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Redefining frameworks for animal welfare, ethics, and trade-offs in non-conventional livestock species production: The case of Cameroon

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Abstract

Non-conventional livestock species including Giant African Land snails, Cavies, Grasscutters, and Guinea fowls contribute to a steadily rising percentage of West-Central Africa's population's diet. Despite their importance, their consumption is not uncritical from a sustainability and ethics perspective. Scanty empirical evidence exists regarding trade-offs in their value-chain, risks like zoonosis in their consumption as well as animal welfare issues. Poor understanding of animal husbandry practices for these species further raises concerns about animal welfare and ethics. Given these knowledge and discourse gaps, a multi-stakeholder symposium was held at the University of Dschang, Cameroon which connected leading experts on non-conventional livestock species. The aim was to create a forum for stakeholders to exchange knowledge and discuss research gaps in relation to developing a framework for sustainable production of non-conventional livestock species. A World Café approach was used to facilitate these discussions with 35 multidisciplinary participants from academia, policy makers, farmers and students. Insights on the contribution of the non-conventional livestock species to biodiversity and sustainable conflict-resilient food systems were discussed. For example, the Giant African Land snail are mostly obtained from the wild with implications for upholding the integrity of future wild populations. A three-pronged approach was proposed. Firstly, the need to understand local contexts to support and/or establish compatible and workable principles of animal welfare and ethics (local - micro). Secondly, the need for implementation, enforcement and revision of already existing policies and institutions guiding the production of non-conventional livestock species (national – macro). Thirdly, promoting the role of academia to address research gaps and strengthen collaboration with extension (and other) agencies to disseminate knowledge and minimise the gap between researchers and farmers (intermediary – data). The outcomes described in this study begin to highlight the importance of creating an enabling framework which minimises the trade-offs and risks of disease infection; promotes better animal welfare practices for improved quality of products and responds to the needs for

non-conventional livestock species (to be renamed) without undermining ethical principles that support sustainable development.

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