



## COMMUNIQUE

# Strengthening Regional Capacities on the management of Animal Genetic Resources: General Assembly of the Sub-Regional Focal Point (S-RFP) for Southern Africa

23 - 25 October 2014

Faircity Mapungubwe Hotel Apartments - Johannesburg  
SOUTH AFRICA

## INTRODUCTION

1. The African Union - Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) in collaboration with CCARDESA (Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research Development for Southern Africa) organized a workshop from 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> October 2014, focusing on Strengthening Regional Capacities on the management of Animal Genetic Resources: General Assembly of the Sub-Regional Focal Point (S-RFP) for Southern Africa.
2. The workshop was organized under the framework of the implementation of the Project **“Strengthening the Capacity of African Countries to Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of African Animal Genetic Resources”**.
3. The aim of the workshop was to facilitate the convening of a General Assembly (GA) for the substantive establishment of the Sub-Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) in Southern Africa, as a way of enhancing the management of AnGR through better regional coordination and networking. Specifically, the GA was organised to give the region, an opportunity to:
  - Validate the proposed governance structure and Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee for the S-RFP for Southern Africa;
  - Conduct the election of members of the Steering Committee;
  - Propose mechanisms for the sustainability of the S-RFP;
  - Introduce discussions on the adequacy of existing policies and regulatory frameworks on the use of AnGR in Southern Africa;
  - Initiate discussions on the development of national and regional guidelines for the formulation and harmonization of policies for crossbreeding and *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation;
  - Engage in discussions on procedures for the operation of regional gene bank(s);
  - Discuss the preliminary results of the consultancy for the establishment of the African Animal Genetic Resources Information System (AAGRIS).
4. The meeting was attended by representatives (comprised mainly of AnGR National Coordinators) from 13 Southern Africa Member States, Regional Economic Communities (COMESA), Sub-Regional Research Organizations (CCARDESA), International Research Institutions (ILRI), Civil Society and non-state Organizations (SACAU, Heifer International), Universities (Sokoine University of Agriculture), Livestock Registrars (Botswana and South Africa), National Research Centres (South Africa Agricultural Research Council - Animal Production Institute) and consultants.
5. Dr Nouala, representing the Director of AU-IBAR officially welcomed the participants to the General Assembly. He informed the participants that AU-IBAR through the Genetic Project supported by the European Union, had initiated the establishment of S-RFPs in the various regions of Africa in line with the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources. The process involved the establishment of Interim Steering Committees (ISC) to lead the way towards the creation of substantive S-RFPs. He thanked the ISC for the work done until the General Assembly. Dr Nouala stated that the task before the participants was to validate the Terms of Reference and elect a substantive Steering Committee. He emphasized that the management of AnGR is better when approached from a regional perspective with regions leading the process. He stressed that it was important to have frank discussions and come up with consensus even when there are no agreements on all issues. He warmly thanked the participants for finding time to attend the General Assembly and for the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, for agreeing to host the meeting. Dr Nouala stressed the need to move to implementation of actions rather than just coming up with recommendations at the end of the meeting.
6. Dr B. M. Modisane, Chief Director for Animal Productions and Health, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries representing the Government of South Africa welcomed the participants to the workshop. He thanked AU-IBAR for choosing South Africa to host this important meeting. Dr Modisane recalled the significant importance of building new or strengthening the existing capacities particularly in the arena of animal genetic resources. Capacity building coupled with infrastructure development in AnGR will increase the success of the region as well as the improvement of the food

security and livelihoods. Dr Modisane also emphasized on the importance of the alignment to the regional initiatives and global trends. Dr Modisane hoped the workshop will be an opportunity for good interaction between participants to share views. He finally wished the gathering, fruitful deliberations that will give a clear way forward for the region and declared the workshop officially open.

7. The General Assembly deliberations were in the form of presentations during plenary sessions and group work sessions. The presentations made included:

- a) Activity report and the suggested action plan by the Interim Steering Committee;
- b) Draft TORs for the Sub-Regional Focal Point (S-RFP);
- c) An overview of AnGR related policies and legislative frameworks in the SADC region;
- d) Proposal towards establishment of regional gene bank(s);
- e) Progress in the harmonisation of tools and protocols for characterization and inventory for AnGR;
- f) Introduction on AAGRIS: report on the needs assessment and the proposed structure.

The group discussions were organized around the following issues:

- a) Validation of the action plan proposed by the ISC;
- b) Validation of the criteria for the election of the members of the S-RFP Steering Committee (SC);
- c) Identification of policy gaps and intervention entry points;
- d) Sustainability of the S-RFP beyond the AU-IBAR project's support;
- e) Validation of information on the needs assessment and proposed structure for the AAGRIS;

## OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP

1. *The Action Plan proposed by the ISC* for the region was adopted and consolidated into Short, Medium and Long term actions.

