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منظمة  
الغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

# COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

## Twenty-fifth Session

Rome, 26-30 September 2016

International Year of Camelids

## Executive Summary

In accordance with article IV.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee on Agriculture, the Director-General received a request from the Plurinational State of Bolivia for an item entitled "International Year of Camelids" (Annex 1) to be added to the agenda of the 25th Session of the Committee on Agriculture. The Plurinational State of Bolivia submitted the attached background letter to the Secretariat on 11 August 2016 (Annex 2).

Camelids are the main means of subsistence for millions of families who live in the most hostile ecosystems on the planet in over 90 countries.

These animals are essential for food security and nutrition as they are the main source of meat protein and milk for smallholder farmers and indigenous communities in different regions throughout the world. They also provide fibres, organic fertilizer and transport and are indispensable for nomadic livelihoods.

The document examines the opportunities and benefits that could be generated by declaring an International Year of Camelids for contributing towards the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and FAO Strategic Objectives.

## Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to examine the proposal submitted by the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the United Nations system to establish 2018 as the International Year of Camelids and provide guidance as it sees fit, in accordance with FAO policy on the proclamation and celebration of international years (C 2013/LIM/15).

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mr457

*Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:*

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## I. BACKGROUND

1. Efforts already made by FAO to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, in particular, those FAO mandates linked to promoting food security and nutrition to eradicate hunger, are clearly expressed in the successful experiences of International Years celebrated in the last decade, as they have contributed to the dissemination of best practices, which has been a catalyst for specific actions.
2. The great potential offered by camelids will contribute in the fight against hunger (SDG 2), as well as helping to tackle extreme poverty (SDG 1). The optimization of the many qualities of camelids (meat, milk, fibre, means of transport) would also contribute to guaranteeing food security and nutrition, providing sustainable livelihoods and promoting the inclusion of communities that benefit from these animals. The participation of women working with camelid fibres and involved in pastoral work is relatively high, which significantly encourages the empowerment of women (SDG 5).
3. Camelids can clearly help promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15) and, therefore, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and stem the loss of biological diversity.

## II. OVERVIEW

4. Camelids are the main means of subsistence for millions of families who live in the most hostile ecosystems on the planet. Their life expectancy depends on one of seven species of camelids, animals that not only embody their means for survival, but that also represent the hope of securing a long-desired improvement in their livelihoods.
5. Camelids are the main source of protein throughout South America's extensive Andean highlands as well as in the majority of deserts in Africa, Asia and Australia. Meat from these animals guarantees daily food for thousands of people. They also provide fibre for clothes for indigenous communities to keep warm as well as producing organic fertilizer that guarantees scarce agricultural production of limited crops for subsistence, which not only feeds them, but helps produce one of the only forms of income generation, as their products can be sold at local informal markets. The animals also serve as transport for products and people.
6. Old World camelid species, camels (wild and domestic) and dromedaries are crucial for nomadic life, governed by transhumance in search of pastures, used as beasts of burden, they are sometimes called “ships of the desert” because of their capacity for survival in the worst of circumstances, travelling vast distances and going for long periods without water.
7. In the case of South American camelids, the four existing species (llama, alpaca, vicuña and guanaco) were the main livestock in pre-Hispanic times, and are considered a unique species of indigenous mammals from the continent. These species also symbolize an important element in the cultural identity of ancestral indigenous communities.
8. One of the many virtues of camelids throughout the ninety countries is their gentle nature and eco-friendly consumption of the limited plant resources available in arid and semi-arid grasslands. As a species they are the least contaminant of all ruminants in terms of greenhouse gases produced. The role of camelids in food security is crucial for communities living in these ecosystems, where other livestock species would be unable to survive, let alone be able to produce food and subsistence for local communities. There are success stories of camelids being introduced into Australia, where many locals have found that they have become their most trusted allies.

### **III. OBJECTIVE OF THE PROPOSAL**

9. The aim of an International Year is to educate public opinion and governments on the importance of recognizing and valuing the economic and social importance of camelids in the lives of communities that are highly susceptible and vulnerable to extreme poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition.

10. The huge potential of camelids would help to reduce levels of extreme poverty, given that optimizing their multiple qualities (meat, milk, fibre, means of transport) would help increase income and resources as well as guaranteeing sustainable livelihoods and reducing hunger and malnutrition. In summary, the integrated management of camelid products will promote community inclusivity and help to create sustainable employment as well as promote equality.

11. Livestock farming serves an important and complex function, contributing to sustainable agricultural development of food security and nutrition, and boosts the exploitation of livestock potential as a sustainable livelihood in combined small-scale agricultural systems for food security and nutrition. Ninety percent of alpacas and all of the llamas in the Central Andes of South America are owned by thousands of small-scale producers. Therefore, breeding these two species is an economic activity essential for sustainability, especially when taking into account the high protein and low cholesterol contents of camelid meat, which in these terms is better than sheep, beef, pork, goat and chicken meat.

### **IV. ACTIVITIES**

12. Once the proposal is accepted, the lessons learned from activities implemented in previous International Years will help in the preparation of an action agenda and activities to be developed at local regional and global levels, as well as in the compilation of a calendar of activities.

Annex 1

**The Plurinational State of Bolivia**

**Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

To: Professor Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General, Rome, Italy

Ref.: **VRE-DGRM-USEC-Cs-527/2016**

La Paz, 7 July 2016

Mr Director-General,

I have the honour of addressing you in relation to the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) to be held from 26 to 30 September 2016 at the Organization's headquarters.

I would be most grateful if you could include Bolivia's proposal to make 2018 the International Year of Camelids as an item of the provisional agenda during the COAG sessions so that it can be given due consideration.

Mr Director-General, please be assured that Bolivia is committed to working together with the FAO Secretariat on handling the material and information required to present the topic at the COAG.

Yours with the greatest and most distinguished respect.

Stamped: José Crespo Fernández, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, a.i.

Annex 2

**The Plurinational State of Bolivia - Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Permanent Representation to the United Nations agencies in Rome: FAO-IFAD-WFP

**Bolivian Embassy in Italy**

To: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Office of the Director-General,  
Rome

Ref.: **EBIT-EVI 048.07.16**

The Permanent Representation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations agencies in Rome: FAO-IFAD-WFP gives its warmest greetings to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Office of the Director-General, and encloses the letter from Ambassador José Crespo Fernández, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, a.i., addressed to FAO Director-General Mr Graziano da Silva, which proposes that the International Year of Camelids should be an item on the Agenda of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG).

The Permanent Representation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations agencies in Rome: FAO-IFAD-WFP takes this opportunity to pledge its greatest and most distinguished respect to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Office of the Director-General.

Rome, 7 July 2016

Stamped: Bolivian Embassy, Rome