



## N e w s   R e l e a s e

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### **Why goats are good for development – and the environment**

FARM-Africa has reacted with astonishment at the recent claims by the World Land Trust in the media this week and wants to put the record straight.

First of all, why does the World Land Trust think poor people in Africa keep livestock?

In many situations keeping livestock is the only means of livelihood because rainfall is too low to grow crops.

Poor people benefit from increased protein from milk and eggs to raise the quality of their mainly cereal based diets and the sale of live animals generates income for livestock keepers.

In harsh arid environments such as Northern Kenya, goats and camels are the only animals that can help poor people survive – there is simply no alternative.

Dr Christie Peacock, Chief Executive of FARM-Africa and author of *Improving Goat Production in the Tropics - A Manual for Development Workers* said, “Environmental degradation in Africa, as elsewhere, needs to be looked at over a long period and is caused by changing factors. For example, in many parts of Africa local people will tell you that they used to own large herds of cattle and sheep but now all they can keep are goats. There is an obvious connection between one and the other. Goats are able to survive in the resulting degraded environments with sparse vegetation, because they are tough enough to survive in these environments, and are erroneously blamed for creating them.”

“Most erosion is caused by loss of ground cover, particularly grass, from heavy grazing by sheep which pull out grass by the roots and well-trodden cattle tracks turning into eroded gullies. Not to mention man cutting down trees. The World Land Trust is obviously still stuck with the colonial prejudice, convinced of the existence of the axe-wielding goat of Africa. They cite the UN’s Food and Agriculture 42-year-old study into the deforestation in the Mediterranean Basin specifying goats as the primary cause. This is a well-known unique case and can happen in island habitats. There are other cases documented in the Pacific islands, where shipwrecked goats went on to breed and decimate the vegetation. But these are isolated cases.

“Goats are the poor man’s cow and on small farms in densely populated areas, if penned and environmentally managed as they are in FARM-Africa’s projects, can provide a route out of poverty – providing the opportunity to go to school, eat properly and pay for medical bills.

Smallholder farmers in Africa have few options to increase their incomes and improve their lives. Landholdings are small, 0.5-2ha, on which maize, beans and coffee are grown. Livestock are an important asset and source of income.

FARM-Africa cross-breeds local African goats with British Toggenburgs producing a hardy dairy goat, which will deliver up to three litres of milk a day (compared with 200mls from a local African goat).

FARM-Africa supplies protein-rich fodder crops, grown on family plots and is then cut and carried to the goats, which are penned in raised houses three feet off the ground. The goats are fed in their stalls.

In this way, the environment benefits. In addition, the goat manure falls through the slats in the flooring and is used on the family’s plot, enriching the soil and increasing crop productivity.

“Because these cross-bred goats are such high milk yielders, they are highly valued and command high prices. As a result, the goats are used exclusively for breeding.

“The people we work with are amongst the poorest in their community – they rarely eat any kind of meat – their main diet is maize. So the income people derive from goats is mainly from milk and selling live animals for breeding.

“FARM-Africa has been invited to advise the Kenyan and Tanzanian Governments to inform their national goat strategy so that more poor communities can benefit.”

“I would urge people to carrying on supporting charities like FARM-Africa and ignore ill-informed and irresponsible criticisms of this kind.”

## **ENDS**

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**Note to Editors: Christie Peacock, Chief Executive, is available for interview in London.**

***FARM-Africa aims to reduce poverty by developing innovative approaches to natural resource management in Africa. The charity works with small-scale farmers and herders, prioritising pastoral development, community forest management and smallholder development & land reform.***

***FARM-Africa stands for Food and Agricultural Research Management-Africa and works in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda.***

**Visit FARM-Africa’s website at [www.farmafrica.org.uk](http://www.farmafrica.org.uk)**

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