



A Social Network for Smallholder Cashmere Producers in Mongolia

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5 May 2026



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Background

- Smallholder livestock producers in Mongolia play a crucial role in the economy, secure the country's food supply, and are essential guardians of the environment.
- However, they face numerous challenges
- A dedicated social network can empower cashmere producers, improving
 - Information for herders and value chain participants
 - Product value
 - Livelihoods
- A digital platform tailored to their needs, would enable
 - Better communication
 - Learning and capacity development
 - Market access

Why does rural poverty persist?

Economic history in three big steps

1. Prehistory: Hunting and Gathering

Subsistence with Relatively Egalitarian

2. Most of History: Agriculture and Commerce

Accumulation with appropriation– quite unequal

3. Recent History: Capitalism and Globalization

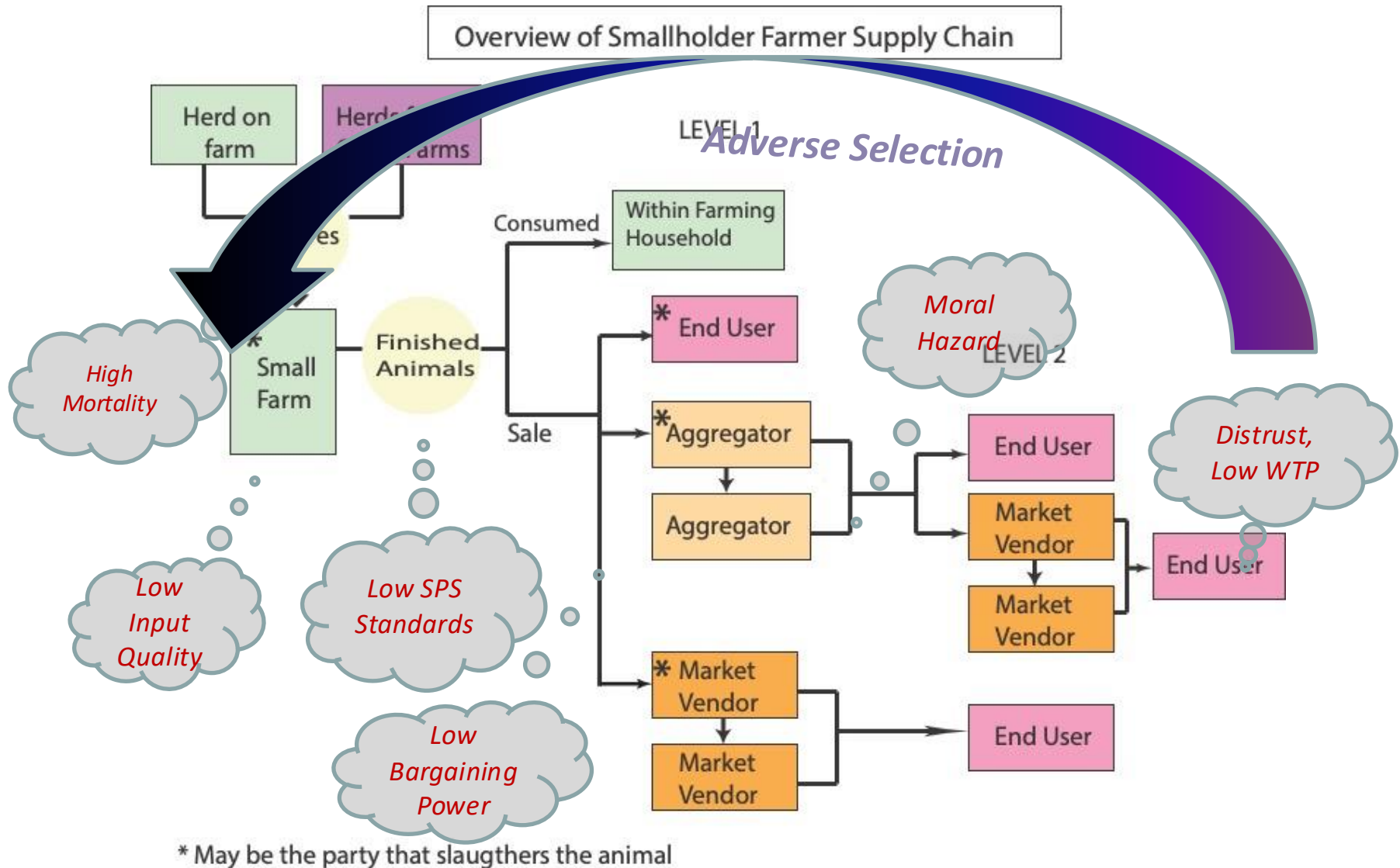
Accelerating and more inclusive accumulation –
declining inequality but persistent rural poverty

Stage three is now driven mainly by the “virtuous cycle” of savings-investment growth (Solow and others).

Why has the rural sector missed out on this?

