

# Drivers for animal welfare policies in Africa

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## Summary

Livestock in Africa represent on average 30% of the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) and about 10% of the national GDP. Up to 300 million people depend on livestock for their income and livelihood. Accordingly, livestock are considered to be important for the African continent. Despite this, little or no provision for animal welfare is made in the laws and regulations of most African countries. However, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Tool includes animal welfare as a critical competency in Veterinary Services, and most African countries have now conducted PVS appraisals. The development of a Regional Animal Welfare Strategy in Africa is also important because it will provide opportunities for full engagement by all relevant parties. Key elements in this process should include collaboration and coordination in information dissemination to all stakeholders, who should include all those in the value chain. The roles played by the OIE Member Delegates and Focal Points, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in driving animal welfare policy in most African countries are notable. Without a level of understanding of animal welfare that is sufficient to support clear animal welfare policy development and implementation, problems may appear in the near future which could jeopardise the attainment of increased animal productivity and product quality. This may have negative implications for economic growth and for national and international trade.

## Keywords

Animal welfare – Animal welfare legislation – Animal welfare policy – Coordination and collaboration – Economic growth – Performance of Veterinary Services Tool – Public engagement – Regional Animal Welfare Strategy.

## Introduction

In Africa, livestock represent an average of 30% of the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) and about 10% of the national GDP, and 250 to 300 million people depend on livestock for their income and livelihood (1). Human population growth and urbanisation are contributing to an increased demand for animal-sourced foods. There are opportunities for livestock-sector development to contribute to economic growth, food security and poverty reduction. However, the sector is at risk from animal diseases and inadequate investment aimed at enhancing its contribution to the development of the African continent (see: <http://pages.au.int/caadp>) (1). The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Tool (2) and PVS Gap Analysis (3) assist governments in identifying priorities to improve their Veterinary Services and to develop action and investment plans and indicators

to monitor the implementation process. Such initiatives aimed at improving Veterinary Services, supported and regulated nationally by clear policies and legislation, may be expected to promote both animal health and welfare.

The third OIE Strategic Plan for 2001 to 2005 included an animal welfare component and the proposal to establish an Animal Welfare Working Group in order to evaluate a wide range of animal welfare issues worldwide, taking into consideration the scientific, political and public attention being given to animal welfare. The recommendations of the Plan were endorsed during the annual OIE General Session in Paris in 2001 (4), and have been reaffirmed in subsequent OIE Strategic Plans (5). Also, the development of Regional Animal Welfare Strategies was seen to offer constructive opportunities for a holistic approach to advancing the welfare of animals in a number of ways, including the implementation of a suite of global animal welfare standards.

A great deal of work has been done to drive the process by drawing on scientific knowledge to provide a secure foundation for the standards. In addition, the OIE Delegates and Animal Welfare Focal Points play a major role. It is worth noting that significant progress has been made in different OIE regions. However, in some regions progress is slow because of insufficient capacity to formulate the necessary enabling animal welfare policies and legislation, and limited political will. All livestock farmers have an interest in protecting the health of their animals in order to increase production and generate income. Harnessing this desire could lead to a brighter future for animal welfare as it improves in parallel with animal health and productivity. It is anticipated that climate change will force the world to adopt new technologies to protect the environment. Likewise, for animals, appropriate measures will be needed to control animal health and welfare in the face of climate change.

## Animal welfare status

Globalisation has seen a revolution in the international trade in livestock and livestock products. In order for livestock keepers in Africa to benefit from this globalisation, changes will have to be made to their production systems. This will only be possible if appropriate policies are put in place to assist livestock keepers to adhere to the modern rules of trade. The OIE has been recognised as a reference organisation for guaranteeing the sanitary safety of world trade in livestock and livestock products. In the recent past, animal welfare has also emerged as a significant international trade issue.

