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**Report Name:** Planned Livestock Sector Reforms Could Lead to Trade Opportunities

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**Prepared By:** OAA-Lagos

**Approved By:** Christopher Bielecki

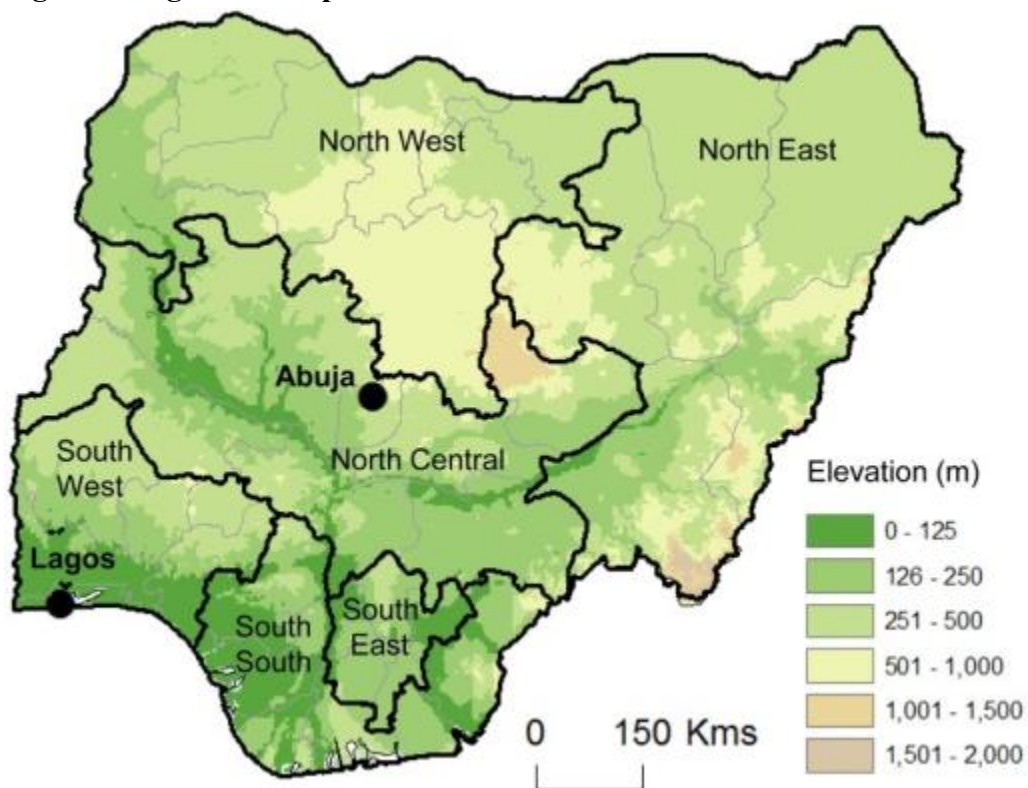
**Report Highlights:**

In 2024, Nigeria created the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development to unlock potential in the country's vast but underdeveloped livestock sector. The Ministry's leadership has focused on increasing commercial productivity, which may lead to more interest in U.S. live animal, genetics, and animal feed product exports. In December 2024, the United States signed seven animal health export protocols with Nigeria, creating more opportunities to grow exports given the Ministry's focus on commercial development, including improving dairy yields, beef production, and animal feed availability.

