



FROM FARM TO FACTORY:

Investing in Yemen's Food Value Chains for Sustainable Food Security

November 2023



New approach brings together various elements of food value chain to yield results.

Because of Yemen's protracted conflict, millions suffer from extreme hunger. **Two-thirds** of the country's population need humanitarian support to improve their living standards.

In a country that imports nearly **90** percent of its food, other factors like climate change, COVID-19, and global supply-chain issues have put even more pressure on households facing significant economic challenges. These include rising inflation, lack of job opportunities, non-payment of salaries, low incomes, and skyrocketing prices of even the most basic essentials.

According to the UN's World Food Programme, **17.4** million Yemenis are food insecure and malnutrition rates among women and children remain among the highest in the world with **1.3** million pregnant or breastfeeding women and **2.2** million children under the age of five requiring treatments for acute malnutrition.

In these conditions, small changes can make a big difference allowing people to be able to feed their families. In partnership with the World Bank's International Development Association and the United Nations Development Programme, the Yemen's Small and Micro Enterprise Promotion Service (SMEPS) have previously supported livestock smallholders. But now, a new approach led by SMEPS joins the food value chain from the breeder to the veterinarian, and from intermediaries to the factory, in a bid to further support those most in need.

1. Improving Food Value

Already impoverished and heavily reliant on food imports, the impact of war, inflation, global supply-chain issues, and much more has meant that the cost of everyday staples has massively increased – making life even harder for most Yemenis.

The SMEPS's approach to developing the food value chain revolves around improving production assets as well as investing in local food producers, supporting supply chains, suppliers, and value-added activities to address food insecurity and malnutrition in Yemen. It works to not only support individuals but to create sustainable and resilient food value chains that benefit the community – and the economy – as a whole.

The project was an essential pillar in improving the lives of women like Afrah and Haifa whom you will meet below, but is also about connecting key elements of the food value chain to bring even greater benefits to women, their families, and their communities – offering diversified sources of income and developing livestock value chains, all of which will contribute to food security resilience in the long term.



2. A Central Role for Women

In rural communities, Yemeni women play a pivotal role in maintaining food security to help prevent hunger and malnutrition. Women build food resilience through their land management and by learning how best to use fertilizers and pesticides to tend their crops – all helping to ensure their families and communities have enough food to eat. Communities also rely on women to tend livestock and to produce meat, milk, ghee, eggs, and honey– contributing to reduced poverty and creating job opportunities.



Afrah Jaber was like many rural Yemeni women, struggling to make ends meet – a situation exacerbated by years of war. Her life transformed after receiving support from the Emergency Social Protection Enhancement and COVID-19 Response Project (**ESPECRP**), a project funded and supported by the World Bank's IDA, managed by UNDP Yemen, and implemented by SMEPS in Yemen.



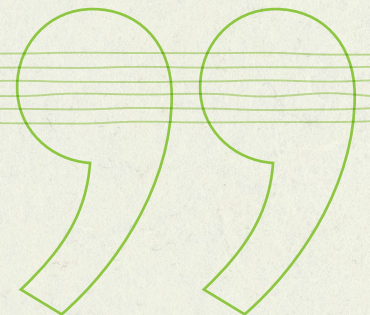
Afrah Jaber
LIVESTOCK BREADER

3. Improving Lives

Afrah lives in Al-Amiriya, a subdistrict of Al Marawi'ah in the very hot Hodeidah governorate, where farming and livestock breeding are the main sources of income for many.

“Livestock breeding helps us secure some of our food needs,” she explains. “Although I have been working in livestock breeding for years, I had no idea how to build cowsheds or the proper way to raise cows and sheep, tending to their nutrition needs, and making the best use of their products,” Afrah adds.

“I was chosen to be trained in livestock feeding methods and to learn to take care of my animals' health to boost their milk yield,” she says. I also received financial support to build cowsheds, feeders, and water troughs”.





Afrah is already seeing a drastic improvement. “My living conditions have improved – my cows now produce **3 to 4** litres of milk every day. I can sell some of it and use the money I make to provide for my family”.

