



**ALCP** | Alliances  
Caucasus 2  
REGIONAL MARKET ALLIANCES IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

**ALLIANCES CAUCASUS 2**  
**LORI (BACON) FOCUS GROUP SURVEY,**  
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#### Key Contact Points

Mercy Corps Europe

Lela Kobakhidze

Main Office Coordinator

8 Megobroba street

Marneuli 3000, Georgia

Tel: + 995 (357) 22-00-20

Mobile: +995 (595) 24 24 59

Email: [mocoordinator@alcp.ge](mailto:mocoordinator@alcp.ge)

Mercy Corps Georgia

Helen Bradbury

ALCP Team Leader

8 Megobroba street

Marneuli 3000, Georgia

Tel: + 995 (357) 22-00-20

Mobile: + 995 (595) 56 00 69

Email: [teamleader@alcp.ge](mailto:teamleader@alcp.ge)

Mercy Corps Georgia

Irakli Kasrashvili

Country Director

48 A.Tsagareli street

Tbilisi 0194, Georgia

Tel: + 995 (32) 25-24-71

Mobile: + 995 (599) 10 43 70

Email: [ikasrashvili@mercycorps.org](mailto:ikasrashvili@mercycorps.org)

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN PIG FARMING AND LORI PRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INCOME GENERATION ACTIVITY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PIG HUSBANDRY FOR LORI</b>	<b>6</b>
BREED	7
FEED	7
PIG SLAUGHTERING	8
INFORMATION	8
SERVICES	9
<b>LORI PRODUCTION</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>KAKHURI VICHINA</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>MARKET FOR LORI</b>	<b>10</b>
DEMAND	10
SUPPLY	10
<b>DANGERS AND RISKS IN PIG FARMING</b>	<b>11</b>

## INTRODUCTION

Racha and Kakheti are both known for bacon (Lori) production. The programme aimed to find out to what extent Lori production was a main income-generating activity for HHs in the Racha and Kakheti regions, to identify what kind of problems and challenges they face in Lori production, what kind of climate change in relation to the Lori production they have observed and what kind of solutions they see. Bacon is a slightly different product in both regions: in Racha Lori is smoked bacon, while in Kakheti it is common to make Vichina - brined pork, smoked and non-smoked

## METHODOLOGY

The study used mixed research methods to collect qualitative and quantitative information. Overall, eight gender disaggregated focus groups were conducted (three female, five male) in two focal bacon producing regions of the ALCP2, Racha and Kakheti regions. 34 Lori producer farmers (13 female & 21 male) participated in the FG's; the age range of participants was 35-65 years old. In Racha region, participants produce on average 500 kg of Lori per year from pigs raised in the forest. In Kakheti region, the participants produce on average 100 kg Vichina.

*Table 1 Regions, number of focus groups and participants data*

Regions	# of FGs	Female	Male
Racha	4	2	2
Kakheti (Telavi and Akhmeta)	4	1	3
Total	8	3	5

## CLIMATE CHANGE

The ALCP2 Lori Production Focus Group Survey 2022 revealed that the majority of the interviewed female and male farmers are worrying about changes in weather patterns which negatively impact the production and storage of Lori in Racha region. Frequent rains and high humidity in spring hinders the drying process of carcasses and curing of Lori. Increased temperature from hotter summers is a key concern for female and male Lori producers wanting to store Lori the whole year round. Due to a lack of proper refrigerated storage rooms female and male Lori producers prefer to produce only the amount of Lori which can be sold before increased temperatures, otherwise Lori spoils easily. Lack of coordination, information, knowledge and finance are constraints for Lori producers to establish new practices of production and storage which will help them cope with the negative impact of climate changes.

Traditional Lori production is highly dependant on natural resource use. Forest reared pigs are a key component of traditional Lori production. The advantage of forest reared pigs is that the pig feeds in the forest on acorns and nuts and due to this, the breed adapted to forest foraging and constant movement as they forage, the fat is well distributed throughout the meat and has the incomparable taste of traditional Lori. The FG survey revealed that interviewed female and male farmers currently have free access to the forest.

