Integrating livestock into agricultural statistics
The AU-IBAR, FAO, ILRI, WB Data Innovation Project

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The growing demand for animal source food in developing countries, stimulated by population growth, gains in real per capita income and urbanization, represents an unprecedented opportunity for the livestock dependent poor to escape poverty. However, because of the dearth of livestock-related data, the linkages between livestock, economic growth and poverty reduction remain to a large extent unclear, which constraints the design, implementation and monitoring of pro-poor livestock-related policies and programmes. This paper introduces the AU-IBAR, FAO, ILRI, WB Livestock Data Innovation Project, covering Uganda, Tanzania and Niger, and the challenges it faces / the approaches it follows to address data gaps in the livestock sector and improve national statistical systems.

The Livestock Data Innovation Project will inventory existing data, and establish communications amongst users and suppliers of livestock data to pilot new methods for collection, validation, analysis and dissemination of livestock-related data, which facilitate both public and private investments in the livestock sector. In developing new methods and approaches, the project: (a) combines production, value chain and consumption data to better understand livestock-poverty linkages; (b) identifies key indicators that provide insights not only on production and productivity but also on the livelihoods and services provided by livestock; (c) supports the mainstreaming of such indicators into national statistical systems.

Three major challenges confront the project. (1) There is asymmetric information concerning data gaps for livestock. Hundreds of different livestock-related variables and indicators could be generated and used to better guide policy and investment decisions. However, only data users (producers, the government, development actors, and a host of others) can clearly articulate which ones they need, and in what form. The Livestock Data Innovation Project is thus a demand-driven process, loosely structured around activities (household, value chain and consumption data collection and analysis) which will be detailed and adjusted as data users in each country recommend. (2) Whereas a variety of livestock-related data are or will be collected at country level, as recommended by the 'Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics', there is currently limited understanding of the livestock-poverty interface, making it difficult to combine and use those data to design and implement policies and institutional reforms which promote rapid and equitable growth of the livestock sector. The Project, through combining micro, meso and macro analysis, will identify key indicators to measure the contribution of livestock to people's livelihoods. (3) Stakeholders tend to look for data and indicators which support specific investment or government objectives, such as for example the number of livestock to be vaccinated or prices for live animals in major regional markets, and disregard the livestock-poverty interface. There could be thus limited incentives for the institutionalisation of livestock-poverty data into national statistical databases. The Project, through analysing a variety of livestock-related data, will identify clear linkages between livestock development and poverty reduction and make a strong case for mainstreaming livestock-poverty indicators into national statistical systems.