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### “Organic” livestock production: An option for Raika pastoralists ?

*by Ilse Köhler-Rollefson*

Young Raika are abandoning the pastoral way of life in droves, and, in all fairness, it is not globalization or the “Livestock Revolution”, the competition from industrial producers that can be blamed. Instead, a bundle of domestic policy and internal factors combine to make pastoralism a uniquely unattractive career option. For a start, there is the omission of the government and policy makers to acknowledge pastoralism as a land use option much more sustainable than crop cultivation in the drylands of Rajasthan, and to provide adequate support mechanisms and policies. A big factor is the disregard by the other parts of the population: former respect and mutually beneficial interaction have given way to ridicule and contempt and wherever herders and their animals are seen, they are cursed and shooed away. Finally, Raika society is inherently conservative; it is ruled by elders who are sceptical about any changes and do not realize the need for adapting to new circumstances and for adopting new skills. The innate qualities of a livestock-based livelihood also discourage the young generation, such as the need for the hard and unrelenting work that is imposed by herd ownership. Day in, day out, every day of the year the animals have to be taken care of. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that even dedicated and proud camel and sheep breeders no longer see a future for their children in herding animals.

But what are the alternatives?

For a young Raika, the odds are currently stacked very much against finding a dignified occupation which earns a living wage; all too often the move to the city results in a hazardous job, inhumane working and living conditions, in destroyed health (including infection with AIDS), and disillusion. Many of them return to the rural areas, and some of them invoke the traditional reciprocal ties to once again build up a herd composed of animals donated by their relatives.

The conclusion is that, despite all the problems, pastoralism is not dead yet. Certainly, there are limitations. Pastoralism cannot absorb all or even the majority of the members of the new generation – exit strategies have to be created. But, if it enabled a life in dignity and provided reasonable economic returns, there would be plenty of takers.

Macro-economically, there are important factors in favour of pastoralism: At the demand end, there is an almost bottomless market for livestock products. Furthermore, in Rajasthan, groundwater depletion is increasingly rendering crop cultivation obsolete. Fields that once provided two rich harvests have been lying fallow for the last seven years. The livestock breeds of Rajasthan are famous throughout India, some of them even internationally, so it would be worthwhile for the state to investigate potential for capitalizing on the locally developed “genetics”.

#### **On the LPP website**

The 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).

From the perspective of consumers, there is also much to recommend extensive livestock production, because it generates healthier products than intensive or industrialized systems.

Although, organic agriculture is held to have potential for alleviating poverty in rural areas according to a regional workshop held in Thailand in 2001, there has been little serious thought about organic animal husbandry. The prospects for exporting organic livestock products from lower to higher income countries are regarded as bleak, since developing countries find it difficult to fulfill EU standards for organic livestock production with respect to traceability and animal identification, apart from the stringent sanitary and animal health regulations.

But it would seem likely that in many developing countries marketing opportunities could be forged closer to home by creating better linkages between local producers and consumers rather than producing for export. For example, in the Indian context, *ghee* (clarified butter) ranks almost as a cult object; in peri-urban areas it is often made from milk laced with additives, from urea to drugs used to induce the milk let down reflex. The *ghee* produced by women in the villages without such additives would certainly have a competitive advantage if marketed under a separate label.

## What needs to be done?

The challenge for support organizations such as the League for Pastoral Peoples is to validate pastoralism and the associated knowledge so that Indian policy makers start to accept it as a useful and long-term sustainable land-use strategy and support it through appropriate legal measures.

It is equally important to offer – in cooperation with local partners -- technical and other support to those pastoralists that are open-minded and willing to absorb and adopt new ideas. This would be a change of the previous approach of mobilizing the entire community which has met with varying results.

A third very important avenue is to educate consumers about the advantages of food produced by pastoralists.

For example, take camel milk. Only a few years ago it was deemed as “hazardous to human health” by the High Court in Jodhpur. But now research results indicate it that it has medicinal properties for treating autoimmune diseases, allergies, juvenile diabetes and tuberculosis, besides generally strengthening the immune system.

