Farm to market

Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) Project, to connect producers and SMEs with sophisticated markets is partnering with the private sector. The first such partnership is with Tazij Meats & Food, a Tazij Group Company. The company is leading exporter of all types of meat including beef, mutton, camel and lamb and has its own state of art abattoir. Project Coordinator, Mr. Azher Choudhry signed a letter of intent (LoI) with Tazij Meats CEO Mr. Musab Mian on 31 May 2021.

Tazij Group uses latest technology and production techniques to preserve the nutritional value, tenderness, and hygiene in their products. The company holds international certifications and are fully compliant with food safety, traceability, management, and all required standards to ensure better quality and access to international markets. Both organizations acknowledged the importance of promoting private sector development, particularly that of SME’s, to eradicate poverty and achieving sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. As part of the partnership, the premier exporter will orient GRASP beneficiaries across Sindh and Balochistan, advising them on raising better livestock that can fetch premium prices.

With most of the people in Balochistan relying on livestock trade for sustenance, and many in Sindh as well, this will be an immense opportunity for farmers disconnected from markets to get first-hand knowledge to treat their animals and prepare them according to the highest standards. GRASP has already been working with the livestock farmers, administering vaccines to over 60,000 animals in Sindh and Balochistan so far.

By collaborating with leading private service providers, GRASP project is making headway in building capacities of farmer organizations and SME’s in building market linkages, and benefit from untapped opportunities. They did not previously have access. The linkage will encourage the actors all along the value chain to improve the produce for better market acceptability and thus get a premium price. Tazij group also expressed interest in sourcing from GRASP beneficiaries as and when they reach an acceptable level and gather economically viable quantities. This will be an important step in GRASP goals to develop rural economy and to reduce poverty.

Media dialogue

GRASP organized a virtual media workshop on May 31, 2021. Nineteen key journalists who contribute to leading print and electronic media both in English and national languages attended the workshop, which was organized to stimulate a conversation around the small and medium enterprises in Pakistan, particularly Sindh.

Shabnam Baloch, GRASP Sindh team lead opened the event and gave a brief intro of the International Trade Centre, GRASP, and its work in Pakistan so far. She explained the hurdles the SME’s and small holder farmer holders/ peasant farmers face in the provinces, the challenges posed by policy lacunae in addressing , and how GRASP has been working on overcoming those for the past year. She also spoke about value chain and by
products identified in each of the 12 GRASP focused districts in Sindh.

GRASP communication specialist presented the GRASP communication strategy, the goals of which are to provide information, advice and guidance to target audience groups thereby prompting action that will help small and medium-sized enterprises in horticulture and livestock become more competitive by making improvements at all levels of the value chain; it can be as simple as developing manuals for making value-added by-products.

This was followed by a Q&A session with the journalists and the ITC-GRASP team, who expressed interest in ITC’s work in Pakistan, and how GRASP was addressing the challenges highlighted. They were curious to know how the value added products were selected, the methodology of which was explained by Sindh provincial lead. Many journalists volunteered to write on the sector, and requested the GRASP team in assisting them in finding data from the districts the project was working in, as well requesting for exposure visit to the areas of intervention in the future.

Climate technology market assessment in Pakistan

GRASP is working to build the SME sector in the country by focusing on rural communities in total 21 districts located in Sindh and Balochistan. Pakistan being significantly impacted by climate change, it is important for SMEs to be able to build their resilience and have the capacity to adapt mitigating the effects of climate change. Therefore one the objective of GRASP is to promote climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices and technologies in selected value chains, and to build the capacities of agribusiness and environmental technology service providers.

For this purpose, Lahore University of Management and Sciences (LUMS) has been selected to carry out the Climate Technology Market Assessment in Pakistan for GRASP.

The Centre for Water Informatics and Technology (WIT) at the university will assess the state of climate technology market in horticulture and livestock across Pakistan, provide a menu of options to guide GRASP to support the innovation of climate technologies, and their commercialization and adoption in the horticulture and livestock value chains in Sindh and Balochistan.

They will do this by identifying distinct market chains based on knowledge and technology, and identify and quantify gaps in knowledge, technology and policies that hinder upgrading between market chains and uptake by SMEs. This will be focused on five areas, i) commercial technology providers, ii) the informal sector and indigenous knowledge and practices, iii) support services, iv) rules and regulations and, v) access for women and marginalized groups.

From this research an analytical report on the state of climate technology market will be derived, which will outline a menu options for the promotion of climate friendly technologies, and livestock and horticulture value chain to support GRASP implementation. A number of consultative stakeholder workshops will be planned across Islamabad, Sindh and Balochistan to facilitate the process and validate the reports by taking expert opinion on the matter.

The report will be used within the GRASP project to design impactful interventions, as well as stakeholders to inform them on the options available in the market when it comes to using technology which is climate friendly, and sustainable.

