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People and Livestock

is an occasional newsletter for those interested in promoting socially and ecologically responsible livestock development. It is produced by the League for Pastoral Peoples with support from Misereor.

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LEAGUE FOR
PASTORAL PEOPLES

www.pastoralpeoples.org

People and Livestock is also available online at www.lifeinitiative.net

Focus: Treaty on animal genetic resources – Will we wait until it's too late?

Local breeds of cattle, sheep, chickens and other livestock still form the basis of livelihoods and culture in many parts of the world. They also represent a vital reservoir of biodiversity for livestock breeders. But these local breeds are under threat – along with the livelihoods of the people who raise and manage them. Their future looks bleak unless action is taken immediately.

Threats to breeds and livelihoods

- **Industrialized animal production** is expanding rapidly. Smallholders and pastoralists – vital for conserving livestock genetic diversity – are being crowded out. The global livestock sector is in danger of consolidating into “livestock monocultures”.
- Rapid advances in **biotechnology** may lead to a total reorientation of animal breeding in the coming decades.
- Urgent questions about **intellectual property rights** over animal genetic resources remain unresolved.

At the same time, biotechnology and gene technology are advancing rapidly in livestock. Presently this is happening in a legal vacuum. Firms have started patenting genes of breeds originating from the South (see news clip below).

The need for a treaty

An **international agreement on animal genetic resources** is urgently needed. Such an agreement should ensure free, open access to animal genetic resources, and should guarantee livestock keepers a fair and level playing field in their interactions with animal industries.

But international agreements are not enough to ensure that pastoralists and smallholders can continue their role as guardians of local breeds. They can do this only if they have secure access to grazing lands, water, and other key resources such as markets and education.

National and local governments must ensure that they have access to these resources.

Crops have been in the centre of attention for more than two decades. An International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has recently come into force. Livestock and poultry have been left aside for far too long.

The long and winding road

In the late 1990s, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) warned that local breeds were threatened: they estimated that breeds disappear at a rate of two every week.

FAO found that about a quarter of all livestock and poultry breeds were threatened. Nearly two-thirds of the endangered breeds were in the developing world.

To verify these estimates, an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group under the guidance of FAO asked all countries to collect data on the breeds in their country in order to compile a State of the World report. This report is due in 2005.

Preliminary analysis of the country reports shows that local breeds are being replaced even faster than was thought. This makes it even more urgent to start negotiations on an international agreement.

Ducking the issue

During the 9th Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 2002, non-government organizations and representatives of livestock communities called for such a treaty. But the Commission referred the issue to the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources.

Despite pressure from Botswana, Kenya and Uganda to start negotiations, the Working Group ducked the issue. At its 3rd session in 2004 it postponed further discussions until the State of the World report was published.

It can take a decade or more to negotiate a treaty on animal genetic resources. Do we have the time?

Grabbing the bull by the horns

An earlier opportunity to get this issue onto the agenda is the 10th Commission session, coming up on 8–12 November 2004. We can only hope that the Commission will

not again defer discussion. Experience with the crops treaty showed that negotiations are a long process. Many breeds will be lost before a treaty comes into force.

Can we really afford to lose more time?

Booroola gene of sheep patented

The Booroola gene is an important precedent: it is the first gene from a Southern livestock breed to be patented.

But the fact that genes can be patented is questionable: especially genes from breeds developed over centuries by livestock keepers!

The **Booroola gene** is one of several genes for prolificacy identified by **AgResearch**, a biotech firm in New Zealand.

The firm claims the gene has a large effect on the litter size of sheep: "It is additive, so one copy of the gene means an extra 100 lambs born per 100 ewes lambing, and two copies inherited from both parents means an extra 150 lambs born per 100 ewes lambing."

The Booroola gene in Australia can be traced back to Bengal sheep which were imported from Calcutta in 1792/3 and crossed with Merinos.

In 1993, the discovery of a genetic marker for the Booroola gene made it possible to identify carriers of this gene.

Research in Israel has confirmed the gene's economic potential. Between 1996 and 2000, the Department of Animal Production of Agricultural Research Organisation under Israel's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development introduced the Booroola gene into Awassi, Assaf and German Mutton Merino sheep.

