



## Regional Pastoral Livelihood and Resilience Project (RPLRP)

### 6TH REGIONAL LIVESTOCK IDENTIFICATION AND TRACEABILITY SYSTEM (LITS) AND ANIMAL HEALTH CERTIFICATION (AHC) COORDINATION FORUM MEETING

OCT 11<sup>TH</sup>–12<sup>TH</sup>, 2018, GETFAM HOTEL, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

### THE COMMUNIQUÉ



Participants in the 6th Regional LITS and AHC Coordination Forum Meeting, Getfam Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Oct 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2018



## INTRODUCTION

The livestock sector in the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region has great potential to contribute to food security, general economic viability and great chance to leverage the integration within the Greater Horn of Africa (GHOA). It is however, seriously burdened with trans-boundary animal diseases (TADs), which are always one of the strong rationale for livestock importers to impose bans on livestock and livestock products originating from the IGAD region. It is, thus, important for IGAD to strengthen disease surveillance, prevention and control of TADs in the region to facilitate access to export market and improve livelihoods. However, attempts to prevent and control these diseases are confronted with many constraints, including inadequate system for livestock identification and traceability (LITS) application.

LITS is becoming a pre-requisite for exporting countries to implement in order to access export markets since it is an effective means to successfully protect public health, food safety and contain or respond to food-borne illnesses and an outbreak of an infectious animal disease. The system requires two basic components: an identification system (for example brands, marks or a device) and a system that tracks an animal, or group of animals, along the value chain to the final destination. It is only when these components are all put together that LITS becomes functional. It is imperative that the IGAD region strengthens efforts of disease prevention and control and finds ways of enhancing and sustaining livestock-based trade and its benefits.

IGAD/ ICPALD trained national LITS focal personnel and other team members, developed regional guidelines and legal framework that would help guide in the implementation of LITS in the member States through its subsequent adaption to national laws. It is important to appreciate that LITS has become an integral part of the livestock trade because most of the international markets outlets for livestock and livestock products are increasingly requesting that the animal health status are known and could be traced back properly and with ease. A regional coordination mechanism, at IGAD level, is also established and so far five (5) regional LITS forums were held with funding from STSD project and through ICPALD coordination. The previous forums were financially supported a European Union (EU) funded project called "Surveillance of Trade-Sensitive Diseases (STSD)" or "Improving Animal Disease Surveillance in Support of Trade". In these meetings, implementation progress at, national level, was reviewed; experiences, expertise and lessons learnt from Namibia, Tanzania, Botswana and South Africa were shared among the IGAD member States that participated in exposure missions. The current support by the Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Resilience Project (RPLRP) will be to sustain the already started regional efforts.

Therefore, the 6<sup>th</sup> regional LITS workshop was planned for two days with the financial support from the Regional Pastoral Livelihood and Resilience Project



(RPLRP) funded by the World Bank. In the meeting, participants discussed and reviewed implementation progress, at member States level, within the framework of IGAD harmonized livestock identification and traceability system.

## **MEETING OBJECTIVES**

The workshop objectives were:

- To get updates on how Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda have benefited from the previous regional and national efforts on rolling out LITS, achievements realized, challenges faced and solutions;
- To review on the progress made and lessons on LITS adoption, institutionalization and implementation in the region from NON-RPLRP countries;
- To coordinate, exchange good practices and lessons to avoid duplication of efforts and improve complementarities on LITS and animal health certification and
- To discuss and agree on the way forward.

## **EXPECTED OUTPUT**

- Updates on how Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda benefited from the previous regional and national efforts received and discussed; and progress made and lessons on LITS adoption, institutionalization and implementation in the region review with agreed way forward.

