

EMERGENCY VETERINARY INTERVENTIONS IN AFAR REGION

According to the field assessment conducted in November 2004 in Afar National Regional State by the MoARD with the support of FAO, the general food security situation for 2005 is critical in 16 hotspot Woredas. This is mainly due to erratic and insufficient rain of the short rain season (*sugum*) and the delay and uneven distribution of the main rain (*kerma*) in 2004, which make the availability of feed and water critical. Pastoralists from hotspot Woredas are currently experiencing increased livestock mortality, decreased food (milk and meat) availability, malnutrition, low price for animals, and high grain price and water shortages. This situation is compounded by previous years of droughts which also caused loss of livestock and low productivity.

High concentration of migrated livestock in "better" grazing areas and watering points increase frequency of contacts between animals, which favours the occurrence, and rapid spread of infectious diseases amongst physically weakened livestock. Thus, the high risk of disease outbreak at an epidemic level due to drought-related crowding of livestock is anticipated. Consequently preparedness for animal health emergency intervention is recognised to be the priority. Thus, in order to avoid or reduce further losses of livestock, preventive measures must be taken within relatively short time. However, the public veterinary service in the region/woreda is unable to prevent and control livestock epidemic diseases mainly due to lack of veterinary inputs and other logistic supports.

This project will therefore provide the necessary prophylactic (vaccination) and curative treatments required to prevent and control the occurrence of major livestock diseases and improve the capacity of the regional veterinary services in the 16 hotspot Woredas identified in Afar region.

The project which will have six months duration beginning January 2005, will be implemented in 16 Woredas located in all the 5 zones of the Afar region. A total of 1,501,719 livestock (261,772 cattle, 1,121,344 shoats, 112,284 camels and 6,319 equines owned by 86,580 households (a total of 432,900 people) will be benefiting from the project with a total fund of US\$ 729,414.

The project will reduce the vulnerability of pastoral communities through bringing an improvement in livestock production and productivity especially by making available milk for household consumptions and improving nutritional status of children in the areas. Further, it will increase the consumption of purchased grain using income to be generated from the sales of surplus livestock products and ensure speedy recovery. Finally the project is expected to increase the capacity of public veterinary services and local people to prevent and treat animal diseases.