



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Livestock

More meat, milk and eggs by and for the poor

Livestock CRP Communications Strategy

Updated Dec 2019

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Why develop a communications strategy?

Before we begin, let's remind ourselves of the Livestock CRP's overall objective:

More meat, milk and eggs by and for the poor

The Livestock Agri-Food Systems CGIAR Research Program (the Livestock CRP) will seize opportunities presented by rapid increases in demand for animal-source food in developing countries. The current suppliers of these foods are mostly millions of smallholder farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, together with the value chain actors who trade, process and deliver products to consumers.

The program will **provide research-based solutions** to drive their transition to **sustainable, resilient livelihoods and to productive small-scale enterprises that will help feed future generations**. This will open up new business and income-earning opportunities in auxiliary services and subsectors. It will also improve local and global food and nutritional security and reduce poverty among poor households who keep livestock or contribute to livestock commodity systems, and enhance the environmental benefits these evolving smallholder-based systems can offer.

Source: Proposal Livestock Agri-food Systems CGIAR Research Program, March 2016

Sounds like hard work? Yes. Can the CRP deliver? We like to think so.

The road towards the CRP achieving its objectives is not a singular one. In fact, it's a network of roads and journeys that are sometimes smooth sailing, or at times so painfully rough it feels like you can't go on. There are crossroads where you pause and wonder which direction to take, or bends when you realize you need to shift direction. And then there are the roads that lead you to those peaks, the high moments when you reach a milestone and you get to pat yourself on the back, before hitting the road again.

The job of communications is to capture the stories of those multiple journeys, the people who are on them and the people whose lives are touched by them. We tell those stories to those who need to hear them and the communications strategy is all about how we're going to do that.

Objectives of the communications strategy

The strategy provides a roadmap that will guide us to do the following:

- Demonstrate the work of the CRP—it's successes and challenges—and how that work contributes to the CRP's objectives.
- Build materials and tools to help us more effectively and meaningfully engage with stakeholders.
- Ensure people understand what the CRP is about, both internally and externally.
- Provide us with the means to become better advocates of the CRP's work, to change behavior or perceptions where necessary.
- Recognize the role and contribution of CRP partners and to complement their own communication efforts.

Communications objectives are most effective when they are aligned with those of the Livestock CRP, to ensure that communications messaging and activities are consistent and relevant. This approach likewise builds support and interest in communications activities, so that they are recognized not as an "add-on", but as fundamental to the research and policy objectives of the CRP and its partners.

Livestock CRP objectives

Communications objectives

To be a leader in the livestock research sector for lower and middle income countries	To raise awareness and demonstrate the work of the CRP—it's successes and challenges—and how that work can help people in developing countries meet the growing demand for animal source foods, build nutrition security, increase livelihoods and reduce livestock's environmental footprint
To regularly report progress and impact of research to CRP management, CG Systems Management Office, donors and Independent Steering Committee	To support CRP reporting of achievements through a pipeline of outcome/impact stories and research highlights, making the case to donors as to why the work of the Livestock CRP is important
To raise visibility of work at the policy level and support priority country engagement	To strategically convey CRP achievements and progress in priority countries to inform and influence policy makers
To demonstrate the critical role of livestock and how it contributes to improved food security, nutrition and increased livelihoods	To advocate for livestock research for development through evidence-based science that demonstrates how the CRP's work contributes to increased productivity, improved nutrition outcomes, and better environmental controls
To create an integrated community of livestock researchers working towards common collective goals	To reinforce and establish a strong Livestock CRP identity internally, so that it can speak with a stronger, more impactful voice externally, to more effectively promote the Livestock CRP's work and objectives

The current situation

There is a strong push externally and internally for the Livestock CRP to become better at communicating. Stakeholders, particularly donors, want to know more about the work of the CRP beyond reporting requirements. We have a great opportunity ahead of us to do better at communicating the science, telling our stories and putting them into context to show why the work is important, as well as to reinforce the identity of the CRP.