## **SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS AND OUTCOMES**

Dr Ameha Sebsibe, on behalf of Dr. Solomon Munyua, the Director of ICPALD who sent his apologies, gave welcoming remarks, welcoming the participants to the workshop and emphasizing significance of livestock resources in the IGAD region and pointing out that there is an increasing demand of livestock products both within the region and export destinations such as MENA. He noted that performance of the sector was constrained by lack of proper LITS and animal health certification and other concerns. ICPALD, working together with AU-IBAR, has focused on LITS because of its importance for trade, combating cattle rustling, boosting public health and food safety and enhancing breeding. The previous forums were held with the support of the STSD project that has ended and the 6<sup>th</sup> forum was now held with financial support from RPLRP.

Dr. Yismashewa Wagoyehu, Director of Epidemiology and LITS on behalf of the State Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, who sent his apologies. Dr. Yismashewa welcomed the participants to the country and expressed gratitude for the organizers for choosing Ethiopia to host the forum. He noted that IGAD had enormous livestock resources, with Ethiopia leading in terms of livestock numbers in the region. According to him, the sector contributes to 47 percent of the Ethiopian agricultural GDP and 18-20 percent of the national GDP. Performance of the sector however is constrained by feed shortage and diseases among others. Ethiopian government has rolled out initiatives such as livestock master plan, breeding policy, aimed at increasing production and productivity in the sector. The government has rolled out LITS as a key tool of supporting trade in livestock, disease management



and export of livestock and livestock products. Implementation of LITS is part of compliance with international trade requirements and is being done in a phased out approach, starting with Borana and Abergale regions. The roll out entails deployment of technical staff, sensitization of stakeholders, procurement of relevant equipment, establishment of local committees in implementation areas, and development of guidelines to steer the implementation. The country acknowledges the support received so far from AU-IBAR and ICPALD and is keen on sharing experiences with other MS that have similar initiatives.

At the end of the two-day workshop, participants were able to deliver on documentation of the current status of LITS in MS and the extent to which each MS LITS processes have been informed by various products developed jointly under coordination of IGAD. The forum presented an opportunity for the MS to share and learn from each other.

Dr Agol Kwai took participants through recommendations of the previous meeting with a view of establishing the status of agreed milestones by both MS and IGAD/ICPALD.

Following that, Dr Ameha, who articulated the significance of livestock sector in the region and the increasing relevance of LITS and animal welfare to livestock trade and access to certain markets, presented important achievements to date, which included suggestions for next steps on regional coordination. The areas emphasized included coordination of LITS, where MS were to think through on ways of sustaining their individual forums; capacity development covering such areas as retraining national teams; development of a generic database; domestication of the legal framework; monitoring and evaluation of LITS pilot work in the region; resource mobilization and enhancing sustainability of LITS through promoting private sector partnerships.

Following that, participants were taken through the status of LITS pilot activities in the three countries and were given an opportunity to interrogate the on-going pilots. It was, however, noted from the presentations that ratification of the legal framework takes time. The Kenyan presentation indicated that one of the activities to hasten the process was to engage the parliamentarians.

Has Ethiopian team considered the same, because the Pastoral Standing Committee of its Parliament is very strong? The Issue in Ethiopia is slightly different. The delay for ratification has been occasioned by the creation of a new Ministry by the new Government and the need to revisit some of the steps that had been taken earlier due to new office bearers.

On the issue of support from RPLRP, Ethiopia has so far supported planning and sensitization workshops in addition to procuring IT equipment. It is interesting to note that activities are still ongoing in Sudan, despite the phasing out of STSD project that supported the pilot. Other MS should learn from Sudan that has been able to mobilize resources from government, other projects and private sector to continue with LITS related activities. For Development of a LITS strategy for Sudan, Sudan



ought to take advantage of the existing influential and resourceful private sector in resource mobilization and the country should come up with a concept note to assist in mobilizing resources for support. ICPALD may be approached to assist in resource mobilization from within the country and other development partners outside the country.

