

RESPONSE TO DOMESTICATED WATER BUFFALO QUERIES

- 1. Do you have Water Buffalo in Kenya? Is their population enough to sustain human food?**

Response

There is currently no Domesticated Water Buffalos (*Bubalus bubalis*) in Kenya. However, their introduction is expected to supplement other current human food sources in the country, besides other benefits.

- 2. What was the rationale in including them as food source?**

Response

They are a good source of cheaper, healthier, sweeter and good-flavored lean meat, that is lower in fat and cholesterol compared to other red meats (beef, mutton and chevon), while their milk which has a creamy texture, is higher in fat and protein content compared to cow's milk, making it a popular choice for dairy products such as cheese, yogurt, and butter.

- 3. Does this amendment mean Kenyans can farm Water buffalo?**

Response

Yes, it opens the way for Kenyans to farm water buffalos.

- 4. Was there a specific industry demand or request for this request? If Yes from Whom?**

Response

Yes, there have been enquiries from various innovative farmers dating as far back as 2018, when a domesticated water Buffalo import/export protocol was endorsed between Kenya and Brazil at the Uberaba International Livestock Show/Trade fare in Minas Gerais State of Brazil.

An initial period of piloting water buffalo husbandry (two (2) years) has been considered to allow for setting of product standards in the country. Only the Kenya Animal Genetics Resource Centre (KAGRC) and any farmers who submit their requests will be allowed to keep the water buffalos.

- 5. How does this regulation inclusion affect the existing livestock regulations and Meat Safety Standards?**

Response.

The Domesticated Water Buffalo and cattle belong to the same family, Bovidae, and thus have a lot of anatomical, physiological and biochemical similarities.

However, this inclusion will entail some minor adjustments into the Animal Health and Disease Control, Registration and Identification and Slaughterhouse legislation and regulations; Meat Safety Standards and Slaughterhouse Regulations over the two-year period.

6. Will there be specific slaughter houses for this meat like donkey? Will there be labelling requirements?

Response.

No, they will be slaughtered separately in existing cattle and small stock slaughter houses with only minor modifications carried out in these slaughterhouses to accommodate the larger size of the buffalos.

Yes, labelling and identification will be mandatory.

7. Does a decision like this require public participation? If yes when was it conducted?

Response

Yes, a stakeholder consultation was carried out at the Naivasha Dairy Training Institute March 2024.

8. Do local Vets have practical experience with water buffalos to be able to address health issues?

Response

The Domesticated Water Buffalo shares a lot of similarities and even diseases with our local bovines(cattle), with a few exceptions. The principles of handling and treatment are the same. The local veterinarians will comfortably handle them.

However, during this piloting period the local veterinarians will be engaged and will have first hand experience with the buffalos.

9. What benchmark studies have been conducted with countries that have established water buffalo industries, such as India to inform amendment?

Response

Various benchmark studies have been conducted starting with Brazil in 2018, and to India in December 2023, June, October and November, 2024 by technical staff from the State Department of Livestock and KAGRC.

10. Are there Ecological impacts expected since water buffalos require access to significant amounts of water?

Response

Yes, the ecological impacts and mitigations expected will be evaluated and addressed during the pilot period. The water buffalos will compete with native species for

resources such as food and habitat. There is a consideration of pollution to water systems that could disrupt local ecosystems leading to ecological imbalance and biodiversity loss. Though this is not considered significant.