

Kangayam-Korangadu

Bio-Cultural Protocol

2015

Process of documenting Kangayam-Korangadu Bio-Cultural Protocol

The Kangayam-Korangadu bio-cultural protocol was established and documented by the people of Kongu community during a cattle show held at Kannapuram, Tirupur District, where people from all villages get together, and subsequent meetings held with stake holders, namely the communities and some associations such as Kangayam Cattle Breeders Association, heads of Mutts, Pattakkarars and so on in the month of April 2015.. The process was facilitated and documented by Senaapathy Kangayam Cattle Research Foundation. More information was obtained through interviewing and distributing questionnaires in different villages. While recording this BCP it was decided to call the process as Kangayam-Korangadu bio-cultural protocol. In some places the names “Kongu” and “Kangayam-Korangadu” are interchangeably used. This documentation mainly focuses on the Kangayam breed and its associated Korangadu grazing land.

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Documentation



Senaapathy Kangayam Cattle Research Foundation

Kuttappalayam (p.o.)
Tiruppur District

Tel: +91 - 4257 - 294234 | +91 - 4257 - 254504
Email: karthikeyaksm@gmail.com | mail@kangayambull.com
www.kangayambull.com

Table of Contents

Kangayam-Korangadu Bio-cultural Protocol	5
Our Biocultural Values	7
Animal genetic resources	8
Traditional knowledge	15
Traditional Medical Knowledge related to Livestock	15
Bio-cultural practices	16
Bio-cultural sports	20
Prior informed consent & benefit sharing	21
Our Future	22
Our Rights Under Indian Laws & Policies	22
Our Rights Under International Law	26
Appendix I: Our Rights Under International Law	22
Appendix II: Colonial and Post Colonial Laws and Policies	32
Appendix III :	33
Appendix IV : Bibliography	33

Kangayam-Korangadu Bio-Cultural Protocol

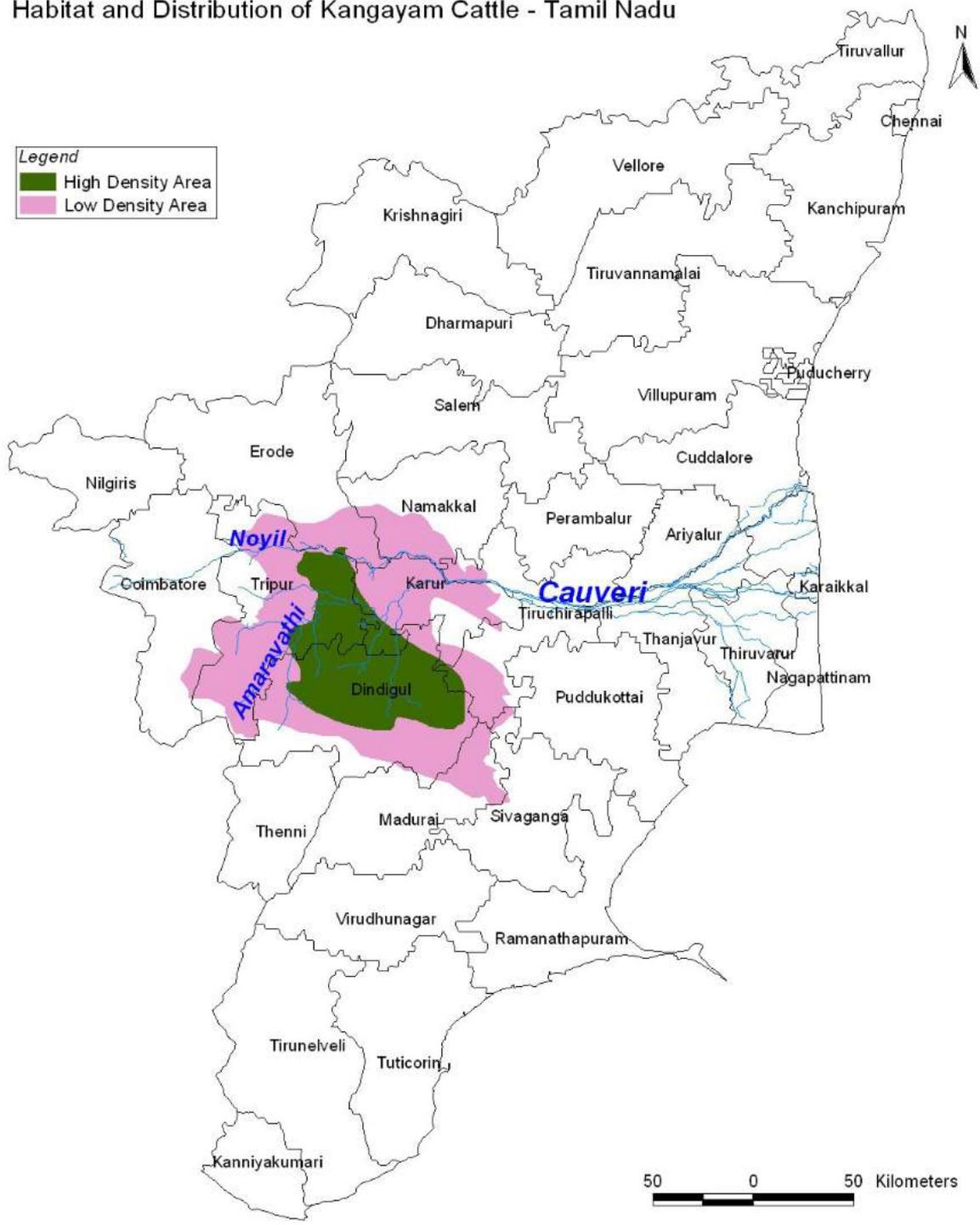
This protocol specifically:

- Sets out our biocultural values and explains how we, the Kongu people, have developed and preserved unique breeds of livestock and traditional knowledge associated with them, and how our pastoral lifestyle has developed the co-evolved ecosystem of Kangayam-Korangadu which we have traditionally conserved and sustainably used;
- Details our customary decision making process involved in providing free prior informed consent to any actions that relate to our grazing rights, animal genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge;
- Illustrates the disastrous impacts that our exclusion from previously communal grazing areas is having on our lives, livestock, genetic resources, traditional knowledge and the Korangadu ecosystem itself;
- Articulates our Korangadu access rights and rights over our genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge under Indian law;
- Calls upon the National Biodiversity Authority to:
 - Recognize our local breeds and associated traditional knowledge as set out in the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu region
 - Biodiversity Register and to include it in the Peoples Biodiversity Register, the Kangayam breed and the associated Korangadu region and its biodiversity and its relationship ;
 - Facilitate the setting up of Biodiversity Management Committees under the local bodies (Panchayats or Municipalities) where we live and to support these Committees in ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of our breed diversity and traditional knowledge;
 - Strengthen in situ conservation of breeds of the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu and include them in the BMC being initiated by the government.
 - Advise the Union Government and coordinate the activities of the State Biodiversity Boards to protect the customary grazing rights of the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu/ so as to safeguard our traditional lifestyles that ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the our breed, the associated traditional knowledge and the local ecosystem;
 - Ensure that our prior informed consent (according to customary law) is obtained before any decision are taken that affect our traditional way of life or access is granted to our breed diversity and associated traditional knowledge for research or for commercial purposes, and further ensure that we receive a fair and equitable share of the benefits arising from the utilization of our breeds and traditional knowledge according to mutually agreed terms; and
- Calls on the Secretariat of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, specifically under Article 8(j) of the Convention, to recognize the contribution of our traditional lifestyles to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in Kongu region; and calls on the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to recognize the importance of our animal genetic resources and to recognize livestock keepers' rights.

