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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

TRANSFORMING NIGERIA'S LIVESTOCK SECTOR FOR PEACE, PRODUCTIVITY AND PROSPERITY

Sub-theme: "Strategic Reforms for Nigeria's Livestock Sector:
Addressing Farmer-Herder Conflicts, Modernizing Production and
Unlocking Economic Potentials"

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Venue:- Faculty of Social Sciences' Annual Distinguished Personality

Lecture Series, University of Ilorin, Kwara State

Date:- June 30, 2025

Contents

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS	1
<i>TRANSFORMING NIGERIA’S LIVESTOCK SECTOR FOR PEACE, PRODUCTIVITY AND PROSPERITY</i>	1
Protocol	4
1. 0 Opening Remarks & Context Setting	4
1.1 Significance of this Lecture	5
2. The Current State of Nigeria’s Livestock Sector	8
2.1. Rising Demand and the Imperative for Strategic Planning	10
2.2. Production Systems: A Landscape of Contrasts and Challenges	10
2.3. Critical Challenges Constraining Growth and Stability	12
3. The Tinubu Administration’s Livestock Reform Blueprint:	15
3.1. Emergency Support and Conflict Resolution: Stabilizing the Foundation	15
3.2. Private Sector-Led Investment and Modernization: Unlocking Capital, Markets and Innovation	17
3.3. Data and Infrastructure Development: Building the Backbone for Evidence-Based Governance	18
3.4 Genetic Improvement and Value Chain Development: Enhancing Productivity and Market Integration	18
4. Legislative and Policy Actions: Institutionalizing Reform through Collaboration and Subnational Alignment	19
4.1. The National Livestock Transformation Bill: Creating a Legal Framework for Sustainable Reform	21
4.2. Budgetary Appropriations and Strategic Investments	21
4.3. State-Level Alignment and the Challenge of Land Use Reform	22
4.4. Enabling Policies for Private Sector Growth	23
5. Call to Action: A Collective Responsibility for Livestock Transformation	23
5.1. For Government: Policy Coherence, Execution and Financing	23
5.2. For the Private Sector: Investment, Innovation and Market Leadership	24
5.3. For Academia, Think Tanks and the Media: Research, Innovation and Public Engagement	26
5.5. Leveraging Technology: AI and Drones for Livestock Intelligence	28
6.0 Strategic Recommendations for Nigeria’s Livestock Transformation	29

7. Closing: A Vision for the Future of Nigeria’s Livestock Sector	32
7.1. A Vision Anchored in Peace, Productivity and Prosperity	32
7.2. A New Social Contract for Livestock Reform	33
7.3 Conclusion	33
Bibliography and Further Reading.....	34

Protocol

1. 0 Opening Remarks & Context Setting

It is with profound humility and great honour that I have the singular honour to deliver this lecture, under the auspices of the prestigious University of Ilorin's Faculty of Social Sciences Annual Distinguished Personality Lecture Series. Permit me to express my deep appreciation to all who have made this occasion both possible and indeed meaningful. I wish to extend my sincere commendation to the leadership of this great institution for hosting this critical discussion and to the distinguished Senator Saliu Mustapha, whose strategic legislative advocacy and policy foresight have been instrumental in catalyzing national attention to the structural challenges facing the livestock sector. His continued partnership with executive stakeholders has created an enabling legislative environment to advance critical reforms in agriculture, food security and national cohesion. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the presence and contributions of a broad spectrum of stakeholders—policymakers, traditional rulers, academic researchers, private sector actors, civil society representatives and our international development partners. Your collective efforts, insights and unwavering commitment serve as both a compass and an engine for progress in reimagining Nigeria's livestock economy. The intersectionality of your roles is vital to achieving sustainable, inclusive and conflict-resilient livestock systems.

This gathering today is not merely ceremonial, it is catalytic and provides opportunity for sober reflection, data-driven interrogation and strategic conversation on how to reposition Nigeria's livestock sector as a bedrock of peace-building, economic diversification and food and nutrition security. The livestock sector, if reformed with vision and precision, can become the long awaited cornerstone of inclusive prosperity in this country.

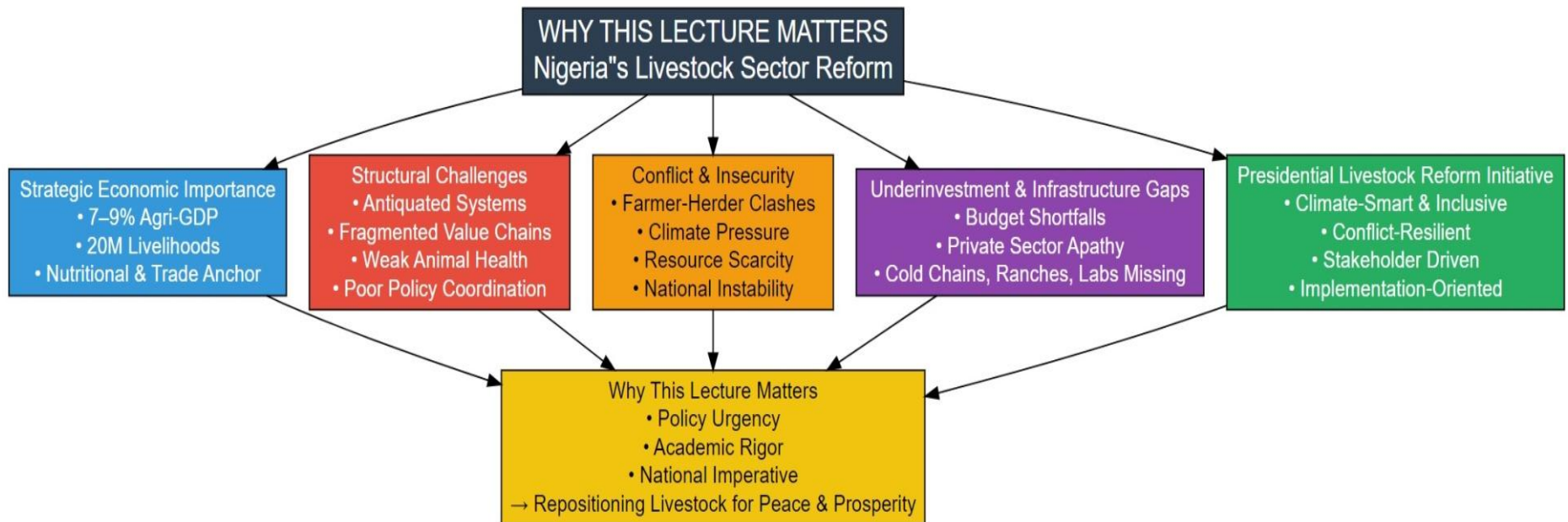
Let us, therefore, engage today with renewed intellectual rigour and policy realism, as we chart a course towards transforming a sector whose fortunes are intimately tied to the peace, productivity and prosperity of the Nigerian state.

