
Sadia Issifu: farmer innovator and women's banker in Walewale, North Ghana



Sadia at work preparing her livestock supplement.

Credit: Joe Nchor

At first glance, you will never guess what Sadia has achieved for herself and other women in her community. Sadia is shy. She is not loud spoken like many women in her community in Gbani village, West Mamprusi municipality, in northern Ghana. She has an air of quiet confidence. Beneath her calm veneer is an engine of new ideas and an astute sense of business. Sadia is a woman innovator who came up with a feed supplement for livestock from local material that has now got her the status of the “women’s banker and financial advisor”.

Livestock play a very important role in helping farming communities in northern Ghana to ward off hunger and poverty. However, feed shortage in the dry season often leads to lower animal

productivity and household income. In the dry season, animals graze freely on pastures and crop residues of low nutritive value. Sadia’s feed supplement has helped her overcome these feeding constraints, thereby significantly boosting the productivity of her small stock and the economic wellbeing of her family.

This local innovation was first discovered by Prolinnova Ghana partners in 2018. Sadia’s feed supplement combines a local salt lick (mo-ayarim), saltpetre (kanwu zie), pods of *Piliostigma reticulatum* (ba-ama biiri, a local shrub) and maize chaff (dufu). Having seen the potential of this feed for other smallholder farmers, especially women, partners in Prolinnova Ghana undertook a farmer-led joint research process together with Sadia to improve the nutritive content of the feed supplement. The team included researchers of the Animal Research Institute and animal husbandry extensionists from the Municipal Department of Agriculture in Ghana.

The experimentation involved feeding the sheep of 12 farmers (4 men and 8 women, including Sadia) on four different formulations (treatments) based on the feed ingredients for four months. Each farmer provided 4 sheep for the experiment, totalling 48 animals. The sheep being fed these rations were weighed at monthly intervals during the joint experiment. Weight gains and other productivity parameters such as mortality rates and birth rates were recorded jointly by the research team and the farmers and compared across the four treatments. The results of these feeding trials, backed up by laboratory analysis of the original feed supplement, helped Sadia improve her formulation by reducing the salt content and adding 4% of sorghum malt brewer’s waste (pito mash) to improve digestion and energy levels in the animals.

The Center for Ecological Agriculture and Livelihoods (CEAL), a local NGO, together with the Municipal Department of Agriculture, assisted Sadia to share the improved innovation through local farmer innovation fairs, radio broadcasts and field training and extension activities. This has increased



Sadia’s livestock feed that is sold on the local market.

Credit: Joe Nchor



Sadia (right) at the International Farmer Innovation Fair in April 2024 in Kenya.

Credit: Janish Wettasinha

the farmers’ demand for the product and increased Sadia’s income whilst exposing many farmers and other development actors in the municipality to the local innovation and to the Participatory Innovation Development (PID) approach. The “Scaling Up Local Innovation for Food and Nutrition Security” (SULCI-FaNS) project, with financial support from German-based organisation Misereor, assisted Sadia to commercialise her product by training her in entrepreneurship, providing processing tools and containers to expand the feed production, and helping

her improve the packaging of the product for sale within the municipality.

Sadia was selected to participate in Prolinnova’s International Farmer Innovation Fair in Nairobi, Kenya, in April 2024. She presented her innovation to many other farmers from 12 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Together with several other farmer innovators who also had livestock-related local innovations, Sadia was engaged in actively sharing her experiences and learning from others.

Back in her quiet village, Sadia is considered to be the home banker for

the women in the community. She not only lends money to women in need, but also guides them to the path of financial independence through local innovation. She has inspired many women to try out new things to solve their problems and together they have formed a women innovators' group. Many of them have come up with new ways of solving their problems and thereby increasing their incomes and ensuring food and nutrition security for their families.

The recognition of the role of local innovation has also spread to neighbouring villages. For example, in recent times several women in a neighbouring village of Kukua have lost their animals to a strange ailment where the animal would feel ill, lie down and die. As the number of deaths increased, the government veterinarian performed an autopsy and found out that the cause of animal deaths was ingesting of plastic waste that lies all around the village. Soon enough, and as a result of the interest and capacities developed on local innovation through Sadia's



Sadia receiving her certificate of participation at the International Farmer Innovation Fair.

Credit: Janish Wettasinha

influence, the women started a campaign to collect the waste and to turn it into useful products such as baskets, and ropes to use for tethering their animals and to get water out of their deep wells. What is clear from this case, is that Sadia has inspired women to find local

solutions to the challenges that they face.

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