



## Joint AU-IBAR and FAO, with other Partner Commitment to LIDESA: Highlights from the Ministerial Session of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Africa Regional Conference



The 33<sup>rd</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Africa, chaired by Aziz Akhannouch, Head of Government of Morocco, was held in Rabat, Morocco from 18-20 April 2024. Themed “Resilient agri-food systems and inclusive rural transformation,” the conference focused on practical solutions for food security and agricultural production over three days. Participants set priorities with FAO for the next two years to achieve sustainable change in agri-food systems, fostering discussions, partnerships, and best practice sharing. During the Ministerial session on 19th April 2024, under the guidance

of H.E. Mohamed Sadiki, Moroccan Minister of Agriculture, participants addressed pressing challenges and opportunities in Africa’s agricultural sector. High-level discussions emphasized collaboration, investment, and innovation for sustainable development, with notable partnership between AU-IBAR and FAO highlighted. The conference showcased a collective commitment to fostering resilience and sustainability in Africa’s agricultural future, emphasizing collaborative efforts to address challenges and unlock economic growth and food security potential.

## Spotlight on Livestock Development



The last agenda of the Ministerial Session, dedicated to livestock development and sustainable agriculture, was a crucial component in addressing the multifaceted challenges and opportunities within Africa's agricultural landscape. Led by Dr. Chu Dong-Yu, Director General of the FAO, and moderated by FAO Deputy Director General, Maria Semedo, this session delved deeply into the pivotal role that livestock plays in Africa's socio-economic fabric and the imperative need for sustainable development in this sector. Dr. Chu Dong-Yu emphasized the significance of

livestock transformation in Africa, echoing FAO's unwavering commitment to this agenda through a series of global conferences and events. He articulated key focus areas essential for sustainable livestock development, including the attraction of investment, bolstering animal health, increasing productivity, fostering innovation, and enhancing market access. His remarks set the tone for a comprehensive exploration of strategies to propel Africa's livestock sector towards sustainability and resilience.

## AU-IBAR's Initiative: LIDESA Implementation

Her Excellency Ambassador Josefa Sacko, African Union Commissioner for Agricultural, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, delivered an address underscoring the indispensable role of livestock in Africa's socio-economic landscape. With a substantial portion of the population dependent on livestock for livelihoods and food security, Ambassador Sacko articulated the pressing need to address challenges facing the sector. She highlighted the significant hurdles in meeting the continent's burgeoning demand for livestock products and advocated for the full implementation of the Livestock Development Strategy for Africa (LIDESA). In particular, she stressed efforts to eradicate the Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) disease by 2030 as a critical step towards enhancing livestock health and productivity.



Dr. Huyam Salih, Director of AU – IBAR, provided a comprehensive overview of the progress and challenges encountered in the implementation of LIDESA since its inception in 2015. Dr. Salih highlighted the strides made in certain areas while identifying gaps in integration with national and regional plans, coordination mechanisms, and budget allocations. She underscored the urgent need for greater synergy among stakeholders, improved monitoring and evaluation frameworks,

and the alignment of national policies with the overarching objectives of LIDESA. During Dr. Huyam Salih's presentation, she highlighted the ongoing collaborative efforts between AU – IBAR and FAO in conducting a comprehensive stocktaking initiative for LiDeSA. This initiative aims to assess the current state of LiDeSA implementation and accelerate progress through impactful approaches and activities. Informed by robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms, this endeavor seeks to address existing implementation gaps and challenges comprehensively. Dr. Salih emphasized that the main expected results of this stocktaking initiative include the production of a detailed report on the implementation of LiDeSA in Africa. This report will highlight achievements and areas needing improvement, providing valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders. Additionally, the initiative aims to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for LiDeSA implementation. This framework will outline reporting mechanisms and facilitate the comprehensive inclusion of results from key livestock stakeholders and actors across the region, ensuring transparency and accountability in the pursuit of Livestock Sector development goals. Key initial findings from the stocktaking exercise were also shared, revealing significant challenges that need to be addressed. These challenges include:

