“If it can’t be measured, it tends to be ignored”

The case of livestock data in Uganda

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"If it can’t be measured, it tends to be ignored": The case of livestock data in Uganda

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Uganda has a rich and diverse animal resource base comprised of 11.4 million cattle, 12.5 million goats, 3.4 million sheep, 3.2 million pigs and 97.4 million chickens (UBOS, 2008) and livestock constitutes an important part of rural livelihoods. In response to increasing recognition of the importance of reliable, timely, and accessible livestock data for planning and investment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), is working with the Livestock Data Innovation Project (http://www.afrilivestockdata.org/afrilivestock/) which is a US$ 2.5 million initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and jointly implemented by the African Union – Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Bank, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI).

The Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), including the Department of Animal Production and Marketing and the Department of Livestock Health and Entomology in the Directorate of Animal Resources, is mandated to formulate and implement livestock sector policies, plans and programmes, as well as to control and manage animal epidemic diseases. The Ministry and the Project highlight the fact that missing and inaccurate livestock data constrain the sector’s development. At the 8th Conference of Ministers Responsible for Animal Resources in Africa (Entebbe, Uganda, 13-14 May 2010) on ‘Improving access to markets for African Animal Resources to significantly contribute to economic growth and reduction of poverty’, the Ministers:

- recognizing that the current policy and institutional environment in the Animal Resources sector is not conducive [...];
- recognizing the need for reliable data, tools and mechanisms to develop quality investment plans [...];
- urge Member States to enhance capacity for timely collection, analysis and sharing of quality data to guide policy.

Reliable livestock data and statistics are critical for MAAIF’s mandate, and generated by a variety of sources, including administrative records, surveys and censuses.

(i) Administrative records livestock data are routinely collected by Local Governments in all the 112 districts of the country on a continuous basis.

(ii) Agricultural surveys are administered every year or few years to a nationally representative sample of households on a multiplicity of their characteristics, and include some livestock-related questions. They are usually conducted by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS).

(iii) Agricultural and livestock censuses are conducted about every ten years and collect a limited set of information from every household in the country. They provide the gold standard data against which administrative records data and surveys can be corrected and judged. They are usually carried out jointly by MAAIF and UBOS.

The project builds on the evidence that in Uganda (i) there are opportunities for a rapid, equitable growth of the livestock sector: on the demand side, population growth,
urbanization and gains in real per capita are associated with increased consumption of animal products; on the supply side, small scale producers keep a large share of the livestock, but in most cases are unable to satisfy the expanding demand for livestock products. (ii) In most Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, lack or inadequate livestock data and indicators prevent both the public and private sector from designing policies and making investments that effectively contribute to poverty reduction and livestock sector development, i.e. that help smallholders access and benefit from the growing market for animal food.

The initiatives are in line with the Uganda National Development Plan 2010/11 – 2014/15 which indicate that: “Statistics are an integral part of the enabling infrastructure for national development”. They are important for public policy and programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Statistics are critical to national development planning and implementation of private sector, civil society and academic research activities’