Habitat and Distribution of Kangayam Cattle - Tamil Nadu

Legend

- High Density Area
- Low Density Area



Our Biocultural Values

Kongu Vellalars

The Kongu Vellalars (a community involved with agriculture and livestock keeping) are organized into several Koottams or clans. People of the same clan do not get married to one another. It is always men and women of different koottams who get married. People of the same koottams are considered to be brothers and sisters. There are about two hundred koottams and each is attached to a Deity. The deities are usually Goddesses, an extension of Mother Goddess worship. In some cases more than one Koottam is attached to a deity. There are other communities which are part and parcel of this culture, namely Chettiar, Mudaliar, Nadar, Pandaram, Dhobi, Barber and a few others. These communities cater to one another and to a large extent do not move away from them. The wedding of these people are conducted by their own priests called Cirkarars or Arumaikkarars and clan heads. All these communities have a role in the weddings. Amongst the Kongu Vellalars there are a few clan heads from different regions called Pattakarars. The title Pattakarar was given to them by the Chola, Chera and Pandiyas, the three main kingdoms of ancient Tamilnadu. In some cases the titles were ordained by one King and in some others two or all the three. The title Uthama Kaminda was also conferred on the Pattakar and bestowed powers to settle social and religious disputes in the community of Kongu Vellalals. However, there are only a few Pattakarars who still hold these titles and continue their rituals. Despite this the people have largely stuck to agriculture and sedentary pastoralism. Apart from these clan heads, the religious heads or the Adheenams namely the Perur Adheenam, Kaumaram Adheenam and a few others have the communities and their customs intact.

The place we live

Kongu is a geographic region in the western part of Tamil Nadu, comprising the current districts of Coimbatore, Nilgiri, Tirupur, Erode, Namakkal, Salem, Karur, and parts of Dindigul. This region is historically significant as a number of archaeological sites have been identified, of which a few have been excavated. These excavations reveal the presence of graffiti, Tamil Brahmi inscriptions on pottery and a number of other artefacts such as Roman coins indicating that trade flourished between Romans and the kings of these regions, dating back to 6th century BCE. Tools of gem-cutting industry and several of these gems, beads of sapphire, beryl, agate, carnelian, amethyst, lapis lazulli, jasper, garnet, soapstone and quartz were unearthed from here. Many of them have been picked up from the Amaravathi river bed near Karur, and on several sites from the banks of the Noyal river.

While there are rivers such as Noyal, Amaravathi and Cauvery, the region is dry and semi-arid zone. The western most part is considered to be the rain shadow region of the Western Ghats. The elevation is around 1200 ft above mean sea level. Therefore the water table is quite deep. The Kongu people are considered to be excellent water tappers. The soil is rich in Calcium. Rainfall is as low as 650 mm per annum.

Our origins

A few theories have been proposed regarding the name “Kongu”. One legend goes like this. The Kangars (the Tamil version of Gangas), according to a text, Kongu Desa Rajakkal from the lapse of Mahabharata and the starting of Kaliyugam(3106B.C) ruled Kongu Nadu for some period. It is also believed that the region ruled by Gangars was initially called `Ganga Nadu` and with the passage of time, it began to be called `Kongu Nadu`. Another research substantiates with Place Name study, that this community has probably migrated from north western part of south Asia such as the Indus plains. This could be seen from the same clusters of place names in both Kongunadu and in western part of south Asia. These migrations took place during pre and early historic period. The clan names can be found in the oldest literature called the Sangam Classics.

Our traditional livelihoods

We are indigenous agro-pastoralists who have developed a variety of livestock breeds based on our traditional knowledge and have customarily grazed our cattle, sheep, goats and chicken on privately owned lands. This means that our livelihoods and the survival of our particular breeds are based on grazing lands. In turn, our animals help conserve the biodiversity of the local ecosystems in which they graze.

Preserving unique animal genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge

Animal genetic resources

Evolution of breeds and varieties are a product of complex interplay of nature and culture. The human element is extremely important for the evolution and continuity of a breed or variety. Through elective breeding in our ecosystem we have enabled the livestock to co-evolve with features particularly hardy, able to forage and digest rough vegetation, withstand the dry Kongu environment - all attributes that “high performance” exotic breeds do not have. Local breeds need fewer inputs and are less susceptible to disease and are well-suited to harsh conditions.

The animal genetic diversity they embody enables us to respond to changes in the natural environment, important attributes in the context of climate change adaptation and food security. Their genetic traits and our traditional knowledge associated with them will also be of use in breeding for disease resistance, and may provide us with other diverse economic opportunities under the forthcoming International Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing or a future International Treaty on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

We conserve and use Korangadu grazing land bio-diversity

The Korangadu Silvi-pastoral System and associated Kangayam Breed of Kongu region in mid-west Tamilnadu is a unique semi-arid pastoral system . A study of this unique mutually inseparable breed-pastoral system provides a window to the rich bio-diversity and cultural heritage handed down the generations. Preserving this for posterity is a serious question requiring concerted and collective effort on the part of stakeholders – elected representatives, the State, large and small holders, scientists, academia and civil society. Such unique systems, however small, located in any part of the world cannot be ignored since it has global significance. Communities and Nations can no more detach or remain insensitive to such heritage issues. This documentation attempts to capture the different aspects of this unique system from a historical perspective clubbed with contemporary and future relevance.

The Kangayam and the Korangadu are uniquely suitable for each other. A rich biodiversity has been documented which has been protected traditionally without which the possibility of the existence of Kangayam breed would have been lost. The biodiversity includes 35 varieties of flora and 145 varieties of fauna comprising insects, birds, reptiles, and other animals. This combination is unique to Korangadu grazing lands. So many living beings would become extinct if this ecosystem is disturbed. Hence we conserve this ecosystem.

Specifically, we maintain the following breeds that are described in Appendix I:

Cattle - Kangayam - Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode, Karur, Dindugal, Namakkal and Salem districts.

Kangayam cattle - A detailed description is provided under the section Biodiversity register.