1.1 Significance of this Lecture

The imperative of this lecture transcends academic inquiry; it is anchored in the pressing developmental realities confronting Nigeria's socio-economic fabric. The livestock sector occupies a uniquely strategic position within the broader agricultural economy of our nation. Contributing an estimated **7 to 9 percent of agricultural GDP** and providing direct and indirect livelihoods to over **20 million Nigerians**, this sector is not merely a subset of agriculture—it is a fulcrum upon which rural livelihoods, nutritional security and inter-regional trade dynamics pivot.

Yet, despite its undeniable importance and vast latent potential, Nigeria's livestock sector remains ensnared in a web of deep-seated structural inefficiencies. These include antiquated production systems, fragmented value chains, weak animal health services and suboptimal policy coordination across the tiers of government. Compounding these challenges is the persistent scourge of **violent farmer-herder conflicts**, primarily driven by competition over increasingly scarce natural resources, exacerbated by climate change and poor land governance mechanisms. This violence, in turn, feeds into broader issues of national insecurity, displacement and diminished social cohesion—making reform not only an economic necessity but a peace-building imperative.

Moreover, for far too long, the sector has suffered from **chronic underinvestment**, both in terms of public sector budgetary allocations and private capital infusion. This investment gap is evident in the glaring deficits in key infrastructure—ranging from ranches and grazing reserves to cold chains, animal feed mills, veterinary, research institutes, laboratories and livestock market systems.



In this context, **President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s Livestock Reforms Initiative**, under the strategic coordination of the Presidential Committee on Livestock Reforms, represents a decisive policy shift—one that seeks to recalibrate Nigeria’s livestock economy into a **modern, climate-smart, conflict-resilient and economically competitive industry**. This initiative is not merely aspirational—it is designed to be implementation-focused, inclusive of key stakeholders and responsive to Nigeria’s unique ecological and sociopolitical diversity. Indeed, while inaugurating the PLRIC, President Tinubu stated what the objective and mission of the reform initiative is, thus:

Our shared mission is clear: we aim to transform the livestock sector from its current subsistence model into a thriving, commercialised industry, an industry that significantly contributes to Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product and provides decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods for our growing population” (see *Premium Times*, October 24 2024).

In addition, he expressed his commitment to ensuring that the reform process would not be encumbered by partisan politics and that it has to be an inclusive process to guarantee its success. He stated thus:

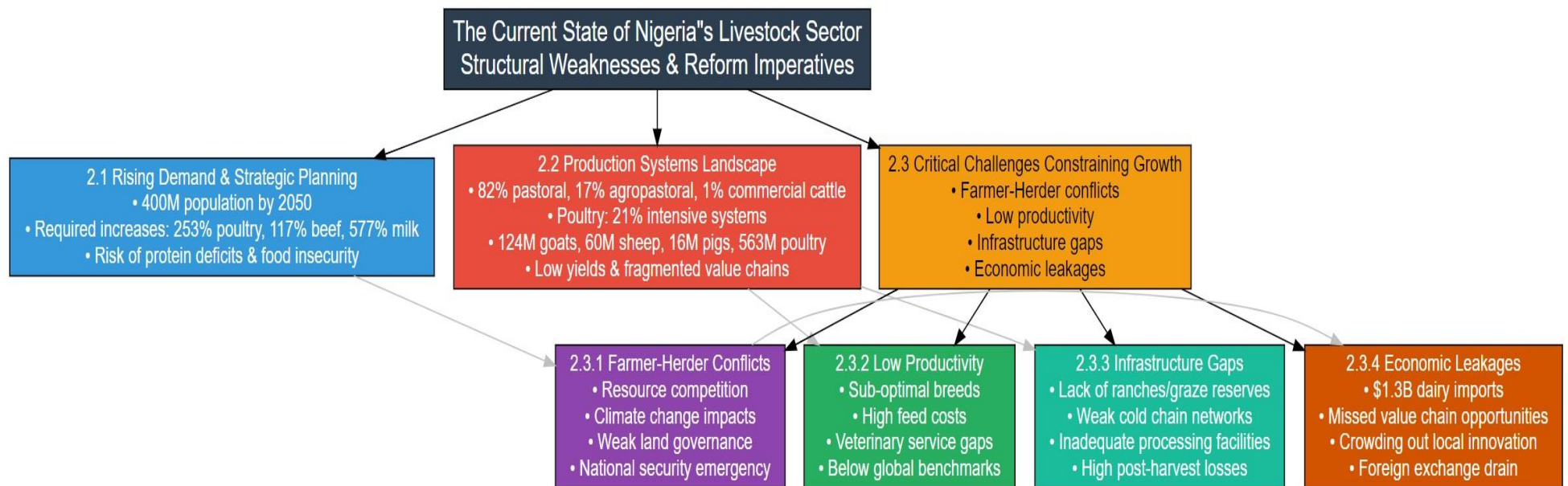
... I will appeal to everyone to remove every iota of partisan politics from this... I will assume the chairmanship of the committee... This is not about politics; this is about opportunity (State House Press Release, July 9, 2024).

Therefore, this lecture matters because it is situated at the confluence of **policy urgency**, **academic rigor** and **national interest**. It offers us the opportunity to unpack the contours of this reform initiative, reflect on the empirical evidence underpinning its design and critically interrogate the pathways to success—grounded in the principles of sustainability, inclusivity and transformative impact.

In essence, today's engagement is a clarion call: to rethink, retool, revitalise and reposition Nigeria's livestock sector as a strategic instrument for peace, productivity and prosperity in the 21st century Nigerian political economy.

2. The Current State of Nigeria's Livestock Sector

To formulate effective and sustainable reform strategies for Nigeria's livestock sector, it is imperative to begin with a dispassionate, data-driven assessment of the current state of Nigeria's livestock sector. While the livestock economy is vast in scale and intricately woven into the cultural and economic tapestry of the nation, it remains encumbered by enduring structural weaknesses. These systemic inefficiencies have historically prevented the sector from transitioning into a fully modernized, commercially viable and climate-resilient pillar of Nigeria's agricultural development. The urgency for reform is therefore not only economic but strategic, intersecting with national security, food sovereignty, food and nutrition security, and rural transformation.



