



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Animal Production and Health Division

Electronic consultation on

ROLE, IMPACT AND WELFARE OF WORKING (TRANSPORT AND TRACTION) ANIMALS

1-28 February 2011

CALL FOR DOCUMENTS AND INVITATION

Background

Working animals play a fundamental role in livelihoods improvement as they contribute to food security and poverty reduction, income generation and gender equity. Animals assist men and women with crop production (ploughing, planting, weeding, fertilizing) and transport (on-farm, marketing, riding, pack transport). Oxen are the most frequently used work animals in the world but bulls can be used; cows provide resource-efficient work for smallholder farmers; buffaloes work well in Asian rice systems but are not as adaptable as cattle. Horses are fast and good for transport and some tillage where they thrive (mainly temperate and high altitude areas). Donkeys are small but hardy for transport in semi-arid and mountainous areas, but do not thrive in humid tropics. Camels, camelids and other animals have characteristics and specific geographical ranges that limit their widespread use.

Smallholders who use animals for soil tillage can cultivate larger areas more efficiently and quickly than with human labour, thereby greatly increasing their farm yields. Work animals create synergy in nutrient cycles, farming and marketing systems: animals allow farmers and traders to transport manure, harvests and market products. They increase people's transport capacity and range and provide families and entrepreneurs access to supplies, services and livelihoods. Animals provide effective feeder transport to complement motorised vehicles. Work animals are multipurpose, producing profitable livestock products, including meat, milk and manure.

Human, animal and tractor power are not exclusive and each has advantages depending on the environment, scale and socio-economic context. People aspire to prestigious, modern machines but tractors may be unaffordable and inappropriate on small farms or in difficult terrain.

Animal welfare is recognized as being integral to programmes and activities that address working animals and a core component of responsible animal husbandry. The welfare of working animals, besides of being a common good per se, has a direct impact on their health and on their capacity to carry out the required functions. However, despite their acknowledged positive impacts, animal welfare practices are insufficiently applied worldwide. There is also a lack of summarised and documented evidence of impact on which to draw when making the case for animal welfare.

In light of these issues, FAO and the Brooke are organizing an e-consultation that will be followed by a technical meeting to better understand and address the significant role played by working animals, as well as their care and welfare. This will be a stocktaking exercise describing the current status of working animals throughout the world, analyzing the reasons for the successes or failures of policies, programme, projects and activities linked to these animals and their welfare and contributing to point towards a pathway for the future.

Objective

The main objective of this e-consultation is to gather evidence on the role and impact of working animals in livelihoods (food security, poverty alleviation, income generation, access to services, gender equity, etc.) and identify necessary actions to raise their profile in agricultural and rural development programmes, as well as to improve their welfare. We will also collect relevant information, data and ideas to prepare background documents for a technical meeting which will be held by FAO jointly with the Brooke and possibly other organizations in June 2011.

The e-consultation will provide an opportunity for scientists, development workers, governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations, and the international community at large with an interest in working animals and their welfare, to share their knowledge and experiences.

Organization

The consultation will address the following aspects and we will focus on each one for a week:

1. Review the current state of knowledge on the contribution of working animals to livelihoods (food security, poverty alleviation, income generation, access to services, gender equity, etc.) worldwide;
2. Analyze in detail the role and contributions of working animals on one of the components of livelihoods described above, selected on the basis of what emerges during the first week;
3. Identify existing standards and guidelines, case studies and best practices addressing working animals health and welfare; and
4. Propose adequate policies and legislation; recommend any further actions at national and international level.

Participants are encouraged to send any relevant information (papers, publications, data, etc.) to Working-Animals@fao.org . This will ensure a rich and fruitful exchange of reflection, knowledge and ideas before and during the consultation and a continuous contribution of additional relevant information. Documents will be posted on the Gateway to Farm Animal Welfare. Contributors should indicate if they are willing to have the documents posted online with free access to all internet users or if they would prefer sharing them only with other participants to the e-consultation.

Moderated contributions to the e-discussion on the specific weekly themes indicated above will be posted and made accessible on the Gateway to Farm Animal Welfare at www.fao.org/ag/animalwelfare.html. Contributions to the discussion can be provided from 1 February onward in English, French and Spanish (and will be summarized in English). A report recapitulating the contributions on each of the four aspects will be produced and distributed for additional inputs and comments. The final report of the consultation will acknowledge all contributors; it will be published electronically and serve as a background document for the technical meeting in 2011.

To subscribe

If you are interested to participate in this electronic consultation please send a completed subscription form ([click here to download](#)) to Working-Animals@fao.org . Please, feel free to contact us should you need any additional information.

Looking forward to your active participation,

Daniela Battaglia

Livestock Production Officer

Animal Production and Health Division

FAO

Tel.: +39.06.57056773

Fax: +39.06.57055749

daniela.battaglia@fao.org

Joy Pritchard

The Brooke

Tel.: +44.117.331.9076

Fax: +44.20.3012.0156

joy.pritchard@thebrooke.org

Illia Rosenthal

Consultant

Linking and learning in partnership for sustainable development

Animal Production and Health Division

FAO

Tel.: +39 06 570 52196

illia.rosenthal@fao.org