Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
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AFRICAN UNION
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POLICY BRIEF



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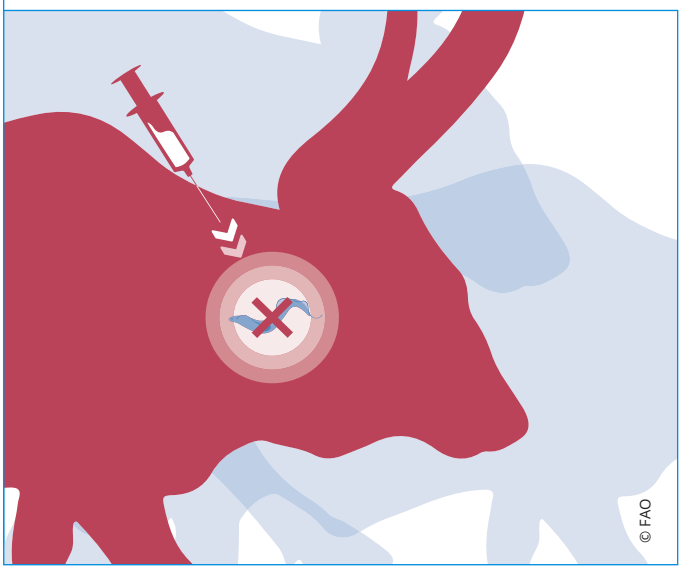
Accelerating access to new veterinary trypanocides for Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

African animal trypanosomosis (AAT) severely impacts livestock productivity, rural livelihoods and food security across sub-Saharan Africa. Current treatment options are outdated, increasingly ineffective and in some cases unsafe. The emergence and spread of drug resistance frequently compounds these problems.[1] Recent international initiatives have revived efforts to develop innovative, modern, efficient and safe products to prevent and treat AAT. This brief advocates for urgent engagement in regulatory support and coordinated stakeholder action to introduce a new generation of safe, effective and sustainable veterinary trypanocides for African livestock systems, and for progress towards the development of vaccines.

THE CHALLENGE

Over 100 million cattle and other livestock species are estimated to be at risk of AAT in sub-Saharan Africa, making it one of the most economically and socially burdensome endemic diseases in the region.[2] AAT is recognized as a critical barrier to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). It also presents a barrier to the achievement of several goals of the African Union's Agenda 2063, especially Goal 1 (A High Standard of Living, Quality of Life and Well Being for All Citizens), Goal 3 (Healthy and well-nourished citizens) and Goal 5 (Modern Agriculture for increased productivity and production).



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Figure 1. Cattle at risk of animal trypanosomosis within the African tsetse belt



Note: The reference year for cattle numbers is 2020.
Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Available treatments rely primarily on two molecules (diminazene aceturate and isometamidium chloride), both in use for over 50 years, while alternatives such as homidium salts are unsafe and potentially carcinogenic. Weak regulation further exacerbates the problem, with counterfeit and non-compliant drugs representing over 50 percent of samples in some markets.[3]

WHY A NEW TRYPANOCIDE IS URGENTLY NEEDED

- **Resistance** to trypanocides has emerged largely due to decades of their widespread, often unregulated use, coupled with limited availability of alternatives and inadequate diagnostic and monitoring systems.
- **A poor safety index** characterizes many currently available veterinary trypanocides, posing risks to humans and animals due to their narrow therapeutic margins and potential toxicity.
- **Falsified trypanocides** contribute to treatment failures, accelerate drug resistance and undermine trust in veterinary health systems, posing a serious threat to livestock productivity and farmer livelihoods.

Safer, more effective molecules are in development but face high barriers to entry without public–private support.

This call is rooted in the progressive control pathway for AAT (PCP-AAT),[4,5] spearheaded by FAO, and co-developed and promoted with a broad range of stakeholders, including the African Union (AU), the Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (CIRAD), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

The PCP-AAT is a stepwise approach now adopted by over a dozen African countries. Within its framework, rational use of drugs is seen as indispensable for sustainable AAT control in stage 2 (integrated management of AAT through community/farmer-based approaches supervised by veterinary services, with a focus on sustainable and economically profitable reduction in AAT burden). The introduction of modern chemotherapy is also considered an enabler for progression towards the elimination stages 3–5.