Not for lack of savings, but from **a low-level investment trap.**

Smallholders Face Many Market Failures



Necessary Conditions for Socially Effective Value Chains

For value chains to be inclusive and sustainable, they must be:

1. **Incentive-compatible** (voluntary): individual perceived benefits must exceed costs
2. **Scalable**: compatible with initial property rights
3. **Self-financing**: in the long run, these programs should avoid open ended fiscal commitments and pay for themselves

Value Chain Interventions that Work

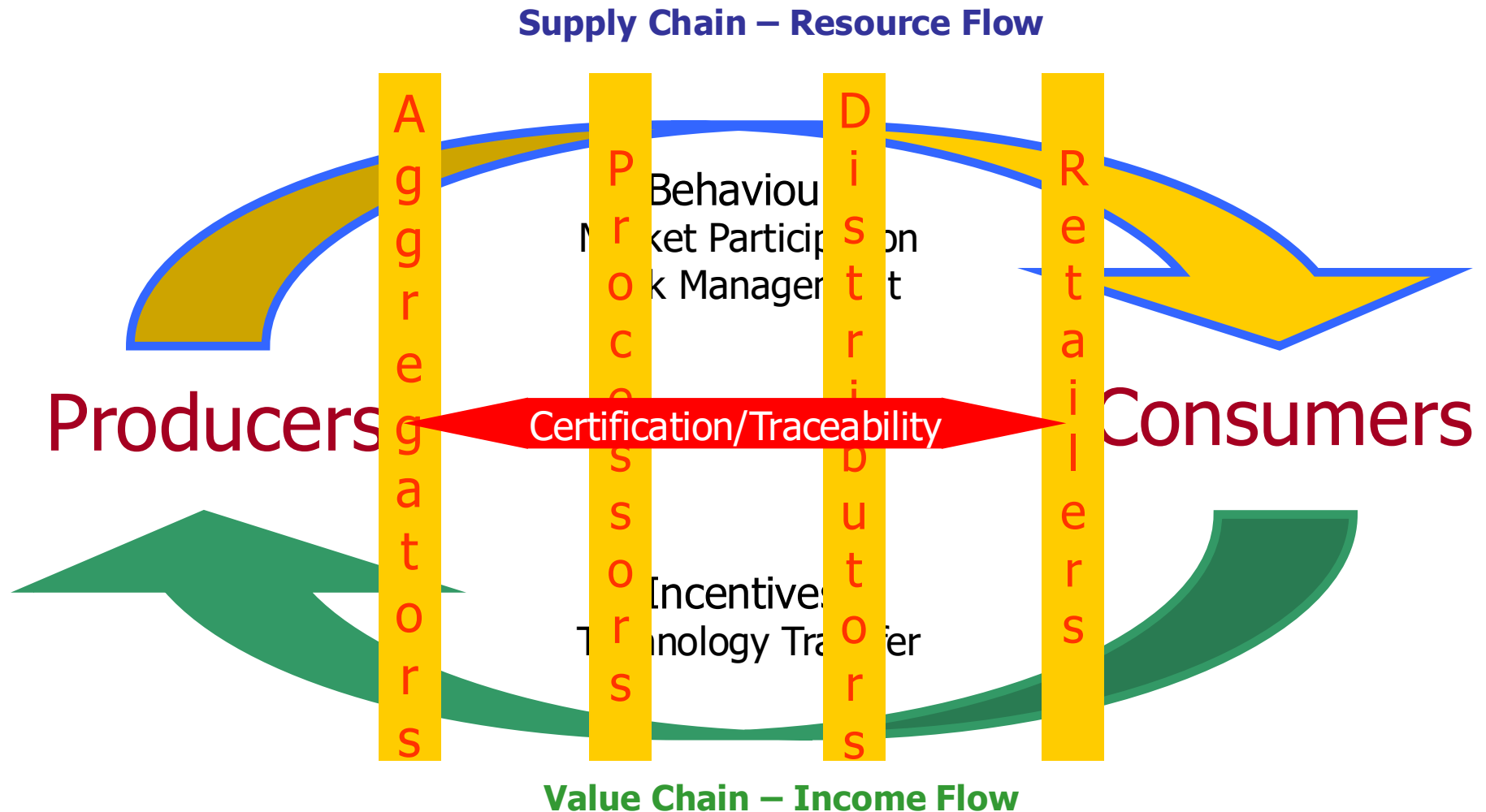
To make value chains work for smallholders, four interventions have proven themselves:

- Certification
- Contracting
- Cooperatives
- Conditional Cash Transfers

Each can be designed to meet the three necessary conditions and promote **self-directed poverty reduction**.

Each can be **built on an internet communication platform**.