Gender equality, diversity and social inclusion (GEDSI) is a cross-cutting theme of vital importance in the ALCP2. Pig farming is a common practice among farmers across Georgia except in Muslim communities. The sectors are male dominated which means that more men are taking part in pig farming and Lori production than women, however, women are involved in almost all stages of pig farming for Lori production. The physically hard work related to this sector e.g., slaughtering of pigs, holding, and cutting carcasses and salting, is done by men, while women share most other activities equally with men. Elderly men, as well as women, are more involved in the Lori production process rather than pig farming as it requires harder physical work, however, they actively pass the knowledge of pig farming and Lori production to youth who are involved in pig farming and Lori production, as it is a part of their tradition. In the younger generation mostly boys are responsible for pig farming however girls might be involved in Lori production. Farmers use Lori for home consumption, helping guarantee food security for the whole year, and in case of need, they might sell small amounts, which is important, especially for the extremely poor as it helps them buy other food or other necessary goods for the family. Table 3 below shows the roles and responsibilities of men and women. Table 4 shows that in line with their inclusion within the Lori production process women have almost the same access to resources and agency over them as men apart from in obtaining different sires for breeding or driving to obtain additional feed.

*Table 2 Gender Division of Roles and Responsibilities in Pig farming and Lori production*

List of activities in Lori Production	Women	Men
Herding	x	x
Giving birth	x	x
Vaccination		x
Castration		x
Treatment against worms	x	x
Buying drugs	x	x
Buying additional feed	x	x
Giving feed	x	x
Breeding		x
Cleaning space of a pig farm	x	x
Slaughtering in a slaughterhouse		x
Slaughtering at home		x
Cutting up carcasses/butchery		x
Cleaning sub products	x	x
Salting of pork	x	x
Smoking		x
Making records	x	x
Selling Lori	x	x
Selling pigs	x	x
Selling piglets	x	x
Selling sub products head and foot,	x	x
Finding buyers for Lori	x	x
Marketing/promotion of Lori	x	x
Negotiation on price of Lori	x	x
Transportation of Lori		x

Table 3 Gender Division of Access and Agency (Decision Making Ability) in pig farming and Lori production

Roles & Responsibilities	Access		Agency	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Information and TV programmes	x	x	x	x
Skill in Lori Production	x	x	x	x
Finances /bank loans/grants	x	x	x	x
Additional Feeds	x	x		x
Forest feed	x	x	x	x
Vet. Medicine	x	x	x	x
Vet	x	x	x	x
Breeding		x		x
Income from selling Lori	x	x	x	x
Income from selling pigs	x	x	x	x
Income from selling piglets	x	x	x	x
Income from selling pork	x	x	x	x
Income from selling sub products head and foot	x	x	x	x

#### INCOME GENERATION ACTIVITY

According to the FG surveys, for Lori producers in Racha and Kakheti region, the main income generating activities are Lori production followed by pig farming and livestock husbandry. Lori production is mainly a male dominated activity, however, in most HHs women are also involved in this business. Lori production is seasonal as it starts in late autumn in November and continues till March. During this period at least one household member has full-time job as he/she is busy and focused on Lori production. Income generated through Lori production is usually shared between all HHs members.

