

# Managing Animal Genetic Resources in Africa: Strategies, priorities, livestock keepers' rights, and the way forward

## ***Executive summary of a workshop held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 24–25 May 2007***

About 50 stakeholders in livestock keeping, breeding and management from nine African countries, Europe and India met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to discuss the future of Africa's domestic livestock and poultry breeds and diversity. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the world is losing about one breed every month. So far breed losses have concentrated in developed countries. But the changes triggered by the last century's rapid developments and accelerated by globalisation, trade liberalization and other factors have started reaching into the remotest corners in developing countries. The expansion of high-yielding breeds and industrial livestock production around the globe increasingly threatens the more than 7000 locally adapted breed populations that have been developed by farmers and pastoralists for thousands of years.

To counteract such trends and conserve the world's domestic animal breeds and their diversity, more than 160 countries have over the past years compiled Country Reports, contributing to *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources* report developed under the leadership of FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The report together with national and regional consultations forms the basis for two documents to be adopted in the *First International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources*, to be held in the Swiss city of Interlaken, on 1-7 September 2007: an "Interlaken Declaration", and a "Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources". The Interlaken documents will become the framework and points of reference for all international and national activities in the field of animal genetic resource management in the years to come.

The Addis Workshop gave African stakeholders in animal genetic resources management the opportunity to familiarize themselves about the Interlaken process and discuss and amend the Interlaken Declaration plus the most recent version of the Strategic Priorities for Action. The latter has been prepared by the Friends of the Chair, a regionally balanced working group endorsed during the 4th Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources in Rome in December 2006.<sup>1</sup>

The spectrum of Addis workshop organizers (see below) and participants – all stakeholders in animal genetic resources management including nine African National Coordinators on Animal Genetic Resources or their representatives, plus members of government, non-government, community-based and national and international research and development organizations and institutions – is indicative for the wide range of actors and institutions that need to collaborate if measures to halt breed loss to be effective. Especially livestock keepers need to get more closely involved in future conservation efforts. Their key role in the development and maintenance of animal genetic resources has been overlooked for a long time. But it is increasingly recognised that without their genuine involvement and recognition of their needs, rights and responsibilities, many valuable breeds and their genes will be lost, especially in marginal areas.

Based on the workshop discussions and their experience in livestock and genetic resources management, the Addis participants issued the following résumé, stating the way forward.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

### Recognising

- the interdependence of countries on issues related to the management of animal genetic resources,
- the need to ensure access and sharing of benefits arising from these resources,

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<sup>1</sup> These and other key documents can be downloaded from <http://www.fao.org/ag/cgrfa/cgrfa11.htm>

- the significance of animal genetic resources for livelihoods, cultural practices, and sustainable management of the environment,
- the establishment of national focal points and the establishment of national legal frameworks,
- the progress made in the State of the World process,
- the increased collaboration between all stakeholders,

We recommend the following

1. Livestock Keepers' Rights that have been discussed since 2003 now have to be adopted into the official agenda of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
2. Implications of patenting and other forms of intellectual property rights on the sustainable management of animal genetic resources need to be investigated.
3. The Global Plan of Action will be recognized and is in accordance with the Convention on Biodiversity and caters for the specific needs and distinctive features of animal genetic resources. It may be necessary to develop a specific sui generis legal framework that is tailored to the special needs of animal genetic resources.
4. The Interlaken Declaration is a starting point to implement the Global Plan of Action. It is a springboard for discussions on the need for and mechanisms of a global and legally binding instrument for the sustainable use of animal genetic resources.
5. The Friends of the Chair (FoC) document is a good step towards reaching consensus on unresolved issues. However, the comments made during this workshop need to be considered. Furthermore, the Strategic Priorities for Action (SPA) need to be separated into international and national-level SPAs.
6. Financing is critical for the success of the above and the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Therefore a financing mechanism needs to be discussed during the meeting of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture at Interlaken.

## WORKSHOP ORGANIZERS



*Ethiopian Society of  
Animal Production*



*League for Pastoral Peoples  
and Endogenous Livestock  
Development*



*LIFE (Local Livestock  
For Empowerment)  
Network*



*Institute of  
Biodiversity  
Conservation*



*International Endogenous  
Livestock Development  
Network*



*Pastoral Forum Ethiopia*

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