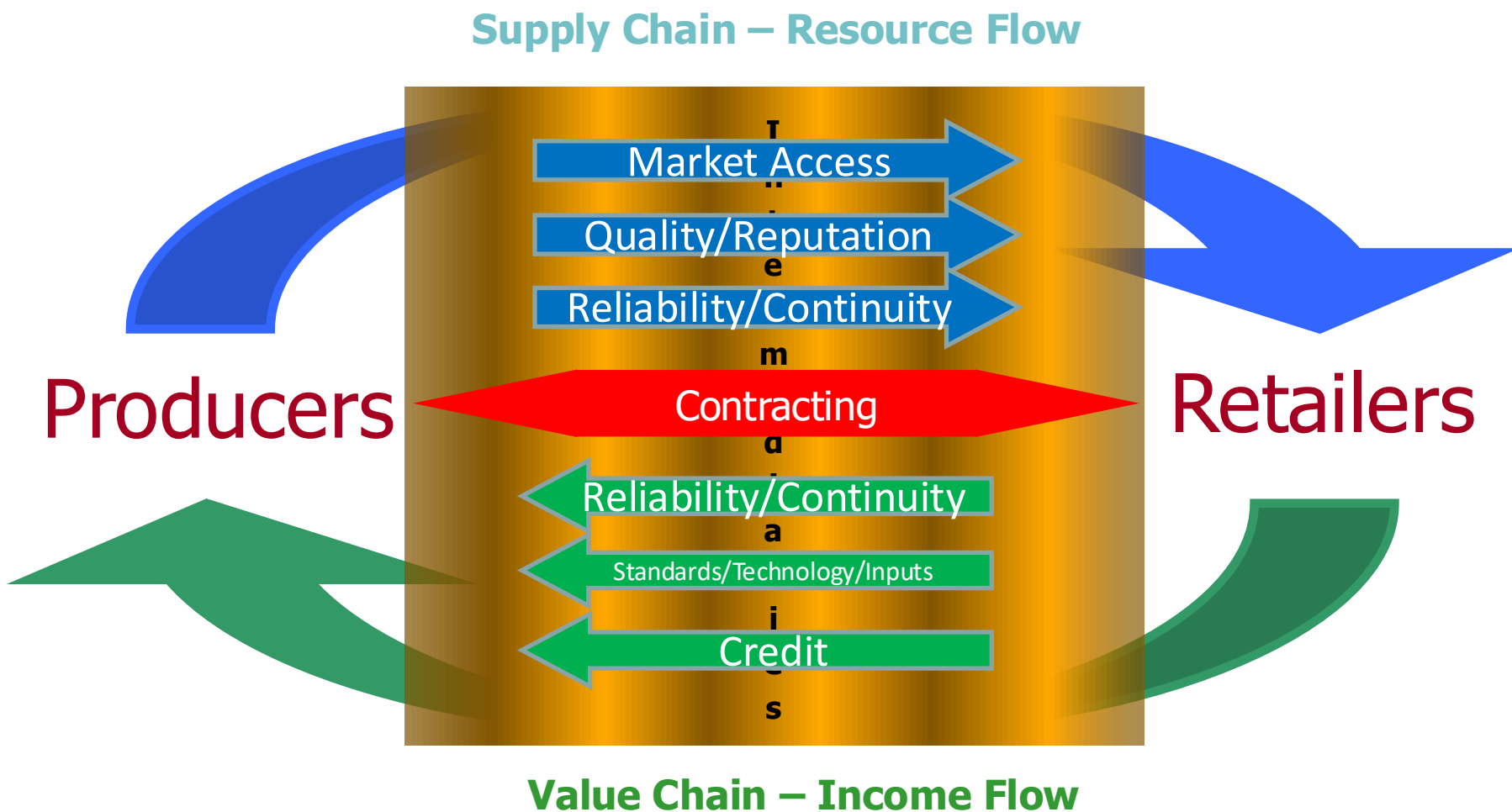
Certification/Traceability: Overcoming Market Information Failures



What is Traceability?

