



# Securing tomorrow's food

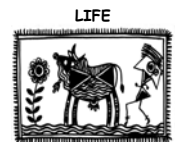
Promoting the  
sustainable use  
of farm animal  
genetic resources



*Information for action*



LEAGUE FOR  
PASTORAL PEOPLES



Local Livestock For  
Empowerment of Rural People



**MISEREOR**

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The League for Pastoral Peoples (LPP) is a non-profit organization devoted to advocacy and technical support to marginal livestock keepers, in particular pastoralists. It was founded in 1992 in Germany. Activities focus on research, training, capacity building and networking in co-operation with partner organizations. LPP promotes the concept of endogenous livestock development utilizing indigenous animal genetic resources and building on local institutions.

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Cover photos

Top: Tzotzil livestock keeper in Chiapas, Mexico (Ellen Geerlings)

Middle: Water transport in Niger (Wolfgang Bayer)

Bottom: Farmer in Maharashtra, India (Ilse Köhler-Rollefson)

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# **Part 1: Putting the conservation and sustainable use of farm animal breeds on the international development agenda**

## **Why this dossier?**

*Farm animal diversity is vanishing at an alarming rate. As industrial livestock production expands, it is relying on fewer and fewer breeds. Already, 15% of the world's livestock and poultry breeds are extinct, and another 35% are endangered. We are coming to depend on a livestock population with a dangerously narrow genetic base: because of their genetic uniformity, huge numbers of animals could be wiped out by a new disease.*

*Locally adapted animal breeds carry genetic material of immense value. These breeds must be conserved. The only realistic way to do so is by maintaining the production systems they are part of – by supporting the small farmers and pastoralists who manage these animals.*

*This dossier is intended for decision-makers and field staff from governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations working on agriculture, livestock production, natural resources management, food security and other aspects of rural development in the South. The goal is to stimulate policy makers, project staff and members of grassroots organisations to support in their policies and actions the sustainable use and community-based management of farm animal breeds.*

The twentieth century has witnessed spectacular advances in many areas, including agriculture and medicine. The consequences have been both positive and negative: extended human life spans, increased food production and other achievements stand against a staggering growth in population, widespread environmental degradation and the fact that about 826 million people, or about 13% of the world's population, still go hungry.<sup>1</sup>

The development of high-performing livestock and poultry breeds has no doubt greatly contributed to the increase of food production, especially in temperate climates. But their indiscriminate export into tropical countries has often ended in failure, as the animals cannot stand the heat, need optimal inputs and readily succumb to disease. To overcome these weaknesses, the ongoing approach is the widespread promotion of crossbreeding high-yielding breeds with hardy and well-adapted local animals. The price of this and other developments is high: local breeds are disappearing at a rate of two breeds a week.<sup>2</sup> This has far-reaching consequences, not only for our generation but also for the generations to come.

Preventing further losses and conserving local breeds is not a romantic or nostalgic adventure; it is a must. The situation is urgent: we risk destroying valuable resources; reducing the world's ability to react to changing nutritional requirements, unforeseen diseases, and natural disasters; and endangering the food security not only of the poor but of us all. The loss of local breeds means a reduction of the part of the world that can be sustainably utilised by humankind.

To be effective, measures to maintain local breeds have to be as broad and diverse as possible and involve stakeholders at all levels: farmers and herders, staff of non-government organizations (NGOs) and extension services, government organizations (GOs), donors and policy makers from all over the world. So far activities have