The experiments resulted in a new Awassi strain called "**Afec**" which produces about 2.0 lambs born per ewe lambing.

A study by the same department found "under the range of economic parameters tested, introduction of the Afec into Awassi flocks managed under semi-intensive conditions would be profitable in most scenarios." Recently the gene has been found to occur in sheep elsewhere in Asia.

In 2003, researchers from New Zealand and Australia have obtained a patent for the Booroola gene. It is registered in the USA under application no. 10/169,051.

AgResearch website:
www.agresearch.co.nz/

ALive platform launched in Paris

ALive: Partnership for Livestock development, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Growth is a multi-partner programme initiated by the World Bank.

ALive is a platform dedicated to a shared and harmonized vision for the livestock sector in Sub-Saharan Africa. Around 50

representatives of various stakeholder groups attended the constitutive meetings held in Paris on 31 May–1 June, 2004.

Members of the General Assembly welcomed the initiative that seeks to revive interest and funding for livestock development. Some pointed out that several of the 13 projects

proposed for funding duplicated existing efforts.

The NGO members were concerned that a number of the measures were unsuitable to reach the poor directly rather than through trickle down.

More information:
www.oie.int/eng/press/en_040720.htm

African ethnobotanical database moves

The **PRELUDE Database on African ethnobotanical medicinal plants** has moved. See the link below for the new address at Metafro.

The database contains 1500 plant species used in human and animal medicine in sub-Saharan Africa. The information has been compiled from sources covering the period 1900–2000.

www.metafro.be/collections/prelude_keywords.txt/view

More information: Jean Lehmann, lehmann@fy-nu.ucl.ac.be

Ethnobotanical congress in Guatemala

The **Second Workshop and First International Congress on Ethnobotanical, Ethno-animal Husbandry and Related Sciences** took place in Guatemala on 28–29 September 2004.

The workshop and congress were organized by the Facultad de Medicina Veterinaria y Zootecnia. Institutions such as “Veterinarians without Borders”, Heifer Project International and universities from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Cuba and Mexico collaborated.

There were 17 presentations, several demonstrations, plus posters from Taiwan, Pakistan, Holland, Uganda, India and Guatemala.

Topics ranged widely from indigenous knowledge related to beekeeping and wild animals to shrimp farming, animal testing, medicinal plants and their use, “good farming practices” in the pharmacology industry and ethno zootechnology and endogenous livestock keepers development.

A follow-up conference is likely to be held in 2005.

More information: Dr. Dora Elena Chang de Jo, Facultad de Medicina Veterinaria y Zootecnia e-mail: dorachang@hotmail.com, or contact: plantasmedfmvz@yahoo.com

[Ellen Geerlings]

Coming up

Saving the Camel and People's Livelihoods

An international conference to build a multi-stakeholder platform for the **conservation of the camel in Rajasthan**, India, will be held on 23–25 November 2004 in Sadri, Rajasthan. The conference is hosted by Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan.

More information: www.pastoralpeoples.org or contact Hanwant Singh Rathore, Director, LPPS, lpps@sify.com

6th Global Conference on Domestic Animal Genetic Resources

Originally scheduled for 27–30 September 2004, in Bloemfontein, this conference has been **postponed to April 2005**. Details will be announced at www.lifeinitiative.net

Conference on horse genetic resources

Biodiversity of horse genetic resources, its characterization and conservation: International conference, 18–20 November 2004, Kaunas, Lithuania.

Global Pastoralist Gathering

On 28 January–1 February 2005, **pastoralist groups** from all over the world will gather in a pastoralist area of East Africa to converse, find common ground and create alliances. Supporters from first nations groups, governments, the United Nations, universities and other organizations will also attend.

The gathering will be co-hosted by pastoralists from East Africa, The

Horn of Africa Pastoralist Communication Initiative, the World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism and the Institute of Development Studies, UK.

Accommodation will be in traditional houses or safari tents. The facilitation will use African approaches, where small meetings and big gatherings take place under shady trees.

More information: Contact Daoud Tari Abkula and Sarah Wilson, globalpastoralistgathering@yahoo.co.uk.

