



AFRICAN UNION  
**INTERAFRICAN BUREAU  
FOR ANIMAL RESOURCES**



# **PROMOTION OF REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES IN AFRICA**



## KEY MESSAGES

- *Given the public-good of animal genetic resources, policy related issues require regional coordination and partnerships*
- *In Africa, regional cooperation for animal genetic resources development can enhance public-private cooperation and better donor coordination*

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of the sustainable management of AnGR in Africa has been widely accepted, not only because of countries obligations under the Global Plan of Action (GPA), but also to protect valuable native and historic assets. There are existing favorable ecosystems and environments in the different regions in Africa that can effectively carry and support the continent's AnGR, if adequate funding were forthcoming from Member States governments. The regional political engagement to devote at least 10% of budget to the agriculture of which a minimum 30% to be allocated to the livestock, adopted during the Conference of Ministers in charge of livestock in Kigali in 2005, was meant to achieve sustainable progress in the AnGR sectors. There are existing regional integration schemes offering larger export markets. Some countries have ratified international conventions on the transhumance agreements between Sahelian and coastal countries (ECOWAS Treaty). Similar protocols are being developed in Southern and East Africa.

The quest for regional cooperation for the sustainable management of animal genetic resources (AnGR) in Africa partly rests on the belief that some of the challenges to achieving a balanced utilization and preservation of AnGR, and of challenges to keeping a balance in the needs of AnGR, wildlife and humans, with respect to the use of natural resources, such as land, water, rangelands and other communal resources, may be so huge and complex in magnitude that only solutions crafted at regional, eco-regional and international levels may be effective enough to overcome the challenges. Similarly, there may be opportunities that could lead to synergistic use of AnGR at the present time and their preservation for future use, while at the same time promoting the health of their habitats or environments.

The need for regional collaboration in animal genetic resources is an obvious case in point, and a number of regional institutions designed for this purpose already exist. Regionally, African countries are divided by a wide range of institutional, legal, and infrastructural barriers. These are drawn for a number of reasons and include demographic, geographic and security reasons and these do not take into account AnGR management considerations. Usually, AnGR disregard the artificial divisions between countries and extend beyond the range of action of any one state. Under such a scenario, AnGR end up being managed by

different institutions in accordance with different legal rules. Thus, regional cooperation is needed.

At a time when, within the various Africa regions, the States are gradually committing themselves to managing their cross-border AnGR in a concerted manner, it is still valid to ask pertinent questions on various experiences acquired from the past or in the process of being acquired. Questions such as how are cross-border AnGR co-managed, what are the issues of state and non-state actors engaged in these processes, and what lessons can be drawn from the various modes of cooperative management in Africa and what are the challenges, ought to be asked. Some of the underlying issues surrounding the status quo of regional cooperation on the management of AnGR in Africa are discussed below.

## **POLICY RELATED ISSUES**

Among issues raised concerning the regional cooperation for the sustainable management of AnGR in Africa are:

- Whereas some regional livestock legal instruments may be relevant for the current situations, specific policy for the management or conservation of transboundary AnGR in the different regions of Africa do not exist in formats that can be deemed as holistic strategies for “Regional AnGR Management”. Moreover, in order for international treaties and other instruments to play an effective role in the conservation and the management of transboundary species and breeds, compliance by states with their international obligations and related commitments is required. African States seem to neglect these obligations, especially where these might have considerable socioeconomic consequences. Clear guidelines and regulations are prerequisites for orderly management of transboundary AnGR.
- In the absence of an appropriate management structure responsible for coordination, there is a high risk of conflicts over access to and use of the shared AnGR. The absence of coordination structures and mechanisms can lead to a duplication of efforts by the various institutions in the countries. With better planning, the efforts of the different institutions can be put to support others, thereby saving money and time. Lack of coordination may result in conflicting management policies. This could lead to poor management of the AnGR.
- Local transboundary breeds are not well characterized and described, and seldom subject to structured breeding programmes to improve performance. Breeds are sometimes classified differently due to location from country to country. There is some evidence that many countries have expressed the need to better assess, at all levels, the status of breeds of domestic animals and reach global consensus on their status, in order to assist in establishing national, regional conservation priorities. However, not much effort has been directed at this by integrating economic communities (RECs).