1. Lack of policy coordination among stakeholders.
2. Absence of policies for funds allocation and resource mobilization for livestock.
3. Limited budget allocations for vital implementation strategies in animal health and production.
4. Weak monitoring and evaluation systems.
5. Missing livestock census and traceability mechanisms. Dr. Salih emphasized the importance of addressing these challenges to ensure the successful implementation of



LiDeSA and to unlock the full potential of Africa's livestock sector. By identifying and tackling these issues head-on, AU – IBAR and FAO are working together to pave the way for a more sustainable and prosperous future for Africa's livestock-dependent communities.

Following Dr. Salih's presentation, FAO Deputy Director General, Ms. Maria Semedo provided guiding questions to steer the conversation during the roundtable for Ministers and their representatives. These questions focused on their experiences, achievements, challenges, and

expectations related to implementing the Livestock Development Strategy for Africa. Participants were encouraged to share their country's perspective and expectations for support from FAO and other partners. Moreover, the discussion explored the linkages and synergies between the FAO Sustainable Livestock Transformation Initiative and the Africa Livestock Development Strategy. Furthermore, participants were invited to propose actions aimed at accelerating efforts towards eradicating PPR by 2030, aligning with the Commissioner's dedication to this goal.



## Ministerial RoundTable: Insights from African Nations

Subsequently, representatives from various African countries shared insights into their unique challenges, strategies, and initiatives aimed at enhancing the performance of the livestock industry. These presentations provided a nuanced understanding of the diverse contexts within which livestock development occurs across the continent. For instance, countries like Eritrea showcased innovative approaches integrating soil and water

conservation practices with livestock development programs. This holistic approach aimed not only to boost agricultural productivity but also to ensure the sustainability of natural resources, with particular emphasis on empowering women and youth through initiatives such as the Mixed Agriculture Package (MAP) program. Conversely, nations like Eswatini outlined strategies to address challenges in their cattle population

through measures such as cattle imports and economic transformation programs. By increasing the cattle population, Eswatini aimed to enhance beef and dairy production, thereby fortifying food sovereignty and economic stability, while transitioning from dryland to irrigated farming to adapt to climate change challenges. Ethiopia, in turn, underscored the centrality of livestock in its national economic plan, exemplified by initiatives like the “Yelamat” program. This program focuses on leveraging private investment, improving services, and healthcare systems within the livestock sector. Embracing contemporary livestock farming innovations, including digital technologies, Ethiopia aimed to enhance productivity and quality standards while prioritizing animal health programs and collaboration with organizations like FAO. Furthermore, countries like Guinea-Bissau highlighted the untapped potential of their livestock sector and emphasized the need for external support to expand production and improve livelihoods. Mali underscored the urgency of addressing livestock-related challenges, particularly diseases like PPR, by establishing robust monitoring frameworks and mobilizing funds for disease control. Niger showcased its vast livestock resources and outlined initiatives aimed at enhancing productivity and value chain integration through mechanization, genetic improvement, and private sector involvement.

Senegal emphasized the revitalization of the livestock sector to meet domestic needs and promote exports, with a focus on strengthening border controls and promoting animal identification for improved traceability and safety. South Sudan highlighted the significant role of livestock in rural livelihoods and economic growth, underlining the National Livestock Development Strategy’s focus on creating an enabling environment for investment and inclusive growth in the livestock value chain. Sudan emphasized

investments in research, infrastructure, and capacity building to enhance productivity and sustainability, collaborating closely with organizations like FAO.

Tanzania showcased initiatives such as the Livestock Development Master Plan, aimed at improving genetic potential, enhancing animal health services, and promoting value addition in livestock products. Finally, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) acknowledged challenges in the livestock sector, including armed conflict and disease outbreaks, and outlined strategic plans supported by FAO to address these challenges and improve productivity and sustainability.

