



## What are “Livestock Keepers’ Rights”?

### The rationale for an International Treaty on Animal Genetic Resources

by Ilse Köhler-Rollefson

During the NGO/CSO events surrounding the World Food Summit in June of this year, the League in collaboration with the German NGO Forum Environment & Development took the lead in advocating for an international legal framework on animal genetic resources. The term *Livestock Keepers’ Rights* was coined. It was therefore very gratifying that at the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Genetic Resource for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) held at FAO on 14–18 October, the FAO Deputy Director General’s opening speech echoed these demands, urging delegates to move quickly towards negotiating the pendant to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for livestock. While this was supported by a number of developing countries, the representative of the European region urged a decision to be postponed until the next meeting of the Commission in 2004.

We believe that such an indifferent attitude is incompatible with the ‘green’ agricultural policy that the German government professes to espouse. Livestock keeping around the world is presently undergoing dramatic and rapid transformation that radically alters its socio-economic context and further accelerates the erosion of farm animal genetic diversity. Therefore there is an urgent need for developing a regulatory framework. Farm animal genetic diversity is based on cultural diversity – it is the result of a multitude of livestock keepers making breeding decisions based on their own specific ecological and economic requirements, and in a decentralised way. We believe strongly, that in order to ensure farm animal genetic diversity, the control over breeding decisions must firmly remain in the hands of individual livestock keepers. Without this being guaranteed by an international treaty or legal framework, control will slip into the hands of a few commercial companies.

Increasing concentration of control over farm animal genetic resources is driven by commercial interests, ably abetted by an academic research community focusing on genomics rather than on bottom-up approaches as a solution to the problems of poor and marginalised livestock keepers. Two processes are driving this consolidation.

One is the ‘Livestock Revolution’, the expansion of industrialised animal production systems into developing countries. This expansion is partly fuelled by a demand for livestock products, but it is also pushed by the interests of the grain-exporting countries. It leads to the establishment of large units for pig, poultry, beef, and dairy production, whereby farmers often become employees or contractors of big firms (‘vertical integration’). Such operations may be successful in providing meat cheaply to urban populations, but they come at a tremendous cost. Of special concern to developing countries should be their effect on rural employment opportunities. As is well documented, this production model of ‘vertical integration’ has led to the virtual death of the family farm in the USA. Developing countries with large rural populations therefore ought to think carefully whether they can afford to follow this path. Besides rendering countries dependent on grain imports, industrialised animal production also has significant negative impacts on the environment. Because they run into difficul-

## Rolex Honours LPP Founder

LPP’s founder and project co-ordinator, Ilse Köhler-Rollefson, was named an Associate Laureate for the Rolex Awards for Enterprise 2002.

The award recognises her (and with this also LPP’s) work in Rajasthan.

‘Ilse Köhler-Rollefson spends half of each year in a remote part of India’s Thar Desert where she has become a leading advocate of a struggling community of camel-herders,’ says the award. ‘Köhler-Rollefson is leading a remarkable movement to save their livestock, pastoral livelihood and way of life.’

The Rolex Awards are granted every two years to pioneering individuals, often working outside the mainstream. The awards recognize innovative work to improve our planet and the human condition. Details at [www.pastoralpeoples.org](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org)

## This report...

Covers the period from November 2001 to December 2002.

ties with environmental legislation in the USA and Europe, many of the companies are trying to relocate their production units into developing countries. By relying on huge numbers of genetically uniform animals and by out-competing small producers, the 'Livestock Revolution' has incalculable effects on farm animal genetic diversity.

The second process threatening autonomous breeding decisions is rapid advances in genetic engineering. According to a lead paper presented at the 7th World Congress on Genetics Applied to Livestock Production held in Montpellier on 19–23 August, in the 21st century 'sequenced genomes, transgenic livestock and cloned animals will possibly become the norm'. While methods are not quite perfected yet, genetic engineering affords the opportunity to selectively transplant certain traits from one breed to the other. Many breeds from developing countries may have traits that are of interest to the 'industry'. Examples include the 'Booroola gene', responsible for prolificacy in sheep and originating in the Garole sheep from India, resistance against viral diseases in the Fayoumi chicken from Egypt, worm resistance in the Red Maasai sheep from East Africa, and probably many others. Scientists who have been successful in identifying and describing the genetic sequences that confer these traits file for patents.

