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Improved Harnessing Systems for Donkeys as Draught
Animals in the Guinea Savannah Zone of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Draught donkey power has the potential to play a major role in increasing agricultural production in the Guinea Savannah zone of Ghana, to ensure the provision of adequate and sustainable food resources for the ever increasing population.

However, at present there is lack of adequate and appropriate harnesses for efficient donkey power use. The adoption rate of some improved harnesses provided by development agents is quite low.

With this background, an objective has been set to assess the effectiveness of existing harnessing systems to farmers in the study area; and measures to improve them for maximum productivity. A diagnostic survey was carried out in the Guinea Savannah zone of the Northern regions of Ghana. Savelugu-Nanton and West Mamprusi Districts was selected for the study. 60 households were interviewed in 4 communities using standardized questionnaire with emphasis on types of harnesses, sources and usage. Perceptions of farmers were assessed to determine measures of improving harnessing systems for adequate draught donkey power supply.

The use of donkey traction for soil tillage activities was rather very low (12%) than transport/ carting (65%). The study revealed that, donkey users preferred the local round collar harness (traditional) to the three-pad collar (improved). The general perception of most farmers on improving harnessing systems underscored the use of quality materials to ensure efficient draught power supply. The study also identified health problems (30%) followed by feed shortage (29%) as most prevalent constraints of keeping draught donkeys. Access to donkey traction by women was generally lower than men, but was comparably higher in rural areas because most women do a lot of work to cater for large family sizes.