Sheep - Mecheri sheep - Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode, Karur, Dindugal, Namakkal and Salem districts.

Kurumbai aadu – Kurumbai sheep - Kurumbai gounders speaking kannada and Tamil

Mecheri Sheep – Mecheri sheep breed are medium sized animals light brown in colour. The ears are medium sized, both sexes are polled and the tails is short hair which is not shorn. The Mecheri is primarily a meat breed. The skin is considered to be of the best quality among the sheep breeds of India.

Kurumbai Aadu - The Kurumbai sheep is a short bodied sheep, with a short small tail, like that of a hare, or goat: the rams have short horns turned back, and their ears are very short and pendulous. The ewes seldom have horns. The wool is thick and curly and has little or no hair intermixed with it. Here they are in general white with black heads.; but above the ghats they are frequently altogether black.

Goat - Salem Black goat – Salem, Namakkal districts.

Salem Black Goat - The Salem Black is an important meat goat breed in the north-western part of Tamil Nadu. The native tract of this breed is the Salem, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Erode, Karur and Namakkal districts of Tamil Nadu. Salem Black goats are tall animals, completely black in colour and reared mainly for meat.

Many of our breeds cannot be stall bred. Just as our lifestyles are suited to the conditions they require to survive, these breeds are suited to our bio-cultural realities. The communities involved – Kongu Vellala Gounders, Kurumbai Goundars, Vettuva Goundars, Dalits, Naickers, etc.,

Kangayam-Korangadu Biodiversity Register

The Korangadu Silvi-pastoral System and associated Kangayam Breed of Kongu region in mid-west Tamilnadu is a unique semi-arid pastoral system . A study of this unique mutually inseparable breed-pastoral system provides a window to the rich bio-diversity and cultural heritage handed down the generations. Preserving this for posterity is a serious question requiring concerted and collective effort on the part of stakeholders – elected representatives, the State, large and small holders, scientists, academia and civil society. Such unique systems, however small, located in any part of the world cannot be ignored since it has global significance. Communities and Nations can no more detach or remain insensitive to such heritage issues. This documentation attempts to capture the different aspects of this unique system from a historical perspective clubbed with contemporary and future relevance.

We steward the following breeds of livestock. Some of them have been exclusively developed by us, while others have been jointly developed with other communities.

Kangayam Breed

The Kangayam breed is known by the names Kanganad, Kongu and Kangayam and derives its name from the Taluk of Kangayam, are well known for their excellent draught power qualities and medicinal properties of milk (A2 beta-casein protein). They are elegant, medium sized, horns variously sized and set, colours different, but usually white or grey, chest and hind-quarter narrow, docile, quick and strong. Dentition is permanently completed by 6 or 6 ½ years and the maximum life of stock is between 20 to 25 years. Select bulls are allowed to cover heifers from the age of 3 years or castrated for rearing as bullocks.

The Pattakarar Family of Palayakottai, located in the present day Tiruppur District, especially the 33rd Pattakarar and his son Rao Bahadur N. Nallathambi Sarkarai Mandradiar and his family were directly responsible for improving the present day Kangayam through selective breeding, improvement, management and protecting the breed at a time when bullock power was indispensable for agriculture and transport. Many small holders in the region also held the breed, but the purest form always came from the Pattakarars. Since 1924, the Government of Madras took steps to improve and popularize the Kangayam Breed. It was around this period that the Pattakarar contributed a nucleus herd of pure bred bulls and cows for breeding purposes to the Madras Government, the Ceylon Government and to the Coimbatore District.



The Kangayam bull and cow

In 1942, the then Imperial Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) implemented the 'Kangayam Cattle Improvement Scheme' to assess the milk potential of the breed without deteriorating its draught quality. The Pattakarar family was maintaining pedigree records. As part of the scheme, bulls were also distributed to other districts and States to upgrade local cattle to suit agricultural operations. Post independence, the state government introduced Key Village Scheme and Key Village Extension Scheme as part of the Five Year Plans, for the improvement of Kangayam in its breeding tracts and adjoining areas. This continued until 1974, when this scheme was replaced with Intensive Cattle Development Project (ICDP) with emphasis on milk production through exotic breeds.

In spite of the large scale transformation and decline of agriculture in the region there is still a demand for the Kangayam not only from the neighbouring districts of Sivagangai, Ramanathapuram, Pudukottai, Villupuram and Madurai, but also the states of Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh for its draught power. The breed has also been exported to Brazil, Malaysia, Philippines and Sri Lanka by the Government of India.

Breed Management

Folk taxonomy in the realm of community knowledge is based on colour of the cattle. 95% of the Kangayam cattle are white in colour called Mayilai. 2% are red called Sevalai, 3% is black called Kari. Among the new borns, Poochi Kalai (Stud) is selected based on the height, weight, shape of the head, length of the legs, the formation of the hump, the length of the tail, gait, well formed ears and eyes and the sex organ. This is done after checking the pedigree (male and female) of the bull. When the bull is 2 ½ to 3 years when the dentition happen it is used as a Stud. The best animals are left to cover heifers to get the best offspring. If the new born does not qualify the above, they are castrated and left for draught purposes. As far as cows are concerned, they are also carefully chosen. These Cows usually calve 12 times in their life time. The best is between the 3rd and 10th calving. Mayilai is preferred for its milk, curd, ghee, urine, dung properties and is considered to be the best for draught purposes. However, the ghee of Kari is considered to be the best.

Unique Grazing System

Korangadu pasture lands

The Kangayam Breeding Tract is largely a rain shadow region of the Western Ghats receiving an average annual rainfall of 650 mm, having shallow red soil, and calcareous sub-soil, conditions favourable for better growth of grass with high nutritive value. Farmers set aside, lease in or lease out, large tracts of lands known as Korangadu. Korangadu, in the local language means, “uncultivated managed dryland set aside for grazing purposes”. Many of these Korangadu are natural permanent pastures. The fields provide good pasture between the months of June and February. An indigenous grass variety called Kollukattai (*Cenchrus ciliaris*), other grasses and legumes such as naripayathan kodi (*Phaseolus trilobus*) grow in these pastures. Saplings of selected tree species like Vellai velan (*Acacia leucophloea*) are permitted to grow in Korangadu. Once in about seven or eight years big holders and two or three years by small holders Korangadu is ploughed using bullocks to upturn the soil and sow crops like horsegram, sorghum, pearl millet and naripayaru. The Korangadu is fenced with stakes of a thorny shrub called Kiluvai (*Commiphora berryi*). At the onset of the north-east monsoon, cattle are turned into the paddocks every day to graze until the arrival of the south west monsoon season. The cattle grazing in these Korangadu, manure the land and vital nutrients are added to the soil. The pasture lasts for several years and when it becomes scarce, are ploughed. However, during the hot months it is always a problem and cattle get scanty feed and they feed on pods of Vellai velan that fall down and supplementary feed consisting of sorghum or pearl millet stalks. Reference to the system can be found in the works of the English traveler, Francis Buchanan when he traveled in the region in 1800.

