

Editorial

2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations. The year is being marked by many events and publications that celebrate biodiversity and promote awareness of the role that it plays in sustaining life on Earth and contributing to human livelihoods and cultures around the world. *Animal Genetic Resources Journal* is delighted to be publishing this special edition as a contribution to the year's events and as a means of promoting the sustainable management of biodiversity in the livestock sector.

2010 also marks three years since the adoption of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*¹ – the first internationally agreed framework for the management of animal genetic resources (AnGR). It is an opportune time to begin assessing whether the enthusiasm and momentum generated by the adoption of the *Global Plan of Action* and the reporting activities that preceded it are starting to bear fruit. The first paper in this edition, therefore, presents an overview of progress made to date, with a focus on implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* at national level. The other 12 invited papers span the four strategic priority areas of the *Global Plan of Action*.

Strategic Priority Area 1 – “Characterization, inventory and monitoring of trends and associated risks” – is represented by three papers. The first addresses the task of identifying and analysing threats to the survival of AnGR diversity. The second describes the role of surveys as a means of obtaining AnGR-related data that can provide a basis for improved management of these resources. The third, reviews efforts that have been made to develop indicators of the status and trends of genetic diversity in domestic animals.

Strategic Priority Area 2 – “Sustainable use and development” – is represented by two papers. The first presents the results of a project that investigated farmers' motives and values with regard to the keeping of local breeds of cattle in Europe. The second paper discusses the marketing of products from local breeds of livestock, drawing on an analysis of case studies in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Strategic Priority Area 3 – “Conservation” – is represented by five papers, the first of which provides an overview of the state of national programmes for the conservation of AnGR. The second paper reviews the potential contributions of economic decision-support tools and analytical

approaches to AnGR conservation programmes, and the extent to which they have been used in “real-world” situations. The third paper reviews options and legal requirements related to the development of national and regional gene banks for AnGR, while the fourth paper considers the role of protected areas in AnGR conservation. The final paper addressing this strategic priority area considers the conservation status of the wild relatives of domestic animals.

Strategic Priority Area 4 – “Policies, institutions and capacity-building” – is represented by two papers. The first discusses the state of discussions related to the concept of livestock keepers' rights, and the second describes the contribution that networking has made to the management of AnGR in Europe.

While it is very heartening to read of the various first-steps that countries have taken in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, as described in the first paper of this edition, a full picture of the state of implementation will only emerge once the first round in the formal process of evaluating progress in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* has been successfully completed. Therefore, it is essential that in 2011, as requested by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, all countries prepare progress reports on their national activities in implementing the *Global Plan of Action*, so that FAO can prepare a synthesis report for consideration by the Commission.

Many of the papers in this edition indicate that while progress has been made, many gaps and weaknesses remain in our knowledge of AnGR and in the tools that are available for studying and managing these resources. Likewise, while programmes and policies for AnGR management are gradually being developed and strengthened, and levels of awareness of AnGR-related issues are gradually being improved, many obstacles need to be overcome before the sustainable use, development and conservation of the world's AnGR can be assured. We would therefore like to appeal to the readership of this journal – whether researchers, people working for governmental or non-governmental organizations, livestock keepers or concerned members of the general public – to promote and contribute to the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.

¹ www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1404e/a1404e00.htm