It is important that developing countries safeguard their interests in what essentially represents their intellectual property; the more so since some of the poorest and marginal countries are exceptionally rich in genetic diversity and in livestock breeds. Negotiation of an international legal framework to clarify the implications of the Convention on Biological Diversity for farm animal genetic resources therefore urgently needs to be put on to the international agenda.

In order to save local livelihoods, livestock keepers need to be given the explicit right to breed their own animals, to make breeding decisions, and to be informed and consulted about any interventions by outside parties, such as cross-breeding programmes. They need to be empowered to negotiate for and obtain appropriate benefits if genetic material stewarded by them for generations is used by outsiders, be it companies or scientists. And last, but not least, the critical and essential role of livestock keepers as guardians of their nations' genetic treasures is to be acknowledged and should be rewarded by secure grazing rights and access to markets. Such a package of 'Livestock Keepers Rights' could contribute significantly to create and secure rural employment opportunities, prevent urban migration, uphold genetic (and cultural) diversity, and become a tool, for rewarding poor countries for their role in contribution to the globe's long-term food security.

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## Alsipura Statement

The Indian Pastoralists and Herders Association in Alsipura/Sadri, India, issued the following statement on 23 March 2002.

1. Pastoralists play an important role in ecology of India. Their production of organic manure contributes to the maintenance of soil fertility. Their grazing controls invasive exotic species. Contrary to their reputation, pastoralists have many traditional practices for conserving vegetation, for instance by rotational grazing.
2. Pastoralists make a significant but largely unacknowledged contribution to India's economy in terms of food security (milk), provision of draft animal power, as well as foreign exchange earnings (meat, fibre e.g. Pashmina wool)
3. Since pastoralists usually do not own land, their produce is generated exclusively by dependence on communally and state owned grazing land. Due to neglect by officials and policy makers, pastoralists face deprivation from their traditional and customary rights to these grazing areas. Because their grazing areas are in decline everywhere, their populations are also declining throughout India.
4. Pastoralists play an important role on the conservation of indigenous livestock breeds (such as one humped camel, Toda buffalo, Nari and Malai-

## On the LPP website

The new LPP website contains a summary of League activities, and the full text of several LPP publications. It also has news of conferences and publications on pastoralism. Visit the site at [www.pastoralpeoples.org](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org).

## Background to the Alsipura Statement

Members of pastoral communities from all over India, including pastoralists from Ladakh, Raika/Rebari, Gujjar, Toda, Dhangar, Malaimadu cattle breeders, Vembur sheep breeders and others, as well as national and international NGOs seeking to protect the interests of pastoralists, met at the Training centre of Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan in Alsipura (near Sadri, District Pali, Rajasthan, India) on 22–23 March 2002 to discuss their mutual problems and exchange experiences about their situations.

madu cattle, Deccani sheep), while Adivasis conserve valuable poultry genetic resources (Aseel chicken). These breeds harbour a wide variety of adaptive traits, being able to cope with harsh climates and landscapes and resisting diseases that affect cross-bred animals. It is imperative to conserve them.