Management of Korangadu

The Korangadu is an intensively managed system. Every five to seven years or after a drought year, a part of the hedge of live Kiluvai (*Commiphora berryi*) fence is repaired by trenching, planting and bunding, usually carried out during August (Ani-Adi) just before the onset of the monsoons, a labour intensive process. These paddock enclosures form the basis of the Korangadu system. Animals are let into the Korangadu paddocks and livestock keepers spend the whole day monitoring the animals and providing water in troughs fetched from a nearby water source (Personal observation). Korangadu owners maintain a healthy ratio of grasses belonging to different species, interspread with Vellai velan trees and oonjai (*Albizia amara*). The grasses are grazed upon by the animals during the monsoon months (June to December), later on Naripayithankodi, a legume (January to March) and then consume Vellai velan pods which has

high protein and nutrient value during the summer months. Owners remove and market when the trees mature. In the past farmers would renovate bunds inside Korangadu before the onset of the northeast monsoons to harvest rainwater which is also used by livestock. A decade ago, State funded soil and water conservation schemes has created bunds in appropriate locations as a means to arrest soil erosion and harvest rain water.

Tenure arrangements of Korangadu pasture lands

A reconnaissance survey of the present day tenure arrangements associated with Korangadu was carried out to understand existing patterns of use. Small holders and landless 'lease in' Korangadu



Cattle grazing in Korangadu

(locally called Kandhayamor Kuthagai) from owners having surplus lands or those who have migrated to the city, for use as grazing Kangayam or Mecheri sheep, approximately for Rs.1000 to Rs. 4000 per acre per year. Some livestock keepers pay a large sum ranging from Rs.30,000/- to Rs.40,000/- to landowners as a deposit for in lieu of 4-5 acres of Korangadu for a period of 3-4 years (locally called Bhogyam). Land owners requiring capital for use in business or other social needs like marriage of children or higher education 'lease out' to others. During the lease period, the lessee would graze Kangayam and Mecheri animals in the Korangadu. When the deposit is returned by the landowner, the lessee vacates the land. It is usually agreed that a lessee would not be disturbed at least for three years. Most of these arrangements are oral and informal and disputes rarely, if any, are settled through village elders. The credibility of the livestock keeper is very high compared with a farmer holding only land.

Traditional knowledge

Our traditional knowledge relating to breeds and breeding has arisen from centuries of experience of tending these particular breeds in Kongu region. We have traditional customs that ensure the genetic diversity of our breeds, such as the rotation of bulls between villages and pattis (Sty) for stud. We have also developed local treatment systems (ethno-veterinary knowledge) with which to care for wounded or ill animals, and much of this traditional knowledge is held by both the men and women of our community. We share our ethno-veterinary knowledge freely with other communities that own livestock. Women play a pivotal role in possessing the knowledge and disseminating through practice. Women are highly knowledgeable in selecting the best stud for covering female. They also patiently and diligently assist while covering. Immediately after delivery they take care of the newborn and administer the required feed appropriately. They also engage in all aspects of breed management including decisions on the sale or transfer of our livestock. In many farms women drive cattle to the pasture land for grazing. These animals also recognize the voice of the lady and without who they may go astray.



Women in live stock management

The Kongu Vellala Gounders are also quite famous for the best water tappers in the world. We have the traditional knowledge of identifying a water source and also the means to reach the source how so ever it may be deep. In fact our knowledge is being put to use by many communities around the world.

Traditional Medical Knowledge related to Livestock

Medications for various diseases or conditions - ethno veterinary practices like - blue tongue, foot and mouth etc are managed using traditional knowledge. Prima facie, the live stock are not afflicted by major disease that afflict breeds that have been imported from other countries. Some of the common diseases and treatment are documented here.

Thettar (Inflammation of the frontal legs) - Onion and a herb found in Korangadu is ground together and administered externally. (To respect the practice of locals the name is not rendered here as per their instructions)

Punippu (Cramps in the legs and the animal cannot walk) – Fenugreek in *Rastali* plantain (Tamilnadu has 32 varieties of plantain) is administered internally to the affected animal.

Vachapai (Foot and mouth) – Pig fat is applied all over the mouth, tongue and foot. *Velan* bark, neem bark is soaked in jaggery water. This is allowed to ferment and administered to the animal along with the feed water.

(Madi veekam) *Mastitis* – *Appakkovai* herb, turmeric and onion are ground and administered externally.

Thadai (Inflammation) – Lemon juice and lime powder are mixed together and made into a paste and applied externally

Snake, scorpion and insect bite – *Varikkimutti* root and *urikka* creeper, root cap of vella erukku (*Callotropis*) and 15 nos. of pepper are crushed and administered to the animal. Sometimes siriyanangai root is administered. Depending on the symptoms, the treatment is decided.

During pregnancy – 2 kgs of *Kozhinji* plant leaves and dry coconut have to be roasted together, dried and powdered. This powder is administered through the mouth for two days. *Perandai* is also administered in some cases.

During delivery – Sometimes the residue in the uterus is cleaned using Sesame cake by mixing this in water and having the cattle drink.

Proverbs

“அறுகாங் காட்டை விட்டானும் கெட்டான்; ஆன மாட்டை விற்றவனும் கெட்டான்”

“Ruin awaits the man who gives up pasture or who sells the bullock that was of use to him”

(Regional proverb)

மேழிச்செல்வம் கோழைபடாது – “Wealth of Yoke does not wither away” (text from Konrai Venthan)

Bio-cultural practices

Achi maadu - “*Achi Madu*” in Kongu region is a customary bio cultural practice. When a girl delivers a child her parents gift a cow and calf when she leaves her maternal home to join her husband. The heifers of the said cow are continuously kept within the family for decades. It is customary that the cow or heifer goes to the daughter or granddaughter in the family when she gets married. This ensures the nutrient needs of the children are met. This goes in a continuum.

Selling milk – Traditionally milk was not sold in Kongu region. In Kongu villages, Kangayam livestock keepers used to give milk without taking any money to families who have small children up to the age of 7. However, butter milk was sold. Milk is generally given free for children and cannot be sold as a custom. In this region as most of the people are non vegetarians and their need of animal protein is met from consuming meat. Hence milk was historically given to children and not consumed by adults.

Kavadi– There are certain religious practices of taking *kavadi* (is a ceremonial ritual offered to temples) to Murugan temples in Palanai, Sivanmalai, Chennimalai. In addition to this, this practice is also followed to not only each individual sect's *Kula Deivam* temple (Family deity) but also of a revenue village and their common deities.