2.1. Rising Demand and the Imperative for Strategic Planning

Demographic shifts and evolving dietary preferences are set to place unprecedented pressure on Nigeria's livestock systems in the coming decades. Projections indicate that by 2050, Nigeria's population will reach nearly 400 million, positioning it as the third most populous nation globally. This demographic surge will necessitate a 253% increase in poultry meat, a 117% rise in beef and a staggering 577% expansion in milk production to satisfy domestic consumption requirements. These figures are not hypothetical abstractions; they are alarm bells. Without deliberate, anticipatory planning and long-term investments in livestock systems, Nigeria risks facing acute protein deficits, heightened food insecurity and intensified pressure on already fragile rural livelihoods.

Meeting this projected demand cannot be accomplished through the inertia of business-as-usual practices. Instead, it calls for a bold reimagining of the sector's architecture—anchored in sustainable intensification, climate-smart production and inclusive value chain development. The alternative is an avoidable crisis in which growing populations, shrinking arable land and deteriorating ecosystems combine to worsen both rural poverty and national food dependence.

2.2. Production Systems: A Landscape of Contrasts and Challenges

Nigeria's livestock production landscape is characterized by stark asymmetries between traditional subsistence systems and nascent efforts at commercialization. The cattle sub-sector, which size is estimated at 20.1 million (2022), and which holds substantial cultural and economic value, remains overwhelmingly pastoral (82%), with 17% of production being agro-pastoral and only 1% attributed to commercial enterprises. This disproportionate reliance on transhumant, open grazing systems perpetuates a cycle of low productivity, land-use conflict and environmental degradation. Pastoralists, operating under increasingly unpredictable climatic conditions, face rising insecurity, limited access to veterinary care and inadequate market integration—factors that collectively erode both livelihoods and national stability.

In contrast, poultry production demonstrates more progressive indicators, with approximately 21% of output now sourced from intensive production systems. This shift reflects early gains in

commercialization, particularly in peri-urban areas where access to markets, capital and technology is more readily available. However, this progress is uneven and disproportionately benefits large-scale enterprises, leaving smallholders and rural producers unable to compete or scale sustainably.

At the macro level, Nigeria's livestock population—comprising 124 million goats, 60 million sheep, 16 million pigs and over 563 million poultry birds—suggests a sector of enormous potential. The Nigerian Livestock industry is valued at approximately N30 trillion. However, beneath the surface, these figures mask pervasive inefficiencies in productivity and resilience. Outdated husbandry practices, poor breeding stock, inadequate extension services and chronic underinvestment in animal health infrastructure have led to underwhelming yields per animal, high mortality rates and significant post-production losses. Value chains for meat, milk, leather and eggs remain fragmented and poorly linked to formal markets, undermining the sector's capacity to generate rural employment or contribute meaningfully to national GDP growth.

This complex reality necessitates a paradigm shift—from extensive, low-yield systems to intensive, knowledge-based production models. It calls for investment in commercial ranching, mechanized feed production, improved genetics, cold chain infrastructure and digitally integrated market platforms. Equally important is the development of conflict-sensitive programming that addresses the root causes of farmer-herder tensions through land-use reform, inclusive dialogue and equitable access to resources, and the harnessing of vast resources in already existing grazing reserves.

There can be no doubt that, the modernization of Nigeria's livestock sector is not a luxury—it is a national imperative. Through strategic reforms informed by empirical evidence, it is possible to transform this sector from a site of chronic underperformance and conflict into a driver of inclusive growth, social cohesion and long-term food security. This transformation must be underpinned by the convergence of statecraft, private enterprise and academic innovation—each contributing to the shared vision of a resilient and prosperous livestock economy.

2.3. Critical Challenges Constraining Growth and Stability

Despite Nigeria's substantial livestock endowment—reflected in its vast animal population and diverse agro-ecological zones—the sector remains burdened by a constellation of interrelated challenges. These obstacles not only curtail its current performance but also severely compromise its long-term resilience, regional competitiveness and potential to contribute to inclusive national development. The following thematic areas underscore the multifaceted nature of the constraints confronting the livestock industry:

2.3.1. Farmer-Herder Conflicts: A Crisis of Resource Governance and National Cohesion

Arguably the most persistent and destabilizing challenge is the intensifying conflict between pastoralist communities and sedentary crop farmers—a dynamic that has escalated from seasonal disputes into a protracted national security emergency. At the root of these tensions lies a competition for finite and degrading natural resources, particularly pasturelands, water points and transhumance corridors. These resources, once managed through informal agreements and traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms, have become flashpoints for violence due to population growth, rapid urban expansion and weak land governance, as well as, the declining ability of security agencies to adequately mitigate conflicts, deal with criminality, and protect lives and property.

Compounding this crisis is the accelerating impact of climate change, which manifests in prolonged dry spells, shrinking water tables and desertification—forcing herders to migrate southward into farming communities in search of viable grazing lands. The breakdown of traditional mechanisms of negotiation, such as mutual grazing rights and seasonal migration protocols, has been exacerbated by state failure to institutionalize modern conflict mediation systems, thereby allowing local disputes to metastasize into inter-communal violence, displacement and militarized confrontations. These conflicts not only undermine food production but also strain national unity, widen ethnic fault lines and drain public resources through repeated emergency interventions.

2.3.2. Low Productivity: A Structural Weakness in Animal Health, Genetics and Feeding Systems

Beyond insecurity, the Nigerian livestock sector is plagued by chronically low productivity across all major value chains. Productivity indicators—measured by milk yield, weight gain, reproductive rates and disease resistance—remain far below continental and global benchmarks. This underperformance is attributable to several converging factors:

- i. Genetically sub-optimal indigenous breeds, which are poorly adapted for intensive production and incapable of meeting commercial market standards;
- ii. The high cost and limited accessibility of quality animal feed, particularly compounded by rising grain prices, seasonal fodder shortages and an underdeveloped feed industry;
- iii. Severe gaps in veterinary service delivery, especially in rural and semi-arid zones where pastoralists operate without regular access to vaccinations, clinical diagnosis, or extension support.