### Nigeria's Livestock Sector has Potential but is Still Commercially Undeveloped

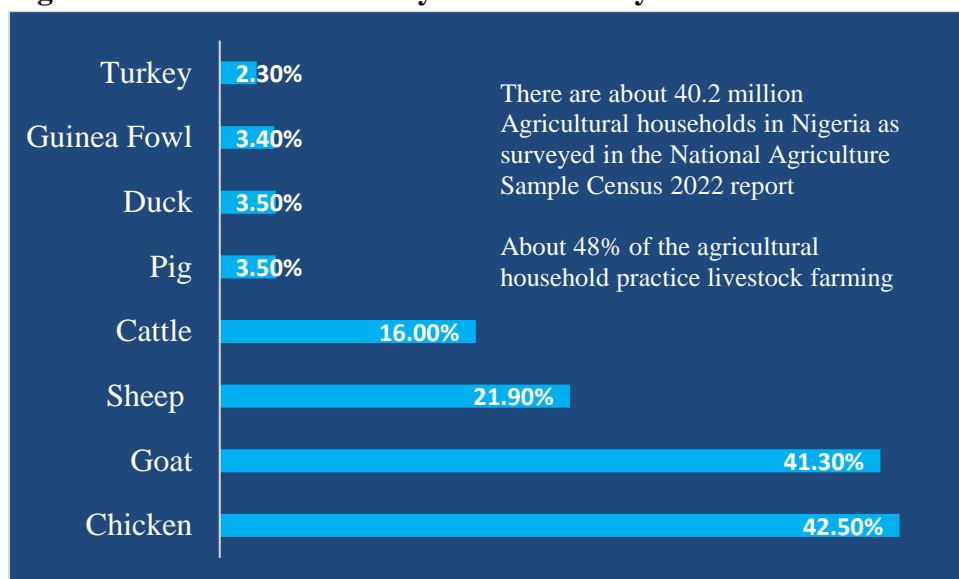
Nigeria has a long history of pastoralism, especially raising cattle among its traditional nomadic herding groups in the three northern geopolitical zones (Figure 1). However, much of the sector is subsistence-based (Figure 2), and only a small portion cattle and small ruminants enter formal commerce. Livestock data is difficult to ascertain due to much of the production, consumption, and trade occurring informally. Furthermore, Nigeria has not recently undertaken a livestock census. Poultry (broiler and layer) is the most commercially developed sub-sector, although operations have been recently affected by high operating and feed costs, and lower consumer purchasing power. The swine sector is largely limited to the southern zones as pork is not widely consumed by Muslims who are more numerous in the north. Dairy products are consumed throughout the country, although consumption is more widespread in the north where traditional pastoralism has its roots.

**Figure 1. Nigeria's Geopolitical Zones**



*Source: U.S. National Institutes of Health*

**Figure 2. Livestock Husbandry Distribution by Household**



Source: National Bureau of Statistics. Note: The total percentage exceeds 100% because households often participate in more than one type of animal husbandry.

### *Beef Cattle*

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Nigeria's cattle herd is estimated at 18.4 million. Approximately 50 percent of the cattle slaughtered for beef in Nigeria originate in the northern Sahel countries and are driven south into Nigeria. Beef cattle are raised predominantly in the Northeast and Northwest zones (Figure 1). Indigenous beef cattle breeds are the White Fulani, Red Bororo, Gudali, N'dama, Muturu, and Keteku. These breeds are from Nigeria's northern zones, and neighboring countries of Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Niger, Mali, and Senegal. Live cattle are almost always transported to local markets where they are butchered by small businesses. There are no operational commercial scale cattle meat processing facilities in the country. Due to logistical and road transportation challenges, cattle frequently enter markets in stressed conditions. In November 2024, the GON [signed a memorandum of understanding](#) with JBS to construct six commercial scale processing plants, to include three for poultry, two for beef, and one for pork, with an investment of \$2.5 billion.

Beef is the predominant choice of meat in Nigeria, and consumed in many forms including sausage, grilled (asun), seasoned dried (kilishi), barbequed (suya), and minced. Offal and hides are also used. Consumption is roughly estimated at 360,000 MT per year, equating to a per capita consumption of 1.7 kilogram (kg) per year compared to the global average of 9.1 kg. [According to National Bureau of Statistics \(NBS\) data](#), the average price of beef increased by about 98 percent on a year-on-year basis in October 2024, making it increasingly difficult for consumers to afford. Nearly all unprocessed beef imports into Nigeria are banned. Nonetheless, some unprocessed imported beef enters the country, mainly from South Africa, Australia, and Brazil.

