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Nigeria launches coordinated livestock genetics initiative to combat breed extinction risks

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In a significant step toward modernising livestock governance and preserving indigenous animal diversity, Nigeriaâ??s federal government has approved a new suite of harmonised genetic-resource protocols designed to strengthen the countryâ??s breeding systems, improve livestock resilience, and prevent the gradual disappearance of native animal breeds.

The initiative marks one of the countryâ??s most comprehensive institutional efforts yet to formalise the conservation and management of Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR), a sector increasingly viewed as critical to food security, climate adaptation, and long-term agricultural productivity across Africa.

The protocols were formally validated during a high-level national workshop convened in Abuja under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development and coordinated through the Livestock Productivity and Resilience Support Project.

Over five days, genetic scientists, livestock breeders, policymakers, development agencies, and private-sector stakeholders assembled to review what officials described as a foundational framework for the future of Nigeriaâ??s livestock ecosystem.

At the heart of the reforms lies an effort to bring scientific precision and institutional continuity to a sector historically constrained by fragmented data systems, inconsistent breeding strategies, and weak conservation infrastructure.

The newly validated framework includes protocols for breed characterisation, inventory systems, risk monitoring, conservation planning, and national data collection methodologies. Stakeholders also endorsed the creation of the Nigerian Domestic Animal Diversity Information System, or NigDAD-IS, alongside a dedicated Animal Genetic Resources dashboard intended to strengthen breed surveillance and integrate Nigeriaâ??s livestock databases with global monitoring platforms.

Those systems are expected to connect with international repositories managed by the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Livestock Research Institute, and the African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources, embedding Nigeria more firmly within global livestock genetics networks.

Speaking at the workshop, Idi Mukhtar Maiha, Nigeriaâ??s minister of livestock development, framed the initiative as a strategic necessity for a country confronting rapid population growth, environmental stress, and mounting pressure on food-production systems.

Without reliable baseline genetic data, he noted, policymakers and breeders cannot effectively determine which livestock breeds are best suited to Nigeriaâ??s diverse agro-ecological regions or design breeding programmes capable of sustaining productivity under changing climatic conditions.

The minister also warned that inadequate monitoring systems increase the risk of genetic erosionâ??the gradual loss of valuable indigenous traits that have evolved over generations to withstand local disease pressures, heat conditions, and environmental variability.

For development agencies, the initiative represents a broader attempt to reposition livestock genetics as a pillar of agricultural resilience.

Hussein Gadain, country representative of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, reaffirmed the agencyâ??s support for Nigeriaâ??s livestock transformation agenda, emphasizing the importance of veterinary infrastructure, genetic services, laboratory capacity, and surveillance systems in protecting both food systems and market stability.

At the conclusion of the workshop, Sanusi Abubakar, national project coordinator of L-PRES, described the validation exercise as a major milestone in implementing Nigeriaâ??s National Strategy and Action Plan on Animal Genetic Resources, first introduced in 2025.

The newly approved protocols, he said, are aligned with international FAO standards and will support future efforts to establish a national livestock gene bank while strengthening conservation and breeding systems nationwide.

Implementation timelines extending through the remainder of the year are expected to focus on nationwide data collection, institutional coordination, technical partnerships, and advocacy campaigns aimed at embedding the framework within Nigeriaâ??s broader agricultural transformation agenda.

In an era increasingly defined by climate volatility, biodiversity loss, and food-system fragility, Nigeriaâ??s wager is that the future of livestock productivity may depend as much on preserving genetic heritage as on expanding production itself.