The consequences of these constraints are profound: low carcass weights, subpar milk yields, longer calving intervals and heightened susceptibility to zoonotic and transboundary animal diseases. These productivity deficits limit Nigeria's capacity to meet domestic demand, participate in regional livestock trade, or attract serious private investment into the sector.

2.3.3. Infrastructure Gaps: Bottlenecks in Production, Preservation and Processing

A third and equally consequential constraint lies in the gross inadequacy of sector-specific infrastructure, which impedes the modernization of livestock systems and curtails economic diversification in rural areas. The infrastructure gaps are both physical and institutional, including:

- i. The absence of modern ranching facilities and functional grazing reserves, which restrict the transition from extensive to intensive production systems;
- ii. A severely underdeveloped cold chain network, limiting the safe transport and preservation of perishable products like milk and meat, particularly from remote production zones to urban markets;

- iii. The dearth of well-equipped abattoirs, meat processing plants, milk collection centers, leather tanning facilities and biogas digesters, which weakens value addition, increases post-harvest losses and obstructs the emergence of rural agro-industrial hubs.

These infrastructural voids not only discourage innovation but also elevate transaction costs, thereby reinforcing informal and subsistence-level production practices. The result is a sector that remains disconnected from formal markets, unable to scale and unattractive to long-term capital infusion.

2.3.4. Economic Leakages: Unsustainable Import Dependency and Missed Value Chain Opportunities

One of the most glaring inefficiencies in Nigeria's livestock sector is its persistent dependence on imports to meet domestic protein needs, particularly in the dairy value chain. Despite possessing favorable agro-ecologies, entrepreneurial producers and substantial demand, Nigeria imports an estimated \$1.5 billion worth of dairy products annually, predominantly powdered milk and cheese. This paradox—importing what can be locally produced—constitutes a massive leakage of foreign exchange, erodes national self-sufficiency and undermines the development of rural livestock economies.

The opportunity cost of this dependency is immense. Instead of stimulating local dairy cooperatives, pasture development, breed improvement programs and milk aggregation infrastructure, Nigeria's import dependency continues to crowd out indigenous innovation and entrench consumer reliance on foreign products. What is more troubling is that, the absence of strategic investment in inclusive value chains denies millions of smallholder pastoralists—especially women and youth—the chance to participate meaningfully in market-oriented livestock production and processing.

3. The Tinubu Administration's Livestock Reform Blueprint:

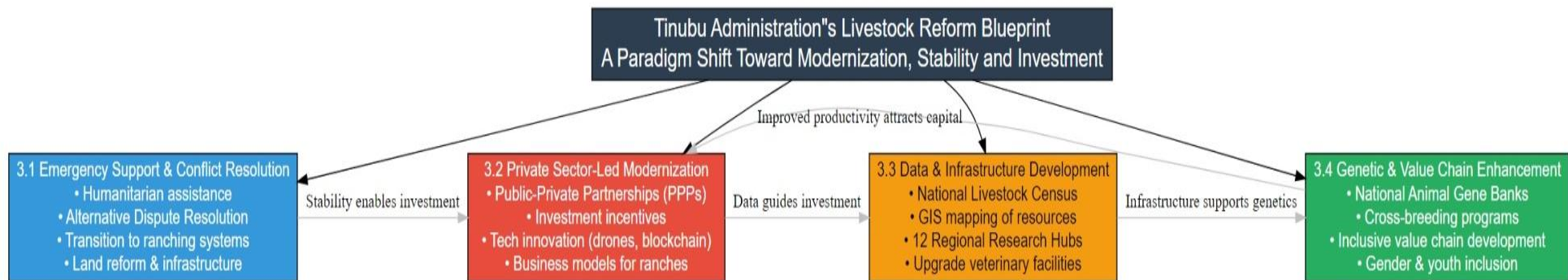
A Paradigm Shift Toward Modernization, Stability and Investment:- Recognizing the existential challenges besetting Nigeria's livestock sector—ranging from recurrent conflicts and chronic underinvestment to stagnating productivity and institutional neglect—President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has initiated a bold and historic intervention through the Presidential Initiative on Livestock Reforms (PILR). Coordinated by the Presidential Livestock Reform Implementation Committee (PLRIC), this blueprint articulates a multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral and data-driven strategy aimed at transforming Nigeria's livestock architecture from an informal, conflict-prone subsystem into a structured, modern and resilient industry.

Anchored on four cardinal pillars—Emergency Support and Conflict Resolution; Private Sector-led Modernization; Data and Infrastructure Development; and Genetic and Value Chain Enhancement—the blueprint marks a clear departure from past reactive approaches, setting in motion a coherent roadmap for sustainable livestock transformation.

3.1. Emergency Support and Conflict Resolution: Stabilizing the Foundation

At the core of the blueprint is the recognition that no meaningful livestock reform can thrive in an atmosphere of instability and insecurity. Therefore, the first strategic thrust focuses on emergency stabilization measures to support communities most affected by violence, displacement, droughts, or epizootic disease outbreaks.

This pillar prioritizes the deployment of immediate humanitarian assistance, restocking efforts and mobile veterinary services to restore livelihoods in the most affected regions. Equally crucial is the institutionalization of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, tailored to the sociocultural realities of Nigeria's diverse rural communities. By empowering traditional rulers, religious leaders and local peace committees, the blueprint seeks to encourage, if not re-legitimize, endogenous conflict resolution systems and complement formal judicial and security frameworks.



A central reform pathway within this component is the transition from open grazing to structured ranching and managed grazing systems. This is not merely a technical shift—it is a socio-political transformation that necessitates land reform, stakeholder buy-in and access to enabling infrastructure such as water points, veterinary clinics and extension services. If effectively executed, this transition can drastically reduce resource-based conflicts and lay the groundwork for more intensive and productive livestock systems.

3.2. Private Sector-Led Investment and Modernization: Unlocking Capital, Markets and Innovation

The second pillar acknowledges that the state alone cannot fund or drive the scale of reform required. Consequently, the blueprint emphasizes a robust, state encouraged, supported and facilitated, but market-driven approach, underpinned by strategic Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). The goal is to substantially bring in domestic and international capital across the livestock value chain, from feed production, pasture development, meat and milk processing, to leather, biogas and logistics infrastructure.

To attract and retain private investment, the blueprint identifies and promotes viable business models for commercial ranches, feedlots and integrated dairy farms—particularly in high-potential zones. These models are further supported by policy instruments such as risk guarantees, concessional financing, diaspora investment platforms and blended finance mechanisms in collaboration with development finance institutions and multilateral agencies.