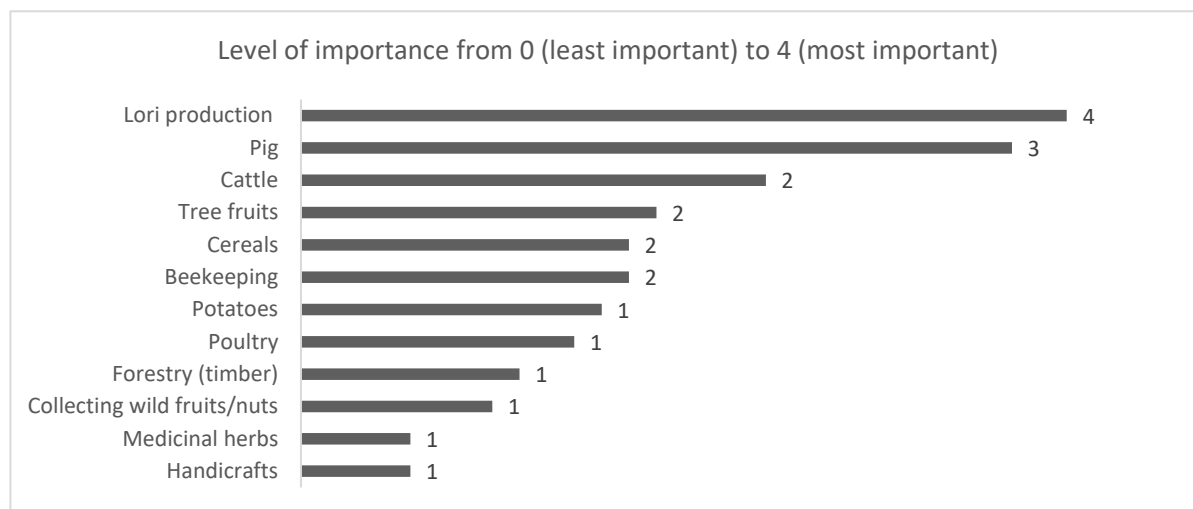


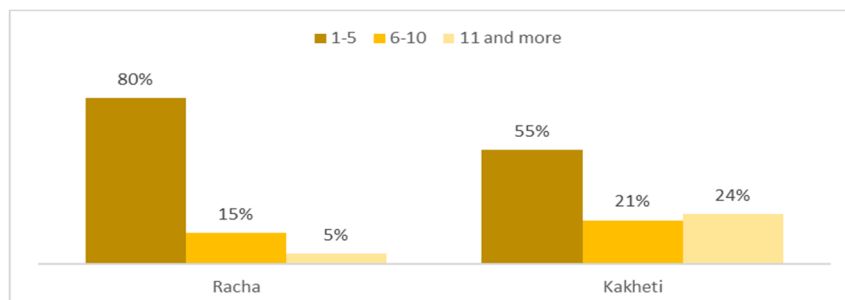
Figure 1 Income generating activities for HHs in Racha and Kakheti Regions

#### PIG HUSBANDRY FOR LORI

In Racha and Kakheti regions, pigs are mainly used for the production of the regional product Lori (smoked bacon) or *Vichina* (brined pork smoked and non-smoked) as it is known in Kakheti and which has been a traditional agricultural activity for centuries in those regions in particular. Lori production in both regions was examined to determine the best potential for a regional product development intervention.

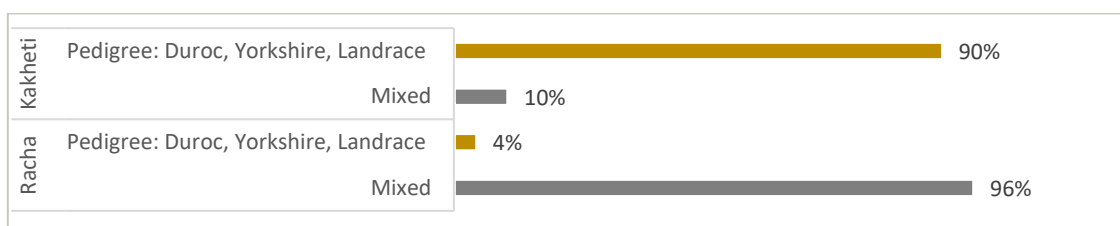
## BREED

According to the FG survey, 80% of pig owner farmers in Racha region and 55% of pig owner farmers in Kakheti region have one to five pigs. On the other hand, more farmers in Kakheti tend to have six to ten and eleven and more pigs compared to the Racha farmers.