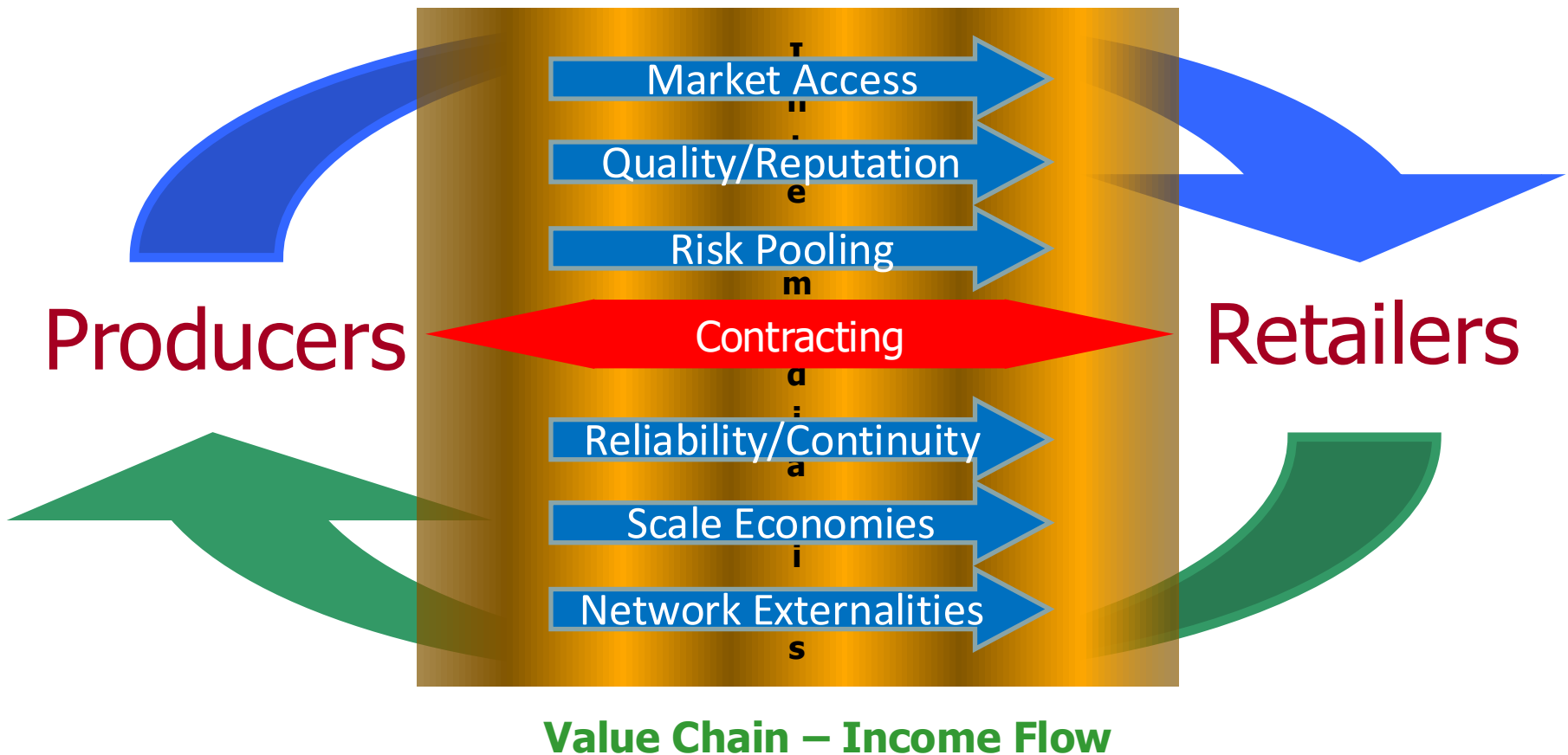
- Traceability is the ability to follow an agrifood item through production, processing, and distribution
- It is an essential mechanism to overcome information barriers that undermine product safety, quality, and value creation.
- Traceability strengthens incentives to invest in quality, such as animal health and, in the event of problems, it facilitates risk identification and containment.
- Traceability contributes to livelihoods by improving safety standards, product quality, and market access.
- It is also a required of exporters to OECD markets.