- Regional and bilateral agreements governing cross-border transhumance have been agreed upon. Engagements related to the implementation of legislative instruments are partially filled by the States and their implementation remains confronted with structural, material and financial constraints, weak integration of all the parts (NGOs, civil companies), deficit of dialogue between the public and the private sector and the associative world. A key observation made in some regions has been that legislations often do not take into account the practices and customs of natural resource users. This practice risks exacerbating problems of unsuitable or implemented legislation, legal dualism, and lack of respect for judgments or transactions carried out according to the statutory legislation. It also makes the implementation much less likely, and the challenge of raising awareness, and understanding of new legal concepts more acute.
- Farmers' associations and breed societies do not exist in many developing countries, which make the implementation of breeding programmes and training of farmers more challenging. In countries where they exist in reasonable numbers, the changing societal demands regarding economic efficiency, product quality and production systems put pressure on the breeding associations responsible for the breeding programmes in the commercial farming sector. Farmer Organizations range from informal village-level groups to organized groups. The informal village-level groups form the greater proportion. At the regional level, there are mostly multi-purpose groups that have been initiated by government development projects, NGOs for their development interventions, church/faith-based organizations or banks and other financial institutions for purposes of credit disbursement. The members' motivation is usually the expected help coming from the initiators more than on self-help mobilization.
- Climate variability and changes are actually the most important environmental issues of our time. Climate change threatens to hit hard on agriculture and increase the pressure on natural resources. With severe and widespread destructive effects, warming of the planet threatens ecological systems, peoples' livelihoods, and species survival. AnGR production and productivity are the most susceptible sectors to climate change due to changes in hydrological cycle, temperature balance and rainfall patterns, which have a negative impact. It is important to protect the quality of Africa's many shared water resources and to promote fair and sustainable usage of these. It is equally important to prevent overgrazing and farming in ecologically sensitive areas in order to stop desertification.

## LESSONS LEARNT ON DISCONTINUATION OR FAILURES IN CROSSBREEDING PROGRAMMES IN AFRICA

In 2014/2015, AU-IBAR undertook a study among 42 of the AU Member States (MS) on the status and development of their animal genetic resources (AnGR). The Study was part of a broader programme whose goal was to get Member States to be effectively involved

in the sustainable utilization of AnGR, and to carry out their functions in ways that ensure food security and improved livelihoods. As part of the Study, information was sought from MS as to what actions might be taken at the regional levels, and would require regional cooperation by responding to the question below:

### **What action should be taken at regional level to ensure the conservation of AnGR?**

Whereas individual countries reported to have initiated several actions in the domain of AnGR in their respective regions, some of them suggested certain joint-actions that could be undertaken at Regional or sub-region levels. The ideas of trans-frontier conservation of breeds that are considered transboundary came up in a few sub-regional and regional meetings on AnGR. However, it was also argued that different kinds of actions were required in individual countries as all of them were not at the same level in the AnGR development. Some of the priority joint-actions recommended by selected countries by regions of Africa are reported below to illustrate the level of demand for regional actions which by logical extension require regional cooperation.

#### **East Africa**

In East Africa a regional recording system and gene bank is proposed by Kenya as feasible joint actions. Uganda recommends a more practical approach of documenting and disseminating the regional available AnGR for the benefit of the region. Eritrea proposes carrying out an intensive inventory and characterization of all species in the sub-region whereas, Rwanda favors a regional advocacy programme that would call for each country to have conservation programmes and a gene bank to strengthen national conservation facilities, while strengthening a regional conservation facility and promote intellectual property sharing. Sudan advocates for capacity building in construction or rehabilitation of infrastructure for ex-situ and in-situ conservation and regional training of animal breeders.

#### **West Africa**

In West Africa the role of the Sub-Regional Focal Point for the management of AnGR (SRFP) is emphasized. Ghana recommends that the Sub-Regional Focal Point on AnGR be resourced by ECOWAS to support the National Coordinators on AnGR. This includes capacity building programmes, financing of sub-regional projects and stakeholder sensitization programmes on AnGR. Within the frameworks of the regional economic community, the Gambia proposes a harmonization of policies and legal frameworks to ensure diversity and use. Nigeria also emphasizes the roles that the SRFP could play in regional efforts by suggesting that National Strategies and Action Plans when in place be implemented at regional levels by appointing Regional Coordinators. Liberia suggests the organization of Breeder Associations and the establishment of Community Based Breeding programmes with a sub-regional flair.

## **Central Africa**

For Sao Tome e Principe the pertinent regional actions includes the establishment of a regional service with the necessary means to guide and support the countries of the region. The service could identify, and collect all relevant information on genetic performance of livestock in the region. Similarly, DRC proposes AnGR identification through mapping. According to DRC a regional data bank should be aimed at. AnGR trading, among countries, in the region is also suggested by DRC as an area of regional level actions. For transboundary breeds, Gabon proposes a system of AnGR identification and registration.

## **Southern Africa**

In Southern Africa, there is a call to base regional actions on existing regional infrastructure and institutions. Lesotho recommends access to already established gene banks in the region and the harmonization of policies and legislation. Mauritius proposes that regional initiatives be set up to assist countries with respect to selected conservation issues, for example the creation of a regional ex-situ conservation and the mobilization of resources to support conservation programmes. Malawi stresses on the need to promote country level establishment of breeding and conservation policy and strategies and the establishment of AnGR curricula in tertiary agriculture institutions across the region. The promotion of regional level public-private- partnerships (PPP) in AnGR is also proposed. For Namibia the collection of regional level data and the assessment thereof is a starting point for regional actions, whereas for Zambia regional conferences on AnGR should be enhanced and promoted.

