

Mak-CAES dispatches 514 native chickens for Women-led Farmer Groups in Apac and Kole Districts

Native chickens contribute significantly to the well-being of rural farming communities in low-income countries and particularly so in poverty-stricken regions of Mozambique and Uganda by providing protein and micronutrients. The majority of smallholder farmers raise native chickens for food and income as they do not require special management, require low investment, need limited pest control, and provide manure. Local chickens have a ready market, and are easily consumed by rural populations in case of food shortage, hence ensuring food and nutrition security and poverty alleviation in rural areas.

The **Native Chickens Project** funded by the African Union (2019-2021) is a collaboration between institutions in two countries - Mozambique and Uganda with the project lead at Eduardo Mondlane University Mozambique. At Makerere University, the project is led by Dr. Donald Rugira Kugonza from the Department of Agricultural Production, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES). Partner Institutions in Uganda include; Makerere University, Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), Gulu University, Chicken Masters, and Research and Education Agency. In Mozambique the partners are; International Rural Poultry Centre- Kyeema Foundation, Agricultural Research Institute of Mozambique, and the Directorate of Animal Sciences (DCA).

Objective of the project

The Native Chickens Project development objective is to increase the quantity and quality of chicken products that will result in better income and nutrition for farmers in Mozambique and Uganda (Northern Uganda). Overall, the project aims to breed native chicken that can lay 100 eggs per hen per year as opposed to the current production of 30-45 eggs. The project also aims to reduce the maturity period from the current six to three months.

Targeted beneficiaries

- Smallholder and medium scale chicken farmers particularly women and youth
- Chicken traders
- Chicken consumers
- National government agencies
- Private sector agricultural service providers

Activities carried out under the project

The main activities carried out under the project include; 1) baseline survey to establish available native chicken ecotypes and characterize their morphometric and molecular features; 2) collection of blood samples of native chickens, extract, genotype and sequence DNA- identification of ecotypes with genes for fast growth and high egg production; 3) establishment of four breeding sites – assemble breeding flocks of native chickens, conduct matings and monitor performance of native and crossbred chickens; 4) identification and characterization of available Scavenging Feed Resource (SFR) for

chickens- assessment of SFR and formulation of feeds based on SFR, and evaluation of the performance of native chickens fed by SFR; 5) developing and testing technology delivery models for scaling up improved chickens and sharing information on improved chickens.

The project also offers practical training for undergraduate and graduate students on the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Master of Science in Animal Science programmes.

Districts supported in Uganda

The project supports capacity building, advocacy and economic empowerment of women farmers and youth groups in four districts in Northern Uganda including Apac and Kole.

Dispatch of 514 native chickens to Apac and Kole Districts

On 9th February 2022, the project team led by Dr Donald Rugira Kugonza, Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Production, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Makerere University and **the project advisor who is a Molecular Geneticist Dr Maurice Agaba** dispatched 514 high quality native chickens from the breeding site at Makerere Institute of Agricultural Research Kabanyolo (MUARIK) to WOUGNET for distribution to Women-led Farmer Groups in Apac and Kole districts.

In Apac district, a total of 195 birds were distributed to Ben Igen Women's Group, and 158 to Awei Nyeko Mixed Farmer Group with each farmer receiving support of 3 birds. In Kole District, a total of 149 birds were distributed to Oribcing Women's Group and Opo Icen Farmer Groups. Each farmer in the two groups received three chickens. Out of the 514 chicken dispatched for distribution, 12 died in transit. In addition to the chicken, Makerere University through WOUGNET supports the farmers with breeding materials and continuously sensitizes them on proper management of their stocks for improved products.

The project team continues to monitor and sensitize farmer groups on the management of the chicken for income generation.