5. For many pastoralists, these farm animal genetic resources are the basis of their cultural identity and they have a moral and social attachment to them.
6. Pastoralists face severe pressures and many of them feel threatened by the continuous decrease in grazing resources, due to factors such as:
  - They are usually excluded from participation in the Village Forest Protection Committees that are promoted by the Joint Forest Management Programme.
  - In Rajasthan, the allotment of *gochar* land for private use at the discretion of District Collectors private people is undercutting their resource base of pastoralists.
  - There are a large number of cases where pastoralists are banned from their traditional grazing areas because these have come under various 'forest protection or management scheme). Examples include: Malai-madu breeders in Tamil Nadu and the Grizzled Squirrel sanctuary, Toda buffalo breeders, camel breeders and the Kumbhalgarh Reserve in Rajasthan.
  - In many places, for instance Ladakh, protection of wildlife has proceeded at the expense of the availability of grass biomass for the herds of pastoralists.
  - Elimination of fallow areas, due to increase in irrigation agriculture.
7. In order to maintain their cultural identity and continue to fulfill their crucial role in India's ecology and economy, pastoralists recommend the following policy changes as absolutely essential:
  - Revival of traditional norms for use of grazing lands (such as rotation).
  - Land use policies that protect grazing areas and ensure sufficient space for their livelihoods.
  - Linkages between the government departments responsible for the two components of their livelihoods i.e. animal husbandry and forest /environment)
  - Educational facilities that integrate and reinforce important elements of their culture and indigenous knowledge (experience is already available from Ladakh).
  - Acknowledgement and support for their essential role in conserving India's farm animal genetic resources and valuable genetic traits.
  - Animal health and livestock extension services that are suited to their particular situation and integrate/utilize the considerable indigenous (ethno-veterinary) knowledge of pastoralists.

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## International Lobbying and Advocacy

At the international level, LPP concentrates on advocating for the stronger integration of pastoralists and smallholders into the efforts for conserving indigenous breeds and for according them 'Livestock Keepers' Rights'. A major step in this process was the activities surrounding the **World Food Summit: 5 Years Later** at FAO in Rome on 8–13 June 2002 and the **NGO/CSO Forum for Food Sovereignty** that accompanied it. In preparation for this event, LPP published a dossier and a leaflet (see below under *Publications*), as well as policy paper '*Why we need livestock keepers' rights to save biodiversity*'.

## NGO/CSO Forum for Food Sovereignty

In cooperation with the German NGO Forum for Environment and Development and the GTZ's Agrobiodiversity Programme, LPP organised a workshop on '**Livestock Diversity: Keepers' Rights, Shared Benefits and Pro-Poor Policies**' with Susanne Gura, Nitya Ghotge (ANTHRA), Raul Perezgrovas (University of Chiapas, Mexico), Jacob Wanyama and Lukas Lolnkojine (ITDG, Kenya), John Gibson (ILRI) and Simon Anderson (Imperial College, UK). The German NGO Forum will publish proceedings of this workshop.

In a session '**Seeds, breeds and people: the fight over genetic resources**' Hanwant Singh of LPPS presented a paper '*How pastoralists manage livestock biodiversity. A case study of the Raika of Rajasthan*'.

## Workshop of the European National Coordinators for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources

Cairo, 30–31 August 2002

In order to pave the ground for an International Treaty on Animal Genetic Resources and familiarize European coordinators with the situation of traditional livestock keepers in developing countries, Hanwant Singh and Ilse Köhler-Rollefson gave a presentation entitled '*The need for an International Treaty on AnGR*'. A similar paper was given in the context of the Rare Breeds International (RBI) meeting held on 29th August. Susanne Gura also participated.

## Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

9<sup>th</sup> Session, FAO, Rome, 13–18 October 2002

With the support of Susanne Gura, LPP organized a workshop on **Farm Animal Genetic Resources: Issues at Stake For Pastoralists and Small-holders**. K. Vasamalli (Toda Buffalo Breeders Association/Sustainable Environment Voluntary Action, SEVA, India), Joyce Njoro (Community-Based Livestock Initiatives Programme, CLIP, Kenya), and W.M.K. Warsi, (LIFE/Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan, India) gave presentations. Because of the great interest, the workshop had to be repeated. Each time, some 30 FAO staff and delegates from developing and developed countries participated. Ilse Köhler-Rollefson and Susanne Gura actively participated in the sessions of the Commission. In collaboration with other NGOs, a statement was drafted and distributed.