However, developing countries, especially in Africa, have high human and livestock populations in rural areas and this has put pressure on pastures and rangelands; thus, making sufficient food available for animals is a challenge. In developing countries, animals that are of interest in terms of animal welfare include: working animals, production animals (milk and meat), companion animals, and wild and captive animals. However, animal welfare has not yet achieved a high political profile in developing countries, for example, none of the countries in the Southern African Development Community has a dedicated animal welfare policy or specific animal welfare legislation (6). Thus, animal welfare policies will have to be developed in Southern Africa. These policies should take into account the priorities of individual countries in ways that suit their particular national situation and culture, and are sustainable. Specific issues will need to be considered. For example, despite strong cultural beliefs about animals being a sign of wealth in Africa, mistreatment of livestock still occurs.

The pattern of animal welfare understanding and management is changing rapidly in Africa, with OIE

initiatives being major drivers of an improved awareness of animal welfare issues and their political importance. However, this change is occurring mainly by 'top-to-bottom' or 'top-down' approaches, and has not yet percolated through into society generally or, indeed, into wider political circles. Furthermore, most individuals who are driving animal welfare policy change in Africa overall, and in Southern African countries in particular, have had no formal training or education in animal welfare issues (6).

The World Assembly of OIE Delegates, representing 178 countries, has adopted 12 animal welfare standards since May 2005, including those on transportation, slaughter of livestock for human consumption, the killing of animals for disease control, stray dog control, the stunning and killing of farmed fish, the killing of fish for disease control purposes and production systems for beef cattle and broilers (4). The OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Southern Africa has been evaluating the status of animal welfare in its Member Countries as a basis for preparing a well-researched animal welfare strategic plan/policy for the region. It is worth noting the recommendations made during the three OIE Global Conferences on Animal Welfare that have taken place in recent years: the first in Paris, France, in 2004 (7), the second in Cairo, Egypt, in 2008 (8) and the third in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2012 (9). The regional implementation of the OIE Strategic Plan, which includes provisions on animal welfare, involves clearly delineated roles for the OIE and its Member Countries (5). Provisions for action, coordination and integrated planning on terrestrial and aquatic animal welfare at national, regional and global level are included. The OIE has developed tools for use by Member Countries, and it is anticipated that they will create or update their legislation relevant to animal welfare while developing programmes for animal welfare education and scientific research directed at key players such as veterinarians, livestock owners, animal handlers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

## International organisations as drivers of animal welfare

The OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)* contains standards for the quality of Veterinary Services (10) and the OIE PVS Tool is designed to help Veterinary Services in Member Countries to identify weaknesses in their ability to comply with these standards. In order to help countries tackle their weaknesses, the Reinforcing Veterinary Services in Africa Project has been established as part of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). This Project is supported by the African Union Commission/African Union-Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AUC/AU-IBAR) in

collaboration with the OIE, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (11). The CAADP is an expression of the desire of the African Heads of States and Governments to accelerate agriculture-led economic growth in Africa, with the ultimate goal of eliminating poverty and malnutrition across the continent under the 'New Partnership for Africa Development' initiative (12, 13). The main goal of CAADP is to raise agricultural productivity in Africa by at least 6% annually, with each country increasing its agriculture budget by 10%. When public investment plans are developed, livestock issues are not always included, which represents a missed opportunity to accelerate economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa as a whole. The AU-IBAR has been mandated by the African Union (AU) to assist its Member Countries to develop some practical tools for the inclusion of a livestock component in the CAADP compacts (11). It is within this tool that livestock investment plans which include policies relevant to animal welfare will be stipulated. These plans will take into consideration the outcomes of PVS Evaluations and PVS Gap Analysis (2, 3), because lack of the relevant capacity is anticipated to be a major obstacle to the implementation of the plans. An appreciation of the role of livestock at national and household levels helps to make a case for investments in the sector and to identify priority areas for intervention. These investments, however, should be placed in the context of the four CAADP pillars (1), which cover agriculture in their entirety:

- land and water management
- market access
- food supply and hunger
- agricultural research.

Other drivers of animal welfare include the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) ([www.iwto.org](http://www.iwto.org)), which recognises the OIE principles for animal welfare. It has endorsed best-practice guidelines for wool sheep production, taking into consideration the 'Five Freedoms' (14):

- freedom from hunger and thirst
- freedom from fear and distress
- freedom from discomfort
- freedom from pain, injury and disease
- freedom to express normal behaviour.

