

---

## EDITORIAL

The need for conservation of Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) is more and more accepted and activities in this field are implemented everywhere. As regards FAO, a meeting was held with CATIE in Costa Rica (see page 3) to describe the status of AnGR in Central America and propose some urgent activities. A similar meeting is scheduled for Africa in early 1993. Projects aiming at the description and conservation of regional Animal Genetic Resources are being prepared for Africa within the Global Environment Facility and for Asia in collaboration with the Japanese Government. Numerous institutions and private organizations such as ILRAD, ILCA and IEMVT, have included these concerns in their future programmes, not to speak of private initiatives being implemented in several african countries.

At country level several institutions are already active at a real scale, such as CENARGEN in Brazil (see page 9), CPBR in the South of France (see page 33) or CIRCELO in Italy (to be published in N° 11). Papers describing such national activities are most welcome.

It is now accepted that conservation means both preservation and improvement of local breeds. Preservation can be either *in situ* or *ex situ*. In both cases there is a place for preservation of living animals and FAO has recently published a manual describing the principles and main realizations, giving also guidelines for the initiation of such programmes (see page 4).

Improvement of local breeds is mostly impaired by the lack of performance recording in developing countries. ONBS could be a way to overcome this difficulty, since only a screening is undertaken on farm level and all the precise performance recording is done within the nucleus. However, field implementation of ONBS is not always easy, mainly due to difficulties in getting the farmers' participation. A workshop will be held in Gambia in October 1992 to discuss the various aspects of the practical implementation of ONBS in West Africa and to elaborate guidelines.

All these activities must rely on a precise knowledge of the characteristics of local breeds. Of utmost importance is the determination of genetic distances between breeds, and of the degree of uniqueness of the breeds to preserve. DNA technologies will be the tools for these studies and FAO, jointly with UNEP, has started promoting training on DNA technologies and their use for Animal Genetic Resources conservation and improvement. A first course was held in Brisbane, Australia (see page 4). Two others will hopefully be organized in the next two years.