## Projects and Workshops in South Asia

In India, our activities continue to be undertaken in close cooperation with Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan (LPPS). But new partnerships are also being forged, for instance with SCOPE, an environmental NGO based in Karachi, and the Toda Buffalo Breeders Association.

**LIFE-India** Mr. W.M.K. Warsi has been the India coordinator of LIFE since On September, 2001. He combines this responsibility with acting as the India representative of the World Herders Council.

**All-India Meeting of Pastoralists**, held at the training centre of Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan in Alsipura near Sadri on 22–23 March 2002. Co-organised with LPPS and CME-India, this first meeting of its kinds drew members of pastoral communities from all over India, including pastoralists from Ladakh, Raika/Rebari, Gujjar, Toda, Dhangar, Malaimadu cattle breeders, Vembur sheep breeders and others, as well as national and international NGOs seeking to protect the interests of pastoralists. After discussing their mutual problems and exchanging experiences about their situations, they issued the 'Alsipura Statement' (see above). Besides being involved in organisation and fund-raising, the League also partially financed the participation of three herders from Ladakh.

## LPP Activities Planned for 2003

**Lobbying and advocacy** for an International Treaty on Animal Genetic Resources will continue.

**Gene flow study** To support our efforts to promote this treaty, we are compiling a report on international flows of livestock and poultry genes.

## Upcoming Activities in South Asia

**Sheep project** LPP will assist Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan in monitoring and evaluation of a three-year project for 'promoting sheep pastoralists'. The project is funded by Misereor.

**Cooperation with SCOPE** LPP has an advisory function on livestock issues for a project by SCOPE, an environmental NGO in Pakistan, to support drought-mitigating land use in the Tharparkar desert.

### **Network for Livestock and Pastoral Development in Western India (NLPD)**

This network of about 30 NGOs is administered by AFPRO and meets every three months to discuss livestock related issues. Ilse Köhler-Rollefson provides guidance and subject matter inputs to AFPRO.

**Putting the indigenous knowledge of livestock keepers on record** This GTZ-funded project, implemented in India by LPPS, entails developing a participatory methodology for documenting breeds and benefits from cooperation with other NGOs, including ANTHRA and SEVA. It represents an important step in our effort to validate the intellectual contribution of pastoralists and other traditional livestock keepers in the creation of breeds.

**World Herders Council Annual Meeting** The WHC held its annual meeting on 24–30 November 2002 in India, where it was co-hosted by the National Dairy Development Board in Anand and Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan in Sadri. Pastoralists from six African countries, as well as Europeans and many Indian herders and livestock keepers attended.

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## **Activities of LPP Members**

**Hedy Bühlmann** organised the World Herders Council meeting (see above).

**Christiane Herweg** On behalf of the German NGO Forum for Environment and Development's Working Group on Desertification and LPP, Christiane Herweg represented the NGO perspective in a panel composed of scientists from academic and industry background (including Aventis) on the subject of 'Is desertification reversible?', organised by the Hessian State Museum in Darmstadt, 23 August, 2002.

**Anita Idel** compiled for the German Church Development Service (EED) a report on animal genetic resources and development. The report has yet not been published, but a summary is available: Idel, Anita und Bernhard Walter. 'Tierartenschutz und Vorteilsausgleich. Zur Bedrohung tiergenetischer Ressourcen in den Entwicklungsländern'. *Entwicklungs-Politik* 17, September 2002, pp. 33–35.

**Ilse Köhler-Rollefson** was invited to attend the Wadi Dana conference 'Mobile Peoples and Conservation' that was held in Jordan on 3–7 April 2002 and resulted in the 'Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation'.

**Evelyn Mathias** represented LPP during the workshop 'Primary Animal Health Care in the 21st Century: Shaping the Rules, Policies And Institutions', held in Mombasa on 15–18 October 2002.

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## **Publications**

**Securing tomorrow's food: Promoting the sustainable use of farm animal breeds. Information for action.** A 90-page dossier providing in depth information and containing selected reprints of relevant papers. This dossier was co-financed by GTZ and Misereor. It was distributed widely and systematically. It can be downloaded from the LPP website, [www.pastoralpeoples.org](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org).