What Contracting Can Offer

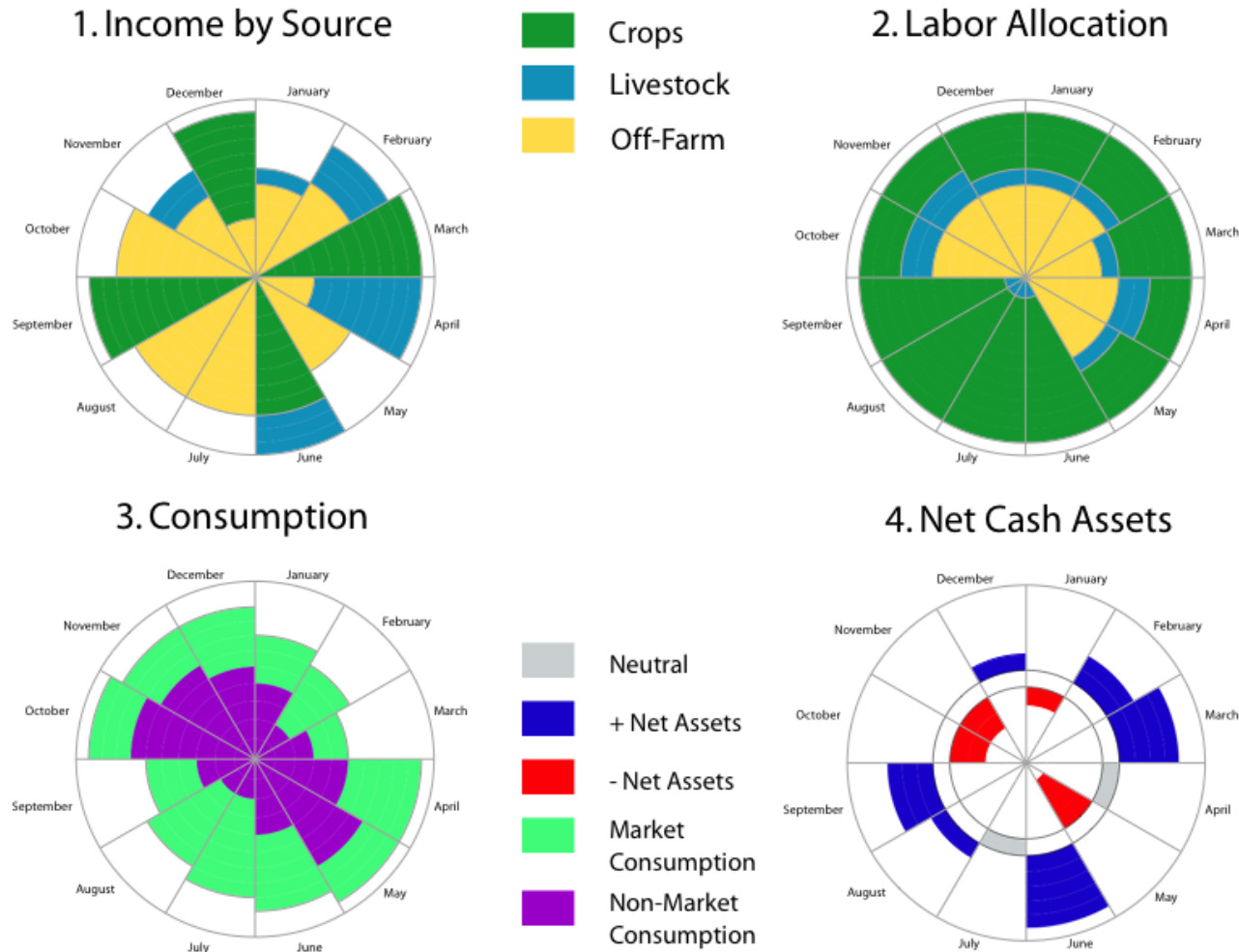


What (OECD-style) Cooperatives Offer

Supply Chain – Resource Flow



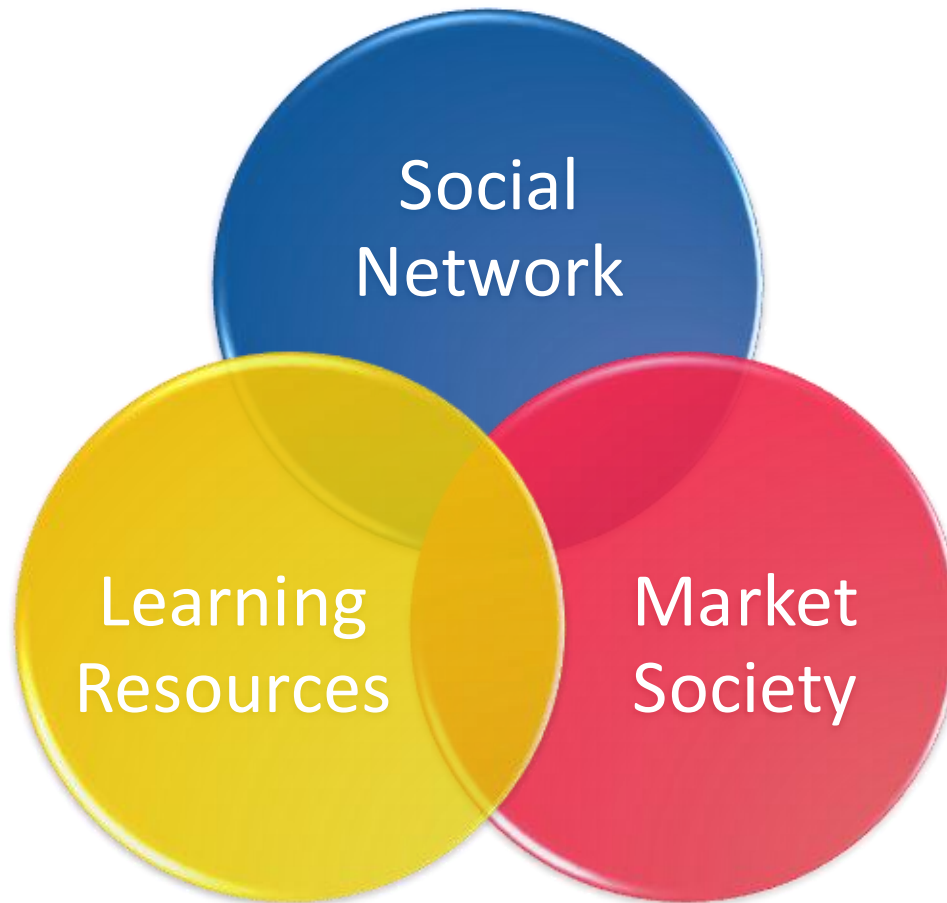
Why Conditional Cash Transfers can help: Seasonality in Smallholder Activity/Income