### *Dairy Cattle*

Dairy cattle are concentrated largely in northern regions with an estimated 90 percent of milk production coming from low yielding traditional pastoral systems. Breeds are mostly indigenous, open grazing, and are used for meat and milk. Some commercial dairy farms have stocked Holstein-Friesian, Brown Swiss, and Jersey mixed with indigenous breeds. Exotic breeds must do well in Nigeria's hot and humid climate. Average milk production per indigenous cow remains low at an estimated 0.5 to 1.5 liters/day.

Nigeria produces approximately 600,000 MT of milk annually. Powdered milk is widely consumed due to its shelf stability and convenience. Inadequate investments in cold chain logistics are driving the growth in the household consumption of powdered milk compared to fresh milk. Fat-filled milk dominates powdered milk retail. Importers prefer fat-filled milk powder due to its favorable retail price compared to skim milk and whole milk powder. This dynamic is driven by weak consumer purchasing power and a lack of consumer awareness of the difference between the different kinds of powdered milk. Yoghurts and flavored milk drinks are consumed as beverages especially in urban areas. Cheese and butter, though still niche, are used mainly in the hospitality and fast-food sectors.

### *Swine*

[According to the FAO](#), Nigeria is the largest swine producer in Africa with about nine million head. Production is mostly dominated by small-scale farmers. Pork production is estimated at 309,000 MT. Due to Islam's predominance in the country's three northern geopolitical zones, most production is in the southwest. While the swine sector is relatively small, the sub-sector is attracting interest due to the perceived shorter production cycle, high offspring numbers, a higher rate of return compared to goat and sheep, and high feed efficiency.

[Pork is the least consumed source of animal protein](#) in the country. Per capita consumption is estimated at 1.47 kg, which is low compared to the West African average of 2.96 kg. Most pork is consumed in the southern zones, although Christian communities in the north also produce and consume pork. Pork products in demand include lard, sausages, ham, and bacon. Unprocessed pork products cannot be imported; however, some processed hams and sausages are eligible to be imported.

### *Poultry*

Commercial poultry production is prominent in the southwest, although smaller producers exist throughout the country. Poultry meat is the second most consumed meat after beef, at an estimated 400,000 MT annually. Per capita consumption is estimated to be 1.5 to 2.0 kg per year, which falls well below the 6.2 kg Africa average. The cuts with the highest demand are the breast (as meat and sausage) and drumsticks. Nigerians also consume gizzard, feet, and neck. Though more expensive, turkey is also widely consumed, though on a smaller scale than chicken. Poultry consumption cuts across religion, age, culture, and status. It is perceived as a middle-class status product and served during special events.

Nigerians tend to raise more broiler chickens than layers due to the faster growth rate and quicker returns associated with broilers. Broilers reach market weight within 6–8 weeks and are raised primarily for meat, which is in high demand in Nigeria. Layers, on the other hand, start egg-laying at about 18–22 weeks, and provide a steadier but longer-term income through eggs.

Nigeria is the largest egg producer in Africa, producing an estimated 533,000 MT annually. Egg size and quality are influenced by breed, feed and water consumption, hen age, bird health, ambient temperature, and bird body weight. However, the most essential factor is the feed, contacts noted that [imported corn is preferred by layer operations](#) as the feed produces a yellower egg yolk compared to domestic corn. Per capita egg consumption is estimated to be 60 eggs (2.7kg) per person per year. This is high compared to the average per capita egg consumption of 36 eggs (1.6kg) per person per year in West Africa. Egg consumption is generally higher in urban areas and among households with higher incomes. According to NBS, egg prices in 2024 increased by about 128 percent year-on-year, mainly driven by high corn prices and operational costs.

#### *Goat*

About 42 percent of households with livestock in Nigeria raise goats. This animal displays a unique ability to adapt and survive across all geopolitical zones. Goats are mostly raised as domestic animals, compared to cattle that are more commercially focused. Goats serve as a flexible financial reserve for the rural population and play an important socio-cultural role in the customs and traditions of many Nigerian societies. As of 2022, there were approximately 88 million goats in Nigeria. This makes Nigeria the country with the largest goat population in Africa. Goat meat is the third most consumed meat in Nigeria after beef and chicken. Goat meat is generally priced higher than beef and poultry, which limit consumption.

