



Join the Movement for Livestock Keepers' Rights

in preparation for the
FAO First International Technical Conference on
Animal Genetic Resources
to be held in Interlaken (Switzerland) in September 2007

As of August 23, 2006

The Corporate Takeover of the Livestock Sector

Ever since humans started domesticating animals - well over 8,000 years ago - farmers and pastoralists have developed and genetically manipulated their livestock based on their own judgement, needs and preferences. This freedom has not only enabled them to adapt to their diverse environments and make the most out of their specific production conditions, but also generated a vast array of livestock and poultry breeds. Now the inherent right of livestock keepers to *use and develop their own breeding stock and breeding practices* is coming under strong assault by commercial interests that are exploiting the current Intellectual Property Rights System to their advantage:

- Trade secrets and licensing agreements are already the rule in poultry and pig breeding, leading to the control over genes in a highly concentrated private sector. In cattle and sheep breeding, developments are following the same trend.
- Monsanto, a new entrant to the livestock sector, has filed an application for a series of 12 patents on pig-breeding in 160 countries.
- An increasing number of patents are being granted for genes, genome sequences and for the tests that are used to trace them. One example is the Booroola gene for fertility in sheep, but there are many others.
- "Sequenced genomes, transgenic livestock and cloning will become the norm in the 21st century" according to the prediction of a leading scientist.
- For fear of bio-piracy, governments are beginning to engage in protective patenting of breeds that have been developed by farmers and pastoralists.

Livestock Keepers' Rights

While companies are shoring up control over the livestock sector, small-scale livestock keepers and pastoralists are progressively losing their rights:

- Customary **grazing rights** of many pastoralists are abolished by the establishment of protected areas, biodiesel cultivation, landbanks, land-grabbing, etc.
- Even the **right to keep animals** is jeopardised in the wake of pandemics, esp. Avian Influenza. For instance, in many countries small-scale poultry keepers are losing the right to keep their traditional poultry in the vicinity of industrial chicken complexes. Biosecurity requirements eliminate small farmers from the livestock business.
- The **rights to sell** animals and their products across national boundaries have been seriously undermined, due to sometimes inappropriate animal hygiene regulations. Developing countries are forced out of international markets, and big players come in.
- The **rights to breed** animals may be threatened in the future by patent laws.
- Unfortunately, in most developing countries, farmers and pastoralists have never had the **right to be consulted** and heard when livestock policies are being designed.

Fundamental human rights, such as the right to food, are at stake, and the implications for livestock biodiversity are enormous. An important event for raising the issue of Livestock Keepers Rights is coming up that will provide opportunity for presenting the perspective of livestock keepers, and for pressing for legal recognition of Livestock Keepers' Rights, as outlined in the **Karen Commitment** (www.pastoralpeoples.org/docs/karen.pdf) and as backed up by the **Bellagio Brief** (www.pastoralpeoples.org/bellagio/bellagio_brief.htm).

The Interlaken Conference

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the Government of Switzerland have announced the First International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources to be held in Interlaken in September 2007

<http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/genetics/angrvent2007.html>. This conference is the equivalent to the Leipzig Conference on Plant Genetic Resources that was held in 1996 and generated an enormous response by Civil Society.

The purpose of the Interlaken Conference is to

- reach agreement on how to best address priorities for the sustainable use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources, and
- raise awareness and appreciation of the various roles and values of these essential resources

A formal outcome will be the finalization of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*.

Preparatory Activities for the Interlaken Conference

The League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development, members of the LIFE Network and other partners will be undertaking a series of activities to project the role of livestock keepers and communities in in-situ conservation of animal genetic resources and the linkages between livestock biodiversity, secure livelihoods and sustainable land use. We invite other like-minded organisations and individuals to join the effort of legally securing Livestock Keepers' Rights.

- International Workshop on FAO World Food Day

An international workshop will be held on October 16, 2006 in Bonn, Germany. Addressed are civil society organisations dealing with environment and development more generally, those who focus on biotechnology, biopiracy, or animal welfare, and organisations actively supporting livestock biodiversity.

The *objectives* of the workshop are

- To draw attention to the Interlaken Conference and its importance
- To raise awareness on the related topics
- To identify potential for action
- To devise cooperation opportunities.

This is an opportunity for pastoralists and livestock keepers' organisations to present their case. Relevant aspects will be analysed and ongoing study work presented: Livestock patents and biotechnology, smallholder livestock biodiversity conservation and breeding, alternatives to industrial livestock production are examples.

The date of the workshop, October 16, is the *FAO World Food Day*, contributing to media interest in the issue.

The next day, October 17, is reserved for organisations committed to engage in the preparatory process, to meet and plan further activities.

Contact: Susanne Gura susanne@pastoralpeoples.org

- Regional Workshops

Two regional workshops with partners in Asia and Africa are planned in order to raise awareness about the issue, establish regional priorities, and mobilise policy makers and donors.

Contact: Ilse Koehler-Rollefson ilse@pastoralpeoples.org

- Documentation

LPP intends to compile a number of publications, such as a Peoples' Report on the State of the World of Local Breeds. It welcomes case studies of community-based management of animal genetic resources, reports on the impact of industrial livestock production on farmers and breeds, research studies on indigenous knowledge about animal breeding and success stories of traditional breeds being revitalised.

Contact: info@pastoralpeoples.org

About the Organisers

The **League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development** is engaged in advocacy, research and field activities to support pastoralists and marginal livestock keepers.

www.pastoralpeoples.org

The **LIFE Network** is a group of organizations and individuals who promote community-based conservation and development of indigenous livestock breeds and species. www.lifeinitiative.net