Temple dedicated to cattle



Traditional offerings to a temple



Kavadi taken for Palani Temple



Horns being shaved skillfully



The oxen is decorated with *pallara paasi* or *muga patta* on the face, a cloth and bed on top of the oxen called *dabara* or *murasu* or *nahar*, on the *viri* to support drums. *Panguni Uttiram* (in March-April) and *Thai Poosam* (in Jan-Feb) are the other festivals during which people visit Palanai, Chennimalai, Sivanmalai – all Murugan shrines taking *theertham* (holy water of Cauvery) from

a place called Kodumudi. This pilgrimage is done by foot which takes nearly seven to ten days. Kangayam cattle are taken along during this ritual and do the necessary oblations. During this pilgrimage people from all communities including Christians and Muslims provide water, butter milk to the pilgrims. Communal harmony has been maintained at its best.

Pongal

Pongal is the traditional harvest festival during the month of Thai (Mid January). Farmers / livestock keepers celebrate this day, exclusive for a good harvest and for as a thanks giving for the livestock. The cattle are washed, poon kavi applied on the horns and back. *Poon kavi* is a particular type of red soil. Turmeric leaves and Poola poo are tied to the cow's horn. *Sarkarai* Pongal (Sweet Pudding) is offered to the cows and bullocks in kottai muthu (Castor) leaves.



Horns decorated for Pongal



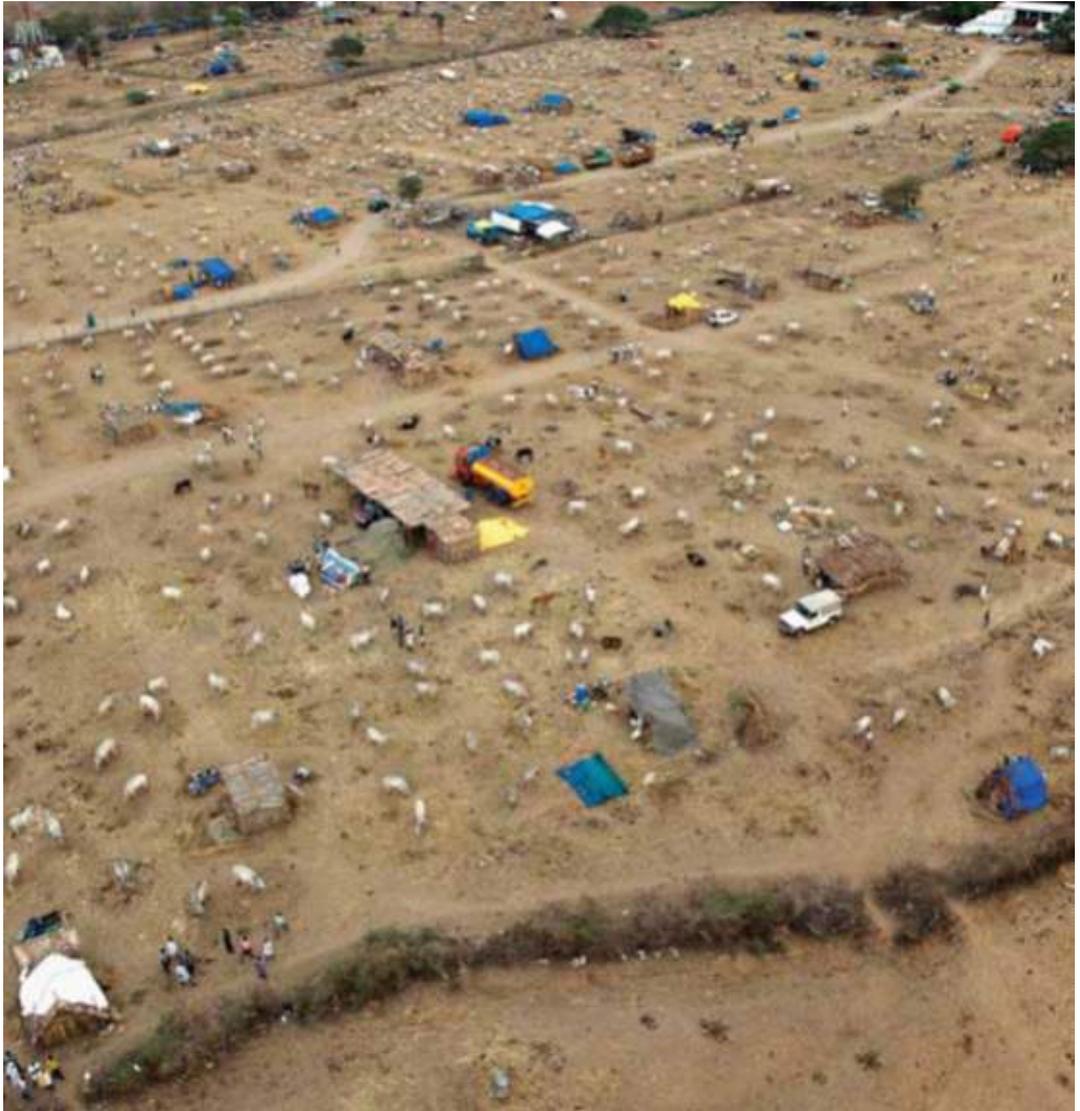
Pongal offering

Trading

The Kangayam breed has been associated with shandys of Kannapuram, Anthiyur, Tiruppur, Kallimanthayam, Athikombai and the Madurai Chittirai festival. Kannapuram is mentioned as one of the important cities of ancient Kongu region. The Vikramacholisvara temple in Kannapuram was constructed during the period of Kalimurkka Vikrama Chola, a contemporary of Rajaraja I. Ptolemy has noted the importance of Dharapuram, an entrepot of trade routes and famous for a good breed of cattle including a cattle fair as a regular feature, and also a commercial centre .

In the present, a cattle shandy is being held in Kannapuram village, located on the Coimbatore-Trichy national highway, between Kangayam and Vellakoil. Bulls and cows from various places in Erode, Salem, Namakkal, Karur and Coimbatore districts are brought to the shandy and sold to buyers from Thanjavur, Trichy, Madurai, Pudukottai and Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Cattle

shandy (Mattuthavany) is held once annually in Kannapuram village for seven to 10 days during the Tamil month of Chithirai (April) and coincides with the “Temple car Festival” (Ther thiruvila) of Mariamman Temple, another temple adjacent to the Vikramacholisvara temple on Chithra pournami day (Full moon day of ‘Chithirai’ of Tamil month).



Aerial view of Kannapuram Cattle Shandy



Cottage products related to Kangayam sold at Kannapuram Shandy

As part of the annual temple car festival people congregate in large numbers. Culturally this was a time for festivities, trading and transactions. Nearly 30,000 animals are brought to the shandy every year, and a decline has been reported.

