

## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed at improving smallholders' feeding and milk hygiene practices in order to increase milk production and improve its quality. A participatory action research was designed with focus group discussions, prioritization of farm challenges, training sessions and interventions in feeding and milk hygiene. Identification of challenges revealed low milk prices, poor breeds and feed unavailability as priority challenges. Feeding intervention was selected by the platform because of feasibility and farmers expressed need to address low production. Milk quality had low priority but was selected because of farmers' willingness to learn about recommended practices. Identification of fodder crops using the Feed Evaluation Assessment Tool (FEAST) revealed that, in order of importance, peri-urban farms utilized more purchased feeds and collected fodder while rural farms utilized more pasture grazing and purchased feed. Feeding interventions increased milk production by 20% but hygiene intervention did not improve milk quality. Introduction of knowledge on proper feed management and ration formulation through participatory research is therefore an opportunity to improve production, income and food security in smallholder herds. Although milk quality is often prioritized in dairy research in smallholder farms, farmers are more interested in increasing production for higher income, hence interest in feeding.