1.1. The General Assembly agreed to focus for the time being on the short term actions, namely: i) Assessment of national and regional policies and regulatory frameworks; ii) an information needs assessment - i.e. assessment of existing resources/ information systems; iii) establishing the status of breed characterization in southern Africa and identification of priority entry points; iv) identification of breeds at risk and those of economic importance; v) supporting/facilitate establishment or strengthening of National Focal points /national advisory committees for management of AnGR; vi) supporting the formulation of National Action Plans (NAP) for the management of AnGR; and vii) identification of AnGR knowledge gaps in the short term, in order to address them through undertaking research initiatives.

1.2 The medium and longer term actions included the need to: Harmonize tools and protocols for AnGR characterization; Support priority research initiatives; Strengthen Regional livestock breeders associations; Work with National Coordinators (NCs) to provide regulatory framework for each country; Work through the Steering Committee to harmonize the AnGR regulatory framework; Develop coherent regional policies and regulatory frameworks for the management of AnGR especially trans-boundary breeds; Collaborate in characterization and inventory of trans-boundary breeds; Document and disseminate indigenous knowledge on management of AnGR; Develop protocol for benefits sharing including Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in consultation with FAO for support; Work through the SC to facilitate development of AnGR project proposals by NCs; Develop/harmonize tools for livestock identification and performance recording; Develop and implement strategies for conservation and sustainable utilization of trans-boundary breeds; Establish Sub regional Gene bank; Facilitate exchange visits for experience sharing on AnGR; Undertake training of animal breeders; Establish or strengthen research laboratories supporting biotechnologies for AnGR; and Document and disseminate best practices and lessons learnt for the conservation, utilization and management of AnGR.

2. ***The Draft Terms of references for the S-RFP*** were discussed, amended and adopted. The TORs focused on the governance structure of the S-RFP including the General Assembly, the Steering Committee and the Secretariat. For each of these organs of the S-RFP, the membership, the roles and responsibilities, the decision making and the functioning mechanisms were clearly stipulated.
3. ***The Steering Committee for the S-RFP for Southern Africa*** was elected after validating the criteria of election. Four Members States were elected: Botswana, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe. South African Stud book association will represent the breeders associations and the Heifer International will represent the NGOs.
4. ***On the identification of policy gaps and intervention entry points***, building on the Inventory and analysis of policies and legislative frameworks of the region, the GA suggested the basis, scope and guidelines for consideration in the development of policies more generally related to AnGR and more specifically those for transboundary breeds, crossbreeding, the use of biotechnology and property rights. In conclusion, a task force composed of Zimbabwe, CCARDESA, SACAU and AU-IBAR was put in place to work on a position paper on the products of modern bio-technology.
5. ***On the sustainability of the S-RFP beyond projects support***, the GA suggested to the following:
  - Deliberate mainstreaming of AnGR activities within existing national and regional structures;
  - Allocation of resources at national levels towards implementation of AnGR activities;
  - Establishment/ strengthening of coordination structures at national and regional level (National Advisory Committees);
  - Undertaking awareness creation and advocacy on AnGRs using fact sheets and pre-designed presentations;
  - Undertaking resource mobilisation through concerted project proposal development at both national and regional levels.
6. ***On the report on the needs assessment and the preliminary structure of the Information system (AAGRIS)***, the General Assembly welcomed the initiative and suggested some improvements focusing on better targeting of stakeholders, other data and information to be included, identification of existing information and its accessibility. The GA noted the need to overcome the challenges associated with the existing databases and information systems such as failure or impediments to provide or update data and the generally low usage of such tools by the stakeholders.
7. ***On the challenges and options for the establishment of the regional gene banks*** the key aspects to be considered in establishing regional gene banks included: the issues on ownership and access to materials kept in gene banks - the possible use of model Material Transfer Agreements and a legal framework to undergird Public-private partnerships in gene banking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

The participants extended their appreciation to the Government of South Africa and AU-IBAR for the warm welcome and the good organisation of the workshop and made the following recommendations:

1. AU-IBAR should attend to the upcoming COMESA joint ministerial meeting (11th - 15th November 2014), for awareness raising to give a presentation on the project and the establishment of the S-RFP for Southern Africa.
2. AU-IBAR should undertake further analysis on the challenges of current livestock databases and determine the appropriate interventions, to avoid the creation of an underutilized Information System;
3. For improved consideration and funding of AnGR activities at country and regional levels, awareness creation should be carried with high level officials including at Permanent Secretaries level and for heads of regional organizations;
4. The GA emphasized that priority should be given to measures that promote conservation of AnGRs in their natural environments. However, gene banking was necessary as a back-up strategy in case the live populations are lost due to unforeseen circumstances. Therefore, AU-IBAR was tasked

with re-engaging the SADC secretariat on regional cooperation regarding gene banking and to learn from the SADC experience on the operation of a Regional Plants Genebank.

5. For the relevance and the necessity to obtain information and data to be fed into the AAGRIS, the AU-IBAR Genetics project should re-assess the outputs and lessons learnt from the breed surveys conducted in the region under the past UNDP/FAO/SADC regional project on AnGRs.
6. The gathering resolved that the next GA will be held in 2016 and the name of the host country will be proposed by the Steering Committee.

Johannesburg, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2014

**THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**