Ultimately, it is the consumer that rules the world, and pastoralists may be able to carve a niche for themselves. Helping interested members of the young generation move into and grow in such niches might be a more promising approach than approaches that involve the community *per se*, since the available grazing lands allow sustainable livelihoods only for a limited number of families.

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## Karen Commitment Pastoralist/Indigenous Livestock Keepers' Rights

We call on governments and relevant international bodies to commit themselves to the formal recognition of the historical and current contribution of pastoralists and pastoralism to food and livelihood security, environmental services and domestic animal diversity.

We also demand that they recognise the contributions of pastoralists and other livestock keepers, over millennia, to the conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture including associated species and the genes they contain (AnGRFA).

### Background to the Karen Commitment

Leaders of Traditional Livestock and Pastoral Communities, government representatives, Civil Society Organizations with a focus on livestock genetic resources, academics and livestock researchers met in Karen, Kenya from 27 to 30 October, 2003.

They issued the "Karen Commitment" which insists on the negotiation of an internationally binding recognition of Pastoralists/Indigenous Livestock Keepers' Rights, including the right to have breeds recognized as products of their communities.

Furthermore, we insist that there is international legally-binding recognition of inalienable Livestock Keepers' Rights and the Rights of their communities to:

- continue to use their knowledge concerning the conservation and sustainable use of AnGRFA, without fears of its appropriation
- participate democratically in making decisions on matters related to the conservation and sustainable use of AnGRFA
- access, save, use, exchange, sell their AnGRFA, unrestricted by Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and [modification through] genetic engineering technologies that we believe will disrupt the integrity of these genetic resources
- have their breeds recognized as products of their communities and Indigenous Knowledge and therefore remain in the public domain
- benefit equitably from the use of AnGRFA in their own communities and by others.

We call on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) to start negotiating such a legally-binding agreement, without delay, ensuring that it will be in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We further call on the FAO to develop a Global Plan for the conservation and sustainable use of AnGRFA by pastoralists, other livestock keeping communities and relevant public institutions.

Finally, we insist that AnGRFA be excluded from Intellectual Property Rights claims and that there should be a moratorium on the release of genetically-modified livestock until bio-safety is proven, in accordance with the Precautionary Principle. We call on relevant institutions concerned with food, agriculture, trade, intellectual property and animal research to provide assurances and such legal protection as is necessary to sustain the free flow and integrity of AnGRFA, vital to global food security and the environment.

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## **International Lobbying and Advocacy**

At the international level, LPP continued to advocate for the stronger integration of pastoralists and smallholders into the efforts for conserving indigenous breeds and for 'Livestock Keepers' Rights'.

### **Mobile Indigenous Peoples Workshop**

Durban, South Africa, 6-13 September 2003

The workshop was a satellite event to the World Parks Congress, a conference of nature conservation organizations that takes place every 10 years. The objective was to work out positions on the role of mobile peoples in biodiversity conservation in order to propose these to the World Parks Congress. Workshop participants – mostly nomadic peoples – pointed out that they contributed to biodiversity conservation rather than being the enemies of nature. During the workshop, Ilse Köhler-Rollefson and two representatives of Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan (LPPS) repeatedly pointed out that nomadic peoples also play a key role in the conservation of domestic animal diversity, which only few participants had realized before.

### **International Meeting of Indigenous Livestock Breeders**

Karen (Kenya), 27-30 October, 2003

LPP and the Intermediate Technology Development Group-East Africa organised this workshop to give representatives of livestock breeding com-

munities the opportunity to inform themselves on issues about the animal breed conservation and voice their own views and recommendations. About 40 leaders of pastoral communities from across Africa, India and Mongolia and some 20 participants from non-government, government and research institutions came together and discussed the implications of emerging trends in livestock development and research, such as the Livestock Revolution, globalization and advances in genetic engineering. In their recommendations – addressed to a variety of actors – they emphasize the importance of indigenous knowledge (IK) for the conservation of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture and the need for integrating an IK dimension into existing documentation efforts. Furthermore they issued the Karen Commitment (see above) which insists on the negotiation of an internationally binding recognition of Pastoralists/Indigenous Livestock Keepers' Rights, including the right to have breeds recognized as products of their communities. Proceedings (see below) and a video of the workshop are available.