**Securing tomorrow's food: Promoting the sustainable use of farm animal breeds. Issues and options.** A four-page leaflet summarizing the background of farm animal genetic erosion and the action that needs to be taken. Also available at [www.pastoralpeoples.org](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org)

## **Papers at Workshops/Conferences**

**Einsichten in die Tierhaltung und Heilmethoden anderer Kulturen: Was können wir lernen?** Paper presented by Evelyn Mathias at the seminar 'Der Mensch und sein Nutztier im Kulturvergleich', organised by the Evangelisches Bauernwerk in Württemberg in Aulendorf, 10–11 November 2001.

**Tierhalter, lokale Rassen und die Erhaltung der Vielfalt auf dörflicher Ebene** Paper by Evelyn Mathias, Ilse Köhler-Rollefson and Ellen Geerlings,

## **A word of thanks**

The following have kindly supported LPP's work in 2002:

- Misereor
- German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)/German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ)
- European Community, through a grant to the Deutscher Naturschutzring/Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung

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- The Stürz family, Wembach
- Jutta Habedank and Dieter Philberg, Essen
- Beate Seifert
- Bettina Haas

presented by Evelyn Mathias at the seminar 'Agrarwende international: Wo bleiben die Tiere' organised by the Church Development Service (EED) during the 'Grüne Woche' in Berlin, 15 January 2002.

**Why we need livestock keepers rights to save biodiversity** Policy paper prepared for the 'World Food Summit: 5 Years Later' at the FAO in Rome on 8–13 June 2002.

**Significance of pastoral cultures for the sustainable management of livestock biodiversity: A case study of the Raika of Rajasthan (India)** Paper presented by Ilse Köhler-Rollefson at the GTZ/BMZ Workshop 'Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity', held in Vilm, 7–11 July 2002.

**The need for an International Treaty on AnGR** Paper presented by Hanwant Singh and Ilse Köhler-Rollefson at the 'Workshop of the European National Coordinators for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources', Cairo, 30–31 August 2002.

**Schutz tiergenetischer Ressourcen zur ländlichen Existenzsicherung von Hirten und kleinbäuerlichen Tierhaltern.** Presentation by Ilse Köhler-Rollefson and Evelyn Mathias for staff of Misereor, Aachen, 25 September 2002.

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## About the League for Pastoral Peoples

### Mission

LPP provides technical support, advisory services and advocacy for pastoral societies and other small-scale livestock keepers to help them pursue their own vision of development and to stand their ground in the face of unfavourable policy environments and alienation of their pasture grounds. LPP's mission goes beyond people by considering the well-being of human's domesticated animals as a secondary but important focus of its work. It seeks to promote the concept of endogenous livestock development relying on indigenous knowledge and institutions, local animal genetic resources and feed.

### Background

LPP was established in 1992 by a small group of veterinary and other concerned professionals confronted with the crisis situation of camel pastoralists in Rajasthan. Efforts to alleviate their situation set into motion a mutual learning process and a series of measures such as action research, projects related to animal health (including ethnoveterinary approaches) and marketing, as well as training and capacity-building. This has resulted in the establishment of the independent local organization Lohkhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan (LPPS) which now represents a key partner and provides infrastructural support for activities in India.

### Philosophy

Taking our cues from pastoralists we believe in the interconnectedness between the well-being of people and their domesticated animals. By conceptualizing animals as machines, industrialized animal production systems sever one of the few remaining links between humans and the natural world. We regard animals as fellow creatures on this planet and not as subjects. The ultimate goal of our effort is human well-being.

### Registration

The League for Pastoral Peoples was registered as a non-profit society at the Darmstadt County Court (VR 2337) on 15 March 1993.

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Account no. 28004893, Sparkasse Darmstadt, Bank Code 50850150. Donations are tax-deductible.