

**Message from Dr. Carlos Seré, Director-General  
International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)  
on the Observance of the World Food Day**

On behalf of the 15 Centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) welcomes this year's World Food Day on 'Bio-Diversity for Food Security'. We take this occasion to applaud the long and outstanding work of the Food and Agriculture Organization to safeguard the livestock genetic resources of the world's developing countries for this and future generations. ILRI collaborates with FAO and other institutions to enhance animal agriculture to reduce poverty, hunger and environmental degradation in developing countries.

Humanity took millennia to create the rich genetic wealth tied up in its domesticated animals. Unique genes allow various farm animals to survive lethal diseases, poor food and little water. The hidden genetic value locked up in the estimated 4,000 often obscure animal breeds round the world is of growing importance in fighting poverty, hunger and disease.

But some 30 per cent of the world's domesticated animals, most of which are found in poor tropical countries and have never been developed, are now threatened with extinction. ILRI is working with FAO and national institutions in developing countries to characterise and save the most important of these tropical livestock genetic resources. This work will ensure that humanity's 12,000 years of animal breeding, which have produced animals exquisitely adapted to harsh environments, will be around to help future generations earn their livelihood, even in the face a warmer and more erratic climate.

Research to save the biological capital of the world's poorest peoples is a win-win for all. Nearly two billion people - a third of the world's population - derive their livelihoods from farm animals. And many tropical breeds have evolved traits, such as an ability to fight highly infectious diseases that can benefit human as well as veterinary health, and thus benefit people directly, everywhere, in unexpected ways and over the long term.