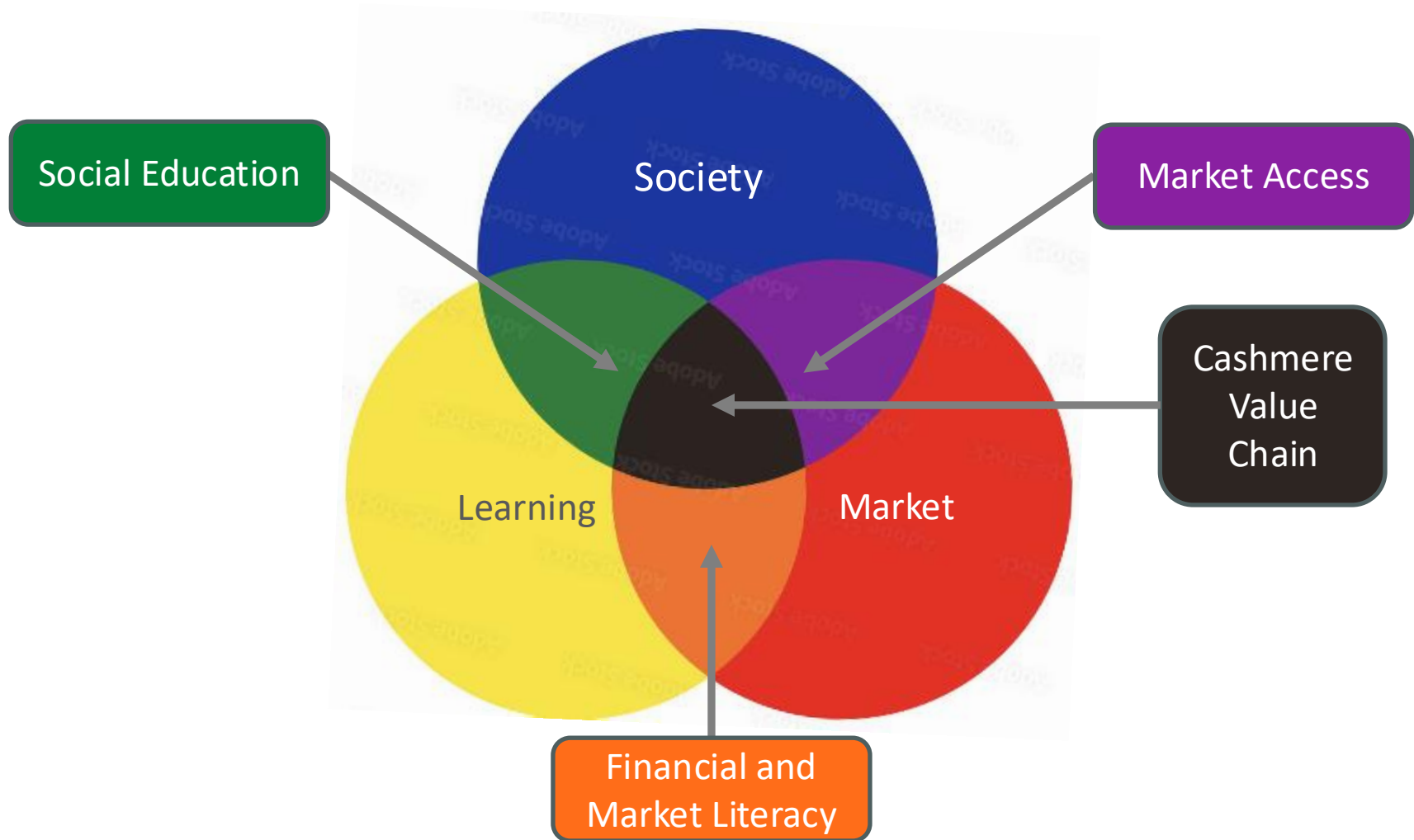
Architecture of the Herder Network

- A viable livestock producer network would promote profitability, mutual social benefit, and sustainability for its members.
- A well-structured network will not only focus on economic objectives but also on social goals.
- Three components:
 1. Social Network: A dedicated Facebook Group
 2. Learning Resources: Online open access knowledge products, including Mongolian language documents, e-learning videos, and links to extension services and other relevant content
 3. Market Society: An online resource for engagement with value chain partners, including suppliers of goods, services, technology, and marketing partnerships

Schematic Producer Network



Main Components of the Network



Piloting the Cashmere Herder Network

- Network design - ongoing
- Training mission – 2026Q2
- Pilot evaluation – 2026Q3
- Recommendations – 2026Q3

Training Mission: In Person, in Village

Staff

- Lead Behavioral Specialist: David Roland-Holst
- Senior Economist – Erdenebolor Baast
- Training assistants
 - 1 international – UCB/BEAR junior researcher
 - 2 national – bilingual NMU students (M/F)
 - Any other project staff welcome, but not required

Training

- 10 villages
- 10 producer households in each village, at least 1 representative each, but open to all
- 5 hours of training for each village, 2 days

Village Training Schedule

- Session 1 – Introductions and Orientation
 - Session 2 – Social Network
 - Session 3 – Learning Resources
 - Session 4 – Market Society
 - Session 5 – Evaluation and review
-
- Each participating household will receive
 - a stipend for attendance (100K MNT)

Weekly Training Overview

Session 1 Introductions & Orientation	Session 2 Society & Animal Husbandry	Session 3 Learning Resources	Session 4 Market	Session 5 Evaluation & Next Steps
1. Welcome & Goals	1. Posting in the Group	1. Feed & Forage Planning	1. The Cashmere Value Chain	1. Review Key Lessons
2. How the Network Works	2. Animal Husbandry Discussion	2. Improving Goat Breeds	2. Marketing Your Cashmere	2. Live Network Practice
3. Smartphone as your Opportunity Gateway	3. Herd Health Check-ins	3. Animal Health & Disease	3. Management Ideas and Methods	3. My Action Plan
4. Joining the Facebook Group	4. Grazing Practices	4. Nutrition & Food Security	4. Financial Literacy & Saving	4. Open Questions
5. Daily Routines & the Network	5. Finding Trusted Members	5. Extension Services Online	5. Diversification of Products and Income	5. Certificates & Closing

Village Pilot Program | Mongolian Cashmere Social Network



Session 1

Introductions & Orientation

2 hours · ~20 min per topic · Group of 10 households · Hands-on & discussion-based

Society

1

Welcome & Why We Are Here

Trainer and each household introduce themselves. Share one challenge you face as a cashmere producer. Agree on group norms.

