

Food Security: the Contribution of Livestock

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ABSTRACT

Food security is discussed as that basic level of food necessary for survival, and beyond that for basic nutrition. The paper illustrates how livestock continually contribute essentially to both survival and nutritional health. It notes that the major contribution of livestock, apart from luxury animal products consumed by the wealthy middle classes, is through those pastoralists and integrated small farmers that feed themselves and their families and to the urban poor through often compromised products. It is estimated that perhaps 1.5 billion persons that currently benefit from livestock products may be compromised if extant pastoral and in particular small integrated farms are not supported in animal science research and national food security plans.

Keywords: Food security, Animal science, Livestock, Nutrition, Protein, Micro-nutrients, Research

INTRODUCING FOOD SECURITY

Food security is probably the major global issue. Where food is scarce, governance is weak and all security is compromised. This has been the case since Empires and States began and may be traced back into prehistory as the basis of a tribe's or a nation's security. Today, we think we are more sophisticated than that. But we are not – and with a burgeoning population, instant international communication and enhanced means of fleeing from disastrous events, food security is not only the first principle of national security, but also of international security. Migration can undo the best intentions of precarious States while also undermining the lifestyles of protected economies. It is thus a primary responsibility of government and international development to ensure that conflicts and disasters do not threaten access to the most basic forms of food that a population needs to survive. This paper explains how livestock form a key part of such food and national security.

The food security of the 1996 World Food Summit stated that 'food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences