Farm Animal Genetic Resources is the term used to describe the domestic farm animals and their wild relatives, which are used for food production. For more than 12,000 years they have been contributing to human needs for food and agricultural products, providing meat, milk, eggs, fibre, fertilizer for crops, manure for fuel and draught power. Domestic animals meet at least 30% of human food needs. This major contribution is made by some 4,500 breeds from ±40 species, bred and selected for different objectives under different environmental conditions. Nine of the 14 most important species (cattle, sheep, goat, pig, chicken, duck, buffalo, horse and ass) account for more than 4,000 breeds.

Namibia is very fortunate, in that it is blessed with a wide range of species/breeds, both indigenous and exotics, which have adapted to the local environmental conditions. Indigenous breeds for the five main species involved with food production are present in Namibia.

Cattle

Beef production is the mainstay of the agricultural sector in the central and northern farming areas. Most of the well known cattle breeds are found in Namibia.

**Beef:** Aberdeen Angus, Afrikaner, Bonsmara, Brahman, Beefmaster, Charolais, Drakensberger, Gelbvieh, Hereford, Limousin, Nguni, Red Poll, Indigenous Sanga (4 eco-types), Santa Gertrudis, Shorthorn, Simbra, South Devon, Sussex

**Dual Purpose:** Braunvieh, Pinzgauer, Simmentaler, Dexter

**Dairy:** Holstein Friesians, Jersey

The exotic breeds introduced into Namibia over the past 100 years, have through breeding and selection, adapted to the harsh environmental conditions. Accurate numbers of animals per breed is not available, but it is estimated that approximately 1 million of the total cattle population of ±2.29 million are indigenous Sanga cattle and their crosses. The Bonsmara, Brahman and Simmentaler, and their crosses, constitute the major portion of the rest of the cattle population. Environmental constraints and the high cost of concentrate feeds restrict the expansion of the dairy industry.
Goats

Goats play an important role in both the commercial and communal sectors. In the commercial sector the Boer goat is used for meat production, mostly destined for the South African market. There are approximately 870,000 Boer goats and their crosses in Namibia. Small numbers of Angora goats are still to be found in the southern parts of Namibia. Mohair is exported to South Africa. Four different eco-types of indigenous goats are found in the Northern Communal Areas. They play an important role in the small holder livestock industry. They are well adapted to the harsh environment and are able to walk long distances between available grazing and water.

Indiscriminate crossbreeding is taking place in the communal areas. This is eroding the available genetic resources, and even though it produces larger goats, these animals are not as well adapted to the production environment.

Sheep

The dramatic drop in Karakul pelt prices during the 1980's, had a significant influence on the Small Stock Industry in Namibia. From a hay-day production of 4.5 million pelts produced, animal numbers dropped to a current total of 193,000. This forced farmers to diversify, with a resultant increase in mutton sheep breeds and the introduction of wool sheep breeds. The Karakul, and as such the different pelt types developed in Namibia, differs from the types produced elsewhere in the world, making the Namibian Karakul unique. It is today accepted as an indigenous sheep breed of Namibia. Namibia is currently the only country in the world where progeny testing of Karakul rams is carried out.

The Damara, an indigenous sheep breed of Namibia, originating from the Kunene Region are currently in high demand. Large numbers of these hardy, well adapted, low-input animals with their excellent mothering ability, have been exported to South Africa.

The Dorper is the most numerous sheep breed and plays an important role in mutton production.

Pigs

The pig industry in Namibia is very small, with a total population of about 40,000 pigs, of which at least half are indigenous pigs found in the Northern Communal Areas, especially the Kavango and Oshikoto, Oshana and Omusati Regions. The commercial pig producers rear the Large White, Landrace, Duroc and F1 crosses for pork production.

Chickens

Although the organized poultry industry in Namibia is very small, large numbers of poultry are found. In many communal households, chickens are the only livestock owned. Indigenous breeds are found in the Northern Communal Areas, but indiscriminate crossbreeding has taken its toll. Many of the established poultry breeds are found in the possession of breeders who breed them as a hobby.