2

What Is a Social Network?

Use familiar examples – market day, well-side meetings – to explain online groups. Draw the network on paper. No reading needed.

3

Smartphones & the Facebook App

Hands-on: open the app, find the group, scroll posts. Pairs practice together. One phone per household is enough.

4

Joining the Cashmere Producer Group

Each representative joins the Facebook group live. Trainer confirms each join. Discuss group rules: respect, honest prices, no spam.

5

Setting a Daily Routine with the Network

Agree on a village 'posting time' so everyone is active together. Link to existing routines – morning tea, evening meal.

Facilitator Tip

Pair confident smartphone users with less confident ones. For households with no signal, show the printed QR code backup. Celebrate every small success loudly.

Session 2

Society & Animal Husbandry

2 hours · ~20 min per topic · Group of 10 households · Hands-on & discussion-based

Society

1

Posting, Photos & Voice Messages

Each household posts one photo of their herd. Others react with thumbs-up. Demonstrate voice posting – no literacy needed.

2

Animal Husbandry Basics

Key practices for goat & sheep welfare: shelter, water, seasonal movement. Group shares local knowledge; trainer adds evidence-based tips.

3

Herd Health Check-ins via the Group

Role-play: one household photographs a sick animal and posts for advice. Others respond. Discuss what makes a helpful reply.

4

Sharing Grazing & Weather Information

Demonstrate how a timely post about pasture or dzud risk can help a neighbour avoid losing animals. Who already does this by phone?

5

Finding & Tagging Trusted Members

Introduce advisors – experienced herders, vets, extension agents, and bag governors. Practice tagging them in a post.

Facilitator Tip

Nominate one or two respected society members as group moderators before this session. They can be your in-village advisors.

Session 3

Learning Resources

2 hours · ~20 min per topic · Group of 10 households · Hands-on & discussion-based

Learning

1

Feed & Forage Planning

Seasonal fodder needs, hay storage, emergency feed during dzud. Calculate rough feed requirements using stones as counting tokens.

2

Breeding for Better Cashmere

Selecting breeding animals: fibre fineness, body weight, temperament. Introduce tracking offspring quality across seasons.

3

Animal Health & Disease Prevention

Common diseases (FMD, brucellosis, parasites), vaccination schedules, signs of illness. Where to get medicine and at what cost.

4

Nutrition & Household Food Security

Link herd productivity to family nutrition. Making choices: selling animals vs keeping for dairy, meat, and household security.

5

Using Extension Services Online

Find an online Learning Resource, download it for offline use. Show government and NGO extension links available in Mongolian.

Facilitator Tip

Download two or three videos in advance in case internet is poor. Partner with a local vet or animal health worker to co-deliver the health topic if possible.

Session 4

Market Society

2 hours · ~20 min per topic · Group of 10 households · Hands-on & discussion-based

Market

1

The Cashmere Value Chain

Walk from goat → raw fibre → washing → spinning → garment → buyer. Pass a piece of yarn hand-to-hand to show where value is added.

2

Marketing Your Cashmere

Current buyers and prices. Collective selling, quality grading, using online platforms to find better prices. Compare Ulaanbaatar vs local.

3

Animal Management and Marketing

Simple record-keeping: herd size, births, deaths, sales. Introduce a one-page icon tally sheet (🐐 birth, ✕ death, 💰 sale).

4

Financial Literacy & Saving

Income, expense, profit, saving, credit. Role-play a good and bad purchasing decision. Introduce and explain the 50,00 MNT gift certificate.

5

Diversification Beyond Cashmere

Income diversification income: wool, dairy, tourism, handicrafts. Which options fit each household's location, skills, and herd size?

Facilitator Tip

Bring printed price data from Ulaanbaatar and local markets – the contrast motivates action. Use the gift certificate exercise to make finance real and enjoyable.

Session 5

Evaluation & Next Steps

2 hours · ~20 min per topic · Group of 10 households · Hands-on & discussion-based

All Pillars

1

Review: What Did We Learn?

Picture cards face-down: households turn one over and explain the concept to the group. Energetic and competitive – small prizes work.

2

Live Network Practice Session

Each household posts one useful piece of information to the group: a price, a tip, a photo. Group gives real-time feedback.

3

My Action Plan

Each household commits to two or three specific changes and writes or draws them on a card. Photograph cards and post to the group.

4

Open Questions & Peer Discussion

Unstructured time for households to ask each other and the trainer. Surface concerns about technology, markets, or herd health.

5

Certificates, Stipends & Closing

Distribute \$10/Session stipends and \$50 Market Society gift certificates. Present participation certificates. Celebrate together.

Facilitator Tip

Step back during peer discussion – let experienced herders answer each other; their credibility is highest. A shared cup of tea after the session seals social bonds.

How will the network be used?