:: Reflections on communications to date ::

Coverage of the CRP throughout Phase 1 and Phase 2 (current one) has been somewhat fractured. This is not surprising since until recently there has not been a dedicated communications staff to oversee and guide the communications process for the Livestock CRP and prior to that, Livestock and Fish CRP.

Communications has comprised mostly of blog posts, a few press releases, at times video and some social media posts. Communication efforts have been inconsistent, with periodic lapses between posts. Social media has not been optimized for the CRP, with no dedicated social media account to provide ownership and concertedly guide the conversation on the work of the Livestock CRP.

The Livestock CRP website is also due for an update. It is underutilized as a key resource for information on the work of the Livestock CRP and so far has mainly been used as a blog platform. In its current form, it is text heavy, the font sizes are too small and it is not adequately set up to effectively integrate visual elements that would normally enhance stories and blog posts, i.e. photo essays, videos or infographics.

Below is a SWOT analysis of the current communications situation, to provide us with an understanding of areas that are working in our favour, while considering others that will require close attention in order for a new Livestock CRP communications program to succeed.

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock CRP has real value in the environment it is working in – food security, livelihoods creation, poverty alleviation • Support from upper management to invest in and improve CRP communications • There is good science being conducted under the CRP; there are stories to tell • Flagships and scientists are on-board and appreciate the value of communications • ILRI and partners are some of the research leaders in their fields 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platforms are outdated • Not all flagships have embedded communications staff • Flagships are underreporting their innovation and policy achievements • Mixed awareness & understanding of CRP by partners and scientists • Evidence of impact not adequately demonstrated
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated CRP website & new, improved storytelling platforms would raise the visibility of the CRP's work to stakeholders • Great stories available that we can tell right now • Increase level of internal communications to reinforce identity of the CRP 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders, i.e. donors, perceive that the CRP is not providing enough evidence of impact • Duplication of research by other actors or perception that others are doing better • Ongoing or backlash of negative feedback on livestock and the burden it creates on the environment • Perception of stealing credit and/or instigating brand/turf war

:: Looking ahead ::

The good news is that the Livestock CRP is now poised to embark on a path towards more deliberate and strategic communications. Strong management support has led to the hiring of a communications manager, together with allocation of financial resources to set up a solid communications foundation and develop good content on a regular basis. There are also great stories waiting to be told – at several different flagship meetings that took place in September 2018, scientists realized that they have not been adequately communicating their achievements and are keen to find ways to better track their research highlights, outcome stories, innovations and policy breakthroughs. We have a great opportunity ahead of us to bring those stories to life.

A website redesign would transform the Livestock CRP site into the primary go-to destination for people wanting updates and information on the Livestock CRP. The design and format will be adapted to the different ways that people consume online information.

There is opportunity to increase social media usage, creating a Livestock CRP Twitter handle, to promote stories, ideas and photos. We would build a following by optimizing existing social media channels of CRP partners, donors, staff and other stakeholders who are active on social media.

Stakeholders

In any communications strategy identifying one's audiences is essential, along with recognizing that *how* you engage with them is just as important as *what* you say to them. We are all fighting for attention in a world where everyone is bombarded with information, so having an intimate understanding of what is important to stakeholders and how they consume information will help us become better and more effective communicators.

Below is a list of the Livestock CRP's primary audiences, both external and internal. Internal communications is extremely important as it helps the CRP build a unified and coherent identity. This helps contribute to more authentic and effective messaging. It also encourages and motivates team leaders and staff to become better Livestock CRP ambassadors when meeting stakeholders, attending conferences, when visiting the field and, where appropriate, engaging with the news media.

