Livestock Data Innovation in Africa **BRIEF**

Joint brief of the World Bank, FAO, ILRI, AU-IBAR with support from the Gates Foundation

Issue 1 • October 2010

Collecting Livestock Data: What, Who, Who Pays?

At the African Union Summit in Sirte in 2009, African leaders reiterated the need to allocate at least 3 percent of their national budgets to livestock. But '*inadequate data to demonstrate quantitatively the role of animal resources in African economies*' (AU-IBAR Strategic Plan, 2010) makes it difficult for policy makers and investors to identify priority areas for investments.

The definition, accessibility and use of '*adequate*' livestock sector data needs to be better understood prior to design of systems and upgrading of services. In particular, enhancing livestock data systems involves three critical issues:

(i) What livestock data to collect?
(ii) Collection of livestock data: who is responsible?
(iii) Financing data collection: who pays, and for what?

These three issues were discussed at the second meeting of the Ugandan Livestock Data Users' Group in October 2010. The meeting was organized by the Livestock Data Innovation Project. Approximately 30 suppliers and users of data participated, including public sector, private sector and civil society representatives.

What livestock data to collect?

Formulating, implementing and monitoring livestock sector investments which contribute to economic growth or poverty reduction requires data (and statistics) on variables pertaining to a variety of domains. For instance, small-scale poultry farmers may be looking for data on the price of live broilers in nearby rural markets. Governments may wish data to monitor productivity or market access among smallholders, in association with support service provision. Dairy associations may need data on regional milk balances for investment purposes.

The diversity of livestock stakeholders' interests implies that endless data could be collected. However, scarce resources and information make identifying and collecting a comprehensive set of livestock data (and statistics) a futile exercise. It is only through the establishment of effective communication networks between suppliers and users of livestock data – with data users highlighting their priority needs and data suppliers attempting to respond to users' needs – that a core set of livestock data can be identified, regularly collected and shared. The question of what livestock data to collect can thus only be answered through communication between suppliers and users of livestock, whose role and skills vary widely between countries. The *Livestock Data Innovation in Africa* project is taking steps to establish and maintain such networks within countries and to communicate lessons learned between countries.

Collection of livestock data: who is responsible?

Livestock related data are collected using a variety of sources, and by a variety of parties – including government agencies, private sector actors, universities, and NGOs. In general, the public sector should be responsible for livestock data collection, analysis and dissemination when these data contribute to public goods, such as for measuring the quality of veterinary drugs and the efficacy of vaccination programs, or for assuring food safety. Livestock indicators such as composition, numbers, locations, off-take rates, price and availability of feeds are also collected and used by government to inform and monitor sector planning.

Private companies often collect livestock data relevant to their businesses (e.g. price of feed/inputs, consumption data, etc.). NGOs

collect baseline data for project design and M&E, as well as for advocacy purposes. However, private actors that collect livestock data in developing countries generally have little if any contact with public authorities. This lack of communication leaves government agencies uninformed about the types of data that private firms need.

The key issue of collection responsibilities is thus not about the role of the public or the private sector, but about the horizontal coordination between the different public actors that collect data, such as the Ministry or Department of Livestock, the National Statistics Office, and the National Dairy and Meat Board. An important part of this coordination challenge is to ensure the quality of data, and the consistency between the data these agencies collect.

Decentralization and the vertical movement of data from local to national levels highlight a second challenge. The lack of clear institutional channels for data collection, information sharing and the processing of statistics raise questions on how data are collected: who asks livestock-related questions to farmers and to other actors? Who enters those data for later use? How is this data validated and disseminated? Incentive schemes should be in place to ensure that data collection and data entry are done properly and shared among partners.

Who pays, for what?

Private livestock operators and NGOs use a variety of data as described above, and are often willing to pay for data collection and analysis. There are also cases in which some livestock data (prices) are collected and provided by private companies for free – most likely to build and maintain a reputation in order to charge for other services. The bundling of data with other services is often attractive to those not willing to pay for data itself.

In general, however, taxpayers pay for most livestock data-related services as livestock-related information is largely (perceived as) a public good. The government collects, reviews and analyses livestock data for policy and planning purposes and, on occasion, to inform the public. However, there is a consensus that the process generally does not function effectively. Much of the livestock data collected is entered into formats that are of no interest to private investors – for instance aggregated at the regional level. Much of the livestock data are not thoroughly analyzed or disseminated. Much of it is not timely. This reduces both the revenues available from data sales and the value derived from data.

Communication is key

While livestock data collection is serious gap, limited communication between data users and suppliers and/or between data buyers and sellers is recognized as a critical constraint to improving livestock data systems in much of the developing world. The establishment of effective communication networks between data stakeholders is thus key to ensure that *'adequate'* data are collected, which helps design public and private livestock sector investments that contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth.

For further information please visit:
www.africalivestock.data.org

Or contact:
Ugo Pica-Ciamarra, Livestock Economist, FAO
ugo.picaciamarra@fao.org