

Appraising the extent of cavy culture in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Abstract

For the first time, the extent of cavy culture in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is assessed with emphasis on Sud-Kivu province. Cavy culture is defined as the raising, production and utilization of the domestic cavy (i.e., Guinea pig, *Cavia porcellus* L.) as farm animal. Although published research literature is extremely scarce, it can be estimated from various sources that more than 2 million cavies are kept as farm animals in DRC, probably contributing significantly to nutrition security and income generation of several hundreds of thousands of poor rural and urban households. This review estimates the current status of cavy populations in the country. The largest cavy populations were claimed in the Kivu provinces, which may be partly due to the inclusion of cavies in the agricultural portfolio of development agencies and in 'rehabilitation kits' of humanitarian NGOs who seek to address the challenges of widespread hunger and malnutrition in the area. Research and capacity building needs related to cavy culture are also identified. Given the dimension, we propose that cavies should generally be included in livestock census, honoring their role in the livelihoods of less endowed people, especially women. This review was undertaken within the project 'Harnessing husbandry of domestic cavy for alternative and rapid access to food and income in Cameroon and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo'.

Key words: *Cavia porcellus*, cobaye, eastern DR Congo, Guinea pig, Kivu, non-conventional animal production,