The National Wool Growers' Association of South Africa has developed a manual of best practice for wool sheep production and this is used as a source of official guidelines by wool-producing farmers and handlers of wool (15). It is envisaged that, in the near future, the IWTO will widen its network and strengthen its dialogue with its strategic partners, such as the OIE, FAO, the European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Consumers, the World

Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), and many others, in order to develop a Code of Best Practice (14). This Code will include reference to sustainability and environmental protection in the maintenance of healthy animals for better and high-quality production.

As regards the transport of animals, the OIE works with the Animal Transport Association (ATA) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) (16, 17). The need to comply with OIE standards on the transportation of animals remains a challenge in Africa. In Southern Africa, only with the transport of animals intended for sports, e.g. horses, does compliance reach acceptable levels.

Animal welfare has been included in the veterinary school curriculum in Africa, as a way of increasing professional knowledge of animal welfare by linking it with animal health. This initiative has been undertaken with support from an OIE-convened meeting of the Deans of veterinary schools in Africa (18). In addition, the World Veterinary Association and Commonwealth Veterinary Association play a major part as drivers for animal welfare improvement in Africa.

Within African countries there are many development partners working on various related issues, including:

- agriculture and fisheries
- wildlife and the environment
- biodiversity
- sustainable development
- environmental education
- health
- capacity-building (with NGOs).

Some partners have formulated their own animal welfare agendas, but most are still carrying out their development programmes on the ground without any animal welfare component. If these partners were to incorporate animal welfare into their existing work and programmes, this would contribute significantly to the level of awareness and understanding of animal welfare policies, especially as these organisations often operate programmes at the grass-roots level, e.g. agricultural extension and community training.

Also of relevance, the animal welfare movement in Africa has begun to organise itself into the Pan-African Animal Welfare Alliance (PAAWA), which has the potential to become a powerful advocacy force for animal welfare policies on the continent. The PAAWA has the support of WSPA, which has a regional office in Tanzania and has had a positive influence politically on the development of animal welfare policies in Africa (6).

All African countries are members of the AU, which has regional centres to facilitate its work. The AU has established the AU-IBAR, whose aim is to provide leadership in the development of animal resources for Africa (11). The Regional Economic Communities, such as the Southern African Development Community, have a mission to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socioeconomic development through effective production systems, deeper cooperation and integration, good governance and durable peace and security (19). These policies, however, do not include animal welfare issues.

The role of agricultural research stations has been important, because they have documented traditional knowledge on animal husbandry, produced up-to-date resources, and increased scientific understanding of animal welfare. Traditional knowledge and practices are particularly relevant and useful in designing development strategies and programmes that are suitable for small-scale agricultural production. Both traditional knowledge/experiences and practices of benefit to animal welfare could be spread through extension activities.

Currently, there is a 'top-down' approach to animal welfare in Africa, emanating from the OIE and its national delegates. The OIE standards have increased awareness of animal welfare and inspired the desire amongst the veterinary community to improve animal welfare nationally; however, the low level of political will has prevented these desires from being translated into tangible animal welfare guidelines and policies on the ground.

Another important driver identified has been the desire of some countries in the African region to secure lucrative export markets for their livestock and fisheries products. Some overseas markets, such as the European Union,

include animal welfare requirements for their imports, and countries are inspected for compliance (20). The premium prices received for quality export products are also a driver, as is the case, for example, with the Namibian free-range certified beef ('Natures Reserve') ([www.natures-reserve.co.uk](http://www.natures-reserve.co.uk)) produced in the Southern African region.

The real desire to tackle stray dog control throughout Africa has been driven by the need to combat rabies, and the public outcry that results if this is not done in a humane manner has led authorities to manage the problem in a way that is both humane and effective (21).

The other driving forces behind the development of animal welfare policies include the animal welfare movements in some African countries. Where these movements are well developed, they are able to contribute significantly to both public awareness and political will, using education, awareness programmes and advocacy. There are examples of good practice in Africa generally and in Southern Africa in particular, i.e. in Tanzania and South Africa. These could be used to encourage and inform the development of animal welfare policies throughout Africa (6).

Finally, the media have an important role to play as a driver of improvements in animal welfare. The spread of satellite television is enabling wide distribution of international programmes on animals and animal welfare in Africa. This is increasing awareness and, hopefully, will aid in policy formulation.