- Technology adoption and behavioral change can be extremely difficult to predict, but this network is being designed to address its member's needs.
- In the pilot, households will be invited as network members and introduced to its uses and information resources.
- Only time will tell if they adopt it, and how it will in turn evolve to meet their needs.
- After the introductory trainings, we will evaluate the pilot and make recommendations for scaling up and modifying the network and its services.

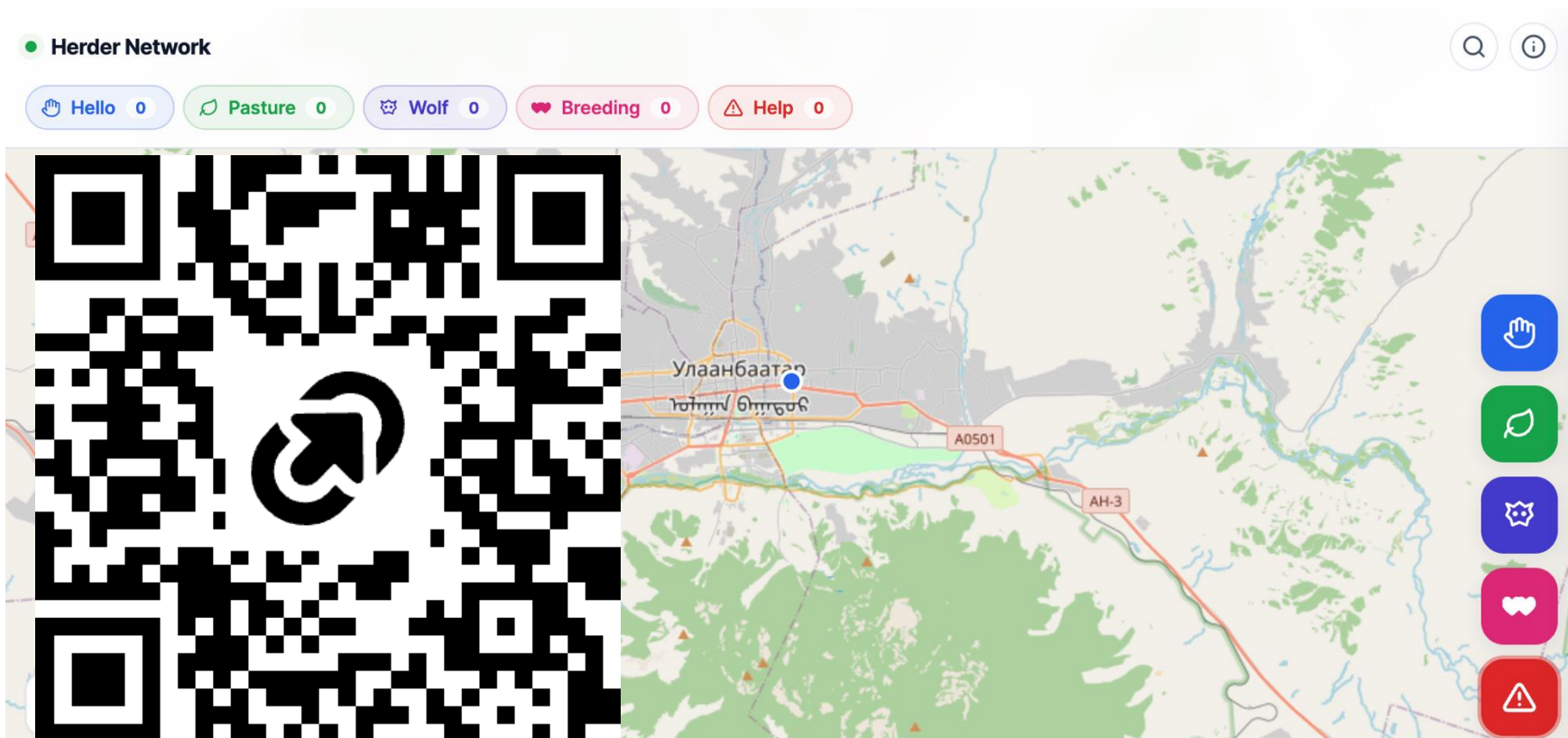
“Live Network” Services for Herders

- In addition to all the social, learning, and market resources of Facebook, we will deploy a crowd-source reporting system embedded in the Google Maps API.
- Live Network allows members to share relevant information remotely and asynchronously on a variety of topics important to them. Each post is individual, recorded in time and space, and accessible only to members of this private user group.
- The list of topics need not be limited, but five will be deployed for testing with the pilot.

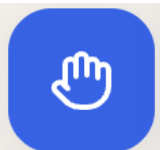
Live Network - Pilot Topics

1. Hello! - I am a herder just like you, here on Google Maps. Do you have news?
2. Pasture - Here is my rating (1-5 stars) of pasture around me, with or without a photo.
3. Wolf! - I just saw one at this location, with or without a photo.
4. Breeding – Referrals for breeding your animals.
5. Help! - I am in trouble, please contact.

Live Network Interface



Mongol Herder's Own Killer App!



National Herder Census



Pasture “weather report”



National Wolf Census



Livestock Dating App



National Safety Warning System

Thank you!

Questions: dwrh@berkeley.edu