Participatory and decentralized pasture management

In Kyrgyzstan, sustainable pasture management has improved productivity and contributed to rural poverty reduction.

Kyrgyzstan has limited arable land but extensive rangeland resources. By addressing the fragmentation of administrative control over pastures, the IFAD-supported Agricultural Investments and Services Project is contributing to a more supportive institutional environment and improved infrastructure for farmers and herders. In collaboration with the International Development Association, the project has led to the adoption of a new pasture law that regulates the management of pasture land more efficiently in order to increase the productivity of livestock farmers and reduce animal diseases, such as brucellosis, that have a negative impact on public health.

Country: Kyrgyzstan

Direct Beneficiaries: Rural communities, specifically livestock and crop farmers, herders and other pasture users.

Results:

- A new pasture law was adopted, decentralizing management of pastures to the ayul okmotu (a rural administration comprising one village or more), and delegating management responsibility to pasture users’ unions comprising users in the area of the ayul okmotu.
- A brucellosis vaccination programme has been successfully implemented in over 90 per cent of Naryn Province.

Main Lessons:

- Because of the complex problems facing agriculture, rural development and poverty reduction in Kyrgyzstan, a single intervention is unlikely to deliver lasting results, particularly in the livestock sector where any progress made (for example in animal health) is quickly lost if the momentum is not kept up. A long-term perspective underpinned by lasting commitments is therefore required to achieve sustainable impacts.
- All rural residents are stakeholders in pasture management. Despite potential social conflicts, empowered rural communities have shown themselves to be conscientious and effective managers of common resources.

BASIC INFO

Sources:
World Bank project appraisal document (2008), mid-term review report (2011)
Project Name: Agricultural Investments and Services Project
Project Starting Date: 2008
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WEB PAGES

IFAD Operations Near East, North Africa and Europe:
http://www.ifad.org/operations/projects/regions/near/index.htm
IFAD learning notes:
http://www.ifad.org/rural/learningnotes/index.htm
IFAD project:
http://operations.ifad.org-web/ifad/operations/country/project/tags/kyrgyzstan/1434/project_overview
Background
In Kyrgyzstan, almost three quarters of poor people live in rural areas. Herding is the main source of livelihood for the rural population but faces a number of crucial problems. First, administrative control over pastures is fragmented among three administrative subdivisions (oblast or province; raion or district; and village). Inconsistencies within the legal framework governing rangeland management complicate the situation. Second, inadequate animal nutrition, poor animal health, inappropriate farm management practices and weak livestock marketing and processing are major constraints. The Government accords high priority to sustaining agricultural growth and increasing farm productivity and incomes. In its Agrarian Policy Concept of the Kyrgyz Republic to 2010, prepared in 2004, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Processing Industry prioritized the introduction of a more sustainable system of pasture management, strengthening agricultural advisory and information services, and improving the provision of veterinary services.

Enhancing aid effectiveness
Five major donors – the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development, and United Nations agencies – developed a joint country support strategy (JCSS) for 2007-2010 to enhance aid effectiveness and support the Government in its effort to improve pasture management. The Agricultural Investments and Services Project is part of the JCSS. The project, cofinanced by an IFAD grant of US$9 million and administered by the International Development Association, is improving the institutional and infrastructure environment for farmers and herdsmen, with a focus on the livestock sector; enhancing sustainable pasture management and productivity; and contributing to rural poverty reduction. Initiated in 2009 and expected to close in 2014, the project addresses a set of closely interlinked constraints in animal nutrition, animal health, farm management practices and the livestock marketing environment.

Managing and improving pastures
A major, tangible result of the project was the adoption of a new pasture law in 2009, which has radically changed the management of rangelands in Kyrgyzstan. The law decentralizes pasture management to local governments (ayuuli omotu), which then decentralize it to pasture users and consolidate management responsibility at the community level. As part of the law, pasture users’ unions (PUUs) have been established nationwide with representative pasture management councils responsible for developing medium-term plans. The pasture law is highly innovative because it allocates exclusive rights to use rangelands to PUU members. The legal entitlement of users to manage pasture resources creates a strong incentive to do so and increases productivity. The new pasture law also provides for the demarcation of pasture boundaries and a conflict resolution mechanism that settles disputes over boundaries and user rights. To foster the efficient management of grazing land, PUUs and local governments have received training on community-based pasture management, including social mobilization and participatory decision-making, pasture rights, responsibilities and benefits of good rangeland use and management practices.

In addition to the innovative pasture law, the project has successfully started a vaccination campaign against animal brucellosis, a highly contagious zoonotic disease caused by the Brucella bacteria. Localized in the animal’s reproductive organs, the bacteria can lead, in female animals, to abortion, stillbirth or the early death of offspring, while, in male animals, it often results in lower fertility. The bacteria can be transmitted from animals to humans, and, like other zoonotic diseases, it represents a serious public health threat and can negatively impact social and economic development. Due to the widespread prevalence of the disease in animals and humans in Naryn Province, in northern Kyrgyzstan, the vaccination campaign has been part of province-wide efforts to provide essential public and private livestock and veterinary services, with over 90 per cent coverage so far. More than 25,000 animals were vaccinated between 2008 and 2009 in Naryn. At the national level, the vaccination campaign has been highly successful, with more than 3 million sheep and goats vaccinated to date.

Replication and scaling up
Since its adoption three years ago, the new pasture law has radically changed rangeland management in Kyrgyzstan. The organization of livestock owners and other rangeland users into PUUs has empowered and capacitated them for community-based management. Better management of demarcated pastures has led to enhanced pasture quality and productivity. At the same time, conflicts over grazing land boundaries and user rights have decreased, and pasture management is becoming more efficient and sustainable. The innovative pasture law is a further step in efforts to reduce rural poverty in the country. Due to those encouraging results, the project has a high potential for being scaled up and replicated in other countries of the region. Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, in particular, have shown a strong interest in replicating the project.