

WFP comments on the HLPE livestock recommendations

The combination of “Operational Priorities for Action” and recommendations, make for an ambitious proposition.

We find some of the arguments not sufficiently convincing – possibly because the report is a summary and so the evidence may not all be cited. For example, improved livelihoods, increased productivity and economic growth are not, in and of themselves, sufficient for achieving food security and nutrition; structural inequalities, that involve unequal power relations, are a key element but not really considered in the report. The claim that the “livestock sector is a powerful engine for the development of agriculture and food systems” is not backed by incontrovertible evidence or questioned in terms of value.

The paper conflates gender with women and incorrectly refers to gender disaggregated data (the correct term being sex-disaggregated). Also, women are not an inherently vulnerable group and they are not just a vulnerable group (which is how the text reads in several places). Women have knowledge, skills, capacities, value etc. Empowering women is not solely about addressing “vulnerability”, but addressing the concentration and abuse of power. If possible, suggest rewording to reflect the issue of abuse of power and structural inequalities, rather than equating women with vulnerability.

Reading the 8-step pathway, it is not clear who participates, who decides and who benefits – what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that the process, priorities and outcomes are grounded in gender equality, social justice and environmental sustainability?

Social justice is preferable to social equity; if the interest is long-term sustainability. Prioritising the needs and interests of “vulnerable populations” is important but so are institutional reforms that redistribute power.

Regarding Recommendation 4:

Gender-transformation is preferable to gender-sensitivity because gender sensitive-policies and interventions see but do not change inequalities; whereas gender-transformative policies and initiatives are about addressing the root causes of inequalities (shifting power relations towards equality).

Suggested re-wording of the actions:

- a) Collect sex-disaggregated data on women’s and men’s and roles in livestock production to understand where gender asymmetries persist in the livestock sector;
- b) Adopt and implement legislation that mandate equal access to, ownership and control of land, and other assets and resources (e.g. livestock), at the community and household levels;
- d) Ensure decent work opportunities for women across the livestock sector;

e) Increase the inclusion of women and men at every stage of the livestock value chain, including by recognising, valuing and redistributing unpaid labour (domestic work and caring responsibilities) and providing necessary physical and social infrastructure;

f) Invest in increasing women's knowledge and skills by providing targeted capacity building opportunities and ensuring access to, and ownership of, existing and new technologies.

The document also refers to “sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition” generically throughout the background and recommendations, which in the case of nutrition, causes it to miss the point. Livestock and consumption of animal source foods (ASF) have a critical role to play in the nutrition of young children and others with nutrient needs, including pregnant and lactating women and those already suffering from undernutrition. Thus, they have a key role to play in prevention of stunting. The background specifically identifies the overconsumption of red and processed meats as a problem leading to overweight and obesity, which is good, but should also specifically identify the positive role ASFs can have for these specific nutritionally vulnerable groups, and particularly fish, poultry, eggs and dairy, and why that is the case (e.g. content and bioavailability of key micronutrients).

Because these linkages between different types of ASFs, different types of malnutrition, and different vulnerable life-cycle groups is never established during the paper, the recommendations also miss out on the opportunity to provide useful policy suggestions on how livestock farming can have a better impact on improving nutrition, in addition to sustainability.