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The Influence of Globalisation on Livestock Biodiversity and Farmer Livelihoods: Implications for Future Policy and Research

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Abstract

Improving the livelihoods of poor livestock-keepers is a key means of reducing poverty and food insecurity. Attaining such livelihood improvements requires the conservation and sustainable use of livestock diversity, as animals of different characteristics, and hence outputs, suit differing local community needs, markets and agroecosystems. In the context of approximately 30% of the world's farm animal genetic resources (FAnGR) being at some degree of risk of extinction, there has been a steadily growing debate on the need for a legal framework and other options to deal with access, exchange and conservation of FAnGR. Exploring such options through an analysis of the current situation and a range of future projections to 2050, reveals that the livestock sector has been and will continue to be influenced by, among other factors, the process of globalisation. The three main drivers behind such globalisation trends are related to a continuation of the “livestock revolution”, human population growth, urbanisation and increasing affluence in the South. They include: (1) a rapid worldwide increase in consumption and production of livestock products, with a major increase in the share of developing countries in total consumption and production, (2) a continuation of on-going changes in the status of livestock production from a multipurpose activity with mostly non-tradable output, to food and feed production in the context of globally and/or regionally integrated markets, (3) an emergence of rapid technological change in livestock production and processing in industrial systems. With particular regard to the impact of globalisation on FAnGR and poor farmer livelihoods, the full paper discusses these drivers in greater detail, together with the need for policy and research to support smallholders. The need for such work to include the development of national policies or international instruments which could facilitate or regulate international exchange while helping to avoid negative impacts is also explored.

Keywords: Farm animal genetic resources, globalisation, livelihoods, smallholders