Value addition trainings in Balochistan

Eighty-three SME’s including farmers, traders, and processors have been trained in Kech and Panjgor districts of Balochistan on “Good Manufacturing Practices in compliance to Food Safety and Quality standards”, and “Good Agricultural Practices in line with Global SPS Standards”.

The objective of the training was to familiarize the participants with good agricultural and manufacturing practices and standards, and their importance in particular the Application of Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary measures (SPS Agreement) at the farm level. Male and female participants were briefed on the importance of SPS compliance and the requirement of buyers, legal authorities, personal hygiene, and disease control during food handling,
prevention of cross contamination, monitoring of quality, food safety and associated risks and hand washing. They were also briefed on Integrated Pest Management, cleaning and sanitation, chemical handling and Minimum Residue Level, requirements of national and international buyers (Metro, Carrefour, Pizza Hut, Dominos, PepsiCo, Nestle and other legal and regulatory requirements, Food Authority, PSQCA etc.). Special focus was to enable the participants to implement these good practices and fulfil compliance to quality, food safety and SPS measures in their own trades. Part of this training were 12 beneficiaries of European Union BRACE project, promoting better synergies between the two EU funded projects in Balochistan. The beneficiaries will build upon the previous support received through BRACE by utilizing the concepts learned through this training. Thus both projects will be complementing the efforts for poverty reduction.

Mr. Irfan Gharsheen, Commissioner Makran attended the training and distributed certificates among the participants.

SME strategy for Sindh
GRASP team with the technical support of ITC experts based in Geneva revised and improved concept note for Provincial SME strategy for Sindh incorporating feedback from the department of Commerce & Industrious. The revised approach is guided by seven main guiding principles to the ITC’s Strategies design process:

GRASP is also developing a menu of options for capacity building of ASI faculty. These include 3 weeks to 3 months long courses in University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) Lahore and University of Agriculture Faisalabad.

Promoting Agri-entrepreneurship
GRASP partner in Balochistan Empowerment thru Creative Integration (ECI) conducted training sessions (for male and females) in Khuzdar district on 26 – 26 May 2021. Fifty participants have been trained on a range of entrepreneurship skills. The trainees learned about the concept of micro entrepreneurship in horticulture and livestock; Role...
and importance of small farmers in farming and livestock; Technical and financial viability of farm businesses, its marketing, costing and pricing; and review of the seasonal calendar and define the key parts of the business plan of horticulture and livestock business. Similar trainings in Quetta, Zhob, Pishin and Lasbela district of Balochistan have been planned in the month of June 2021.

For Sindh, partner organization CSSP completed 15 similar trainings in five districts of Sindh ie. Tando Allahyar, Matiari, Tando Muhammad Khan, Sanghar and Shaheed Benazirabad engaging 180 participants.

Development of Sindh Livestock Entrepreneurship and Investment Policy

GRASP’s consultant Dr. Hamid Jalil, finalised the draft of Sindh Livestock & Investment Policy. The policy draft developed through extensive stakeholder consultations and departmental deliberations was presented to the Department of Livestock & Fisheries department. The department has officially accepted it and will now take it onward for formal approvals. This contribution by the project is likely to go a long way in creating favourable policy environment for livestock sector in general and SMEs’ in particular.

Our partners

Coordination meetings with stakeholders

Field teams of FAO conducted coordination meetings with Department of livestock and Agriculture in district Thatta, Khairpur Mirs and Tharparkar for planning of GRASP-Regular project and shared the progress and achievements of GRASP-Emergency project.

The discussion with departments focused on the selection of union council under the GRASP-Regular project. Official of relevant line departments expressed their full cooperation for the implementation of the project and fruitful discussion held on union councils’ selection.

Agriculture and livestock departments appreciated the support of FAO, under the GRASP-Emergency project, to the farmers of district Thatta and Khairpur Mirs.

Two-day workshop held to discuss implementation of GRASP-R project

FAO organized a two-day workshop, under GRASP project, to discuss the implementation of the GRASP-Regular activities, finalizing the projects’ work-plan and monitoring and evaluation plan, orienting teams on the project and collaboration with other partners in Karachi.

The workshop improved the understanding of participants on outputs, which FAO will be delivering along with the impact of the project. Apart from this, a discussion to focus on seven commodities i.e. onion, tomato, dates, banana, mango, goat and cattle in ten districts of the GRASP Regular project.
News in brief

Final review of Sindh Seed Act 2021! GRASP is supporting review of draft act through its policy consultant.

GRASP conducted a training on business skills in horticulture and livestock in Khuzdar district of Balochistan on 27th May. Fifty trainees (25 male, 25 female) attended the session including farmers and businessmen/women. Certificates were distributed by the chief guest Deputy Director Agriculture Khuzdar Mr. Muhammad Ishaq.

First meeting of consumer protection cell Sindh was held. GRASP translation & dissemination of Consumer protection act was appreciated, and the project is in talks to build capacity of district consumer protection cells.

GRASP in media

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