Importantly, the reform recognizes the role of technology and innovation as levers for speedily surmounting traditional bottlenecks. This includes, where necessary and possible, deploying drones for herd surveillance, digital platforms for livestock insurance and e-markets and blockchain-based animal traceability systems to meet sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards in domestic and export markets.

3.3. Data and Infrastructure Development: Building the Backbone for Evidence-Based Governance

The third strategic pillar focuses on addressing Nigeria’s chronic deficit in livestock data and enabling infrastructure. Without credible data, planning becomes speculative, policy becomes reactive and interventions become misaligned with ground realities. To that end, the reform agenda includes the execution of a comprehensive National Livestock Census, integrated with GIS-enabled geo-mapping of pastoral routes, grazing reserves, conflict hotspots and disease-prone zones.

This data effort will not only inform resource allocation and early warning systems but also support spatial targeting of investment incentives and infrastructure rollouts.

In tandem with the data revolution is the development of an Infrastructure Master Plan, which includes the establishment of 12 Regional Research and Innovation Hubs dedicated to livestock technologies and climate adaptation strategies. Additionally, existing veterinary laboratories, abattoirs, milk collection centers and quarantine facilities will undergo phased upgrades to meet global standards, thereby enhancing animal health surveillance, food safety and regional trade competitiveness.

3.4 Genetic Improvement and Value Chain Development: Enhancing Productivity and Market Integration

The fourth pillar addresses the biological and commercial underperformance of Nigeria’s livestock systems. At the heart of this strategy is a commitment to genetic upgrading, including the establishment of National Animal Gene Banks and cross-breeding programs designed to preserve and improve indigenous livestock species for higher yields, disease resistance and climate resilience.

Complementing the genetic component is the comprehensive development of inclusive value chains across key livestock products—meat, dairy, eggs, leather and organic fertilizers. The reform aims to incentivize backward and forward linkages, linking producers to processors,

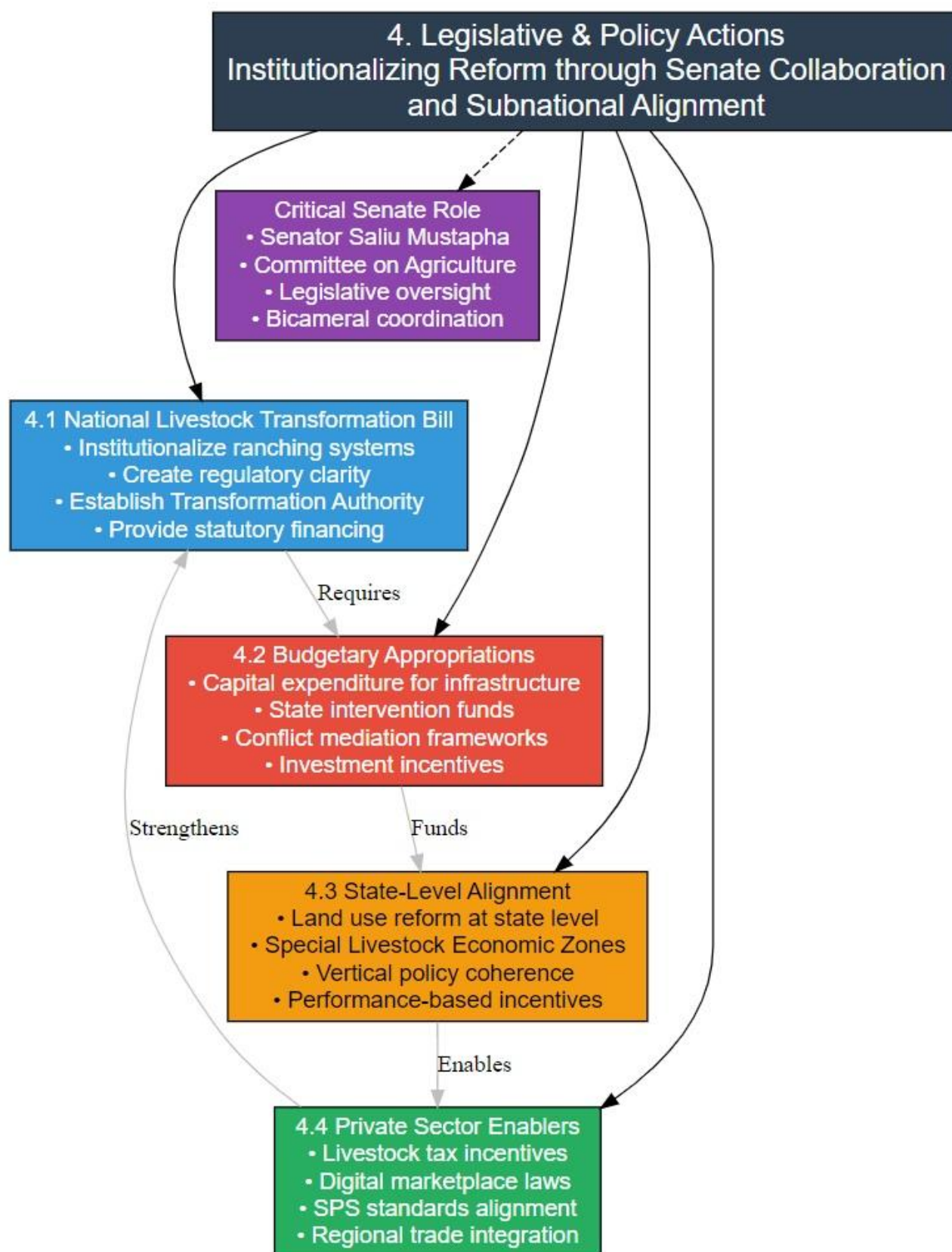
retailers and exporters through integrated supply chains supported by physical and digital infrastructure.

Equally notable is the emphasis on gender and youth inclusion. By integrating smallholders, women and youth into these commercial ecosystems—through targeted training, access to finance and cooperative models—the blueprint seeks not just productivity gains, but also equity and broad-based rural empowerment.

4. Legislative and Policy Actions: Institutionalizing Reform through Collaboration and Subnational Alignment

While technical interventions and executive programs are critical to the transformation of Nigeria’s livestock sector, their durability and scalability ultimately hinge on the legal and institutional frameworks that underpin them. As such, the active collaboration between the Executive and the Legislature is indispensable to ensuring that reforms are not only impactful in the short term but also entrenched within Nigeria’s long-term development architecture.

