharkhand), India
- Co-supervision by a researcher from the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and your university
- Financial support for students from developing countries. Students from developed countries depend on personal (or other) funding.

Any other novel, relevant and appropriate ideas would also be very welcome!

More information:
Ranjitha Puskur | Team Leader, Innovation in Livestock Systems | International Livestock Research Institute | www.ilri.org
P.O. Box 5689 Addis Ababa Ethiopia | Tel: +251 11 617 2319 | Email: r.puskur@cgiar.org |