Bio-cultural sports

Jallikattu / Eru Thaluvudhal

Jallikattu, an important ancient Tamil sport that takes place in several villages in southern Tamilnadu in the month of January during the harvest festival Pongal. Jallikattu means tying the coin. In olden days a gold coin wrapped in a piece of cloth was fastened to the horns of a bull and the tacklers hold onto the hump of the bull and untie this knot to get the prize. While the name Jallikattu is retained, the coin is no more tied to the horns. One of the stringent rules practiced in the sport is if there is any blood mark seen on the cattle the baiter is barred. S. Theodore Baskaran has recorded this practice of Jallikattu in his book "*Thamarai Pootha Thadakam: Cutruculal arvalarkalum kalacara aracijalum*". Jallikattu bulls belong to a few specific breeds that descended from Kangayam. This sport is traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization which are depicted in the seals with scenes of bull baiting. The majestic Kangayam is an important breed involved in this game and considered to be more muscular and ferocious.

Rekhla

Rekhla race is another prestigious and passionate farmer sport conducted in 15 or more places, attracting more than 10000 participants a year. It is a place where small holders and big landlords meet. Small holders can compete with big owners and provides an edge for individual honour. In Kongu region, only Kangayam cattle are involved in these events, while other breeds are used



Rekhla



Jallikkattu / Eru Thaluvudhal

in other locations. Individuals spend a lot of money to take part in these events. The winners are honoured with Shields and gold coins. The animal pairs that win these competitions have a great demand. Sometimes they are sold ranging from Indian Rupees 400,000 – 700,000.

Prior informed consent & benefit sharing

Our animal genetic resources and our associated traditional knowledge about breeding and ethno-veterinary practices are collectively owned by the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu community. We have customary laws that regulate decisions making in our communities. For issues that relate to all community members, we our clan heads and panchayat that is constituted. Our elders and heads in the community in our panchayat follow our customary laws and norms of decision making that have been followed for generations. Regions traditionally under Pattakkarars are relatively easier and the Pattakkarar families take this responsibility of resolving issues. Therefore our community should be engaged any time outside interests take decisions that may affect our livelihoods or relate to our breeds and associated traditional knowledge. For example, before any of our access rights to customary grazing areas are altered we must be consulted. Also, where researchers or commercial interests want to access our animal genetic resources and / or associated traditional knowledge, we must be given all relevant information with which to take a decision and given time to discuss the issues within the community panchayat as our breed

diversity and traditional knowledge are collectively held and their ownership does not vest in any single individual. In cases where we decide to grant access to our animal genetic resources or associated traditional knowledge, we have the right to negotiate a benefit sharing agreement based on mutually agreed terms.

Our future

The expansion of cities and the growth of real estates and the Government policies towards special economic zones are direct threats to grazing lands and subsequently the Kangayam breed and finally the ecosystem which challenges the way of life and our livelihoods. With it will disappear our livestock, our culture and the virtuous relationship between our herds and the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu landscapes we have sustained. If the younger generation has to carry on our traditional way of these policies have to be stronger so that they can carry on the traditional values. The associated sports like Rekhla and Jallikkattu should be allowed under supervision for them to find meaning in what they are doing.

Time and again, conservationists have acknowledged the importance of traditional knowledge and practices of local communities. These practices are a mix of age old wisdom with new ideas and go beyond the realm of modern science and are strongly rooted in culture and religion. The problem is traditional knowledge being mindlessly replaced by modern knowledge without taking the broader holistic view into account factors that have become detrimental to the environment and endangering the very existence of the breed and pasture lands. Initially the threats were factors such as industrialization, abandonment of this breed has opened the lands to be preyed by realtors sandwiched by narrow interpretation of Government policies is likely to erase the knowledge of local communities, leaving no trace of heritage and history except on paper. Only a matter of honour and pride prompts a few farmers to hold onto the Kangayam cattle and the Korangadu grazing lands. State support is essential for the continuity of the breed.

Our Rights Under Indian Laws & Policies

A. The Biological Diversity Act of 2002 and the Biological Diversity Rules of 2004

The Biological Diversity Act of 2002 in its efforts to fulfil India's commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity provides for the conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use

of such biological diversity and associated traditional knowledge (TK). The Biological Diversity Act sets up the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and the Biological Diversity Rules of 2004 lists the functions of the NBA as including regulating access to biological resources and associated TK for commercial and research purposes. The NBA is also empowered to advise the Union Government on any matter relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and associated TK and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of biological resources and associated TK. The Biological Diversity Act among other things requires the Union Government under Section 36 to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity through in situ conservation and minimize the adverse effects on biological diversity of any project undertaken through environmental impact assessments that includes public participation. The Union Government is tasked with ensuring respect and protection of associated TK of local communities in accordance with the recommendations of the NBA including registration of TK and other sui generis methods for its protection. Under Sec 38 the Union Government is also required to preserve and protect those species that are on the verge of extinction.

In order to ensure the effective fulfilment of the role of the NBA at a local level, local bodies such as the Panchayats or Municipalities are required under Sec 41 to set up Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) to promote conservation and sustainable use and documentation of biological diversity and associated TK. The NBA and the State Biodiversity Boards would consult with the BMCs while taking any decision relating to the use of biological resources and associated TK within the territorial jurisdiction of the BMC. Under Rule 22 (6) of the Biological Diversity Rules of 2004 the main function of the BMC is to prepare a Peoples Biodiversity Register in consultation with the local people which shall contain comprehensive information on availability and knowledge of local biological resources and their associated TK. The Biological Diversity Act under Sec 21 envisages that the NBA will base its approval regarding any application for access to biological resources or associated TK on the whether a mutually agreed terms and fair and equitable benefit sharing has been negotiated with the local community that provides such resource or associated TK (benefit claimers according to Sec 2 (a) of the Biological Diversity Act). The local community or benefit claimers in question will be identified according to the Peoples Biodiversity Register under the territorial jurisdiction of the local BMC.

The Biological Diversity Act and Rules therefore provides certain rights to the Kongu community:

- The right to consultation and public participation prior to any project that may affect the livelihoods of Kongu community, their animal breeds and associated TK;
- The right to conservation and sustainable use of our animal breeds;

- The right to give prior informed consent and negotiate mutually agreed terms when any Kangayam-Korangadu animal genetic resources or associated TK is accessed and share fairly and equitable in any benefits arising from the utilization of their animal genetic resources and associated TK;
- The right to a Peoples Biodiversity Register that will document Kangayam-Korangadu biological diversity and associated TK;
- The right to a BMC to advise the NBA on how the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu biological resources and associated TK
- can be conserved and sustainably used; and
- The right to carry on the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu traditional lifestyles which involves continued access to grazing lands in order to conserve the biological diversity of our breeds and associated TK.

C. National Policy for Farmers

The National Policy for Farmers (NPF – 2007) is an attempt to reorient agricultural policy to take a more holistic vision of agricultural production to include a focus on socio-economic wellbeing. Animal genetic resources and pastoralists are among the areas it focuses on to achieve in situ conservation according to the NBA.