The reform blueprint championed by the Tinubu Administration is thus deliberately aligned with ongoing legislative processes aimed at creating a robust policy ecosystem, addressing legal gaps and fostering coordinated governance across federal, state and local levels. In this regard, the contributions of Senate Committee on Agriculture, Production Services and Rural development, chaired by Distinguished Senator Saliu Mustapha, and Senate Committee on Livestock Development chaired by Distinguished Senator Musa Mustapha, and their parallels in the House of Representatives, are especially noteworthy.



4.1. The National Livestock Transformation Bill: Creating a Legal Framework for Sustainable Reform

Central to this legislative drive is the proposed National Livestock Transformation Bill, which seeks to codify the principles, structures and institutional arrangements necessary to support the transition from extensive, conflict-prone livestock systems to commercial, climate-smart and sedentary production systems. The bill is designed to:

- i. Institutionalize ranching and managed grazing as the national livestock production paradigm;
- ii. Create regulatory clarity on land access, resource use rights and pastoral infrastructure development;
- iii. Establish a Livestock Transformation Authority or coordinating body to harmonize efforts across MDAs, states and the private sector;
- iv. Provide a statutory basis for sustainable financing, monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

By moving livestock reform from executive policy into the realm of statutory law, the bill aims to protect the reform process from future policy reversals, enhance investor confidence and foster consistency across subnational jurisdictions.

4.2. Budgetary Appropriations and Strategic Investments

The legislative arm also plays a pivotal role in appropriating the necessary fiscal resources to operationalize the blueprint's components. Without adequate and sustained budgetary allocations, even the most well-crafted plans risk faltering at the implementation stage.

The Senate, in collaboration with the House of Representatives, is therefore instrumental in:

- i. Allocating capital expenditure for strategic livestock infrastructure, including ranches, grazing reserves, research hubs and veterinary facilities;
- ii. Creating intervention funds for states committed to implementing aspects of the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP);

- iii. Establishing conflict mediation and compensation frameworks for communities impacted by herder-farmer clashes;
- iv. Championing tax incentives, import waivers and credit guarantees to stimulate investment in key segments of the value chain.

These fiscal measures must be embedded in annual national budgets, medium-term expenditure frameworks (MTEFs) and public-private investment pipelines to ensure both continuity and scale.

4.3. State-Level Alignment and the Challenge of Land Use Reform

Given that land governance in Nigeria is constitutionally domiciled at the state level, the effectiveness of any livestock reform agenda is largely dependent on state governments' willingness to allocate land for ranching and livestock infrastructure development, as well as willingness to partner with the federal government to make more arable land available for expanded cultivation of crops required for livestock feeds and for pasture development.

The National Assembly, in this context, plays a strategic role in fostering vertical policy coherence—through intergovernmental engagement, peer learning platforms and performance-based incentives—to ensure that state-level institutions align with the objectives of national livestock transformation within an appropriate legislative framework.

Incentivizing states to review, update and harmonize their land-use regulations, designate grazing zones and support legal frameworks for livestock entrepreneurship will be essential to scaling reforms nationwide. In addition, the Federal Government may need to negotiate with states to create Special Livestock Economic Zones (SLEZs) that operate under harmonized land and investment laws—thereby reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks and unlocking regional comparative advantages.

4.4. Enabling Policies for Private Sector Growth

In line with the broader economic reform agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, legislative action is also required to remove regulatory impediments and stimulate private investment in the livestock sector. This includes the development of:

- i. Livestock-specific tax incentives, such as accelerated depreciation, VAT exemptions on feed and investment tax credits for processing facilities;
- ii. Laws supporting digital livestock marketplaces, e-extension platforms and blockchain traceability systems;
- iii. Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards and enforcement mechanisms aligned with ECOWAS protocols and international trade norms.

These enabling policies will help position Nigeria's livestock sector not only for domestic food security and sovereignty, but also for regional trade integration and global market competitiveness.

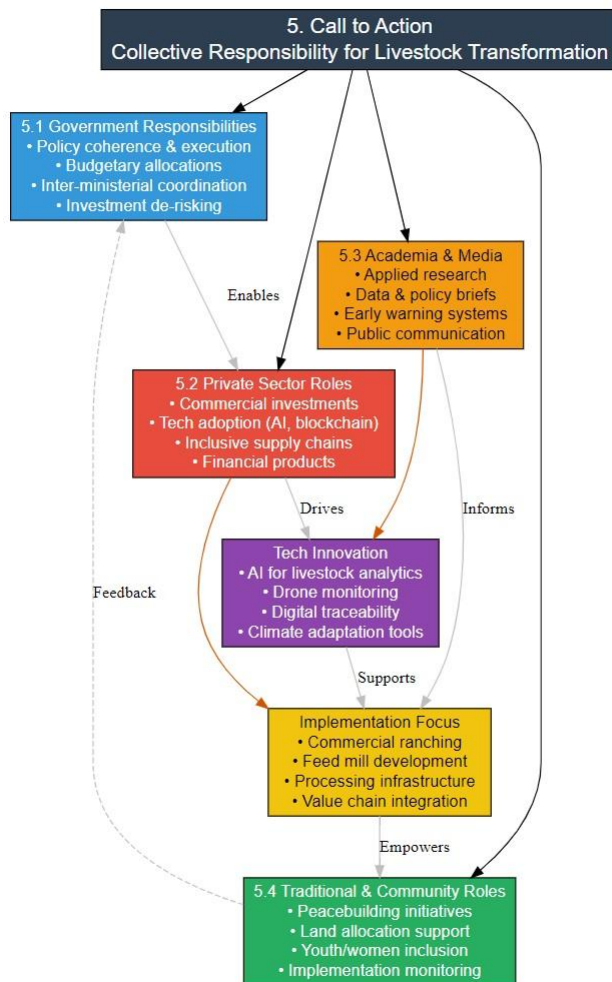
5. Call to Action: A Collective Responsibility for Livestock Transformation

While strategic blueprints and legislative instruments are indispensable, their successful implementation depends fundamentally on the collective commitment of all stakeholders. The transformation of Nigeria's livestock sector is not the exclusive preserve of government agencies or technical experts—it is a national project that requires multi-stakeholder ownership, intersectoral coordination and broad-based participation across society.

It is, therefore, imperative to articulate a comprehensive call to action, assigning clear roles to key actors whose complementary efforts will ensure the success of the reform agenda.