This effort also aligns with FAO expert recommendations to mobilize funding and technical expertise to develop more effective tools – including the establishment of a sustainable drug development pipeline.[1] It also supports FAO and WOAH advocacy for the establishment and broadening of AAT reference laboratory networks to support disease prevention and control efforts.

Finally, the call also supports the recommendations made at the 36th Conference of the International Scientific Council for Trypanosomiasis Research and Control held in Mombasa, Kenya (18–22 September 2023), convened by the AU InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), which highlighted the slow progress in preventing and controlling AAT and urged faster research and development of new trypanocides.[6]

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To support responsible access to a new veterinary trypanocide, the following actions are recommended:

1. Accelerate regional regulatory harmonization and expert review processes for new veterinary trypanocides.
2. Support public–private partnerships to co-finance development, registration and deployment of new molecules.
3. Invest in stewardship and surveillance mechanisms to ensure rational use and safeguard long-term efficacy, with new product deployment supported by training of animal health professionals, pharmacovigilance systems and farmer education.
4. Ensure responsible and prudent use of new and existing trypanocides following the principles established in WOAH international standards and guidelines.
5. Ensure the coordination of research to maximize return on investment for technology transfer and equitable access to new veterinary trypanocides.
6. Enhance AAT surveillance and reporting in line with WOAH international standards and with the PCP-AAT.
7. Ensure new products are not subject to substandard manufacturing and falsification, and report detection of substandard and falsified trypanocides – both new and existing – to national competent authorities and WOAH.
8. Pursue research on vaccine development to complete the portfolio of control tools alternative to chemicals.

JOINT CALL TO ACTION

We call upon governments, donors, regulatory bodies and veterinary health actors to collaborate in delivering responsible access to a new generation of veterinary trypanocides. Collective, coordinated action is essential to protect livestock health, enhance food security and secure the economic well-being of millions of rural households.

Figure 2. A combination of research and development, commercial development and an enabling environment for bringing new trypanocides to the African market



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

NOTES

1 **FAO.** 2022. *Expert consultation on the sustainable management of parasites in livestock challenged by the global emergence of resistance - Part 2: African animal trypanosomosis and drug resistance – a challenge to progressive, sustainable disease control, 9–10 November 2021*. FAO Animal Production and Health Report No. 18. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc2988en

2 **FAO.** 2026. *Progressive control of African animal trypanosomosis – Tackling neglected tropical diseases through One Health*. Rome. https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd8183en

3 **Bengaly, Z., Vitouley, S.H., Somda, M.B., Zongo, A., Têko-Agbo, A., Cecchi, G., Adam, Y. *et al.*** 2018. Drug quality analysis of isometamidium chloride hydrochloride and diminazene diaceturate used for the treatment of African animal trypanosomosis in West Africa. *BMC Veterinary Research*, 14(1): 361. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-018-1633-7

4 **FAO.** 2025. *The progressive control pathway for African animal trypanosomosis – Operational guidelines.* PAAT Technical and Scientific Series, No. 13. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cd7991en

5 **Diall, O., Cecchi, G., Wanda, G., Argilés-Herrero, R., Vreysen, M.J.B., Cattoli, G., Viljoen, G.J., Mattioli, R. & Bouyer, J.** 2017. Developing a Progressive Control Pathway for African Animal Trypanosomosis. *Trends in Parasitology*, 33(7): 499–509. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pt.2017.02.005

6 **AU-IBAR.** 2023. *Recommendations/Resolutions of the 36th Conference of the International Scientific Council for Trypanosomiasis Research and Control (ISCTRC) held in Mombasa, Kenya on the 18th to 22nd September 2023.* Nairobi. https://www.au-ibar.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/20240203_recommendations_36th_isctrc_conference_final_en.pdf

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