## Les moteurs des politiques du bien-être animal en Afrique

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### Résumé

Dans les pays africains, l'élevage représente, en moyenne, 30 % du produit intérieur brut (PIB) agricole et près de 10 % du PIB national. Près de 300 millions de personnes dépendent du bétail pour leurs revenus et leur subsistance. En conséquence, les animaux d'élevage sont considérés comme une richesse importante sur le continent africain. Or, dans la plupart des pays d'Afrique, le bien-être animal ne fait que rarement (ou pas du tout) l'objet de dispositions législatives ou réglementaires spécifiques. La prise en compte du bien-être animal est toutefois l'une des compétences critiques considérées dans l'Outil d'évaluation

des performances des Services vétérinaires (outil PVS) de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé animale (OIE), outil auquel ont déjà recouru la plupart des pays africains pour évaluer leurs Services vétérinaires. La mise en œuvre d'une stratégie régionale pour le bien-être animal en Afrique est également un facteur important, qui fournit aux principales parties prenantes une opportunité de s'engager pleinement dans ce processus. Parmi les éléments clés de celui-ci figurent la collaboration et la coordination pour diffuser les informations nécessaires auprès des différents acteurs intervenant dans la chaîne de valeur. Il convient également de souligner le rôle joué par les délégués et les points focaux de l'OIE, ainsi que par les organisations non gouvernementales pour promouvoir les politiques de bien-être animal dans la plupart des pays africains. En l'absence d'une bonne connaissance du bien-être animal, condition indispensable pour soutenir l'élaboration et la mise en œuvre de politiques bien définies dans ce domaine, des problèmes risquent de surgir dans un avenir proche, en menaçant les progrès accomplis en matière de productivité animale et de qualité des produits. Cela aura certainement des conséquences néfastes pour la croissance économique du commerce africain, tant au plan national qu'international.

#### **Mots-clés**

Bien-être animal – Collaboration – Coordination – Croissance économique – Engagement de l'État – Législation sur le bien-être animal – Outil d'évaluation des performances des Services vétérinaires – Politique du bien-être animal – Stratégie régionale pour le bien-être animal.



## **Motores de las políticas de bienestar animal en África**

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#### **Resumen**

En los países africanos la ganadería representa, en promedio, un 30% del producto interior bruto (PIB) agrícola y alrededor de un 10% del PIB nacional. Hasta 300 millones de personas dependen de ella para ganarse el sustento y vivir. De ahí que en el continente africano se considere tan importante el ganado, pese a lo cual en las leyes y reglamentos de la mayoría de los países africanos brillan por su ausencia las disposiciones relativas al bienestar animal. No obstante, la herramienta de evaluación de la eficacia de los Servicios Veterinarios (PVS) de la Organización Mundial de Sanidad Animal (OIE) incluye el bienestar animal como una de las competencias fundamentales de todo Servicio Veterinario, y la mayor parte de los países africanos ya han llevado a cabo evaluaciones con arreglo al método PVS. También es importante la formulación de una estrategia regional africana de bienestar animal, pues ello abrirá las puertas para que todos los interlocutores del sector participen plenamente en la empresa. Entre otros elementos básicos, el proceso debe integrar una labor de colaboración y coordinación para difundir información entre todas las partes interesadas, incluidas cuantas intervengan en la cadena de creación de valor. También es notable la función que cumplen los delegados y puntos focales de la OIE, así como las organizaciones no gubernamentales, a la hora de impulsar las políticas de bienestar animal en la mayoría de los países africanos. En un futuro próximo, a falta de un nivel de comprensión del bienestar animal suficiente para secundar la elaboración y aplicación de políticas claras en la materia, es posible que aparezcan problemas que comprometan el logro de un mayor nivel de productividad animal y calidad de los productos, lo que a su vez puede lastrar el crecimiento económico y el comercio nacional e internacional.

**Palabras clave**

Bienestar animal – Colaboración – Coordinación – Crecimiento económico – Estrategia regional de bienestar animal – Herramienta de evaluación de la eficacia de los Servicios Veterinarios (PVS) – Legislación de bienestar animal – Participación pública – Política de bienestar animal.



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