ICAR gets its ducks in a row to promote desi breeds

Nine species of yak, pig, duck and geese have been registered by ICAR-National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources

RAJESH KUMAR in NEW DELHI

Nine indigenous species of yak, pig, duck and geese, have been registered by the Karnataka-based Indian Council of Agricultural Research-National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBAGR) to promote their breeding, taking the total number of indigenous species of livestock in the country to 169.

Interestingly, five newly-registered breeds are from North-Eastern States.

According to ICAR data, out of the 169 registered breeds, 41 are of cattle, 30 of buffalo, 42 of sheep, 28 of goat, 7 each of pig and horse, 9 of camel, one breed each of yak and donkey, among livestock. The new breeds of indigenous farm animals are: Lakshmi cattle of Assam, Salem Black Goat of Tamil Nadu, Sumi-Ne Goat of Nagaland, Kachchh Sindhi horse of Gujarat, Zowawk pig of Mizoram, Arunachal yak of Arunachal Pradesh, Hansli chicken of Odisha, Pati ducks of Assam and Anz geese of Kashmir.

The estimated population of tall and lean Salem black goat is about 86,000. Semi-Ne Goat of Nagaland also known as "Nagaland long hair goat" and their population is about 4,500. Kachchh Sindhi horses are found in Gujarat and Jaisalmer and Barmer districts of Rajasthan. The estimated population is about 6,000.

Zowawk pig's estimated population is about 18,000. Zowawk pig is reared in rural areas of Assam are 18.21 lakh in number. Plumage is dark brown in drakes with white patch on forehead, white patches on body and white boots. The population of Arunachal yak is about 14,000 and they are predominantly black in colour with medium sized and compact body.

Pati ducks are reared in backyard production system in rural areas of Assam are 18.21 lakh in number. Plumage is dark brown in drakes with white patch on forehead, white patches on body and white boots. The population of Arunachal yak is about 14,000 and they are predominantly black in colour with medium sized and compact body.

Officials said the total population of small sized, horned and relatively short legs Lakshmi cattle is about 79 lakh.

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"But today, 54 per cent of the country's livestock population is yet to be identified in the form of breeds," said the official after giving away the animal breed registration certificates to nine livestock. "Still, there is a possibility of more breeds in these areas. There should be unique, stable and lesser-known population in other species like mule, yak, mithun, duck, and quail which are yet to be identified," he said.

An official of the Ministry of Agriculture said the breed registration process assumes importance as there is a need to protect native animal genetic diversity in the light of Intellectual Property Rights and other trade issues. Breed registration is an important step in documenting the animal genetic resource and related knowledge, which will lead to creation of an inventory so systematic efforts can be made for genetic improvement, conservation and sustainable utilisation of these resources.

In 2008, the ICAR constituted a breed registration committee under the chairmanship of its Deputy Director General (Animal Science) for the purpose. The mechanism is the sole recognised process for registration of animal genetic resources material at national level. The cataloguing of India's animal genetic resources by the ICAR and registration of breeds is aimed at creating a sense of ownership among local communities responsible for development of breeds.