*Figure 2 Average number of pigs per HHs by regions*

In Racha region 96% of HHs keep the local unknown mixed breed, which are raised in forests, eat forest fruit and the meat is suitable for Lori production. When Lori producer farmers cannot buy these local mixed breeds of pigs in Racha region, they buy them from nearby municipalities such as Sachkhere and Tkibuli, where pigs are also raised in the forest, also from Kharagauli, where one farmer has a pig farm in the forest surrounded by an electric fence. Different trends were observed in Kakheti (Telavi, Akhmeta) where 90% of HHs have Duroc, Yorkshire, Landrace based breeds.



*Figure 3 Types and % of pig breeds existing in Racha and Kakheti regions.*

## FEED

In Racha pigs are raised in the forest for almost eight months from April till November. ‘There are weeks when pigs do not come home, then I or my brother or my mom go to the forest to find them. When we find them, we lay grains of maize to bring the pigs back to home’ - a male farmer stated. In autumn pigs gain more weight, and the meat becomes tastier, when walnuts, chestnut and forest fruits are ripe. In autumn farmers select female pigs for breeding and the rest are slaughtered. The pregnant sows are kept at home for four months during the winter (December-March). A similar approach was revealed for male and female focus groups. However, when winter is light, snow is not deep and the ground is visible, the farmers let the pigs out to roam. At home, farmers feed the pigs with the poorest quality wheat flour and farmers mill wheat, maize and barley and mix them for pigs (wheat 40%, maize 20% and barley 40%).

A different trend was observed in lowland areas of Kakheti (Telavi, Akhmeta) where farmers do not allow pigs to roam outside as they can damage vineyards or gardens. Those breeds of pigs grow bigger than local or

Kakhetian breeds of pigs. At home, farmers give the pigs mixed feed premix and maize, whey, and food waste. 'Raising pigs at home costs high for farmers because the prices of feed and fuel have increased. 'It is a laborious and costly task, but what else should you do in the village, you should keep a cow or a pig'- noted a female farmer. However, in the villages of Telavi, Kvareli that are surrounded by forest e.g., Kobadzebi, Pshaveli, Ikalto, Akhal Sofeli, HHs keep Kakhetian or local unknown breeds of pigs raised in the forest and fed with forest fruit. The general practice of raising pigs in the forest is the same as it is in Racha region. Pork of pigs raised in the forest cost 2-3 Gel more than those pigs which are raised at home, because of the taste. 'Who once taste this pork makes an order in advance for the autumn and buys pig for home consumption 'stated a male farmer.

## PIG SLAUGHTERING

In both regions, 97% of pigs are slaughtered in the backyard for home consumption and informal local sale.

However, the FG revealed that in Racha region when Lori producers have an order from the HoReCa sector, they are requesting a form #2 or laboratory analysis of pork on *Trichinella*<sup>1</sup>; due to this Lori producers use slaughterhouses and laboratory services according to request. In the case of Lori producers from Racha buying pigs in Kharagauli (Imereti), Lori producers slaughter them at the slaughterhouse in Kharagauli and bring pig carcasses back to Racha for smoking. Those Lori producers who produce big amounts of Lori hire workers for slaughtering, cleaning, and salting of carcasses from neighboring villages or from Sachkhere (Imereti) and pay 40-50 per pig.

In Kakheti region a similar trend was observed in terms of supplying to formal buyers, however, it should be noted that in Kakheti, particularly in Telavi the majority of farmers do a laboratory test on *Trichinella* themselves. 'When farmers slaughter a pig one person takes a meat sample (a piece of meat between spine and ham) to do the lab test, when the answer is negative, he calls at home to start making barbecue' - mentioned a male farmer of the FG in Telavi municipality by male farmer. In Akhmeta municipality, due to the lack of a laboratory and the absence of a pig slaughterhouse, farmers are not able to slaughter their pigs in a local slaughterhouse or do local laboratory tests. In general, it should be noted slaughter related work is mainly done by men.

## INFORMATION

The main source of information regarding Lori production and pig farming is TV (100%), other farmers (100%) and social media (88%). Female and male participants had similar priorities when it comes to Lori related agri information.