More specifically, ICPALD had suggested to CVO Sudan to arrange a meeting with LITS steering committee and come up with a concept note to be shared with African Development Bank. Both Sudan and Ethiopia indicated that the animals are registered at the primary markets as most of the animals are sourced from pastoral areas where individual registration at farm level is difficult. For that reason it was proposed that registration starts at the primary market and it is followed through the entire route. Technically, if we can identify an animal and trace it for a period of more than ninety days, it becomes acceptable with regard to disease monitoring, so the system is generally acceptable.

A Kenyan experience of successful export to Mauritius of livestock can demonstrate that tagging the animals at primary market can work very well. Presentation from Kenya did not articulate the next steps, which are:

- Increase the number of animals registered in the current data base
- Promote a private sector led centralized production of ear-tags to ensure the serialization of the tags are orderly.
- Enhancing stakeholder/public participation on LITS
- National Launch.

The Kenyan government has moved to appoint a LITS coordinating committee to oversee implementation is commendable. Private sector representation in this committee and all activities is advisable. The initiative of having LITS database linked to national portal (e-government) is a very positive development that can be emulated by others. The proposed database need to be aligned to IGAD guidelines on ownership of the operating system. Kenya should be encouraged to share its draft LITS strategy with MS.

The committee, as currently constituted, may be difficult to involve the private sector but there are a series of stakeholders' consultation workshops that are planned for both strategy and legal framework and their participation is highly anticipated.

Ear-tags numbering has 15 digits, the first three being the country code. The number of possible permutations of the remaining 12 is very high making the idea of recovering and reusing the tags unnecessary. South Sudan, Somalia and Uganda were countries that were not having ongoing pilots and they briefed the forum on the status of LITS activities. Of the three, Uganda has limited support from RPLRP project and therefore registered a relatively better progress.





Kenya currently has a strong LITS committee, which should be bold enough and get a direction instead of being confused and pulled in different directions. Ethiopia has another World Bank supported project on pastoralism and commercialization in the pipeline that they should be able to utilize for up scaling the current pilot. In Kenya, the Government works with the main mobile service provider to run Nairobi surveillance system. The Kenyan central Bank financial reporting system is fully run by a private sector. It is, therefore, possible for private sector to be engaged in data management system of sensitive data. What is most important is to ensure that there are data management laws in place that will govern such system and can guard against negative impacts such as malicious destruction of data. In coming up with such laws, experts must guide the MS to avoid private sector taking advantage of loopholes within the laws.

The meeting noted that unlike other member states, Somalia livestock export agenda, is mainly private sector led, with six out of the seven designated quarantine stations managed by the private entities. The vibrant private sector involved in export of livestock can contribute to the process through levies. ICPALD has produced policy briefs that can guide introduction and roll out of such levies that would help the sector. To succeed on this, Somalia should prioritize awareness creation for pushing the LITS agenda forward.

The CVO/LITS team should consider developing a concept note for LITS to assist in resource mobilization for support of national coordination and awareness creation but there was concern that many trained technical officers are not retained and this has a negative effect on sustainability of LITS as staff movement to greener pastures is normal and cannot be stopped. How is the country handling the challenge and what needs to be in place as a mechanism of ensuring that the new staff are adequately briefed when taking over.

South Sudan has no specific project supporting LITS and the idea of a concept note to be developed is welcome. Awareness creation is an important entry point for LITS adoption and production for such material is very important as it is what informs the choice of the LITS/animal health/breeding act as a choice for anchoring LITS legislation, while the acceptable practice is to have an act related to animal health that is within the control of the CVO who is recognized competent authority on LITS. AU-IBAR/IGAD should support the development of projects for these countries focusing on LITS as they are generally lagging behind. It was noted that it is highly likely that LITS specific projects may not be funded by national treasuries, but it is possible to incorporate LITS in other projects dealing with animal diseases, trade etc.

For South Sudan and Somalia, establishing national LITS units should be starting point and developing strategy should come later. The CVOs of the two countries can establish the units in two months' time to help in coordination. South Sudan can



capitalize on the significance of battling cattle rustling in pushing the LITS agenda. All CVOs need to pursue national priorities aggressively and advocate for support.