:: External audiences ::

1. **Donors:** we absolutely need to engage with this group regularly, cultivating and deepening relationships—critical in a challenging and crowded fund-raising environment. The good news is that donors for the most part are very happy to receive updates on how we're doing as it provides them with material for their own advocacy and reporting purposes.
2. **Government/policy makers:** it's a good idea to engage early and regularly with this group, to build and influence the relationship, whilst providing materials that break down information clearly, to help inform the policy making process.
3. **Development actors:**
 - *Next users* (i.e. NGOs, private sector) that could help scale up of research outputs and delivery to end users
 - *End users*, livestock keepers, who are interested in new technologies, tools and approaches to increase the productivity of their animals
4. **External partners:** to celebrate and recognize their role and contributions to the CRP.
5. **Public:** building public support through advocacy and success stories is important because of the public's ability to influence government and donors.

:: Internal audiences ::

6. **Management:** Management, especially at the higher levels, represent the voice of the organization. By arming them with updates on progress, successes and challenges, they can become meaningful spokespersons and advocates for the Livestock CRP, especially with key stakeholders.
7. **CRP partners:** ILRI, ICARDA, CIAT, SLU and GIZ; it is essential that all partners feel adequately represented in all communications and that their work is recognized, to ensure equal ownership and responsibility towards the successes and challenges of the Livestock CRP.
8. **Scientists/staff:** Scientists and staff focus on specific areas and projects and often may not be aware or lose sight of the overall objectives of the Livestock CRP; by keeping this group informed of the work of their colleagues and the CRP as a whole, this will help reinforce the CRP identity and the roles and contributions from individuals and teams.
9. **Board of Trustees:** This group of senior, well-respected professionals from livestock and general research, development and management fields can serve as ambassadors and networkers for the CRP.
10. **Independent Steering Committee:** The advisory group to the Livestock CRP consisting of academic, science and industry experts. Providing this group with regular updates on the CRP will help strengthen their role in providing strategic guidance and constructive feedback to the CRP and the different flagships.

11. **Systems Management Office:** Regular engagement with the office and particularly the resource mobilization and communication teams will ensure they are aware of our work, and to provide material to support their respective activities.

Below is a breakdown of the different communications products or services that the Livestock CRP's key audiences would likely be interested in:

Target audience	Newsletter	Social media	Success stories	Policy & innovations	Advocacy pieces	Factsheets/ infographics	News media
Donors	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Government/ policy makers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Next users	X		X	X		X	X
Public		X	X		X		X
CRP partners	X	X	X	X		X	X
Management	X	X	X	X	X		X
Scientists	X	X	X	X		X	X
Board	X	X	X	X	X		X
ISC	X	X	X	X		X	X

Messages

The top tier messages for the Livestock CRP will underpin all other messaging that is conveyed through the Livestock CRP communications channels. Stories, social media posts and all other content in some part will contribute to reinforcing the following messages:

- The Livestock CRP combines research in 5 different areas – genetics, livestock health, feeds & forages, environment, livelihoods and agri-food systems – to develop integrated solutions for poor households to increase livestock yields and productivity, expand livelihoods opportunities, meet growing demand for nutritious animal source foods and reduce livestock's environmental footprint.
- The Livestock CRP's added value lies in creating an enabling environment where livestock systems can thrive and improve the lives of women and men smallholder farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists through increased productivity and better health.
- The Livestock CRP translates science into innovations and interventions that work, in order to attract investments and develop policies to take them to scale.
- Livestock CRP identifies and enables opportunities for women and youth to benefit and to be empowered by high-value products and employment that livestock-related activities offer.

Communications outputs and activities

To meet the desired communications objectives and convey the Livestock CRP messaging, the appropriate tools of engagement need to be built and channels of communication identified and strengthened. Below are guidelines on producing compelling communications, followed by the different tools to disseminate or host related content.

