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Policy brief on Enhancing Animal Welfare in the IGAD Region

Introduction

The understanding and implementation of animal welfare concepts in different countries and regions has been described as a journey in which countries, regions, and even continents are at different stages at any one time. For instance, the drivers of animal welfare in Africa have been quite different from those in Europe, America, or Asia. However, with globalization, especially of trade, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) has had to establish standards for animal welfare that meet sanitary requirements and animal sentience.

The challenges are greater for African countries with increasing urbanization, land and population pressures, consumer awareness and demands as well as the need to increase agricultural and livestock productivity while conserving the environment. Thus, interventions which ensure that animal welfare principles and standards are embedded along the livestock value chain are more urgent. Africa must reach the end of this journey with the rest of the world.

The objective of this policy brief is twofold: 1. to draw the attention of Member States' policy makers and all animal welfare stakeholders to the key issues and challenges affecting the compliance status of IGAD Member States (MSs) to the OIE animal welfare standards, and 2. to share key policy recommendations so as to assist and advocate mainstreaming of welfare into all animal production and utilization activities.

The OIE standards for animal welfare comprise the following:

1. Transport of animals by sea;
2. Transport of animals by land;
3. Transport of animals by air;
4. Slaughter of animals;
5. Killing of animals for disease control purposes;
6. Controlling the population of stray dogs;
7. Use of animals in research and education;
8. Animal welfare and beef cattle production systems;
9. Animal welfare and broiler chicken production systems;
10. Animal welfare and dairy cattle production systems;
11. Welfare of working equids;
12. Transport of farmed fish;
13. Slaughter of farmed fish for human consumption;
14. Culling of farmed fish for disease control purposes; and
15. General standards for the welfare of farmed fish.

Status of animal welfare practices in IGAD MSs

IGAD MSs are at different stages in the application of animal welfare standards. All MSs have officers assigned to animal welfare and some states such as Somalia (Somaliland) and Sudan have very comprehensive laws dedicated to animal welfare. All the MSs have animal welfare Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that deal with various projects. Some of the projects have made significant contribution to domestic and

international animal welfare advocacy. All MSs except Djibouti and South Sudan have veterinary councils or boards and professional associations that have strong roles in animal welfare practices. Sampled teaching institutions in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somaliland include animal welfare as a subject in their veterinary curricula. Sudan Veterinary Council cooperates with veterinary education institutions to include courses on animal welfare in their curricula. There will be need to identify all non-compliant teaching institutions in the national strategies of all MS countries. Other sampled stakeholders such as farmers and livestock traders are aware of the concept of animal welfare, though not in fine detail such as required standards. Similarly, animal handling infrastructure and procedures in the sampled slaughterhouses and markets were good in some countries and inadequate in others. Each country will need to comprehensively assess such infrastructure and procedures for the national strategies. However, the main constraints include:

1. Inadequate policy and legal frameworks

- o Animal welfare and even other animal health and production policies and laws are inadequate or lacking in most countries. Only Sudan and Somaliland have modern and proactive animal welfare laws.



Poor practices of transporting animals

2. Poor enforcement and compliance with animal welfare standards

- o Enforcement and compliance with animal welfare standards and legislation is poor in all countries. This is so in different areas especially housing of animals, disease control, transport, marketing, and slaughter infrastructure and procedures, and use of animals in research and training.

3. Inadequate training, capacity building, and awareness creation on animal welfare among stakeholders at all levels

- o Perception and awareness on animal welfare are some of the weaknesses at all levels. They exist at the level of Governments, national media, key stakeholders, marginal stakeholders, professionals, students, communities, and animal owners.

4. Inadequate institutional arrangements to support and promote animal welfare issues

- o Government organizational structures are lacking in units and personnel dedicated to animal welfare in most MSs. In addition, most NGOs handling animal welfare issues work in isolation; some have unskilled personnel while others have no defined activities. Some MSs do not have veterinary regulatory and professional associations even though these are important drivers of animal welfare issues.

5. Inadequate funding, trained personnel, infrastructure, and equipment

- o All MSs have no allocated resources required for all animal welfare activities including legislation, advocacy, training, awareness and animal handling infrastructure/equipment. Animal welfare work is mostly done by NGOs; little or no Government funding is dedicated to animal welfare.



Good marketing infrastructure with sheds for protecting animals, providing feed and water, and separate animals

Recommendations

The following priority policy actions are recommended for IGAD MSs and stakeholders in order to revise, develop, and mainstream animal welfare into general development planning and all animal production, utilization, and other activities involving animals:

- Develop a supportive legal and policy framework to facilitate and support various actors to deliver on their mandates.
- Train or re-train appropriate human resource to roll out and ensure enforcement of the legal and policy frameworks.
- Train police and customs officials on the basics of animal welfare standards and requirements.
- Embed animal welfare standards in livestock production, health, and marketing training curricular of all tertiary institutions.
- Establish or strengthen dedicated animal welfare units and personnel in the appropriate ministries in the MSs.
- Make specific, dedicated and proactive animal welfare policies and laws and ensure enforcement.
- Include animal welfare considerations in general development planning and other animal- related policies and action plans such as disease control, drought and disaster management, and research and innovation
- Undertake training and capacity building, and promote awareness of animal welfare among foundation stakeholders, pupils and students in relevant school and college curriculums, and other stakeholders through appropriate policies, circulars, and communication strategies.
- Provide necessary funding and other resources to support key animal health, production, and utilization, and enforce promotion of animal welfare in government ministries, departments, agencies, and Public-Private-Partnerships
- Establish National Animal Welfare Committees to implement the National Animal Welfare Strategies in conformity with the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy and Action Plan
- Adopt and implement the validated Regional/ IGAD Animal Welfare Strategy and Action Plan in the Member States

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