## 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)

Montreal, Canada, 10-14 November 2003

SBSTTA provides advice and technical guidance to the Conference of the Parties (COP) which is the governing body of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) negotiating details for the implementation of the CBD. LPP helped secure funding for Ms. Isabella Masinde of ITDG-EA so that she could participate and raise there the issue of livestock keepers' rights by reporting on the workshop and distributing the KAREN Commitment. The latter also appeared in *ECO*, a Newsletter of non-government organizations (NGOs) produced during the international environmental conventions (see Vol. 9(3):4, 2003 at [http://www.ukabc.org/eco\\_sbstta9-3.pdf](http://www.ukabc.org/eco_sbstta9-3.pdf)).

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## Projects and Workshops in South Asia

In South Asia, our activities continue to be undertaken in close cooperation with Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan (LPPS) and other partner organizations.

### Workshop on Livestock and Pastoralists Development

Jaipur, Rajasthan, 30 September -1 October 2003

This was a state-level workshop organized by the Indian NGO AFPRO in the context of the "Network on Livestock and Pastoral Development" (NLPD), with the goal of sharing the results of a study on cross-breeding and poverty-alleviation carried out by AFPRO and network partners with government officials. Ilse Köhler-Rollefson who acted as advisor to NLPD gave two overview presentations, one on the history of NLPD and another on the indigenous livestock breeds of Rajasthan.

### Farm Animal Genetic Resources From the Perspective of Rural Communities -- Asia Level Workshop

Sadri, India, 12-16 October 2003

For two years, LPPS and other NGOs in India, including ANTHRA and SEVA, had developed and field-tested a participatory methodology for documenting breeds. Hosted by LPPS and co-organized with the LIFE-Network and Raika Pastoralist Community with the support of the GTZ Project on Agrobiodiversity, the workshop concluded this project. It provided stakeholders from the GO and NGO sector with background information and practical exposure to participatory and community-based approaches

## LPP Activities Planned for 2004

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

With funds from Misereor, LPP's **LIFE Project** has been extended for two years. It will focus on conceptualizing a framework for socially and ecologically sustainable animal husbandry integrating the needs of livestock-keeping communities and spread the idea through training, networking and advocacy. Evelyn Mathias coordinates the networking and Ilse Köhler-Rollefson the training and advisory services.

## Upcoming Activities in South Asia

LPP will continue to assist the **sheep project** of its partner organization LPPS in India.

**The cooperation with SCOPE** in Pakistan shall be expanded. A proposal to Misereor is in the pipeline.

LPPS has decided to make **2004 the "Year of the Camel"** by undertaking various activities targeted at raising public and government awareness about the decline of the camel population and the loss of the underlying culture. Besides the camel survey and the camel competition, other activities planned include research of the secondary industries relying on camel products (such as camel bone), holding of an international conference and a camel yatra.

to the conservation of animal genetic resources. Participants discussed their experience with the methodology and presented sample case studies on selected breeds based on field work (see *Publications* below). Goal is to achieve a wider application of such approaches and to highlight the potential, significance and possible avenues of integrating indigenous knowledge into conservation efforts.

Ilse Köhler-Rollefson participated as advisor and resource person. Juliane Bräunig and Christiane Herweg assisted with the organization of the workshop.

## Sheep project in Sadri, Rajasthan, India

LPP provided research support for the "sheep project" of LPPS by seconding Ellen Geerlings for a six-month period in the first half of 2003. Ellen supervised the collection of base-line data on economic returns from sheep breeding as well as (ethno-)veterinary and breeding practices. Many Raika have meanwhile recognized the importance of vaccinating their animals against Foot and Mouth disease as well as enterotoxemia, and LPPS has fulfilled many requests for training as well as vaccinations.