The NPF acknowledges livestock keepers' inherent rights to continue to use and develop their own breeding stock and breeding practices and calls on the government to recognize these rights, acknowledge livestock keepers' contribution to the national economy, and adapt its policies and legal frameworks accordingly. As part of this effort, it underscores the need to document the indigenous knowledge of pastoral communities about animal conservation, maintenance and breeding.

To achieve these aims, the NPF calls for:

- Restoration of traditional grazing rights and camping rights in respect of Korangadu areas and in those areas earmarked for grazing purpose in village common lands;
- Formalizing entitlements (including issue of permanent grazing cards) for traditional pastoralists/herders maintaining native animal breeds to enable free access to notified or demarcated grazing sites and migration routes;
- Conservation and expansion on grazing land and drinking water sources for livestock; Documentation of indigenous livestock breeds to recognize and protect the intellectual property rights of the local communities / individuals conserving these livestock breeds; and

- Involved of pastoralists in all local natural resource management programs, including village Korangadu committees and joint Korangadu management.

We call on the National Biodiversity Authority to:

- Recognize our local breeds and associated traditional knowledge as set out in the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu Biodiversity Register and to include it in the Peoples Biodiversity Register (under Rule 22(6) of the Biological Diversity Rules);
- Facilitate the setting up of Biodiversity Management Committees under the local bodies (Panchayats or Municipalities) where we live and to support these Committees in ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of our breed diversity and traditional knowledge (as per section 41 of the National Biodiversity Act);
- Strengthen in situ conservation of breeds of the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu and include them in the BMC being initiated by the government (under sections 36 and 41 of the National Biodiversity Act).
- Advise the Union Government and coordinate the activities of the State Biodiversity Boards to protect the customary grazing rights of the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu so as to safeguard our traditional lifestyles that ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the our breed diversity, associated traditional knowledge and the local ecosystem (under section 36 of the National Biodiversity Act).
- Ensure that our prior informed consent (according to customary law) is obtained before any decision are taken that affect our traditional way of life or access is granted to our breed diversity and associated traditional knowledge for research or for commercial purposes, and further ensure that we receive a fair and equitable share of the benefits arising from the utilization of our breeds and traditional knowledge according to mutually agreed terms (under section 21 of the national biodiversity Act);

We commit to protecting the biological diversity of the region, our animal genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, by:

- Upholding our traditional roles as custodians of the Korangadus and as sustainers of the co-evolved Korangadu ecosystem of the region;
- Protecting the Korangadu against fires by regulating the grass growth by grazing and by fighting Korangadu fires when they break out;
- Sustaining the predator population in the Korangadu through the customary offering of some of our livestock as prey;
- Continuing to increase Korangadu growth through the customary manuring of the Korangadu from the dung of our livestock;
- Ensuring strong tree growth by the customary pruning of the upper branches and twigs of

trees by our Cattle;

- Grazing the fallen leaves on the Korangadu floor thereby keeping the termite population in check; Combating illegal logging and poaching in the Korangadu;
- Continuing our traditional rotational or seasonal grazing that facilitates Korangadu growth;
- Eliminating invasive species in the Korangadu;
- Promoting and sustaining the breed diversity of our livestock; and
- Preserving and practicing our traditional breeding and ethno-veterinary knowledge and innovations, and sustainable management of Korangadu resources relevant to the protection of the co-evolved Korangadu ecosystem of the region.

Our Rights Under International Law

We the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu in our biocultural community protocol identify the following principles and rights based on international law, (that are further elaborated in Appendix II, namely:

A. Principles

We are creators of breeds and custodians of their animal genetic resources for food and agriculture;

- The Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu and the sustainable use of traditional breeds are highly dependent on the conservation of our ecosystem; and
- Our traditional breeds represent collective property, products of indigenous knowledge and our cultural expression.

B. Rights

We have the right to:

- Make breeding decisions and breed the breeds they maintain.
- Participate in policy formulation and implementation processes on animal genetic resources for food and agriculture.
- Receive appropriate training and capacity building and equal access to relevant services enabling and supporting us to raise livestock and to better process and market our products. Participate in the identification of research needs and research design with respect to our genetic resources, as is mandated by the principle of Prior Informed Consent.
- Effectively access information on issues related to our local breeds and livestock diversity. We call on the Secretariat of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, specifically under Article 8(j) of the Convention, to recognize our contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the Kangayam-Korangadu ecosystem. We also

call on the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to acknowledge the importance of our animal genetic resources and to recognize livestock keepers' rights.

Our Contact Details:

Senaapathy Kangayam Cattle Research Foundation,
Kuttappalayam (p.o.), Kangayam Taluk
Tiruppur District,
Tamilnadu -638108, India
karthikeyaksm@gmail.com

Appendix I: Our Rights under International Law

We the Kongu people in this Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu Biocultural Community Protocol identify the following principles and rights based on international law:

Principle 1:

The Kongu people are creators of breeds and custodians of their animal genetic resources for food and agriculture.

Over the course of history, the Kongu people have managed and bred livestock, selected and used them, thus shaping them so they are well-adapted to our environment and its extremes. Keeping these breeds is a vital part of our culture and livelihoods. Yet these breeds and our livelihoods are under risk through loss of access to our traditional grazing lands. This has endangered our food security and our way of life. As recognised in the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources and the Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources, livestock keeping communities are thus the creators and custodians of the breeds that they maintain. We have therefore earned certain custodianship rights over these breeds, including the right to decide how others use the genetic resources embodied in our breeds.

Principle 1 is supported by:

Point 9 of the Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources recognizes “that the genetic resources of animal species most critical to food security, sustainable livelihoods and human well-being are the result of both natural selection, and directed selection by smallholders, farmers, pastoralists and breeders, throughout the world, over generations”.

Point 12 of the Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources recognizes “the enormous contribution that the local and indigenous communities and farmers, pastoralists and animal breeders of all regions of the world have made, and will continue to make for the sustainable use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture”.

Part I Point 10 of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources: “all animal genetic resources for food and agriculture are the result of human intervention: they have been consciously selected and improved by pastoralists and farmers since the origins of agriculture, and have co-evolved with economies, cultures, knowledge systems and societies. Unlike most wild biodiversity, domestic animal resources require continuous active human management, sensitive to their unique nature”.

Principle 2:

The Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu and the sustainable use of traditional breeds are dependent on the conservation of our ecosystem.

Our traditional breeds are developed through the interaction between our livestock, the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu pastoralists and our natural environment. This natural environment is conserved, inter alia, through traditional practices of the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu, and traditional breeds lose their specific characteristics once removed from this ecosystem. The Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu therefore have a right to access our natural environment, so as to ensure the sustainable use and conservation of our breeds and the environment.