The participants mentioned that there are many TV reports and agricultural programmes related to pig husbandry. Thus, TV was the main source of agri information for pig farmers. However, the focus groups participants also indicated that an increasing number of farmers prefer to get information through social media. Often, social media shares the content produced by TV programmes, but farmers found it more convenient to access this information through Youtube, Facebook and other social media platforms.

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<sup>1</sup> *Trichinella* infection rates vary from region to region and seem to increase in colder climates. Foxes, wolves, and bears have the highest infection rates, but small mammals, such as skunks, raccoons, and rats, provide the highest risk to infecting the domestic pig.



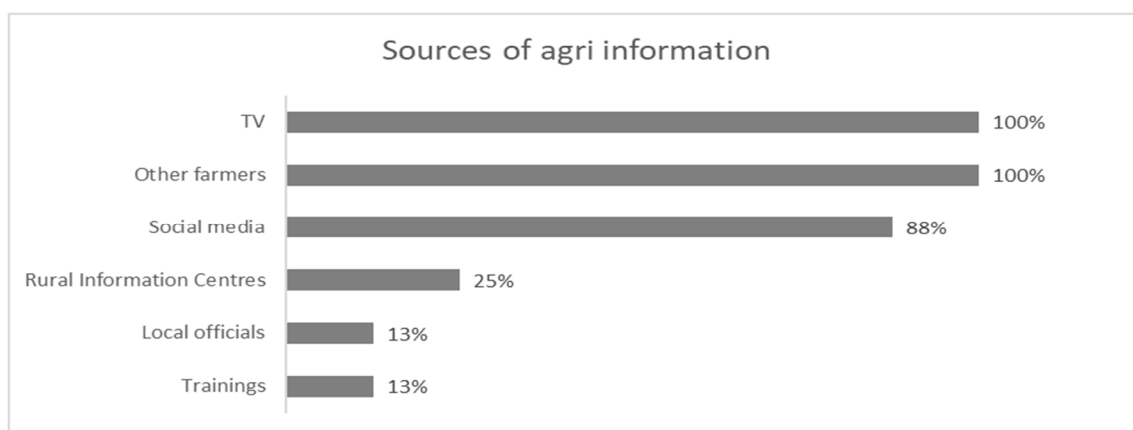


Figure 4 Main source of information on livestock

## SERVICES

According to the female and male FG survey participants, the farmers involved in Lori production use vaccination, veterinary and castration services once a year. These services are available within the local area. Rarely there is a need to buy medicines in municipal centers. Transportation services are only needed for farmers who purchase piglets or pigs outside the region.

In Racha region, female and male Lori producers use slaughterhouse and laboratory services, including tests on Trichinella disease, only when they have orders for Lori from formal buyers e.g., HoReCa. As for their own consumption and for informal sales, backyard slaughtering and not testing pork on diseases is a common practice. It should be noticed that slaughterhouse and laboratory are available in the region.

In Kakheti region the same model works regarding the slaughtering of pigs, however, the majority of all farmers are doing laboratory analysis of pork on Trichinella, it does not depend on whether pork is used for home consumption or for sale.

## LORI PRODUCTION

According to the FG in Racha region, 83% of HH's produce Lori for sale and home consumption, 18% of HH's produce Lori for solely home consumption. Pig slaughtering starts in autumn, farmers use whole carcasses to produce Lori. In Racha region, all farmers smoke pig carcasses at home. All female and male Lori producers focus group participants mentioned that they use traditional methods of smoking Lori which they know from the previous generations, their parents, and grandparents.

