The issue

Demand for livestock products is expected to grow by as much as 50 percent by 2050, driven by Africa and southern Asia. Livestock play a crucial role in the nutrition, food security and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people, particularly family farmers. The nutrients provided by eggs, milk and meat are vital in countries where malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies are rife. Also, the socio-economic role of livestock is strong in many societies, which associate livestock with cultural heritage and customs. Livestock are central to everyday life in many communities and to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, particularly for rural youth and women. Livestock production faces many challenges, however, and has a substantial environmental impact. The emergence and spread of transboundary animal diseases and the misuse of medicines pose major threats to animal, human and environmental health and food safety. The challenges in low-income countries are compounded by competition and limited access to productive inputs and markets, meaning small-scale livestock keepers are not benefiting from fast sectoral growth. Meeting these challenges will require a comprehensive strategy, planning, investment and international cooperation to build capacity and share expertise.

The action

The programme aims to ensure that family-farm livestock production contributes to societal wellbeing in a sustainable way. Countries and international development organizations recognize the importance of family-farmer livestock production. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) complements their actions by supporting national livestock development and providing expertise where weaknesses exist. FAO will:

- help countries to prepare livestock master plans to guide and implement investment and policy, and identify needs for technical assistance;
- provide guidance and technical assistance on good practices in areas such as husbandry, feed and food safety, managing animal genetic resources, feed inventories and animal healthcare;
- help governments to boost the capacity of farmer organizations and cooperatives to facilitate activities such as animal identification and traceability, value-chain development, animal health and breeding programmes and farmer field schools;
- work with countries to gather data and monitor the impacts of interventions on animal productivity, livelihoods and the natural resource base and use this information to further develop and share methodologies, tools, analyses and good practices.

The issue in numbers

- 50% growth in livestock products seen by 2050, driven by Africa and southern Asia
- 34% of global food protein supply comes from livestock
- 600 million poor small farmers earn their livelihoods from livestock
- 5 national livestock master plans for sustainable investment
- 40 community-based animal breeding programmes
- 5 countries with national animal identification and traceability systems and feed action plans

The budget

- USD 50 million
- 5 years
- 10 countries
Expected results

- Sustainable and resilient smallholder livestock production systems are developed by introducing and implementing good practices to improve production efficiency and natural resource management.
- Institutions and stakeholders have greater capacity to formulate and integrate agroecological approaches, mainstream biodiversity and incorporate issues such as climate, animal health and welfare, food and feed safety, and human nutrition into policy, investment and budgeting processes for livestock production.
- There is a stronger evidence base to inform decisions on issues such as the restoration of the natural resources necessary for sustainable livestock production, including animal genetic diversity, feed sources and rangelands.
- Favourable conditions are established for sustainable small-scale livestock production through more cohesive governance, capacity building and the collection, analysis and dissemination of knowledge, data and information.

Geographic focus
Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mongolia, Nepal and Rwanda

In partnership with
Non-state partners and other intergovernmental organizations operating in the livestock sector; national governments, with a focus on agricultural, livestock and environmental ministries; international financial institutions and development organizations, including the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development; research institutions, such as the International Livestock Research Institute and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD); non-governmental organizations, from formal and informal farmer associations to the private sector

Modernization of the dairy sector in Rwanda

FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) joined forces with the Government of Rwanda to improve the dairy sector, the largest segment of the Rwandan livestock sector, accounting for 10.5 percent of the country’s agricultural gross domestic product. IFAD provided USD 50 million to boost the competitiveness and profitability of the dairy sector by increasing the quality of products from small producers for domestic and regional consumers. FAO, through farmer field Schools, supported the Government in strengthening the capacity of dairy-farmer cooperatives to improve climate-smart dairy-farming practices. FAO also assisted the Government in setting up a fully functional livestock identification and traceability system to improve data monitoring and record keeping.

Why invest?

The production and consumption of animal-source foods will rise substantially over the next 30 years, particularly in developing countries. This creates sizeable opportunities for economic development, better nutrition and dietary diversity, especially for infants and children, as well as for greater social inclusion and equity through rural development, job creation and women’s and youth empowerment. Such growth carries risks, however – to biodiversity, the environment, rural communities, family farmers and the animals themselves – all of which are already facing the challenge of climate change. These risks can be mitigated by investing in planning and providing technical support, as well as regular monitoring of the natural resource base essential to sustainable livestock production.

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