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The Case for the Conservation of Sudanese Kenana and Butana Cattle Breeds

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Abstract

Kenana and Butana in Sudan are characterised to have the best milk potential among local breeds in the country. Under improved feeding and management Kenana and Butana yield on average 1500 kg milk and up to 4500 kg per lactation. Unfortunately, their numbers are very small compared to other less productive types of cattle. These two breeds are now subjected to fast genetic dilution due to different factors.

Their crossbreeding with Friesian is gaining ground very quickly. Many farmers have realised that crossbreeding Friesians with Butana or Kenana give better milk yield than crossing with other local breeds. Therefore, the demand for Butana and Kenana to produce crossbreed for improved system is very high.

Drought, famine and most recently civil war in Western Sudan have led to the displacement of millions of mostly nomadic people. Displaced people who have managed to keep some of their animals (generally Baggara cattle which are poor milkers) during the droughts have done so because they moved early on to riverian areas, the homeland of the Kenana and Butana cattle. Now, crossbreeding is happening between Baggara and the better breeds of Kenana and Butana cattle.

This has led to widespread concern over the fate of Butana and Kenana types and to efforts for conservation of these strains for both present and future use. Conservation methods (e.g. in-situ and ex-situ) are discussed and the possibilities for in-situ conservation (on farm conservation) based on establishing sustainable improvement breeding programme involving the cattle owners breeding goals and practices are addressed.

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