Dairy Asia dialogue: Yak milk production

Strengthening cooperation and partnership between yak husbandry countries

Batbaatar Bayarmagnai
CEO & coordinator, Dairy Asia

Introduction / Background

Cow milk accounts for 81% of world milk production followed by buffalo milk with 15%, goat milk with 2%, sheep milk with 1%, camel milk with 0.5%, and other dairy species (yak milk, mare milk, etc.) with 0.5% (FAO)

As an action network, Dairy Asia is highly focused on both cow milk and non-cow milk production and hosts a series of Dairy Asia dialogues in the region. Domestic yak is descended from the wild yak. Asia is a home continent of domestic yaks.

Domestic yaks located in Asian highlands. (Mountain Sayan, Khangai, Altai, Tian Shan, Pamir, Hindu Kush Karakoram, Kunlun, Qilian, Tibetan Plateau, Hengduan, and Himalaya)

Yaks provide major income opportunities to many indigenous people living across higher altitude regions. (Countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and a part of East Siberia in Russia)

Methods / Approach

Cooperated with FAO, GASS, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia, Department of Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests of Bhutan, National Dairy Development Board of Nepal, National Research Center on Yak in India, IDF, Yurta Association, Dairy Association of China, “Treasure of Plateau” enterprise in China, the joint Dairy Asia dialogue: Yak milk production was held on 19th November 2021.

Results

The number of yaks in Asia is estimated at 17.3 million.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Yaks Population (M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>901.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main dairy products:
- yak milk cheese, yak liquid milk, yogurt, curd, ghee, butter, and fermented milk.

Facing challenges in yak husbandry countries:
- Harsh winter combined with droughts, rangeland degradation, worsened genetics, declining feeding resources, milk quality and safety, insufficient veterinary service, poor infrastructure, not enough market linkage (middle man), migration of yak herders to urban, aging yak herders, low recognition, insufficient in depth research, lack of supportive policy and regulations.

Conclusions / Significance

Yak milk production may play an important role in non-cow milk production, nutrition security, rural livelihood, and regional sustainable development. Yak husbandry is one of the most eco-friendly sub-sectors in the global livestock that has a unique culture based on the nomadic lifestyle and special natural ecosystems.

From the joint Dairy Asia dialogue, new initiative for the establishment of the World Yak Association in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia have been proposed. Dairy Asia is calling on international organizations and national institutions in highlighted countries to cooperate on the proposed project.

Project proposal:
- Strengthening cooperation and partnership between yak husbandry countries.
  - Organize the joint webinars and activities: yak husbandry, yak genetics, raw material (milk, wool, meat) management, value chain development, and GI & GIASH introduction.
  - Establish the focal points in the projected countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan and Tajikistan based on the Dairy Asia network.
  - Launch and operate the www.worldyak.com platform.
  - Promote and support the knowledge and good practices sharing in the yak husbandry.
  - Develop the hard book of “World Yak”.
  - Support the yak herders’ cooperatives in the countries.
  - Formulate and draft of the charter of the World Yak Association in Mongolia.
  - Co-organize the World Yak Forum in Mongolia.
  - Announce and cooperate with World Yak Ambassador.
  - Launch and operate the brand E-fair on yak product (milk, meat, wool...) and producers.
  - Initiate the World Yak Day.

Strengthening cooperation and partnership between yak husbandry countries through establishing World Yak Association will be a good call for rural livelihood improvement, sustainable livestock, balanced ecosystem, and rural development.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Vinod Ahuja, FAO representative in Mongolia, Mr. T. Jambaltseren, State Secretary, MoFAI, Mr. Towchu Rabgay, Chief officer, Research and Extension Division, Department of Livestock, Bhutan, Mr. Babu Kaji Panta, Deputy Executive Director, National Dairy Development Board of Nepal, Mr. J. Tsogtbaatar, officer, Livestock Department, MoFAI, Mr. S. Tsogtgee, Dairy consultant, Mr. Jiang Yanshi, Chief engineer, Mr. Siqian Wang, Founder & Chairman, “Treasure of Plateau” in China, Mr. G. Temuulen, Member of the Mongolian parliament, President of Mongolian Yak Association, Mr. Santiago Benites, Founder & Director, Yurta Association, Dr. Mihir Sarkar, Director, ICAR-National Research Center on Yak in India.

References/Links

www.dairyasia.org