As part of the new approach to improving the livelihoods of women like Afrah, **ESPECRP** now connects livestock farmers with intermediary organizations who provide additional support such as training sessions and livestock feed. This is something Afrah says has been another big boost for her. “Forming producers groups, which manage the process of collecting milk, is an important step toward increasing milk production and enhancing the financial and living conditions of women livestock breeders,” she says.

Haifa AL-Marouei, another beneficiary also living in Al-Amiriya, has seen similar improvements since joining the project. “I was unable to get much milk before because I faced issues with preparing and keeping the cowsheds clean, as well as taking care of my animals’ health”. She explains, adding that she has a cow and five goats.

Through **ESPECRP**, Haifa has learned livestock breeding techniques as well as more efficient methods of rearing, fattening, and tending to the animals’ needs. “Our situation has certainly improved, and my animals’ health has become stronger, plus their milk production has increased to more than three litres a day”. She adds, “the support we received from this project was incentive for me and my family to work hard on boosting milk production”. This increase in milk production has meant an improvement to Haifa’s living conditions. “I can now sell more milk each day that helps me provide for my family,” she says.

4. Supporting Veterinarians to Reduce Livestock Mortality and Morbidity

As **ESPECRP** brings the key elements of the food value chain together, it has also started to support local veterinarians. The project recognizes that their work is crucial to raising and keeping healthy animals and improving milk production.

Through the project, women livestock breeders received financial support to repair sheds, build fences, install feeders and water troughs, as well as to purchase manual chaff cutters and scales. Concentrated feed, feed cubes, molasses, various medicines, and animal supplies were also distributed.

Several local veterinarians were trained to further strengthen the livestock value chain, with project organisers approaching them individually to assess their needs. “Veterinarians play a key role in reducing livestock morbidity and mortality and educating livestock breeders on the importance of health care – which leads to increased milk production,” explains Majed Hegham, one of the veterinarians who benefited from the project.

Majed received **US\$ 3,000** in assets to support his veterinary clinic and improve its operation. Providing pharmacies with solar, refrigerators, and transport helps them provide quick and effective veterinarian services. “The money was used to buy a laptop, a cash register, a refrigerator to store medicines, and a motorbike so I can reach local farms more quickly,” he explains. “All of this has helped us develop our work in clinics, increase our income, improve our livelihoods, and provide quality medical services to livestock,” he adds.



