

Consultation and Sensitization Meeting on the Formation of Yak Cooperatives and Federation as a Strategy for Highland Development



A week long consultation and awareness meeting was organized with the yak rearing farmers of two highland gewogs – Sakteng and Merak under Trashigang Dzongkhag from 9th to 17th February 2020. The main objective was to create awareness on formation and strengthening of the existing yak cooperatives at the gewog and district level. The consultation and awareness meeting were attended by 209 herders from Sakteng and Merak Geog. (89 males and 120 females).







The herders and local government authority were sensitized about the Highland development support programs during the 12FYP and the special highland development program approved by the government which is above and over the plan activities proposed in 12FYP. The participants were also clarified on why the proposed Highland flagship program was changed to program-based emphasizing on the differences and advantages being time bound and future sustainability.

The dzongkhag administration in consultation with different stakeholders have decided to organize Highland festival in Sakteng Gewog on 2nd May 2021, coinciding with the birth anniversary of His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo of

Bhutan. In line the team advocated herders and local leaders for a need to start preparing hereafter for the highland festival. Most importantly, the herders were informed that the festival must be unique and different from other festivals celebrated in other dzongkhags. For this, they were asked to start identifying economic activities (develop homestays with toilet facilities and recreational programs) and local yak products (dairy, wool etc.) henceforth to compliment cash income from the festival. The farmers have agreed to produce different wool products from yak and sheep in addition to existing dairy products such as *yeatpa*, cheddar cheese and butter which will be improved through standardization and packaging.



The Dasho Dungpa, Sakteng gewog shared the plans and activities for the Highland festival, and thereafter he led the team to different sites identified for the festival.

The participants were sensitized on a need for the existing groups to grow (group, cooperative, federation) vibrantly so that the “voice of herders” could be heard at the national, regional and international levels. The herders from both gewogs have agreed to revamp the current groups and accordingly come up with action/business plans in consultation with different stakeholders. Subsequently, the Dzongkhag Livestock Sector (DLS) in consultation with Regional Livestock Development Centre (RLDC) & Regional Agriculture Marketing Cooperative (RAMCO) will process for the registration as the

cooperatives. The formation of Yak Cooperative in various Dzongkhags will enable to institute Bhutan Yak Federation which is supported through Kanchenjunga Landscape Program, ICIMOD, Nepal and National Highland Development Program, Bhutan.

The meeting was coordinated by the Research and Extension Division, DoL & National Highland Research & Development Centre, Jakar in collaboration with RLDC, Kanglung, Department of Livestock, RAMCO, Mongar and DLS, Dzongkhag Administration, Trashigang.

The team would like to thank the local government authority in particular Dasho Dungpa, Dungkha Administration, Sakteng for his kind supports, and the Gups and Mangmi of two gewogs for mobilizing the participants and providing other logistic supports.

**Reported
by Research & Extension Division, DoL**