- **Strong picture, data, and story content** will provide opportunities for the CRP to grow its *following* when actively posted on social media networks.
- **Be active on social media:**
 - **Post regularly**, share relevant posts by other scientists/organizations
 - **Follow people** or organizations (partners, donors, staff, policy makers, influencers) we would like to follow us *and* selectively follow the people they are following
 - Strategically use **hashtags**, the best way to capture information and conversations
 - **Promote social media channels** in emails, newsletters, at conferences and on the Livestock CRP website
- **Produce content that is shareable**, that stakeholders (i.e. donors especially) would like to repost and send on to their own stakeholders.
- **Capitalize on relationships/partnerships** with other organizations
 - Greater collaboration with partners or organizations who are doing similar or complementary work to help raise the impact of stories and messages
 - Strengthen partnerships to open up access to larger local and global audiences

:: Priority Actions ::

To put these principles into operation, the following will be the initial priorities to achieve:

Redesign Livestock CRP website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Update the website to adapt to how people consume information online, integrating more visuals such as photo essays, slideshows and videos○ In addition to regular blog posts, the site will be the main repository for information on the Livestock CRP, links to publications, upcoming events, reference materials (i.e. factsheets, infographics) and links to publications
Develop Livestock CRP quarterly newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Highlights of posted digital content, news and recent publications○ Announcements of new funding or projects○ News (internal or external)
Develop social media presence of the Livestock CRP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Create Twitter handle @Livestock_CGIAR<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Daily posts consisting of message + visual content and/or retweets▪ Post during workshops or conferences, citing key messaging/takeaways▪ Promote online content from Livestock CRP site or partners' sites▪ Posts 'from the field' – a good way to showcase science or people in action▪ Strategic posts linked to ongoing social media campaigns (i.e. #USAIDtransforms, International Day of Rural Women, #WorldScienceDay)▪ Tag stakeholders, partners or organizations strategically to grow audiences and promote content (i.e. donors, CG centres, UN, etc.)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ INSTAGRAM: create a Livestock CRP account (to be considered for Q1/2 2019) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tell compelling “Instagram stories” ▪ A more personalized platform for engagement –post images of scientists & people in the field ▪ Caption and use hashtags strategically to optimize reach and add whimsy ▪ Has the fastest growth rate and highest level of engagement of all the social media platforms
Produce products & materials for download or print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Factsheets: information on CRP, flagships, partners; summaries from key publications and policy briefs ○ Infographics: visually present information/data on projects, publications, briefs; can be used alone or integrated into factsheets, blog posts and others ○ Posters: develop as needed to support information or advocacy campaigns; to be used at conferences or provide visibility internally in Livestock CRP offices
Produce digital content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Blog posts on publications, research highlights, scientist Q&As, produced by flagships, consultants or the Communications Manager ○ Human interest stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrate the human angle where possible in blog posts and communications packages, to humanize the science/policy and to demonstrate what the science looks like in practice (impact/evidence) ▪ Tell relatable stories of how science changes lives (before/after) ○ Interactive stories for content we want to highlight (i.e. outcome story showcase from the annual report, advocacy pieces, themed stories on nutrition, livelihoods and others) ○ Photo essays/slideshows to be used in blog posts or on social media ○ Videos – can be corporate style videos to be used on the website or short clips from the field for social media ○ Combine data visualization with stories and pictures to allow big picture thinking to small stories and to demonstrate impact where possible
News media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ International media: share with journalists research linked to news related to food security, malnutrition, drought, conflict; contribute to op-ed opportunities (i.e. CGIAR level, CKM, CRP partners) ○ National media: engage with local journalists when seeking to promote CRP work locally, to inform/influence policy makers; promote high-level events by CRP partners
Conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify conferences where there could be opportunities to strategically promote Livestock CRP research and

	agenda through speakers or presentations, conference booths, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide scientists with communications support during conferences, i.e. tweets, blog posts
Establish network with CRP partners & Systems Management Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Build relationships through regular engagement with partners and SMO when opportunities arise ○ Curate Livestock CRP stories and relevant content onto the CGIAR website ○ Contribute to CGIAR and partner campaigns, initiatives and activities

Work plan & resources

The strategy of roll-out of communications activities and outputs can be divided into three main phases: beginning with the **Foundation phase** where the focus is on building platforms for communication, followed by the **Momentum phase** where we populate the platforms with content, then finishing off with the **Consolidation phase**, where we continue to generate content and amplify our messaging, building on lessons learned from the Momentum Phase. The total duration of the three phases will bring us to the end of phase two of the Livestock CRP.