Principle 2 is supported by:

Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity: “genetic resources should be conserved in the surroundings in which they have developed their distinct properties”.

Article 10 (d) of the Convention on Biological Diversity demands that “local populations are supported to develop and implement remedial action in degraded areas where biological diversity has been reduce”.

Chapter 15 (5) (g) of Agenda 21: requires States to “Take action where necessary for the conservation of biological diversity through the in situ conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats,...and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings.

Principle 22 of the Rio Declaration: “Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development”.

Principle 3:

Our traditional breeds represent collective property, products of indigenous knowledge and cultural expression of the Kongu/Kangayam-Korangadu.

While the Kongu people have collective custodianship rights over our breeds and the genetic traits of these breeds, it is crucial that these rights are supported and promoted by the government. Our government must therefore respect, preserve and maintain the knowledge, innovations and practices of the Kongu people embodying lifestyles relevant for sustainable use and conservation of livestock diversity.

Principle 3 is supported by:

Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: “Contracting parties shall...subject to national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity...”

Article 10 (c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: “customary use of biological resources is protected and encouraged in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation and sustainable use requirements”..

Chapter 15 (4) (g) of Agenda 21 calls on governments at the appropriate level “to recognize and foster the traditional methods and knowledge of indigenous people and their communities ... relevant to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources”.

Chapter 15 (5) (e) of Agenda 21: Governments should “subject to national legislation, take action to respect, record, protect and promote the wider application of the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles for the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources ...”

Based on these principles articulated and implicit in existing legal instruments and international agreements, the Kongu people who belong to a traditional livestock keeping community and adhere to ecological principles of animal production affirm the following rights:

1. The Kongu people have the right to make breeding decisions and breed the breeds they maintain.

This right is supported by:

Article 10 (c) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: obliges Parties to “protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation and sustainable use requirements”.

2. The Kongu people shall have the right to participate in policy formulation and implementation processes on animal genetic resources for food and agriculture.

This right is supported by:

Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: obliges Parties to “promote the wider application of the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities with their approval and involvement”.

Article 14(1) (a) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: obliges Parties to “introduce appropriate procedures requiring environmental impact assessment of its proposed projects that are likely to have significant adverse effects on biological diversity with a view to avoiding or minimizing such effects and where appropriate allow for public participation in such procedures”.

Article 3 (a) of the United Nations Convention on Desertification: compels Parties to “ensure that decisions on the design and implementation of programmes to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought are taken with the participation of populations and local communities and that an enabling environment is created at higher levels to facilitate action at national and local levels”.

Article 10 (2) (f) of the United Nations Convention on Desertification: obliges the “effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non- governmental organizations and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes”.

3. The Kongu people shall have the right to appropriate training and capacity building and equal access to relevant services enabling and supporting us to raise livestock and to better process and market our products.

This right is supported by:

Article 12 (a) of the Convention on Biological Diversity obliges Parties to ‘establish and maintain programmes for scientific and technical education and training in measures for the identification, conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and its components’

Article 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity obliges Parties to ‘adopt economically and socially sound measures that act as incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity’

Article 19 (1) (e) of the United Nations Convention on Desertification obliges parties to promote capacity building “by adapting, where necessary, relevant environmentally sound technology and traditional methods of agriculture and pastoralism to modern socio-economic conditions”.

Strategic Priority 6 of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources requests governments to “Support indigenous and local livestock systems of importance to animal genetic resources, including through the removal of factors contributing to genetic erosion. Support may include the provision of veterinary and extension services, delivery of microcredit for women in rural areas, appropriate access to natural resources and to the market, resolving land tenure issues, the recognition of cultural practices and values, and adding value to their specialist products.”

4. The Kongu people shall have the right to participate in the identification of research needs and research design with respect to our genetic resources, as is mandated by the principle of Prior Informed Consent.

This right is supported by:

Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (see above) and Article 10 (d) which says Parties shall “support local populations to develop and implement remedial action in degraded areas where biological diversity has been reduced”.

Chapter 15(4) (g) of Agenda 21 require states to “Recognize and foster the traditional methods and the knowledge of indigenous people and their communities ...and ensure the opportunity for the participation of those groups in the economic and commercial benefits derived from the use of such traditional methods and knowledge”.

5. The Kongu people shall have the right to effectively access information on issues related to our local breeds and livestock diversity.

This right is supported by:

Article 13 (a) of the Convention on Biological Diversity: obliges Parties to “Promote and encourage understanding of the importance of and the measures required for the conservation of biological diversity, as well as its propagation through media, and the inclusion of these topics in educational programmes”.

Appendix II

Colonial and Post Colonial Laws and Policies and their impact on Pasture Lands and Agro bio-diversity

During the colonial period, these pasture lands used for grazing were held under patta and assessed at one fourth of the cultivable lands, known as Ayan pillu vari (Ayan Grass Tax). The pressure on Ayan pillu lands for tillage started as early as 1855, when it was reported that the population and prices rapidly escalated. Land became profitable for tillage above pasture and were therefore broken up by the owners themselves and were brought under the plough. This led to increased dependence on Government lands known as parava-pillu lands (scattered grasslands) for the purpose of grazing. The privilege of grazing this scattered grasslands was usually rented to the village headmen, provided there were no other takers for cultivation. Subsequently, these grass lands were turned into patta lands when there was pressure on land use for cultivation and eventually started disappearing. Not being able to control conversion, the Government decided by 1875 to charge full assessment for all lands whenever they were converted for cultivation purposes.

In the post colonial period, land reforms had a significant impact on pasture lands used for raising and maintaining the Kangayam Breed. The major objective of land reforms promoted by the state was to achieve an egalitarian society through redistribution of ceiling surplus land among tillers

and landless poor and to increase land productivity. The Government of Tamilnadu enacted the Tamilnadu Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling on Land) Act 1961 which came into force on 6.4.1960 (almost a decade after the Government of India Act 1952 was passed). According to the State Act the maximum extent one family of five members could hold was fixed as 30 standard acres. For every additional member in the family, additionally 5 standard acres were allowed, subject to a maximum of 60 standard acres. In the year 1970 the ceiling was reduced from 30 to 15 standard acres by Act 17 of 1970. In 1972 Act 20/72 the overall ceiling limit was reduced from 60 to 40 standard acres. This was further reduced to 15 standard acres. Subsequent policies framed the death knell of the Kangayam cattle. Therefore, post independence and reforms and land ceiling act further reduced the possibility of maintaining and using grazing lands for breeding.

Data on changes in land utilization pattern in Tamilnadu during 1960-61 to 2001-02 adds strength to the above argument. The data indicates a sharp decline in 'Permanent pasture and other grazing land' from 334,000 hectares in 1960-61 covering 2.6% to 121,000 hectares covering 0.9% of the total land extent of Tamilnadu in 2001-02.

Appendix III

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