

# Business & Economy

## Livestock: Ethiopia's extra potential to stimulate the economy

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With all the gifts the world offers, Africa is considered as the most resourceful continent in the world. As a result, African countries have been labeled as the source units of the world.

Ethiopia, in this regard, has so many assets to provide to the world. Apart from its heritages, Ethiopia is rich in livestock resource. According to the report from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Ethiopia's name is placed first by the largest livestock population in Africa. The report also stated, "Livestock is a major source of animal protein, power for crop cultivation, means of transportation, export commodities, manure for farmland and household energy, security in times of crop failure, and means of wealth accumulation. The sector contributed up to 40 percent of agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP), nearly 20 percent of total GDP, and 20 percent of national foreign exchange earnings".

The Ethiopian livestock population is almost entirely composed of indigenous animals, the report disclosed. Albeit Ethiopia has been registered such place in livestock resources, many queries have been raised regarding the production and productivity. Many reports and even experts proved that Ethiopia is not using its livestock resources effectively when it is compared with other neighboring countries.

Having stayed with The Ethiopian Herald, Principal scientist at International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Dr. Tadelle Dessie has mentioned the current facts about Ethiopia's livestock resources. He disclosed that it is true that Ethiopia is one of the leading homes for livestock resources in the world. "When we say Ethiopia is the first in livestock resources in Africa and ninth in the world, it doesn't mean that we are the first in livestock production, economic and other advantages from the sector. All these places are regarding the quantity of livestock in the country." The scientist further mentioned that its first position in Africa and ninth in the world's rank shows the country has enough livestock resource.

Supporting the researcher's idea, Million Yote (PhD), Vice Administrator and Office Head of Dale Woreda Animals' Resource at Sidama Regional State stressed that in many parts of the country, having a number of livestock expresses the social status of an individual. It depicts that the individual is rich. The saddest part is that the society only sees the number not the productivity and benefit that the individual gains from them.

Dr. Tadelle noted that Ethiopian farmers especially in the highland and lowland areas have numerous livestock resources. It is not for the purpose of economic advantages or maximizing productivity; rather it is for rearing farm oxen capitalize on the number. For this reason, they need to have a number



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More effort is needed to gain appropriate benefit from animals' resources

of farm oxen for substitution. All they need is the number not the productivity rate. This implies that the nation loses what it should get from the sector due to the farmers' lack of lucid perception towards diversified benefit of livestock resource.

Unless concerted effort is exerted in order to change the current mind set of the farmers, the scientist elaborated that the whole system of the sector is in a circle that changes nothing. Besides, the scientist said, "Our farmers are not market-oriented." For this reason, farmers do the rearing not for the purpose of creating market-based economy and escalating productivity. Let assume that the farmers are market-oriented and even if they are, due to the products' expensive price, the local consumer does not want to buy the products, so that these products become luxury for the people these days.

Dr. Million also supports the above idea about the price of livestock products. He said that the price of livestock products is getting higher and higher from time to time nowadays.

According the Dr. Tadelle, there are pull and push factors that determine the situation. If the pull factor takes the upper hand that promotes the products to be on the market, farmers will be initiated to invest on those products to be provided to the market. Currently, the market lacks the pull factor. On the other side, the push factor is from the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry pushes the farmers to produce desirable animals on the market via providing various trainings and awareness sessions for farmers, but such

pressures will make no difference in the productivity unless proper market is created.

Dr. Million Further said, "There is a huge gap in productivity. Though we are the first in number, even our neighbor, Kenya, produces three folds of products compared to us."

Based on the USAID report and according to the scientist, 99 percent of Ethiopian sheep and goats and 95 percent of Ethiopian cattle are indigenous. Dr. Tadelle disclosed that Ethiopian breeds have their own qualities when they are compared with other countries' breeds.

"Our breeds are hardship resilient and easily adaptive. With all the nutrition quality and loads of diseases, our livestock can provide a certain amount of products. Such kind of environment is not suitable for crossbreed animals. They could not resist this hostile environment. These crossbreeds need suitable atmosphere than ours. This shows that our breeds are much better," Dr. Tadelle underscored.

The scientist added that the responsibility to study their entire genetic features relies on local scientists to acquire advanced knowledge about the existing status of the animals. To this end, various and immense studies are taken place at the moment especially on genetic characterizations of the breeds. "We are striving to understand the whole genetic frameworks of the breeds. In this regard, we have published a book on the genetic frameworks of all Ethiopian livestock. The book is found in the Ethiopian

National Museum," he disclosed.

So as to modernize the system and to aware the farmers to use updated systems, Dr. Tadelle mentioned that International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) has supported the government with all efforts. For instance, it provided a strategic support so that they developed a ten years livestock master plan. This master plan shows ways to uplift the entire Ethiopian livestock. Not only that, few weeks later from now, the institution will announce the ten years Poultry Development Strategy and there are many in the pipeline.

Moreover, Dr. Tadelle stated that in the agriculture sector, many things go together. To illustrate, if the farmers start using mechanized farming, the livestock sector will bounce immediately. Farmers will also prefer crossbreed animals to maximize their productivity. This kind of transformation, however, needs a policy change. The whole system needs to change in order to get what is desired.

With the current global situation, Ethiopia still feels the heat. Even though it has the resource, it still imports livestock products. Besides, one of the prominent problems seen in the livestock sector is that the growth of the country's economic productivity is not equivalent with the population growth rate. With little resources, countries like Netherlands feed the whole Europe including Russia in its dairy products. This is because the country has small resources with the best outcomes. On the contrary, with all its resources, Ethiopia could not earn what it should get, the scientist said.

Dr. Tadelle has highlighted the major challenges. According to him, Ethiopia needs to work on fodder especially on quality and quantity. The other point that needs consideration is health care essential to have healthy animals. Health care service should be upgraded to meet the intended achievement. Functionality of this service requires the farmers to pay for the service they get. In addition, it is imperative to work on upgrading the genetics and to facilitate favorable market linkage from the government and the stakeholders' side.

For the coming days, as to Dr. Tadelle, it is a must to work on transforming the traditional agriculture system to a mechanized farming for better outcome. Equally, it is vital to work on the land policy aiming to create favorable conditions for investors. In addition, the government should create different packages for those who are willing to invest in the livestock sector.

To wrap up the ideas, Ethiopia has a great amount of livestock resources but it hasn't got the desirable benefits. Therefore, the government along with the responsible stakeholders should work to uplift the sector. New and updated policies need to be implemented, and also favorable environments should be created for those who invest in the sector.