5.1. For Government: Policy Coherence, Execution and Financing

The primary responsibility lies with the **federal, state and local governments** to translate plans into tangible outcomes through decisive policy action and institutional reform. Government actors must:



- i. Fast-track the implementation of the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) and align state-level initiatives with the broader reform framework;
- ii. Ensure adequate and sustained budgetary allocations for infrastructure, veterinary services, research and livestock extension;
- iii. Promote inter-ministerial coordination among Agriculture, Environment, Interior, Water Resources and Finance to avoid fragmented and duplicative efforts;
- iv. Leverage fiscal tools and regulatory instruments to de-

risk livestock investments and entice private capital investments.

Above all, governments at all levels must demonstrate political will by confronting entrenched interests, enforcing land-use reforms and championing policies that prioritize sustainable, long-term transformation, over short-term expediencies.

5.2. For the Private Sector: Investment, Innovation and Market Leadership

Private sector actors are indispensable to unlocking the sector's full economic potential. They must respond to policy signals by:

- i. Investing in commercial ranching, feed production, abattoirs, cold chains, dairy processing and logistics infrastructure;

- ii. Adopting climate-smart and technology-driven models, such as AI-enabled herd management, solar-powered cold storage and blockchain for supply chain transparency;
- iii. Forming strategic partnerships with cooperatives, extension agencies and development actors to build inclusive supply chains;
- iv. Expanding the availability of financial products tailored to livestock producers, including credit, insurance and working capital for inputs and equipment.

The private sector must be seen not just as a beneficiary of reform but as a co-architect of a new livestock economy—one that is commercially competitive, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. The private sector holds the key to unlocking the productivity and industrialization potential of Nigeria’s livestock economy. As such, it must specifically take the lead in:

- i. **Establishing and scaling commercial ranches**, designed with modern animal husbandry principles and equipped with the infrastructure necessary for sustainable breeding, feeding and health management. These ranches should be developed not only for beef and dairy production but also as hubs for training, demonstration and innovation dissemination.
- ii. **Investing in feed mills and pasture development enterprises** to ensure year-round availability of affordable, high-quality animal nutrition. This is crucial for mitigating feed-related productivity losses, which currently account for one of the largest cost burdens in livestock production.
- iii. **Developing integrated processing plants**—from abattoirs and meat packaging facilities to dairy processing units and leather finishing factories. Such facilities are essential to capture value across the entire chain, reduce post-harvest losses, improve quality assurance and meet the evolving demands of both domestic consumers and export markets.

These investments must be complemented by access to patient capital, business development services and enabling regulatory frameworks to thrive sustainably.

5.3. For Academia, Think Tanks and the Media: Research, Innovation and Public Engagement

The knowledge sector—comprising universities, research institutes, policy think tanks and the media—plays a critical role in shaping a scientifically grounded and publicly supported reform process. These institutions are called upon to:

- i. Conduct applied research on improved livestock genetics, feed formulation, climate-resilient fodder systems and disease surveillance;
- ii. Generate data and policy briefs to guide evidence-based decision-making at all levels;
- iii. Develop and disseminate early warning systems for conflict and disease outbreaks, using geospatial and digital technologies;
- iv. Mobilize public understanding through consistent, accurate and culturally sensitive communication about the benefits of ranching, peaceful coexistence and agribusiness opportunities.

Academia must become the intellectual engine of livestock transformation, while the media must serve as a trusted bridge between policymakers, producers and the public.

The knowledge ecosystem—comprising universities, think tanks and media organizations—serves as both a catalyst and conscience for livestock reform. Their dual role includes:

- i. Conducting research that is applied, context-specific and solution-oriented. Key priorities include the development of climate-resilient fodder species, low-cost feed formulations, livestock vaccines and conflict early warning and mediation systems. These outputs must feed directly into policy, practice and curriculum development across veterinary, agricultural and environmental institutions.
- ii. Driving public awareness campaigns to promote peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders, counter misinformation and showcase the socio-economic benefits of

investing in the livestock sector. The media, in particular, must highlight success stories, facilitate policy literacy and serve as a watchdog for reform implementation.

By working synergistically, academia and the media can ensure that livestock reform is both technically sound and socially resonant.

5.4. For Traditional Rulers, Communities and Civil Society: Mediation, Ownership and Inclusion

Given the sociocultural dimensions of livestock systems in Nigeria, traditional and community institutions must be fully integrated into the reform process. Their responsibilities include:

- i. Championing peacebuilding initiatives and dialogue platforms between farmers and herders to de-escalate tensions and promote mutual understanding;
- ii. Mobilizing community support for land allocation, grazing area demarcation and ranch adoption, especially in sensitive areas;
- iii. Promoting the inclusion of youth and women in livestock entrepreneurship and training programs;
- iv. Partnering with civil society organizations to monitor implementation, provide feedback, and ensure environmental and social safeguards;
- v. Championing intra- and inter-community dialogue as a pathway to de-escalating farmer-herder tensions. Traditional institutions must be revitalized as platforms for dispute resolution, land-use negotiation and cultural consensus-building;
- vi. Supporting the participation of youth and women in livestock value chains through targeted empowerment programs, cooperative formation and access to communal assets. Communities must see themselves not only as beneficiaries of reform but as co-creators of economic opportunity and social cohesion. With the active engagement of traditional authorities and community leaders, livestock reform can move beyond elite policy corridors and take root at the grassroots—where it ultimately matters most.

Grassroots legitimacy and the social capital of community leaders, will enable the reform to achieve scale or durability. Community buy-in must not be an afterthought—it must be foundational.

In operationalizing the livestock reform agenda, different sectors have distinct but interconnected roles to play. These responsibilities are not merely aspirational—they are actionable imperatives that must be embedded within national, state and local implementation frameworks.

5.5. Leveraging Technology: AI and Drones for Livestock Intelligence

To overcome historical productivity barriers and environmental challenges, the sector must fully embrace **technology** as a tool for efficiency, traceability and risk mitigation. The reform agenda therefore calls upon stakeholders to:

- i. Deploy Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for predictive analytics—tracking animal health, optimizing breeding cycles and forecasting feed demand. AI can transform decision-making from reactive to proactive, thereby increasing profitability and minimizing losses.
- ii. Utilize drones and remote sensing technologies to monitor herd movement, assess rangeland conditions and detect encroachment or security threats in real-time. These tools are particularly valuable in conflict-prone and hard-to-reach areas, offering unprecedented visibility and early warning capabilities.