## Cooperation with SCOPE, Pakistan

Christiane Herweg provided advice to SCOPE, an environmental NGO, with respect to managing and combating an anthrax-outbreak in their project area in the Tharparkar Desert.

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## LPP participation in networks and working groups

- European NGO Network on Genetic Engineering (Genet) (Anita Idel)
- German NGO Forum for Environment and Development's Working Group on Desertification (Christiane Herweg)
- German NGO Forum for Environment and Development's Working Group on Agriculture and Environment (Susanne Gura and Evelyn Mathias)
- LIFE (Local Livestock for Empowerment) Network (Ilse Köhler-Rollefson, Evelyn Mathias)
- NLPD (Network on Livestock and Pastoral Development in Western India) (Ilse Köhler-Rollefson)
- WAMIP (World Association of Mobile Indigenous Peoples) (Ilse Köhler-Rollefson)
- Working Group on Food Security of the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Susanne Gura and Evelyn Mathias).

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## Activities of LPP members

**Hedy Bühlmann** participated in the International Meeting of Indigenous Livestock Breeders held in Karen, Kenya on 27-30 Oct 2003 (see above).

In July-August 2003, **Ellen Geerlings** conducted a series of workshops for Misereor partner organizations in Bangladesh on sustainable livestock management. She helped to set up systems for baseline data collection using participatory research techniques and develop strategies for sustainable livestock management.

## A word of thanks

The following have kindly supported LPP's work in 2003:

- Misereor
- Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED)
- German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)/German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ)
- Deutscher Naturschutzring/ Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung

The following individuals have provided generous donations and in-kind support to LPP:

- Bettina Haas
- Günther Bock
- The Stürz family, Wembach
- Dr. Ilse Köhler-Rollefson.

We would also like to thank

- Andrea Buchelt for her enthusiastic support to our public relations effort in Germany.
- Dr. Anita Idel for making possible LPP's membership in GENET.
- Dr. Paul Mundy for taking care of the LPP Website.
- Dr. Vera Renninghoff for her hands-on support in safeguarding the material collection from Giessen for LPP.

**Susanne Gura** and **Evelyn Mathias** participated in the conference *Wessen Eigentum? Patentierung von pflanzengenetischen Ressourcen: Motor für den Norden – Bremse für den Süden?* in Iserlohn, Germany, on 7-9 July, 2003.

In Sept 2003, **Susanne Gura** who supported and conducted LPP lobbying and advocacy work became the Project Development Manager of International Federation of Organic Movement (IFOAM). LPP was very sorry to see her leaving and wishes her all the best for her new job!

In 2003 **Anita Idel** founded the *Projektkoordination Tiergesundheit & Agrobiodiversität* and was involved in several projects focusing on agrobiodiversity and ecological animal husbandry. Together with **Maite Mathes** she has been implementing a research project on *Developing agrobiodiversity – what promotes, what hinders it?*

On 22-28 February 2003 **Ilse Köhler-Rollefson** together with former LIFE coordinator W.M.K. Warsi held a workshop for Misereor partners in Bangladesh. The workshop focused on sustainable livestock development and was attended by about 15 NGOs.

On 21-22 June 2003 **Ilse Köhler-Rollefson** and **Evelyn Mathias** met in Ober-Ramstadt with Katrien van't Hooft (Compas Project of ETC in the Netherlands), Wolfgang Bayer (AGRECOL) and Javier Delgado (University of Hohenheim) for an informal information exchange on endogenous livestock development.

On 19 December 2003, **Ilse Köhler-Rollefson** was the guest interviewee of *HörenSagen: Im Gespräch*, a one-hour radio broadcast of DeutschlandRadio in Berlin.

**Evelyn Mathias** continued to moderate the Ethnoveterinary Mailing List. She also participated as an advisor in a project to produce an information kit on *Alternative animal health care in British Columbia*. The project included a one-week workshop in Victoria, Canada, in October 2003. The resulting book is scheduled to come out in 2004.