## Developing Partners: Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Livestock Development

Dr. Thanawat Tiensin, Director General of the Animal Production and Health Division, FAO, reflected on the discussions emphasizing Africa’s livestock sector’s importance and the presentation of Africa’s livestock development strategy as given by the Director of AUIBAR. He highlighted the need to translate strategies into actionable implementations at the country level and stressed the importance of increased investment in the livestock sector. Despite the significant portfolio for livestock mentioned by the World Bank representative, financial support at the country level remains low. Dr. Jensen emphasized the necessity of responsible investment to support sustainable livestock production. He also underscored the importance of strengthening partnerships among various stakeholders to advance the sustainable livestock agenda. Dr. Jensen invited contributions to support Africa’s livestock sector during the upcoming subcommittee session on livestock and the Sustainable Livestock Transformation Initiative discussions. He emphasized the need for increased

investment, promotion of science-based narratives, and holistic collaboration to address livestock sector challenges effectively. Dr Jensen highlighted recent global initiatives on sustainable livestock transformation and encouraged continued discussions on livestock production sustainability. In conclusion, he expressed confidence in collaborative efforts to overcome challenges and build sustainable livestock sectors for future generations.

Dr Samuel J. Vassagayan, Director of Agriculture in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, articulated the Foundation's commitment to promoting equitable access to healthy and productive lives globally. Emphasizing the pivotal role of livestock in driving economic growth and providing nutrient-rich food, Dr. Vassagayan highlighted Africa's untapped potential in meeting the growing demand for animal-sourced foods. He underscored the abundance of resources available in Africa and stressed the importance of collective action to harness these resources effectively. The Foundation's partnership with AU IBAR in the development of LIDESA reflects its commitment to catalyzing progress in livestock development across the continent. Dr. Vassagayan highlighted the Foundation's niche role in providing support and funding to address gaps in livestock development, particularly in areas where others may be hesitant to invest. He emphasized the readiness of Africa for private sector involvement and called upon leaders to create a conducive policy environment to unlock the sector's full potential, fostering sustainable economic growth and addressing food security challenges continent-wide while mitigating emissions from livestock.

Professor Apollinaire Jing Kang, the Director General of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), highlighted the institute's efforts in leveraging livestock to alleviate poverty

in the Global South, particularly through the implementation of LIDESA. ILRI made significant contributions in three key areas: genetic improvement to enhance productivity and resilience to climate change, promotion of animal health including disease detection and eradication, and ensuring proper animal nutrition.

The Global Feed Conference, mentioned by the Director General of FAO, underscored the importance of addressing the shortage of reliable feed for animals in the Global South. ILRI and its partners planned to segment production systems to better address the specific needs of pastoral, mixed crop livestock, and semi-intensive systems, aiming to enhance resilience and health to improve livelihoods.

ILRI's collaborative efforts with partners yielded progress in delivering improved genetics and developing systems for farmers to select productive animals. Additionally, ILRI worked on point-of-cow detection of mastitis and other bacterial infections to aid farmers in early disease prevention decisions. ILRI remained committed to collaborating with governments, universities, and research institutions to ensure that livestock played a crucial role in poverty alleviation. Gratitude was extended to countries fostering conducive environments for collaboration, as ILRI continued to build necessary capacity to meet short, medium, and long-term needs.

Dr. Frank Berthe, Senior Livestock Specialist at the World Bank, outlined the Bank's alignment with the regional livestock strategy, focusing on three main areas: improving animal living environments, addressing climate change impacts on livestock, and enhancing resilience. Additionally, he noted that the Bank has addressed health concerns including nutrition, infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance, and zoonoses. Dr. Berthe emphasized

the importance of equity, particularly for women and young people who make up 70% of the workforce in the livestock sector. Implementing the regional strategy presents challenges, especially considering external pressures such as climate change and conflicts.