Table 4 Constraints within the production process

Lori production stages	Current condition
Salting	No proper compliance procedure for salting, Keeping/hanging drying carcasses in rooms not protected from insects and rodents
Smoking	Poor build quality of smoking rooms which are made from wood means they often have holes allowing insects and rodents inside Non stainless hooks are used for hanging carcasses Carcasses are sometimes hung to close to the smoking fire as the rooms have not been built with a high enough ceiling. These carcasses to become over-smoked with a darker colour of Lori and potential high level of carcinogens in the product
Storage	Lack of temperature control in storage rooms can cause spoilage of Lori, especially in hot weather Lack of refrigerated storage limits sales season to cold weather
Packaging (and labelling)	No packaging and labelling hampers, limit sale of Lori to informal markets

## KAKHURI *VICHINA*

According to the FG survey in Kakheti region, in Telavi and Akhmeta municipalities, 38% of HH's produce *Vichina*, out of which 7% is produced for sale. The product is popular at New Year and Easter holidays. Production of Kakhuri *Vichina* is seasonal. Usually, farmers slaughter pigs in autumn and winter. They cut the whole carcass of the pig in parts (half pig, shoulders, leg). They mainly use fresh pork and keep some other parts of carcass (leg, shoulder) in salted water (for ten litres of water it needs three kg salt) for 20 days to make brined pork. After that they take out the *Vichina* to dry and smoke or leave the pork to dry cure in salt for months. Some farmers use a smoking service and pay 1.30 Gel/KG *Vichina*. The smoking process takes on average 1-4 days. Those farmers who are not using smoking services are smoking *Vichina* at home by themselves. Farmers use beech wood chips and add different types of fruit wood e.g., apple, Juniper to impart flavour. Smoking and processing constraints are similar to those in Racha.

## MARKET FOR LORI

The main and growing problem for producers and consumers is the increasing amount of counterfeit Lori made using imported frozen pork, which is hampering regional Lori production. Consumers who cannot distinguish the taste of Rachuli Lori or Kakhuri *Vichina* can be easily deceived.

## DEMAND

Demand for the regional product Rachuli Lori and Kakhuri *Vichina* is high. The majority of producers sell Lori during the New Year and Easter holidays (April/May/beginning of June) and a few producers keep Lori for summertime when visitors, tourists and people visit the region or are coming back in their houses or to see relatives. The majority of Lori producers sell it from home, almost all houses in the villages of Racha, have a sign 'Lori for Sale'. However, some Lori producers sell Lori in small cheese shops, other small grocery shops in Tbilisi and agri markets in Kakheti, Racha and Tbilisi. Lori producers also sell Lori to the HoReCa sector via social media<sup>2</sup> Facebook pages or friends or relatives in Tbilisi and other cities.

There is a demand for Lori from the Georgian Diaspora in France and the US, buying Lori through social media or relatives. Sending Lori to foreign countries through the local national postal operator - Georgian Post, is a common practice in Racha.

## SUPPLY

Lori supply is limited in summertime. Currently, Lori producers in both regions have old smoking and storage facilities, which need reconstruction and improvement. There are no specific agreed written regulation production standards to support regional product development which would help producers to upgrade smoking and storage facilities and produce compliant Lori. During the FGs, farmers mentioned that in recent years more hot summer seasons have been observed which makes it difficult to keep Lori cool. In hot weather Lori spoils easily e.g., worms are appearing due to not having proper refrigerated storage rooms. For this reason, producers prefer to produce the amount of Lori they will be able to sell before hot weather starts.

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<sup>2</sup> [soplidan.ge](http://soplidan.ge) ; [Rachuli.lori](http://Rachuli.lori) [Rachuli Loruka](http://Rachuli.Loruka);

In Telavi and Akhmeta municipalities in Kakheti, where pigs are raised at home, the FG survey participants did not mention ASF as a constraint, however in Racha where pigs roam freely disease risk is potentially higher meaning disease control for Racha region has to be particularly well enforced, e.g. controlling the import of pigs brought from outside potentially with a quarantine zone/procedure. The majority of the FG participants said that they had not been affected by the disease in recent years.

According to the focus group survey pig farming for Lori production is not easy work, it takes time and energy and expenses for feed. Foraging pigs might get lost or eaten by wild animals or die from diseases, however, *'One pig out of six, covers all expenses, that is an incentive for farmers to keep pigs'* - a male farmer noted. The FG in Racha revealed that those farmers who are oriented on increasing the number of pigs, are thinking of using an electric fence for pig flocks, which works well in Kharagauli where one farmer has it protect pigs against attacks of wild animals.