Ugandan presentation referred to several projects such as RPLRP and LITS in Uganda is taking many trends, some of which are geared towards trade. There is a new EU supported project targeting meat export that has the potential of contributing immensely towards LITS. Currently RPLRP is supporting development of quarantine stations in project areas and awareness creation on LITS. In addition, the project is undertaking a livestock longitudinal study targeting all animals in the study area that is monitoring productivity parameters and to this entails identification of individual animals in the area. The country has a state export abattoir whose success is pegged on ensuring traceability of slaughtered livestock.

Within the Ugandan context, the breeding act replaced the branding act and mentioned animal identification, and this informed the decision. However, the breeding act is supposed to be subjected to a review, which is taking long thus leading to the current delay. A new act on LITS specifically may be an option and way out of this confusion.

The last presentation was given by Dr. Joseph Mugachia, who acknowledged that the region has had several pilots. A key lesson learnt from the pilots was that linking LITS to trade was critical to its support and roll out by stakeholders. He presented other lessons learnt as:

- Creating awareness to a large cross section of stakeholders, which should ideally be guided by having a communication strategy;
- Focusing on capacity building, especially addressing the low level of competence of technical officers on ICT tools;
- Anchoring LITS legislation preferably in animal diseases act, noting that despite the processes tending to be lengthy and protracted, this is a very critical step;
- Running LITS in a country should not be reserved only to LITS units but must also involve other actors, including the private sector;
- The devices should be visible, electronic for ease of reading accurately and affordability;
- Database can be contracted to private sector to run as a service and the government to focus more on enforcements.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Ameha encouraged MS to hasten the pace of LITS development in the region and link it to trade thus taking advantage of the increasing demand of livestock and livestock products. He advised MS to design their LITS according to their priorities and allocate roles and functions to entities that are best suited to perform them, for example, governments are better equipped to regulate and enforce while private sector can provide other services such as the production of the devices.



Finally, Dr. Ameha expressed his gratitude for the good participation by all participants. He acknowledged that the workshop had achieved what it had set to achieve as the participants had reviewed progress, learnt from each other and developed a plan of action. We need to demonstrate commitment on the set milestones going forward. The CVOs/teams that have committed to develop concept notes should do so and share with ICPALD as the earliest time possible.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To increase awareness on livestock identification and traceability system (LITS) in the region, MS to make use of the regional guidelines and legal framework, communication materials and training manuals;
2. For LITS adoption and institutionalization, MS are encouraged to empower national LITS forums to ensure LITS is legislated with explicit laws that stipulate purposes and application;
3. As LITS operates to boost public health, food safety and trade in livestock and livestock products, it must be linked to trade for both livestock farmers and traders to appreciate system's socio-economic benefits;
4. MS to develop concept notes, on possible resource mobilization to support LITS legislation, adoption and institutionalization, and share them with ICPALD for resource mobilization;
5. While IGAD expressed willingness to readily provide expertise on request, MS are encouraged to develop national LITS databases but must always consider issues of ownership, accessibility and security, from the time of contracting software developers and in line with IGAD regional LITS guidelines;
6. While MS are encouraged to obtain membership of the International Committee for Animal Registration (ICAR), they are to assess training needs and request IGAD to organize training on cross-cutting issues for national LITS teams, including exposure to the ICAR regulations and ensure collaboration with it on capacity building in MS;
7. MS are encouraged to effectively engage the private sector in LITS funding, roll out and management. e.g. NEALCO can help mobilize the private sector in the region for active involvement in resource mobilization;
8. The meeting recommended that LITS forms part of all the future projects in the region and noted with concern that Uganda, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan lag behind on LITS adoption and require that the region (IGAD) embarks on developing a project to jump-start the process.

*The Regional Pastoral Livelihood Resilience Project (RPLRP) has expressed willingness to sponsor next 7<sup>th</sup> Regional LITS/AHC Coordination Meeting, which will tentatively take place in South Sudan.*





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