Promising Practices Series | July 2025

Fodder Production for Nutrition: A Promising Practice from Ethiopia's Drylands

Preventing Child Wasting in the Mandera Triangle – The Hanaano Programme
Submitted by: *Pastoralist Concern* | In partnership with Concern Worldwide

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1. Background: The Global Push to Prevent Wasting

Globally, **45 million children under five** suffer from wasting, and the majority live in fragile, food-insecure settings. Despite this, only **25% of wasted children receive treatment**. The **UN Global Action Plan on Child Wasting (GAP)** and the 2025 **UN Food Systems Summit+4** call for urgent action to **prevent wasting**, especially in climate-stressed areas, through locally led, multisectoral solutions that strengthen food systems, diets, and incomes.

In the Mandera Triangle, recurrent drought, land degradation, and conflict threaten livelihoods and nutrition—particularly for women and young children and wasting prevalence remains stubbornly high. Concern and local partners the Rural Agency for Community Development and Assistance (RACIDA) in Kenya, Pastoralist Concern in Ethiopia, and Lifeline Gedo in Somalia are implementing the **15million euro 3-year Hanaano Programme with funding from Irish Aid**. The programme integrates livelihoods, WASH, natural resource management, social and behaviour change, gender equality and conflict sensitivity approaches in order to prevent child wasting. The national and local government authorities and the Inter-governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) are also key partners. A strategic partnership with Tufts University to generate evidence and insights that will be shared with humanitarian and development partners, facilitating collective efforts to effectively combat child wasting.

As part of this learning series, **Ethiopia** partner, Pastoralist Concern has piloted a **climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive fodder production model** that is already showing tangible benefits.

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2. The Intervention: What It Is and How It Works

The project supported **10 community-led fodder production groups**—with 200 households—in Dollo Ado and Dollo Bay. These groups, often mixed-gender and led by women, were trained and supported to grow **Sudanese grass and maize** on 50 hectares of riverine land using flood-fed irrigation.

Key Components:

- **Training** on fodder planting, harvesting, storage, and marketing
- **Start-up support**: seeds, tools, fuel for land preparation (cash-for-work)
- **Market linkages**: connecting producers to women retailers in urban markets
- **Nutrition-sensitive design**: targeting families with under-5s and PLWs

After 45 days, groups harvested over **750,000 kg** of green fodder. About **60% was sold** (generating over 3.1 million ETB / $55,000 USD), and the rest stored for dry-season feeding.

Nutrition Impact:

- **Milk availability** increased among member households
- **Income from fodder** used for food, health, and basic needs
- **Livestock survival** improved, reducing household vulnerability

This integrated approach strengthens both **dietary diversity** and **economic resilience**, addressing immediate and underlying causes of wasting.

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3. Why It's a Promising Practice

Criteria	Evidence from the Hanaano Project
Innovative	First large-scale community-led fodder model directly linked to wasting prevention in Ethiopia's Somali region.
Scalable	Low-cost inputs, available riverbank land, and rising demand for fodder in drought-prone zones. Other NGOs are replicating.
Sustainable	Market-driven model with strong community ownership, women's involvement, and government support.
Cost-effective	High returns within 45 days, minimal external inputs, labor-based model.
Responsive	Climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive, and aligned with Ethiopia's food security strategy and regional drought response plans.

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4. Lessons for Practitioners

✓ **Start small, link fast:** Begin with existing groups and small plots but quickly connect production to markets and nutrition groups.
✓ **Think nutrition from the start:** Target households with young children and integrate nutrition messaging.
✓ **Support women as producers and marketers:** Gender-inclusive approaches help scale impact.
✓ **Invest in training and local leadership:** Capacity-building ensures sustainability.
✓ **Diversify alongside fodder:** Watermelon and vegetables grown alongside fodder helped increase food access and reduce risk.

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5. Next Steps & Recommendations

- **Scale to new kebeles** with land and livestock potential
- Formalize **market linkages** to milk producers and drought preparedness systems
- Integrate **nutrition tracking** to document child and maternal impacts
- Advocate for fodder inclusion in **resilience, nutrition, and food system strategies**

Conclusion: From Grass to Growth

Fodder production is more than livestock feed—it's a **tool for child survival, women's empowerment, and climate resilience**. In drought-prone drylands like Ethiopia's Somali region, it offers a viable, cost-effective pathway to **prevent wasting**, protect livelihoods, and nourish futures.
