

Africa: Uganda's Animal Genetic Centre Positioned As a Leader in Africa

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The National Animal Genetic Resources Centre and Data Bank (NAGRC&DB) was established by the Animal Breeding Act, 2001.

It's one of the statutory semi-autonomous bodies of the ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF). NAGRC&DB's core mandate is the commercialization for the production, conservation, and promotion of efficient and effective delivery of animal genetic resources in Uganda.

The overall goal is to contribute to the transformation of the agricultural sector by enhancing sustainable livestock productivity through conservation and improvement of animal genetic resources.

The vision and mission to guide attainment of this goal are "to be a leader in profitable production and efficient delivery of animal genetic resources and services in Eastern and Central Africa" and "to establish a comprehensive and sustainable National Animal Breeding Program which meets the commercial and developmental interests of the actors along the livestock subsector value chains", respectively.

Currently the NAGRC&DB strategy focuses on:

1. Enhancing animal genetic improvement efforts for increased animal production and productivity
2. Conservation of animal biodiversity and sustainable utilization and development of indigenous animal genetic resources
3. Strengthening institutional capacity, growth and development
4. Establishing client oriented services, collaborations and entrepreneurship, and 5. Establishing a national animal information resource and development center.

In working towards achieving her goal, NAGRC&DB has continued to engage in several commercialisation activities which include

(i) availing for salesmen, eggs, ova, embryos and associated equipment; (ii) managing 12 farms for production, selection and sale of superior dams and sires to the community; (iii) managing sire studs for production and sale of semen; (iv) producing and selling liquid nitrogen and associated equipment; (v) producing and selling founder brood stock of fisheries resources; (vi) partnering farmers through pathways such as open nucleus breeding schemes and (vii) procuring and selling breeding and reproduction equipment.

Among the development activities, NAGRC&DB serves as (i) both a National and regional animal genetic data bank (ii) national Central Livestock Registry; (iii) national animal genetic resources evaluation Centre and Laboratory; (iv) national and regional gene depository and examination centre for Genetic materials (v) quarantine and evaluation center for imported genetic materials; (vi) a national center for training technicians on assisted reproductive techniques and (vii) the national center of excellence for training of farmers in aspects of animal, poultry and fish breeding.



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Through these development and commercial activities, NAGRC&DB ensures that Ugandan livestock farmers have access to affordable and quality animal breeds and lines suitable for the different agro-ecological zones and farming systems.

In a way of positioning itself as a leader in efficient delivery of animal genetic resources and services in East and Central Africa, NAGRC&DB has established state-of-the-art facilities, which include, among others, a modern liquid nitrogen plant with a production capacity of 89 litres per hour, thus positioning it as the biggest liquid nitrogen producer in the Eastern African region; a semen-processing facility with a production capacity of 12,000 semen straws per hour and a modern embryo transfer laboratory with experts trained from some of the best laboratories in the world.

In order to improve production and productivity of livestock in Uganda, NAGRC&DB has embarked on community-based animal breeding outreach program (CBBOP), a strategy aimed at revolutionising livestock farming in Uganda.

Under CBBOP, farmers in the various agro-ecological zones of Uganda are supported with high-quality animal genetics that respond to market needs. The approach is foreseen to generate crossbred beef and dairy animals with enriched genetic merit such as attainment of a slaughter weight of over 350kg at 18 months for beef and production capacity of over 30kg of milk per cow per day for dairy breeds.

The author is the executive director of The National Animal Genetic Resources Centre and Data Bank.

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