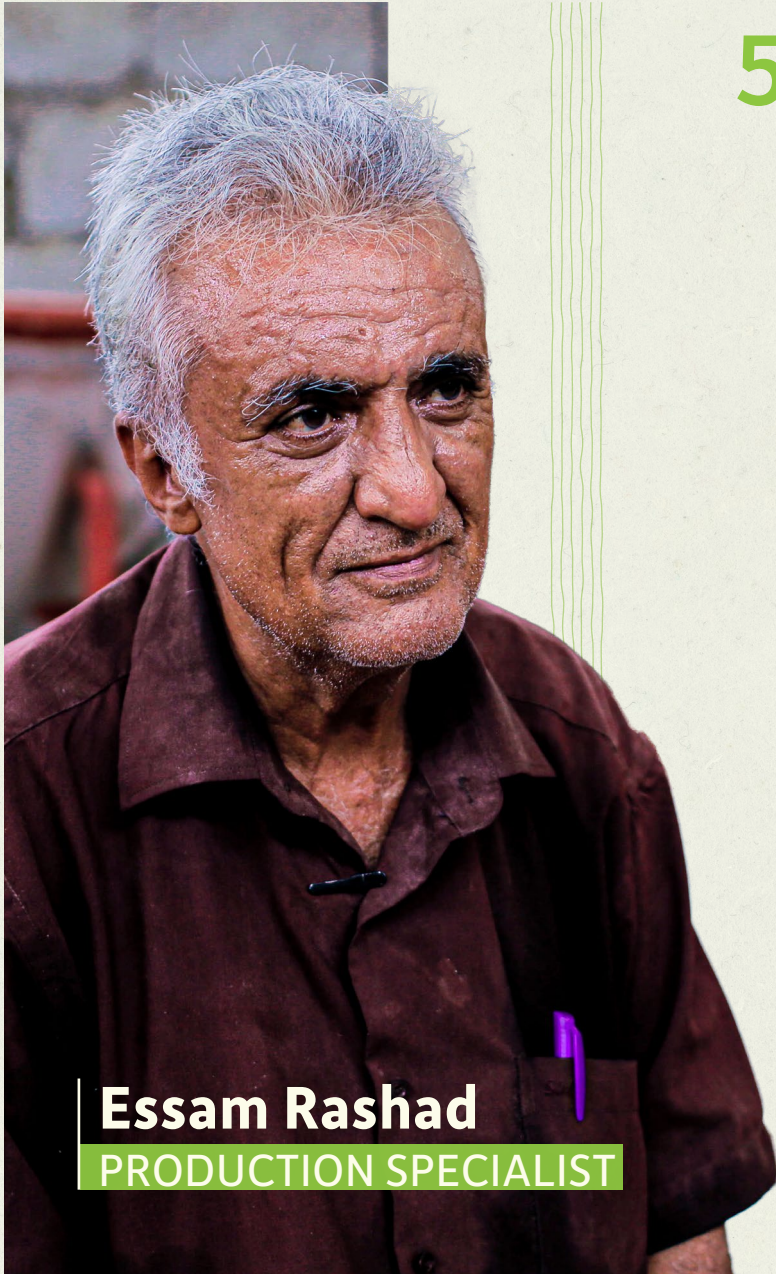
Majed Hegham
VETERINARIAN

5. Increasing Fodder Production in Tihama Factory

In addition to corn, barley, and wheat, concentrated feed and salt blocks provide nutrients for livestock – and make up another key element in the food value chain. Tihama factory produces concentrated feed, as well as white and red salt cubes, which are used for supplementary feeding. “They contain calcium, phosphorous, and many minerals that improve livestock health and aid fattening,” says Essam Rashad, a Production Specialist at the Tihama Factory for Fodder and Salt Cubes in Hodeidah.

To sustain the continuity of the factory’s work and start a concentrated feed production line, **ESPECRP** provided half of the financial support needed for production assets, while the other half was provided by the factory.

“The project provided us with the necessary equipment to maintain and improve production. We have been using the equipment for nearly a year and can produce **20** tons of concentrated feed and **40** tons of salt cubes every two months,” Essam says. “The process of producing feed used to be a manual one and it was very difficult,” he adds. “After the assistance, our work has improved and its quantity has increased. It has made a big difference in the factory and had a positive impact on livestock breeders”.



Essam Rashad

PRODUCTION SPECIALIST

6. Supporting the Poor and Vulnerable

ESPECRP in Hodeidah targeted poor and vulnerable groups explains Jaafar Fouad, a SMEPS Livestock Consultant and Production Engineer. “We reached out to livestock breeders through awareness sessions and provided beneficiaries with consulting services – support that was extended across the value chain,” he explains.

Livestock breeders were trained in proper livestock breeding techniques, including fattening and reproduction. They also received technical and financial support and were taught business continuity to improve their livelihoods and income. Through the project, **173** cowsheds and **81** sheep sheds have been built, **15** sheds have been renovated, and **188** livestock breeders have been trained.

Jaafar explains the livestock production associations that have been established that have become key intermediaries between those breeding and milking animals and the factories buying and processing the milk they produce. “Seven producers’ groups were formulated in the region that included **231** women livestock breeders,” explains Jaafar.

He notes that they were brought together under Al-Kashoba’a Association, where a team was formed to manage the separate producers’ groups connecting them with milk collection center and those who oversee the selling to markets.



Jaafar Fouad

SMEPS LIVESTOCK CONSULTANT
AND PRODUCTION ENGINEER

“This project has had a significant impact in improving women’s economic conditions as the quality and quantity of milk have both increased,” he says.

