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Livelihood and entrepreneurship in Rabbit meat marketing for small farmers- Lessons from Kenya

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Kaimbu county of Kenya has found a profitable way to support livelihood by value addition to rabbit meat. Rabbit rearing has been practised in Kaimbu for sometime. The rabbits are sold as pets, for breeding and for meat. A rabbit replicates with an average of 3 to 4 times a year with an average of 9 young ones in a year. Rabbit breeding has become a livelihood support activity in Kaimbu.

The live animals do not fetch good price. A service doe sells for Kenya Shilling 5,000 while a weaning bunny sells for Kenya shilling 2,000. With this price rabbit breeders were only making a break even. The issue of marketing remained a big challenge for small farmers of Kaimbu. The rabbit breeders undergo a training on value addition in rabbit meat which was provided by Jomo Kenyetta University, Nairobi.

The real change in came in the approach of marketing of rabbit when Ann Jackyene, County Director (Agriculture) geared up to provide training to youth and farmer group and women of Kaimbu county on preparation and cooking of rabbit meat.

Figure 1 Rabbit Breeder, Kaimbu County, Nairobi
Ann Jackylene came to India as a trainee in US-India-Africa trilateral training programme on Agricultural marketing. National Institute of Agricultural marketing (NIAM) had provided her training on marketing, value addition, strategies, group marketing, market led extension, use of ICT for marketing etc. As a County Director of Agriculture she was in lead position to bring a difference. Equipped with knowledge and experience she was determined to take up the challenge of marketing and lead Youth and women groups to enhance income through value addition.

The youth of Kaimbu now know to prepare sausages, samosas out of Rabbit meat. Rabbit meat is the best white meat rich in Iron and Zinc with low fat content. The snacks of rabbit meat have become very popular with urbanites.

For Josphat Kamani, age 22, life has been good ever since he got training from Extension officers of County. He learnt to add value on rabbit meat and has made a successful agri venture. Josphat started Kipayo Rabbit Breeder with one Rabbit and today he has become a successful rabbit breeder. He now sells rabbit meat snacks and samosas every evening and is enthusiastic to sell in other Districts.

He sells 100 samosas everyday fo Kenya Sh 3000. To make 100 samosa it requires 2 Kg of meat, 1 kg onion, 1 kg oil for frying, 1 kg of flour. The cost of material for preparing 100 samosa is SH 1300, cost of labour and transportation is KSh 200. The total cost of production is KSh 1500. (1 Kenya Shilling equals 0.69 Rupee). He makes a 100% profit on this venture. Kipayo Rabbit breeders gets prior order for serving samosas in parties and are getting popular in their town.

Rabbit breeding has been growing with leaps and bounds. Looking at this trend the farmers of mobilised each other and formed the Rabbit Breeders Association of Kenya (RABAK). Their goal was to empower communities with health and wealth. By 2005, the association had registered more than 3000 rabbit farmers from different parts of the country. The association also provides breeding stock to upcoming rabbit keepers.

The Kenya government believed in the initiative and partnered with the association by offering an office, which is hosted at Thika District Commissioner’s office. A visit to Kaimbu and Theka with Ann Jackylene provided an opportunity to interact with enthusiastic Rabbit Breeder Association of Kenya and Kipayo Rabbit breeders. “The training by USAID-NIAM provided an inspiration to make an action plan to bring to bring value addition in rabbit meat and encourage youth.
entrepreneurship so as to enhance livelihood options of farmers of my country”.

However issue of food safety, quality, certification, branding remains a big challenge to be addressed by the local youth and association. They have to gear up to invest in cool chain infrastructure to maintain food safety standards. Team from National Institute of Agricultural Marketing, Jaipur visited Kaimbu to meet County Director and Youth who have taken up this venture.