#### **Ministry of Livestock Development to Focus on Improving Productivity**

In 2024, President Tinubu announced the creation of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development (FMLD) and appointed Alhaji Idi Mukhtar as the inaugural minister. Minister Mukhtar was the former commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources in Borno state. He also owns a 250 dairy head ranch in Kaduna state. The FMLD was established by the President to “transform Nigeria’s livestock sector into a sustainable and globally competitive industry. With a mandate to enhance livestock productivity, ensure food security, and drive economic growth, the Ministry is committed to addressing key challenges such as poor infrastructure and conflicts between farmers and herders.”

In 2019, the GON launched the [National Livestock Transformation Plan \(NLTP\) 2018–2028](#), to address the farmer-herder conflict and modernize the livestock sector. The plan aimed to gradually end open grazing, encourage the adoption of settled ranching, and promote peaceful coexistence between herders and farmers. In April 2025, [the National Economic Council \(NEC\)](#) endorsed FMLD’s inheritance of the NLTP and the National Livestock Growth Acceleration Strategy. The Strategy has five priority strategies for 2025–2026 which include animal health and zoonoses control, feed and fodder

development, water resources management, breed improvement, and statistics and information system development.

Nigeria has not completed an animal census in almost 20 years. According to contacts, livestock policies have been made on based on FAOSTAT estimates and field data collected by the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics which focuses on human involvement (e.g., number of households in an area raising livestock) rather than data on breeds, average weights, feed use, etc. Despite these challenges, the Ministry seeks to reduce land use conflict and increase productivity by applying modern technology and market-based reforms. This includes linking service providers to ranchers, to provide veterinary and advanced breeding services, information on feed and forage availability, and product processing and marketing services.

### **Prioritizing Commercial Development May Lead to U.S. Export Opportunities**

The Ministry has noted the country's low per capita animal protein consumption and has set a goal of increasing daily consumption from their estimate of 45 grams to 75 grams per person. To do this, they intend to increase the nation's cattle numbers by an average of seven percent per year over the next 10 years. The Ministry estimated milk output per cow per day could go from one liter to about five or more, and the beef cattle slaughter weight improving from about 200 kg to possibly closer to 400 kg. This expansion would necessitate increasing the use of artificial insemination and other advanced breeding techniques and importing live animals and genetics.

The Ministry also understands the pivotal role forage and feed has in not just commercial production but also reducing farmer-herder conflicts over land use. Raising cattle with feed and water resources in one location is expected to increase production yields. In April 2024, the National Committee on Naming, Registration and Release of Crop Varieties, Livestock Breeds and Fisheries [approved and registered eight new pasture varieties](#). The newly registered varieties include six types of grass—Brachiaria ruziziensis, Chloris gayana (Rhode grass), Sorghum almum (Sudan grass), Andropogon gayanus (Gamba grass), Panicum mumbasa (Mumbasa grass), and Pennisetum purpureum (Napier grass)—as well as two leguminous forages, Mucuna pruriens and Lablab purpureus. Formalizing feed and fodder production could boost the value chain and attract investment in the feed sector.

### **U.S. Companies May be Interested in Livestock Sector Opportunities**

Given the government's emphasis on developing the livestock sector to drive commercial development and reduce internal conflict, there may be increased opportunities for U.S. exporters to provide animal genetics, live animals, and feed ingredients to Nigerian companies. Nigerian government and private sector stakeholders favorably view U.S. livestock companies and exports. In 2024, the government of Nigeria approved seven [Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service veterinary services health certificates](#) for exports of live animals and animal genetics to Nigeria. FAS-Lagos has good working relationships with livestock sector stakeholders and welcomes request for assistance from

U.S. companies seeking to expand animal genetics, live animal, and animal feed export opportunities to Nigeria.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.