
FAO activities in support on the restructuring of the animal production sector in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs)

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The livestock sector was an important part of agriculture in most of the CEE countries during socialism and has maintained its importance during transition. All the countries experienced massive structural changes in markets, production demand pattern, price structures for livestock products and for production inputs. As a result, most of the livestock production systems are in the process of reorienting their production intensity as well as the direction of the production itself. CEE countries make efforts to build up the institutions and organizations needed for contemporary livestock production. On one hand the State is giving more responsibility to the private sector, on the other hand the Government is strengthening national institutions to evolve EU regulations and other international standards on livestock production and products (animal breeding, feed control, trade, animal health, product quality, housing and welfare, environment, etc.). EU regulations concern all countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), which wish to trade animal products to the EU, additionally EU accession is a national policy for most of the countries in CEE.

A decade after the fall of the Berlin wall, the CEECs' transition from former, centrally planned economies to functioning market economies is in full progress with sound support from the international community. Although transition economies shared many of the failures that led to the demise of the central planning model, there are significant differences between the countries in transition. There is no procedure and only a few experiences of successful conversion of former socialistic livestock production systems and institutions into the market-oriented structure. Many dilemmas imposed by transition into the market economy in the countries in transition within the next years are anticipated. The progress of the strong private sector in agriculture will require pertinent infrastructure, especially in the livestock sector.

Background

Changes which relevant institutions and businesses will need to anticipate and implement as part of adjusting to the single market rules and supporting international quality standards are to be positioned in the best possible way to meet the countrywide needs. CEE countries often fail to copy the organizational structures of western countries and adjustments are needed to support the local needs in the most efficient way. The development of the livestock sector in CEECs may or may not copy the pattern of the developed world, where the livestock sector was gradually enhanced in relative isolation and was genuinely protected by several trade immobility factors of that era. Additionally public interventions were introduced and domestic animal production and breeding are not only publicly supported in industrial countries, but also strongly protected, by tariff and non-tariff barriers. CEE countries have the challenge to compete in open markets, improve production efficiency, product quality and maintain natural resources. For some countries the major task is to carry on accession to the EU, which is in the middle of reforming its policy, institutions and procedures.

FAO's comparative advantage lies in its ability to draw lessons across countries and regions and to bring best practices to bear in meeting country-specific needs especially in minimising the tensions that may arise as a result of the process of transition.

International Organizations in Livestock Development

Generally there are two types of international organizations. The first group comprises intergovernmental organizations, where members are national governments (e.g. United Nations (UN) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO).

The second group of organizations is usually called non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), whose members are national institutions and organizations. The most important international NGOs, involved in livestock development are: the International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR), the European Association for Animal Production (EAAP), the International Dairy Federation (IDF) and many others.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) is an international agency with its mandate (approved by Member Nations) being to take care of the development of the agriculture and food sector. Among many regional and country offices in the world, FAO has also established a Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe (FAO/SEUR).

The four key areas of SEUR's Regular Programme are:

1. Restructuring institutions and services of animal production and health:
 - the optimal assignment of the State, NGOs and the private sector in extension and advisory services for smallholders and large farms;
 - managing animal feed resources and maintaining feed and food quality and safety;
 - organization and delivery of national services (animal recording, breeding, research/development, training, information, laboratories).

2. Livestock Production Systems Sustainable Development: Sustainable development strategies overall need improved (multidisciplinary) methodologies to better involve the local resources and knowledge into integrated development in the country. These programmes aim at a better overview of the process and indicator sustainability and decision support on livestock farming at the local level.

3. Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR): FAO is responsible for the operation of the Global Programme Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) and this is one of the priority areas for AGA. Management of AnGR in the broad sense is an important issue in SEUR's overall programme (including areas 1 and 2). More specifically SEUR's programme contributes to the regional networking and training of national coordinators and informal contacts for AnGR.

4. Direct support to Member Nations, to the field programme and liaison with regional networks and international NGOs on livestock development.

Several project proposals are prepared for submission to international donors where FAO/SEUR has been involved during the inception period of the project: project formulating, project document, seeking of possible donors and submission. Two projects have been approved for external funding. Five project proposals (on AnGR management) in preparation and seeking possible donors and two more regional projects (to be submitted to the EU) are in preparation in the field of animal feed resources and sustainable livestock farming systems.

Within FAO's mandate and the scope of AGA's programme, the SEUR livestock production programme is aiming to integrate all (always-limited) resources available to evolve the CEE livestock development.

The FAO/SEUR Livestock Programme in Central and Eastern Europe

Technical cooperation programme on livestock programme

Partners and resources

In addition to official liaison with INGOs (ICAR and EAAP), good contact with NGOs and regional INGOs exists. Additionally there are a number of partners involved in the livestock development in the Region, the best contact being that with German, French and Austrian institutions, which have funded several workshops and project preparation. Besides EAAP CG, a network has been established within CEECs and CIS with focal points for different functions (e.g.: research and extension, government institutions, breeding organizations and FAO national coordinators for AnGR).

Partnerships have allowed:

- country-experts to participate in the workshops (usual attendance is 60-80 people from CEECs);
- the invitation to people from the least developed countries;
- the opting for a broad range of emerging topics (1-3 each year);
- the publication and distribution of the proceedings;
- the involvement of the best experts in the field as resource persons;
- the initiation of some field projects for external funding.

Conclusions

National experts in CEECs exercise the transition at the national level, but also gain experience at international level. Newly independent states are becoming actively involved in the international intergovernmental organizations and national institutions are joining INGOs. It is important that countries can address their needs to the relevant organizations and become actively involved in the work of these organizations.

The role of the international organizations in development is not only to observe the dynamics in the Member Nations, but also to offer the ground for technical cooperation.

FAO's programme endeavours to carry out the best practices involving the relevant INGOs, which have the expertise in the field. Training, workshops, seminars and technical meetings have helped to build capacity in CEECs and converse the latest experience. International organizations have played a key role in supporting such activities and capacity building remains a key area for international cooperation.