

Dairy Research for Impact: Catalysing Collaboration With the Private Sector

Position paper of the BRIDGE+R&D Side Event at the 10th African Livestock Exhibition & Congress (ALEC)

May 2026

Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

SNV

WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



Introduction: Moving the Needle

The 10th African Livestock Exhibition & Congress (ALEC) took place from October 30 to November 1, 2025, at the Millennium Hall in Addis Ababa, facilitated by Prana Events.

The exhibition provided a unique platform to:

(i) Showcase successful research-to-market pathways, facilitate dialogue between researchers and businesses, and promote partnerships for innovation and sustainable growth, and

(ii) To connect Ethiopian livestock and dairy research with the private sector. This premier platform brought together experts, investors, and policymakers across the livestock value chain, with a strong focus on animal health, feed, genetics, equipment, and innovative farming solutions.

In line with the BRIDGE+ project's objective; to strengthen linkages between the private sector and research institutions in developing business cases and innovations, the project organised a dedicated side event on November 1 2025, that brought together over 120 participants from Ethiopian research institutes and universities, private sector actors including dairy processors, feed manufacturers, animal health companies, technology providers, and commercial farms, along with policymakers, regulators, and development partners. Prominent senior experts, leading researchers, and influential private sector leaders served as panellists during the event.



Effective collaboration between the private sector and Ethiopian research institutions requires moving towards a demand-driven research system, supported by effective partnerships, clear Intellectual Property Rights frameworks, straightforward co-funding mechanisms, and strong innovation platforms. Such collaboration will enable Ethiopia's research system to generate impactful, market-relevant solutions, while empowering the private sector to invest in and scale innovations and transform the dairy sector.

This position paper captures the key discussion points, insights, and action points outlined during a side event panel discussions. The recommendations presented emanate from this event and aim to inform the three key actors- knowledge institutions, the private sector, and financing partners such as the Ethiopian government, as well as other stakeholders.

The paper is structured covering :

(i) Key reflections from the panel discussions;

(ii) General recommendations; and

(iii) Action points for enhanced public-private collaboration on dairy research that can promote the Ethiopian dairy sector transformation.

Key Reflections from the Panel Discussions

The Big Picture - Why do we need research institutions to collaborate with the private sector?

The panellists outlined that effective collaboration between research institutions and the private sector drives demand-driven research, promotes sharing of knowledge and resources, creates opportunities to translate research findings into tangible impact, accelerates the market uptake of innovations, enhances productivity and profitability, ensures sustainable research funding, and strengthens the support of research to government policies and strategic decisions.

Research generates knowledge and innovations that are critical for driving economic transformation, competitiveness, and inclusive development. However, in many cases, the connection between research institutions and the private sector remains weak, resulting in under-utilisation of evidence and limited commercialisation of research outputs.

Private sector actors, on the other hand, face challenges in accessing practical, evidence-based solutions that could enhance productivity, efficiency, market competitiveness, and sustainable business growth. Strengthening collaboration between research institutions and the private sector is therefore essential to foster innovation, scale-up technologies, and co-create solutions that address the challenges of the Ethiopia dairy sector.

Partnerships between research institutes and the private sector currently are at an infant stage. Despite isolated efforts to foster research collaboration, overall, it remains weak, fragmented, and largely dominated by the public sector.

Available Dairy Research products for Impact

Panellists provided practical examples of research that successfully generated impact on productivity, quality, or market competitiveness in Ethiopia's dairy sector. The main examples cited included research and technological innovations in:

- Genetic improvement, such as crossbreeding of local and exotic breeds through artificial insemination services, oestrus synchronisation, and sexed semen;
- Introduction of improved forages that increase feed biomass and quality;
- Feed conservation technologies, including effective microorganisms, hay, and silage making;
- Evidence-based awareness creation on modern animal husbandry practices;
- Improved animal health services;
- Hygienic milk production practices.



However, both panellists and participants emphasised that limited access to and adoption of these technologies remain significant challenges.

Another issue discussed was the availability of approaches or models for translating research findings into viable commercial products or services through collaboration between the research system and private sector actors. According to the panellists, the success stories highlighted above lack appropriate models or formal mechanisms for translating research innovations into practice. They explained that there is no well-established, systematic approach for transferring innovations from the research system to the private sector. Instead, technology transfer largely depends on personal relationships.

Ensuring protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) was recognised as critical for encouraging private sector uptake of research outputs. The panellists highlighted that significant efforts are needed to strengthen the policies and enabling environment, putting in place appropriate institutional mechanisms for effective technology transfer, and raising awareness about the importance of protecting research innovations through IPR. They also stressed the need to structurally strengthen linkages of the industry with the universities and research institutes to improve performance in this area.



The Need for Catalysing and Strengthening Collaboration

Research institutions and the private sector can effectively collaborate in different ways across the full research-to-impact pathway, from agenda setting to joint implementation and utilisation of research outputs. Practical collaboration approaches include:

Jointly Setting Demand-Driven Research Agenda: - Establish national and sub-regional dairy innovation platforms that bring together research institutes, private companies, farmer organisations, policymakers, and development partners. It was suggested that these platforms can be used to identify priority research issues/questions based on market needs, productivity constraints, and competitiveness gaps. Another approach that can be implemented to enhance joint agenda setting is through ensuring private sector representation in the existing national and regional research priority-setting exercises.

Joint Execution of Research: - The panel discussion participants outlined that private sector actors are interested to invest in innovations that enhance their profitability and competitiveness. They can be involved in co-designing and co-funding research projects. In this regard private actors can contribute funding, facilities, data, or pilot sites. However, it was argued that for this to happen, research institutions and private sector actors must establish trusted relationships, and clearly define common interests that can lead to practical collaboration.