He elaborated the World Bank's financial role in supporting countries' long-term agriculture and livestock projects, exemplified by initiatives like the Pastoralism Project in the Sahel. The Bank also collaborates with the private sector through the International Finance Corporation, facilitating partnerships to drive investment. With a significant investment portfolio of nearly \$2 billion, most of which is in the region, the Bank is committed to accelerating progress. Dr. Berthe highlighted the value of technical partnerships and knowledge sharing, emphasizing collaboration with organizations like the FAO to incorporate best practices. In conclusion, he reaffirmed the World Bank's commitment to its partners, the countries in the region, and the African Union, pledging to expedite the implementation of the strategy.

Dr. Tracy McCracken from the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security Center for Resilience in the U.S. of the USAID emphasized the importance of animal source foods in USAID's Feed the Future approach, highlighting their role in promoting biodiversity, sustainable livelihoods, and providing nutritious protein. While acknowledging criticism of livestock systems for their contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, Dr. McCracken stressed that well-managed systems can help address the climate crisis through measures like improved grassland management and waste regulation.

She informed delegates that USAID invests in research and innovation to promote resilient and sustainable livestock systems, focusing on disease

control and improved nutrition. Scaling up research and technologies is crucial for broader impact, particularly for smallholder farmers who face limited private sector investment. Collaboration with the private sector is encouraged to create sustainable foundations and strengthen the resilience of livestock keepers.

With climate change exacerbating challenges, efforts to strengthen the climate resilience of livestock keepers in target countries are vital. Improving access to weather data, disease control measures, and adaptation strategies will help mitigate impacts from floods, droughts, and climate variability.

Investments in livestock systems should be efficient, sustainable, and market-oriented to strengthen livelihoods and nutrition. USAID looks forward to collaborating with development partners across Africa to implement strategies like LideSA and support sustainable development in livestock systems.

## Conclusion: Accelerating Sustainable Livestock Development

Dr. Salih extended gratitude to all Excellencies and partners for their valuable insights. She noted that as Africa's population grows, ensuring food security becomes increasingly crucial. While the livestock sector shows promising growth through partnerships, meaningful progress requires member states to prioritize it in national budgets. She highlighted the necessity of allocating resources and fostering public-private partnerships along livestock value chains identified by AU-IBAR projects are vital for sustained development. By uniting efforts, she highlighted that progress can be accelerated and transformation can be achieved for our continent.



In conclusion, FAO Deputy Director-General Maria Semedo underscored the critical role of livestock in the region for ensuring food security, livelihoods, job creation, and income generation. She highlighted the need to elevate the visibility of livestock in development plans to contribute to sustainable development goals, socio-economic growth, inclusivity, and youth employment. Emphasizing public-private partnerships, she urged for accelerated investment in the sector and highlighted the importance of scientific advancements to improve genetic resilience, feed quality, production systems, and animal health.

Madam Semedo mentioned various funding opportunities such as the Pandemic Fund, the Green Climate Fund, and the World Bank, stressing the need for effective implementation of strategies. She called for enhanced coordination and collaboration at regional and country levels to prioritize the livestock sector in strategic development agendas. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of addressing transboundary animal diseases like PPR and fostering better coordination with relevant institutions. In concluding her remarks, Madam Semedo further expressed gratitude for the collaborative journey with the African Union and reiterated her commitment to continue working for the region's development, expressing heartfelt appreciation for the support received.

The discussions in this session underscored the critical importance of collaboration, investment, and innovation in advancing sustainable livestock development in Africa. By prioritizing the livestock sector in national development agendas and implementing targeted initiatives, African countries aim to enhance food security, reduce poverty, and promote inclusive economic growth. The conference as a whole, served as a robust platform for knowledge exchange, collaboration,

and strategizing aimed at accelerating the transformation of Africa's agri-food systems towards sustainability and resilience in the face of global environmental challenges.

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