On June 12, 2003 **Renate Strohm** conducted a one-day meeting in Zempow, Germany to discuss the possibilities of establishing there a project on *interkulturelle Wiederkäuer*. League members **Juliane Bräunig**, **Anita Idel** and **Evelyn Mathias** participated.

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## Publications

This section includes outputs of LPP projects as well as documents by LPP members relevant to the objectives and focus of LPP.

Augsten, Frank, Anita Idel und Maite Mathes. 2003. Nachholbedarf ökologische Tierzucht – auch eine Geschlechterfrage. In: *Landwirtschaft 2003. Der Kritische Agrarbericht*. Agrarbündnis, AbL-Bauernblatt Verlag, Hamm, Germany. ISBN 3-930413-22-1. Pp. 234-237.

Gura, Susanne und LPP. Losing livestock, losing livelihoods” *The Seedling*, GRAIN, January 2003:8-12 (see also <http://www.grain.org>).

Idel, Anita. 2003. Die Tiere sollen sich bei uns wohlfühlen. In: *Ökologie und Landbau* 128:11-13. Stiftung Ökologie und Landbau (SÖL), Bad Dürkheim, Germany. Pp. 11-13.

Idel, Anita. 2003. Tierzucht in der Sackgasse. *Wenn die Saat aufgeht. Slow Food Magazin* 10(1):18-21. Slow-Food Deutschland, Münster, Germany.

Idel, Anita. 2003. Enttäuschte Hoffnung – erhoffte Täuschung. Die Versprechungen der Industrie und was aus ihnen geworden ist. In: Manual Schneider, ed., *Genopoly. Das Wagnis Grüne Gentechnik. Politische Ökologie* 81-82:49-53. ÖKOM-Verlag, München, Germany. ISBN 3-936581-05-3.

## Ethnoveterinary Mailing List

The list focuses on local knowledge of animal healthcare and production. If you are interested in subscribing, send a blank message to:

[join-EVM@lyris.nuffic.nl](mailto:join-EVM@lyris.nuffic.nl)

or contact Evelyn Mathias at:

[evelyn@mamud.com](mailto:evelyn@mamud.com).

- Idel, Anita. 2002: Animal genetic resources an biopiracy – an impulse paper about the problems of Gene Technology and Patents of life. In: *Local livestock breeds for sustainable rural livelihoods: Towards community-based approaches for animal genetic resource conservation*. Proceedings of a conference/workshop held on 1-4 November, 2000 in Udaipur & Sadri, Rajasthan, India. Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan, Sadri, India. Pp. 151-161.
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- Mathias, Evelyn and Constance M. McCorkle. In press (2004). Traditional livestock healers. *Rev. sci. tech. Off. int. Epiz.* 23(1).

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- Geerlings, Ellen. 2003. *Documentation of local livestock breeds. Guideline: Reporting on local livestock breeds for Misereor partners in Bangladesh*. Unpublished report. Misereor, Aachen, Germany.
- Ghotge, Nitya, Nana Marne and Dileep Halse. 2003. Participatory tools to document local breed: The Dangi, a cattle breed of Western Maharashtra, India. Paper presented to the *Farm Animal Genetic Resources From the Perspective of Rural Communities Asia Level Workshop*, Sadri, India, 12-16 October 2003.
- Köhler-Rollefson, Ilse. 2003. Indigenous knowledge about animal breeding. Paper presented to *International Meeting of Indigenous Livestock Breeders* held in Karen, Kenya, 27-30 October, 2003.
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- Köhler-Rollefson, Ilse and Hanwant Singh. 2003. Pastoralists, protected areas and biodiversity conservation in Western India: a case study

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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 Lokhit 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.

### LPP Board Members

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LPP's most active members include:

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### Bank Account

Account no. 28004893, Sparkasse Darmstadt, Bank Code 508 501 50. Donations are tax-deductible.