ESPECRP also supported Al-Kashoba’s Association by building the capacity, as well as other administrative and technical components, of its members. It has also provided the association with critical refrigerated milk trucks – essential in Al-Hodeidah’s hot, humid climate.

“We were struggling because we did not have adequate transportation before the project,” explains Abdullah Kashoba, Head of the Al-Kashoba’s Association. “The milk was exposed to the heat and sun and often turned rancid. Spoiled milk is rejected at the factories, causing significant loss to farmers,” he adds.

“The project supported the association with two refrigerated trucks dedicated to transporting milk”. Adding to that, this support has had a significant impact on improving the quality of the final product, reducing waste, and keeping milk fresh until it reaches the factory – all of which result in more money going to local livestock breeders.

Abdullah says, “The association had **250** members before the intervention, but it reached **1,400** by mid **2023**. The number of milk suppliers also increased from **40** to **102**”.



Abdullah Kashoba
HEAD OF THE
AL-KASHOBA’S ASSOCIATION

7. Bolstering Food Value Chains for Sustainable Livelihoods

“The project aims to improve the livelihoods of women livestock breeders,” says Dr. Mohammad Al-Qormah, Livestock Project Supervisor at SMEPS.

“We allocate an advisor consultant for every **20 – 25** women livestock breeders and a veterinarian to educate beneficiaries and train them on livestock breeding and dairy production,” he explains.

Al-Qormah also talks about the project’s multifaceted thinking where each element is designed to complement and support other parts of the food value chain, “The milk collection points were designed to increase production, enhance quality, reduce costs, and give women livestock breeders access to the market”.

According to Al-Qormah, the number of beneficiaries in Hodeidah reached **269** livestock breeders, resulting in creating nearly **1,900** new job opportunities and each link in the food value chain creates further opportunities within local communities. From the livestock breeders who see an improvement in their livelihood and who have more money to spend within their local economies, to veterinarians who are able to better expand their practices, and from the drivers employed on the refrigerated trucks to the factories that can reduce their reliance on imports – everyone benefits.



Dr. Mohammad Al-Qormah

LIVESTOCK PROJECT SUPERVISOR AT SMEPS

8. Connecting Smallholder Businesses with Yemen's Leading Dairy Firm



Mohamed Al-Sharabi

PRODUCTION MANAGER AT NANA

As part of its work to support women local livestock breeders, Al-Kashoba'a Association has developed a partnership with Nana, the leading Yemeni dairy company. "The company is keen on using fresh milk in its products, so it reached out to stakeholders in the association and worked with them to set up milk collection points.

Milk testing equipment was provided to ensure the milk matches the specified quality," says Mohamed Al-Sharabi, Production Manager at Nana. He adds that the factory wants to improve local supplies to enable them to stop importing milk from other countries. "Initially, the company received **200-300** litres of milk per day, but that has increased to an impressive **10,000** litres per day after livestock breeders were supported through this project".

As part of the training that local farmers received through **ESPECRP**, they learned not only how to increase milk supplies but also the importance of keeping the milk sterile and maintaining its quality – without which companies like Nana would be forced to turn the milk away.

With funding and support from the World Bank's International Development Association, UNDP Yemen and SMEPS continue their key partnership to provide financial and technical support to micro- and small-business owners working in food production and distribution to improve food production and build resilient local food systems and markets. This support helps generate jobs and incomes and contribute to enhancing food security resilience in Yemen.

The Emergency Social Protection Enhancement and COVID-19 Response Project (ESPECRP) supports geographically bundled interventions of nutrition-sensitive cash transfers and temporary employment, while also improving access to sustainable livelihoods, key services, and economic opportunities for areas affected by hunger, malnutrition, and climate related shocks. The project is in line with the World Bank's integrated approach to improve food security resilience for Yemenis.

Funded and supported by the World Bank's IDA, the US\$ 232.9 million ESPECRP is implemented by the Social Fund for Development (SFD), the Public Works Project (PWP), and the Small and Micro Enterprise Promotion Service (SMEPS) in partnership with UNDP Yemen.

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