

- **Corporate control.** Three companies own 90% of poultry genetics worldwide (Tyson, Hendrix, EWG). These foreign-owned breeds are crossed with indigenous birds and marketed in Africa as “local” or “improved local” or “improved traditional” breeds. This is misleading! They are exotic hybrids!
- **The myth that our local chickens are not profitable:** One of the main constraints to valuing local chicken breeds is the widespread perception that they are unprofitable compared to commercial breeds. This idea, often conveyed by intensive production systems and input chains, leads many breeders and decision-makers to favor improved strains (hybrid, exotic), to the detriment of local genetic resources.
- **Hybrids cannot be reproduced.** Farmers must buy new stock regularly, creating dependency on those three companies which ultimately own genetics.
- **Biodiversity is at risk.** If farmers cross exotic hybrids with their indigenous flocks, we lose our local strains. And yet African communities cherish local breeds for their taste and their longstanding role in cultural events, household savings and social dynamics.
- **Dependency on industrial feed.** Industrial poultry feed – which is made up of soybeans, maize and nutrients – is 70% of the cost of production for farmers who go into industrial chicken farming, even just semi-intensively. The adoption of industrial feed creates dependency and debt. And the soybeans and maize being used for this feed are increasingly GMOs.
- **Dependency on industrial vaccines.** Hybrid chicks come pre-vaccinated. This creates dependence on animal pharmaceutical companies rather than building local resistance to pests and disease. This can increase the risk of pandemics through avian flu outbreaks.
- **Poor nutrition for consumers.** The meat of fast-growing hybrids (like Ross 308) contains less protein, more fat and more water than the meat of indigenous chickens. The same is true of eggs produced by local breeds vs the exotic breeds. The use of antibiotics on caged birds can result in high risks of salmonella and reduced nutrition from the eggs.

- **Industrial chickens are taking over.** Large-scale factory farm operations are being pushed to meet Africa's growing needs for chicken, the cheapest and most popular form of animal protein. The IFC (World Bank), African Development Bank, Bill Gates, Norfund, AgDevCo and others are pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into this. Industrial operations often mean poor animal welfare and difficult labour conditions!
- **Digitalisation will make things worse.** African farmers are increasingly being pulled into commercial feed use and the whole industrial model through digital tools, which are controlled by a few global corporations that profit from farmers' data.

Faced with these findings, we call on African governments, regional institutions, technical and financial partners, researchers and all stakeholders in the poultry sector to support small producers and local breeds of chickens as a priority, through the following actions:

- **Support small-scale producers and local breeds:** Establish public policies, research programmes and financing mechanisms that promote the conservation, selection and participatory multiplication of local breeds, based on farmers' organisations, cooperatives and networks of pastoralists. Our governments must urgently support smallholder farmers, through their unions, cooperatives, networks and associations, who work with indigenous breeds.
- **With proper domestic support, African communities can conserve and improve local chicken breeds themselves.** The support should be scientific (research), political (alliance building among grassroots actors including street vendors, local authorities, public programmes) and financial (subsidies, tax breaks, pricing policies).
- **Governments need to de-prioritise industrial chicken and prioritise local breeds managed by small-scale producers in their trade and investment policies.** Right now, for African consumers, industrial chicken is cheap while indigenous chicken is expensive. This needs to be turned around. And while it used to be the EU or US, a lot of this cheap imported chicken meat comes today from Brazil. This needs to stop.
- **Local markets, through which indigenous chicken and eggs are of best value, should be strengthened.** This means investing in short circuits led by women and small-scale farmers who are situated in local communities. Granting market access to local producers to deal with market concentration and reliance on harmful imported chickens and eggs.
- **Countries that ban imported chicken or imported chicks should grow their local chicken sector, NOT the industrial one.** Ghana used to be self-sufficient in chicken, today it imports 90% of its needs. Benin and Senegal, on the other hand, have banned imports to promote local production, and Gabon is about to do the same. But they are all investing in exploitative industrial chicken mega farms, not local breeds nor small producers. Our governments need to urgently support small farmers – through their unions, coops, networks and associations – working with indigenous breeds.
- **There is local knowledge and know-how held by various actors, including farmers, herders and religious leaders, that deserves to be documented and capitalized.** This will ensure their transmission from generation to generation, preserve this traditional

knowledge against its disappearance and contribute to the promotion and conservation of the biodiversity of local chicken breeds.

- **The place of women should be valued and recognized more:** it is essential not to neglect the central role of women in the preservation, management and promotion of local chicken breeds. As key actors in family poultry farming in many African communities, since generations, the essential contribution of women in the conservation, selection, feeding, care and marketing of local chicken breeds should be valued, by strengthening their access to resources, training, funding and decision-making bodies.
- **Promote the commitment of young people:** Encourage the participation of young people in the conservation and development of local breeds by facilitating their access to training, innovation, productive resources and entrepreneurship opportunities in the poultry sector.
- **Local varieties of African pasture crops can replace industrial chicken feed:** Encourage the production and use of local fodder crops to reduce dependence on industrial feed, reduce production costs and enhance the resources available in the territories.
- **Local disease management strategies can be strengthened to great effect:** Promote good local disease management practices, including access to clean water, appropriate biosecurity measures and prevention approaches, to sustainably improve poultry health.
- **Direct investments in local poultry systems:** Public, private and development partner funding must prioritize support for family livestock systems based on local breeds, rather than the expansion of industrial models that are highly dependent on imported inputs.
- **Keep the Gates Foundation out of African poultry:** Gates and other funders are spreading dependency on corporate genetics, vaccines and industrial feeds. We need to uphold local poultry for food sovereignty, the resilience of livestock systems, and the preservation of African biodiversity instead.
- **Develop open digital tools adapted to African realities** to document local breeds, preserve traditional knowledge, build the capacity of producers and ensure that communities themselves have control over agricultural data. This strategy can become a lever for development rather than a factor of dependence.

In view of the above, we welcome the commitment of the signatory organizations to this declaration, as well as that of all organizations in the subregion that work in favor of the rural world, the promotion of local chicken breeds, biodiversity and food sovereignty in Africa.

Long live the promotion of local breeds and local production for food sovereignty!

Long live the preservation of biodiversity!

Long live African farmers!

Done in Cotonou on August 05, 2026,
The participants