

EDITORIAL

A major step forward in the development of a global strategy for the Conservation and Management of Animal Genetic Resources Programme took place during the latter part of 1983. An Expert Panel of 36 eminent animal geneticists (see pages 37-39) was established jointly by FAO and UNEP and held its first meeting. The scientists have competence and experience in the different aspects of animal breeding and genetics. While they were appointed by virtue of their individual professional stature, and not as representatives of national governments, they are in fact drawn from 28 countries, and thus, are experienced in the needs, resources and opportunities of all parts of the world, including developing and developed, socialist and capitalist, north and south, tropical and temperate. They also have expertise in the major species of domestic animals and birds. Additionally they provide links with the various Regional Organizations engaged in animal breeding and genetic improvement work.

Their task is to advise the Director-General of FAO and the Executive Director of UNEP on all aspects of Animal Genetic Resources Conservation and Management. This work will be undertaken by periodic meetings, and by correspondence. The meetings will bring together those Panel Members best qualified to address the issues under consideration at that time. Approximately half the Panel Members were present at the first meeting in Rome in October 1983, a report of which is given on page 36.

The definition of Conservation was debated at the first meeting. The Panel affirmed and adopted the definition used by the World Conservation Strategy, which makes it clear that Conservation is not, as some have supposed, simply Preservation.

Conservation is the management of human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations. Thus conservation is positive, embracing preservation, maintenance, sustainable utilization, restoration and enhancement of natural resources.

This issue of AGRI provides prominence to the Criollo cattle, a unique animal genetic resource of the Americas, already threatened by the introduction both of other *Bostaurus* and also by *Bos indicus* cattle, but having much to offer in the future as well as having been immensely important in the past. The comprehensive review is therefore of greater length than normal for articles in this Newsletter because of the continuing importance of Criollo cattle in many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.