

Sustainable livestock keeping is a worldwide must

The unexplored potential of local marketing and endogenous livestock development

There is an unexplored potential to be tapped for poverty alleviation and sustainable agricultural development: initiatives based on local marketing and endogenous livestock production systems. Southern countries need not simply follow the path of industrialised livestock production for the world market, as the northern countries decided to do several decades ago. North and South can learn from each other, as numerous options towards sustainable agricultural development - based on local initiatives and marketing - can be found in all continents.

These were some of the conclusions drawn at the symposium "*The World on your Plate – livestock in a global perspective*", which was held on Wednesday November 7th, 2007, at the veterinary faculty in Utrecht, The Netherlands. The symposium was organised in honour of the twentieth anniversary of DIO Foundation together with the global Endogenous Livestock Development network. It brought together around 100 professionals of veterinary and agricultural development organisations, from some 20 countries in the North as well as the South.

The Dutch government decided after the famine of the second world war, that there should never be hunger again. This led in the 1960's to intensification of agriculture, a development that continually accelerated and turned to numerous environmental problems, subsidised overproduction, and dumping of products on the markets of developing countries. The EU Milk Quota system was one of the measures taken in the eighties to limit the milk production and reduce surpluses. The EU want to stop the quota system now, but the attendants to this symposium believe that there is a need for market protection in order to achieve sustainable agriculture in both North and South. Other presentations also showed the devastating effects of trade liberalisation, for example on the Indian dairy market and on the poultry market in various African countries. The basic problem is that there is pressure to open up the markets, while the southern countries have not had the time to build up their own agricultural system. In the process the cultural heritage is trampled.

These critical issues related to globalisation and livestock were directly linked to possible alternatives based on local organisation and marketing. Discussions between professionals from both South and North revealed differences, but also striking similarities. It became clear that farmers in both North and South are actively engaged in local initiatives, which indicates the wealth of opportunities that exist. It is a myth that local communities are resistant to change. There is an urgent need to re-think the conventional approach towards agricultural productivity, and emphasise the potential of a people-centred livestock development approach.



For more information, please contact:

DIO Foundation: foundation for veterinary medicine in development cooperation. Our primary activity is our question- and answering service, the Veterinary Information Service. We provide farmers and extension workers in developing countries with information regarding animal health, infectious diseases and veterinary medicine. Website: www.dio.nl. Contact: dio@dio.nl

ELD-network: Endogenous Livestock Development is a concept - that puts livestock keepers at the center of development efforts. The ELD network is an exchange and learning network, of organisations that are applying that into their livestock- and development related work. Website: www.eldev.net Contact: katrien van't Hooft (katrien.hooft@etcnl.nl), Evelyn Mathias (evelyn@mamud.com) or Getachew Gebru (g.gebru@cgiar.org)

VSF-Europa: Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Europa – an association of which the members are all working towards reducing poverty and increasing food sovereignty. Their focus is on livestock and veterinary medicine. Website: www.vsf.org.