Improve Information Exchange on Available Innovations/Research Outputs:- Limited information exchange between research and private sector actors has led to many research innovations remaining shelved within research institutes rather than being taken up for practical use. The participants suggested that a structured technology transfer mechanism should be put in place for improved utilisation and commercialisation of research outputs.

The recently established Ethiopian Dairy Sector Association (EDSA) presents a strong opportunity to cultivate partnerships. The association should be strengthened by expanding its membership to include both dairy professionals and a broader range of private sector actors. By doing so, it can become an effective conduit for facilitating linkages and fostering partnerships between private sector actors and research institutes.

For the above three areas of collaboration to materialise in practice, a formal agreement in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) could be initiated by the leadership of the EDSA. Such an MoU would open doors on both sides and clarify roles and responsibilities, cost-sharing arrangements, data ownership, and intellectual property rights.

One of the panellists noted that, in terms of incentives and policy measures, private sector actors require a clear regulatory framework to ensure that investments made in research and innovation generate adequate returns. Such a framework would better motivate private companies to invest in, co-develop, and jointly implement dairy research.



Recommendations and Suggested Actions

Recommendations

The following key thematic areas are recommended for generating impactful research to drive transformation in the dairy sector, requiring coordinated engagement among key actors:

- Knowledge institutions and the private sector need to create a mechanism for jointly setting a research agenda and for scaling of technology and innovations.
- A strong research governance system is required that builds private sector confidence to invest in research and innovation. Knowledge institutions should further invest in research infrastructure that strengthens their capacity to conduct research that meets private sector needs and interests.
- Government agencies and donors need to support the sector by providing critical inputs and funding to incentivise collaboration between knowledge institutions and the private sector through public–private partnerships.
- The Ethiopian Dairy Sector Association should be a spokesperson between sector and research partners.
- Strong partnership between knowledge institutions and the private sector will create better opportunities for students to understand the sector through internships in private companies.



Priority Actions for the Timely Implementation of Suggested Recommendations

To ensure the effective implementation of the proposed thematic recommendations, a set of priority actions was identified during the R&D side event. These actions are recommended for consideration and implementation over the next two to three years, with the aim of strengthening coordination, enhancing research effectiveness, and accelerating transformation within the sector:

(1) Establish coordination mechanisms for public-private research collaboration:- Either integrated in the dairy/livestock innovation platforms formed by the Ministry of Agriculture or as a stand-alone coordination platform. The Ethiopian Dairy Association (EDA) to organise **balanced representation** of research institutes and universities, dairy processors, input suppliers, service providers, and farmer organisations. The mandate of the platform should include but not be limited to identification of collaboration opportunities, joint setting of research priorities, and monitoring of implementation and outcomes.

(2) Develop governance mechanisms for collaboration:- Led by EDA, initiate framework MoUs by organising consultation between key research and private sector actors, followed by development of a standard public private partnership (PPP) MoU template, defining roles and responsibilities, cost- and risk-sharing arrangements, IPR, commercialisation, and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

(3) Co-develop a demand-driven national dairy research agenda

(4) Launch flagship research projects by research institutes and private actors, with government, donors and development partners co-funding the initial joint agenda setting and implementation.

(5) Strengthen scaling of existing and new research outputs.

(6) Strengthen Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) regulations.





Conclusion

Effective collaboration requires moving towards demand-driven research systems, supported by structured partnerships, clear Intellectual Property frameworks, co-funding mechanisms, and strong innovation platforms. This will enable Ethiopia's research system to generate impactful, market-relevant solutions while empowering the private sector to invest, scale, and transform the dairy sector and beyond. The divers' actors engaged in the BRIDGE+ R&D Side Event at the 10th African Livestock Exhibition & Congress (ALEC) emphasized the need for timely actions in consideration of the suggested thematic recommendations and priority actions if Ethiopia's dairy sector is to be transformed and contribute to food and nutritional security, livelihood improvement, and the national economy. Accordingly, policy makers, researchers, private sector actors, and development practitioners are expected to increase and coordinate their efforts to realise the proposed recommendations and actions.



Acknowledgment

Author: Jan van der Lee (WUR), Dawit Alemu (Stitching Wageningen Research) and Zelalem Atnaf (SNV).

Contributors: Alwin Quispel (Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia), Marco Streng (SNV), Yoseph Mekasha (Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Institute), Asaminew Tassew (Bahirdar University), Awet Estifanos (Tigray Agricultural research Institute) , Yohannes Getinet (Private Business), Mulugeta Yimer (Ethiopian Dairy Sector Association), Zewdie Wondatir (Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research) .

Review, Editing and coordination: Zelalem Atnaf and Bezawit Shiferaw (SNV Ethiopia), Mirijam Spoelstra and Augistine Ayantude(WUR)

Photography: Velocity Marketing

Graphic design: Velocity Marketing

This position paper is part of a series of practice and policy briefs in the BRIDGE+ Research & Development Component.

Once published, all publications in this series will be available online via the following link:

SNV Link: www.snv.org/country/ethiopia
WUR Link:
https://research.wur.nl/en/organisations/swr-ethiopia/

Citation: Please cite this position paper as: authors, year, title, BRIDGE+ Project Brief, Addis Ababa.

Contact: **SNV**: Lideta Sub-city, Roosevelt St. , P.O. Box 40675, Telephone +251 116 166 232, Email: ethiopia@snv.org.
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

WUR: Jan van der Lee,
Animal Breeding and Genomics
Wageningen University & Research
Email: Jan.vanderlee@wur.nl,
P.O. Box 338, 6700 AH Wageningen,
the Netherlands.

This publication was made possible through financial support provided by Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the BRIDGE+ Project.'

Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

SNV

WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH