



International Workshop on the Future of Animal Genetic Resources Under Corporate Control or in the Hands of Farmers and Pastoralists?

Bonn, 16-18 October, 2006

Purpose of the workshop

- Review key concerns that livestock keepers and pastoralists have about rights to their livestock breeds, to the productive resources that they need and to their involvement in relevant decision making;
- Explore how international implementation of Livestock Keepers' and Pastoralists' Rights could be achieved; and
- Plan Civil Society involvement in international processes for developing programmes and legally-binding rights-based regulations for the conservation and sustainable use of Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (AnGRFA)

There is an opportunity for presenting the perspectives of livestock keepers and pastoralists and for pressing for the recognition of Livestock Keepers' Rights to sustain local breeds and have access to grazing, water and other requirements needed to keep the animals *in situ*. At the International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources that will be held in Interlaken, Switzerland, in September 2007, these issues could be raised. It is being organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (see www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/genetics/angrvent2007.html). In preparation for the conference the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources* will be published. 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.

Formal results of this conference will be the Interlaken Declaration and a plan for addressing *Strategic Priorities for Action* for the conservation and sustainable use of livestock genetic resources.

This conference is the equivalent to the 1996 Leipzig Conference on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in which Civil Society was closely involved.

Workshop participants and activities

LPP (www.pastoralpeoples.org) together with the LIFE Network (www.lifeinitiative.org), organized the workshop to initiate coordination of the CSO preparations for Interlaken. 45 participants from 20 countries attended the workshop. They were not only from livestock keeping communities, but also from civil society organisations, FAO, Swiss government, national focal points for AnGR from South and North, research organisations (ILRI, universities from North and South), donor organisations, and breed conservation organizations.

The first day was devoted to presentations and a panel discussion, the second to the planning of the Interlaken preparation process, and the third to field visits. Local media accompanied the field visit, and a press release was issued in English and German on the occasion of World Food Day.

Key issues

The corporate takeover of the livestock sector

Ever since humans started domesticating animals - well over 8,000 years ago - farmers and pastoralists have bred 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’ rights¹

While companies are shoring up control over the livestock sector, small-scale livestock keepers and pastoralists are progressively losing their rights to land, water, markets, their breeds and their right to be included in policy formulation and decision making:

¹ These issues are summarised in the 2003 **Karen Commitment** to Livestock Keepers’ and Pastoralists’ Rights (www.ukabc.org/karencommitment.pdf) and (www.pastoralpeoples.org/docs/karen.pdf) and are reflected in the 2006 **Bellagio Brief** (www.pastoralpeoples.org/bellagio/bellagio_brief.htm);

- Customary **grazing and water rights** of many pastoralists are abolished by the establishment of protected areas, bio-fuel plant cultivation, land-banks, 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. Bio-security 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.

The food sovereignty of livestock keepers, pastoralists and their communities is under threat: fundamental human rights, such as the right to food, are at stake, and the implications for livelihoods and livestock biodiversity are significant.

Workshop outcomes

It was concluded that as livestock keepers, pastoralists and their organisations are the most important actors in the conservation and sustainable use of livestock breeds, they should therefore be key participants in the FAO's Interlaken conference. The organisers will need to find ways of involving of them in planning the event.

It was agreed to work with FAO through the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), if accepted by its General Meeting, so that these vital concerns of livestock keepers and pastoralists, as expressed by their organisations and movements themselves, can be properly addressed at this event, the subsequent meeting of the CBD in Bonn in May 2008 and at several preparatory meetings.²

Two major points of leverage were identified by the participants:

- diversity oriented breeding policies, and
- access to productive resources (e.g. grazing land, water, animal health services, and credit)

As these points are so far hardly reflected in the ITC preparations, they need to be stressed and elaborated on.

² The two key UN meetings are:

1. The International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources – Interlaken, September 2007
2. The 9th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD/COP9) – Bonn, 12-30 May 2008, and three meetings at which preparations will be made are:
 1. The Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (IT WG AnGRFA) – Rome, December 2006
 2. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture – Rome, June 2007
 3. The meeting of the CBD/COP's Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) – Montreal, February 2008

Access to productive resources

Local breeds can't be developed if access to grazing land, water, health services, credit etc is not granted. In fact, transhumance and nomadism have been seriously hampered in many countries for several decades. Although some information on environmental, economic and social benefits of pastoralism is now available (e.g. LPP, WAMIP, WISP, IFAD, FAO), old threats prevail and new ones are developing, especially biofuels. For example, India plans to convert its so-called wastelands, currently used by the poor for fodder and firewood, into biofuel plantations run by large companies.

Equally, development of irrigated cropland –which often turns out to be unsustainable- reduces access to grazing land and water for livestock. The benefits of transhumance and pastoralism for drylands –where breed diversity is highest- are established but this information is not yet mainstream. Breed diversity is fundamental for food security in drylands.

Credits and animal health services need to be oriented towards those who keep local breeds. Advocacy in donor countries and agencies is urgently needed, and favourable international policies are necessary to initiate the required changes in national policies.

Diversity-oriented breeding policies

Very few instruments are available in industrial agriculture to counter the narrowing of genetic diversity within and between breeds, and the build up of unintended and undesirable inbreeding in industrial livestock populations. International breeding companies are the main originators of the diversity loss. Yet, information on genetic diversity in their operations is mostly unavailable. AnGR management approaches collect information from communities and conservation initiatives on rare breeds, but rarely on the breeding stock of large companies. Trade secret legislation often contributes to the lack of information. Artificial insemination facilities focus on industrial breeds and contribute to the genetic loss.

Livestock keeping communities, on the other hand, operate along their own set of rules. Rarely, these rules are written; However, they constitute a breeding institution which has produced breeds that perform under local conditions – where industrial animals would often simply die. These communities and their breeds seldom have received governmental support.

It is the responsibility of national governments to adapt policies in order to efficiently manage breeds. Adequate international regulations should be set to help national governments accomplish this change. National breeding policies should

- Acknowledge local breeding institutions
- Strengthen breeders at local levels
- Strengthen rights of local breeders
- Regulate semen selling as part of breeding policy
- devise breeding policies appropriate for different production systems and regions

Action points

The livestock keeping communities must be represented in the ITC; plan participation with the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), if agreed, to organise a parallel event.

Participants at the Bonn workshop will produce an information dossier containing short briefings on about a dozen key issues, some of which will be ready in time for the December meeting of the ITWG AnGRFA in Rome. Further information on this process will be placed

at www.pastoralpeoples.org. This information is for use at international meetings or processes, for example:

- ITWGANGR Dec 06, with side events
- LEAD Conference, ends Nov 06
- IAASTD ongoing
- World Forum on Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni, Mali, Feb 06
- CGRFA, June or October 07
- UNESCO, UNCCD and others

Videos will also be made available. A media strategy is being developed.

Plans were made to support national and regional activities:

- Develop contacts with national AnGR coordinators/focal points
- Prepare publicity documents and videos in local language on livestock keepers' / pastoralists' rights to access productive resources, to maintain cultural diversity, and including demand for no patents on animal breeds, animal species or animal genes.
- Country reports on the State of the World's AnGR submitted by national Governments to FAO must be shared with livestock keeping communities;
- Their response on the reports must be documented in the national report
- In some countries, information could be compiled into an alternative country paper
- The final documentation must reflect livestock keepers' / pastoralists' needs and demands

The "Interlaken Declaration" should stress the importance and role of pastoralists and livestock keepers in the conservation and sustainable use of AnGRFA and that, in order to do this work, the need to recognise their rights to grazing territory, water, markets, breeds, and traditional knowledge and culture, as well as their right to be consulted in relevant policy decision making.

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