1. Foundation phase

Duration: 6 months (Sept 2018 to Dec 2019)

Objective: to build and/or strengthen the Livestock CRP's platforms for engagement and identify opportunities for us to promote the Livestock CRP and communicate meaningfully and effectively with stakeholders.

Deliverable	Due date	Required resources/tasks	Budget
Livestock CRP website redesign	Dec 2019	Programmer, photos, write content, design layout	US\$ 15,000
CRP communications tool kit	Ongoing	Produce content & layout design	TBD
Activate @Livestock_CGIAR Twitter	Oct 2018	Regular tweets from Nov	–
		Slideshow subscription to Animoto	\$588/year (split with CKM)
Build CRP photo database	Ongoing	Photographer field visits	Ongoing
Quarterly newsletter (1 st ed.)	Feb 2020	MailChimp subscription	Sharing with CKM
Blog posts	Ongoing	Liaising with flagship teams	Case by case
Engage in CGIAR Communications CoP to connect with CG communication partners	Jan yearly	Meeting with Communications CoP	

2. Momentum phase 2019

Duration: 12 months (Jan 2020–Dec 2020)

Objective:

- Building upon the foundation phase, generate regular content as follows:

Deliverables	Timing
Blog posts	Weekly/bi-weekly
Social media posts	Daily
Video clips	As needed
Infographics	As needed
Themed campaigns (i.e. nutrition, environment)	Bi-annually
Newsletter	Quarterly
Outcome stories/innovations	Annually

- Establish a library of outcome/impact stories by flagship, priority country and overall CRP, with pipeline of stories under development for each
- Grow followers on Twitter and Instagram
- Reinforce work and role of the Livestock CRP strategically during key conferences, ensuring our messages are conveyed and heard through scientists, presentations and social media
- Focus on strengthening relationships with donors, CRP partners and other key stakeholders
- Support scientists in promoting projects that are strategic in reinforcing the objectives and identity of the Livestock CRP
- Identify opportunities to produce material in conjunction with other units (i.e. advocacy campaigns with ILRI Communications & Knowledge Management team or CRP partner communications teams)

3. Consolidation phase 2021

Duration: 12 months (July 2020-Dec 2021; final year of the Livestock CRP)

Objective:

- Continue generating regular content for the website and social media platforms
- Build upon the achievements and lessons learned during the *momentum phase*, update communications direction and packages as needed
- Identify and develop overall outcome stories for all of Livestock CRP Phase 2
- Package learning from Livestock CRP, especially overarching products and achievements (i.e. FEAST/G-FEAST tool, RHoMIS, priority countries, etc.)

Evaluating success

Evaluating how we are doing over the course of each phase is important, so we can learn what does or does not work so well, and adapt our activities accordingly.

- 1) **Identify baseline:** Gather readership data (views, visitors, PDF downloads, etc.) of the various existing platforms and communications products so we can monitor and compare progress in the future.
- 2) **Online analytics** to monitor the following on a bi-annual basis:
 - Website analytics
 - CG space analytics
 - Twitter analytics
 - Newsletter analytics: readthroughs, bounced emails, number of subscribers
 - *Additional conversation with Ben Hack on other tools available for us to monitor success*
- 3) **Gather numbers** of the following bi-annually, categorizing them by flagship, partners, priority countries to ensure healthy distribution:

- Blog posts
 - Videos
 - Infographics
 - Photo essays
 - Media coverage
- 4) **Use data:** Use analytics to determine which media, issues or campaigns have been effective or popular to inform actions and strategy.
- 5) **Gather feedback from stakeholders,** especially donors and partners on how we are doing – find out if they are reading our products, whether they are effective and engaging, and if they are able to use them for their own messaging and reporting purposes. For example, through one-on-one engagement or electronic survey.
- 6) Where possible, identify any **observed or tangible changes** resulting from communications initiatives or campaigns:
- Mentions by others – stakeholders, social media, news
 - Public responses or shift in attitudes
 - Any calls of action met