## **SETTING THE POLICY AGENDA**

The Agenda setting for policy discussions, formulation and communication of the eventual policies should consider:

### **Create and/or access to funds for technical capacity**

Regional collaboration is essential to halt the current erosion of AnGR. Enhancing awareness of the roles and values of local breeds is essential in order to secure financial resources for their development and conservation. This is a high priority for many countries, particularly among those utilizing similar breeds, or which have similar production conditions, using existing regional structures where they exist. There is a need for regional action to secure and maintain domestic animal diversity given the large number of livestock breeds that are known to be at risk and the large number of breeds for which the status is unknown. Funds generated or accessed should support the training of staff as inadequate capacitated staff represents a major impediment to developing and implementing AnGR policies, strategies, programmes and projects.

### **Enable and empower SRFP**

The establishment of the SRFP, will enhance regional collaboration in the use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources. Currently, the challenge is to make them fully operational and able to assist with coordinating activities and communication among National Coordinators.

### **Improve existing marketing channels**

Organized marketing structures are not always in place, including product processing or value adding outlets for livestock products. Enhanced market infrastructure and more efficient channels would be expected to encourage farmers to invest in livestock development. Many countries within the different regions report an increasingly commercial orientation among livestock keepers, particularly those close to urban centers, in response to an increased demand for animal products. Medium external input production systems have evolved as farmers realize opportunities to move from subsistence production to a more market-oriented production to serve local markets. Poor livestock keepers who are not able to be part of these markets are experiencing negative externalities from it. Off-cuts from the export markets or cheap imports may create competition for small suppliers in domestic markets. Improved access to credit for small-scale producers is a priority for many developing countries, as access to capital is particularly important to assist farmers to move from low external input, subsistence-level farming, to medium external input systems, which can supply animal products primarily to local markets.

### **Promote and support Biopiracy measures**

The international legal and policy framework is an area that has undergone and is still undergoing, very significant changes. Indeed, the number of national instruments implementing ABS under the CBD is still relatively limited. Most African countries have not developed adequate formal ABS systems based on the CBD and the Nagoya Protocol. What currently exist is an ineffective regulatory system, open to abuse, and leakage of AnGR. These must be overcome with Biopiracy measures. Some countries have initiated the development of national policies and legislations to regulate access to genetic resources and the sharing of benefits. Regional cooperation in the implementation of the ABS measures has as well been launched. Whereas countries have expressed the need for assistance, both with regards to advice and capacity building for the implementation of ABS, there is a need for stronger coordination in the development of policies, legislation and regulations among the various ministries, state, regional or and other institutions having responsibility for different aspects of the Nagoya Protocol.

### **Policy options and recommendations**

Proposed policy options and recommendations include the following:

- Governments in partnerships with the RECS should secure adequate funding to

support the enhancement of capacity (human and institutional) in all priority areas of AnGR management, where this is not available within countries. Capacity building to support the development of policy frameworks targeting wide geo-political regions should be considered as a priority.

- Governments should further ensure that there are favorable policy and security environments that favor integrated management plans, involving RECs and their institutions for the management and conservation of shared AnGR.
- Governments and RECs should be engaged in the planning of regional characterization research and analysis to better understand the states, the characteristics and uniqueness of the breeds at regional levels, in order to establish priorities for regional conservation efforts. Transboundary breeds should be the primary focus in the early phases but effort should be extended to other breeds at risk of extinction.
- Governments and RECs should establish emergency plans for breed rescue and rehabilitation through the engagement and involvement of technical experts during regional and interagency planning. These inter agency planning meetings should be adequately resourced to be able establish regional initiatives aimed at the sustainable use and development of AnGR. These high level planning should eventually lead to roadmaps for the development and implementation of regional transboundary breed conservation plans
- RECs should speed up the integration of markets of the constituent countries to enable enhanced trade in AnGR take place in the region, as a prelude to the integration of the regional markets into world markets. The development of regional markets and their further integration into world markets should include considerations for regional-level Biopiracy measures to overcome the abuse and leakage of AnGR from the regions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many persons have contributed to the preparation of this document through their constructive feedback and suggestions. These inputs provided a vital contribution to the planning and completion of this policy brief. AU-IBAR wishes to thank them for their interest and support.

This policy brief was made possible through financial support provided by the European Union (EU) funded Project “**Strengthening the Capacity of African Countries to Conservation and Sustainable Utilisation of African Animal Genetic Resources**”. The contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and under no circumstances should be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

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