Animal genetic resources at CGRFA

A key body governing animal genetic resources will meet in Rome on 8–12 November 2004.

The **Commission on Genetic Resources for**

Food and Agriculture (CGRFA), will meet at FAO.

NGOs are pressing for animal genetic resources to be discussed at this meeting. See the focus article, **Treaty on animal genetic resources**, on page 1 for details.

Publications

Production and management of camels

by Bakht Baidar Khan, Arshad Iqbal and Muhammad Riaz, Dept of Livestock Management, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Written in question-and-answer format, this book covers almost all aspects of the camel.

More information: Arshad Iqbal, drarshad_iqbal@hotmail.com

The political economy of international development and pro-poor livestock policies: A comparative assessment

by David K. Leonard. *PPLPI Working Paper 12*. Pro-Poor Livestock Policy Initiative, FAO, Rome.

Suggested ways to support the interests of poor livestock producers in developing countries.

www.fao.org/ag/againfo/projects/en/pplpi/docarc/wp12.pdf

Livestock keepers' wronged

by Patrick Mulvaney. *eco*, 11(1) p. 16. May 2004

How the USA is blocking the recognition of livestock keepers' rights at FAO.

www.ukabc.org/eco_cop7-11.pdf

Livestock keepers' rights: Conserving breeds, supporting livelihoods

by the League for Pastoral Peoples

Outlines the case for supporting the rights of livestock keepers in order to conserve animal genetic diversity.

www.pastoralpeoples.org/docs/livestockkeepers/rights1.pdf

The black sheep of Rajasthan

by Ellen Geerlings. *Seedling*, October 2004. pp 11-16.

A study of the Raika, one of the largest groups of livestock herders in India.

www.grain.org/seedling/files/seed-04-10-3.pdf

Relevance of access and benefit sharing for farm animal genetic resources

by Lucia Kaal-Lansbergen and Sipke Joost Hiemstra. North-South Policy Brief 2003-5, Wageningen University

www.north-south.nl/webfiles/Policy%20Brief%20Farm%20Animal%20Genetic%20Resources-2003-5.pdf

The Abundant Herds: A Celebration of the Nguni Cattle of the Zulu People

by Marguerite Poland, David Hammond-Tooke and Leigh Voight. Fernwood Press

Examines the role played by cattle and cattle-related imagery in the oral tradition of the Zulu people.

Order from www.nhbs.com/xbscripts/bkfsrch?search=144632

Links on animal genetic resources

Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

The forum where governments negotiate on genetic resources for food and agriculture

www.fao.org/ag/cgrfa/default.htm

Convention on Biological Diversity

International agreement to conserve and use biodiversity sustainably, and to share benefits fairly.

www.biodiv.org/default.aspx

DAGRIS Domestic Animal Information System

Source of information on indigenous livestock breeds. Focus on Africa.

dagris.ilri.cgiar.org/dagris/

FAO-DAD-IS

Database covers 5300 breeds of 35 livestock species from 180 countries.

<http://dad.fao.org/>

FAO Pro-Poor Livestock Policy Initiative

Promotes policies and institutional changes to improve the livelihoods of livestock keepers

www.fao.org/ag/againfo/projects/en/pplpi/home.html

GTZ Agrobiodiversity in Rural Areas

A project to enhance the long-term conservation and use of plant and animal genetic resources.

www.gtz.de/agrobiodiv/english/index.html

Intermediate Technology Development Group

Advocates defending the global commons.

www.itdg.org/?id=global_commons

League for Pastoral Peoples

NGO that supports the rights of pastoralists and small-scale livestock keepers.

www.pastoralpeoples.org/

The LIFE initiative: Local Livestock for Empowerment of Rural People

Network to promote community-based conservation and development of indigenous livestock breeds and species.

www.lifeinitiative.net/

LinKS Biodiversity Gender Knowledge

FAO project on gender, biodiversity and local knowledge in four countries in southern Africa.

www.fao.org/sd/LINKS/

Rare Breeds International

International NGO aiming to prevent the loss of diversity in global farm animal genetic resources.

www.rbi.it/

SAVE Foundation: Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe

European organization promoting the conservation of endangered breeds and cultivated plants.

www.save-foundation.net/