By integrating these technologies into both commercial and smallholder systems, Nigeria can accelerate the modernization of its livestock production while building resilience against climatic and socio-political disruptions.

6.0 Strategic Recommendations for Nigeria's Livestock Transformation

6.1 A cornerstone of this national reform agenda must be the modernization of livestock infrastructure through robust public-private partnerships. It is proposed that National Livestock Industrial Zones be established across Nigeria's six geo-political regions. These zones would be anchored by export-certified abattoirs meeting European Union and ECOWAS standards, dairy processing clusters powered by renewable energy cold chains, and integrated leather industrial parks geared towards value-added manufacturing. Such clustering is not only efficient in reducing post-harvest losses—which currently account for over 30% in meat and dairy—but also serves as a magnet for domestic and foreign investment. Ethiopia's Bishoftu Industrial Park provides a tested model from which Nigeria can draw significant lessons.

6.2 Parallel to infrastructure development is the urgent need for land-use reform and conflict resolution. The implementation of a National Ranching Corridor System will require the delineation of GIS-mapped grazing reserves equipped with essential water infrastructure, the issuance of long-term pastoralist title deeds under the proposed National Livestock Transformation Law, and the institutionalization of community conflict resolution units co-managed by traditional authorities. Such a framework is projected to reduce farmer-herder clashes by up to 70% within five years, drawing from the successful precedent set by Botswana's Tribal Grazing Lands Policy.

6.3 Ensuring feed and fodder security is critical to enhancing livestock productivity. The launch of a nationwide initiative titled *Operation Feed Abundance* would prioritize the expansion of soya- and maize-based feed mills in strategic feed-producing states such as Niger, Benue, and Kaduna. This would be complemented by the establishment of irrigated fodder belts along the nation's major river basins—including the Benue, Niger, and Sokoto-Rima—and the imposition of smart import substitution tariffs to encourage local feed production. With feed accounting for nearly 70% of total livestock production costs, this intervention is essential to improving margins and sustainability, particularly for small and medium-scale producers.

6.4 Simultaneously, Nigeria must embark on a genetic revolution anchored in animal health innovation. The creation of regional livestock gene banks will serve as a platform for large-scale deployment of artificial insemination laboratories aimed at increasing milk yields from the

current 1 litre per cow per day to at least 10 litres. The dissemination of disease-resistant poultry breeds such as the FUNAAB Alpha, and NAPRI's Shika Brown, along with the establishment of mobile veterinary brigades targeting nomadic populations, will catalyze a threefold increase in sector productivity by 2030. These innovations must be accompanied by epidemiological surveillance frameworks to guard against zoonotic disease outbreaks.

6.5 Social inclusion remains a cardinal principle of this reform strategy. A National Livestock Entrepreneurship Scheme will provide women and youth with starter packs for micro-enterprises in feed milling, poultry production, as well as pig and rabbit farming. Digital platforms—such as the proposed *LivestockNaija* marketplace—will enhance their market access, while gender-responsive loans at single-digit interest rates (targeted at 5%) will empower rural entrepreneurs. With women constituting over 60% of the livestock workforce and youth unemployment surpassing 50%, this initiative seeks to equitably distribute the gains of sectoral transformation.

6.6 Nigeria must design and activate an export acceleration policy. Special Livestock Export Zones should be designated in key transit and production cities such as Kano, Jos, and Lagos. These zones would feature Halal and Kosher certification centers, ECOWAS-compliant quarantine facilities, and duty-free access to critical inputs for export-oriented producers. This strategy is expected to reverse Nigeria's dependency on \$1.5 billion worth of dairy imports annually and position the country to capture at least 15% of West Africa's meat trade by 2030.

6.7. Climate resilience is non-negotiable in a rapidly warming Sahelian corridor. The piloting of agroforestry-based ranching models—including silvopasture systems that integrate drought-resistant trees with pasturelands—will improve land productivity while mitigating thermal stress on animals. The construction of biogas plants to convert livestock waste into renewable energy will further reduce environmental footprints. In collaboration with NAIC, index-based livestock insurance products should be introduced to cushion pastoralists and farmers from climate-induced shocks. These actions are aligned with Nigeria's broader climate obligations under the COP28 framework.

6.8 To underpin these technical interventions, Nigeria's legislative and institutional frameworks must be fundamentally overhauled. Three critical legislative instruments—the National Livestock Transformation Bill, the Livestock Infrastructure Development Fund Act, and the

Animal Health Surveillance Agency Bill—must be prioritized for enactment. A key feature of these laws would be the establishment of a single-window taxation regime to eliminate multiple and informal levies that deter investment.

6.9 The reform rollout will be staged across three phases. The Emergency Phase (2025–2026) will focus on stabilizing conflict hotspots and deploying mobile veterinary services. The Stabilization Phase (2027–2028) will see the expansion of feed mills, operationalization of grazing reserves, and youth skill development. Finally, the Growth Phase (2028–2030) will consolidate gains through the establishment of export hubs, national gene banks, and digital traceability systems.

6.10 Stakeholder accountability must be clearly defined. The Federal Government is expected to dedicate substantial budgetary allocation to livestock development annually, while the President or Vice President should chair the proposed National Livestock Reform Council. State governments must allocate land for ranching corridors and harmonize taxation policies. The private sector is expected to inject up to \$500 million annually into processing and value chain infrastructure, with a push towards blockchain-enabled supply chain transparency. Traditional rulers will lead community sensitization campaigns on ranching benefits and co-manage grazing allocations. Development partners are called upon to fund climate adaptation projects to the tune of at least \$200 million per year and provide technical assistance for genetic upgrades.

6.11 By 2030, this comprehensive reform strategy is expected to yield measurable outcomes: at least 70% reduction in farmer-herder conflicts, a \$10 billion increase in livestock-related GDP, the creation of 5 million new jobs, \$2 billion in annual livestock exports, and a four-fold increase in national milk yield.

6.12 As a concluding imperative, let it be underscored: this is not yet another policy dialogue lost to the annals of bureaucratic inertia. It is a decisive national reset. The cost of inaction—measured in conflict, underdevelopment, and human suffering—far outweighs the investments required. The moment to act is now, to transition Nigeria’s livestock sector from a flashpoint of crisis to a fulcrum of inclusive growth and shared prosperity. As President Bola Ahmed Tinubu says, “to turn tragedy into opportunity” for optimal economic growth and inclusive, people-oriented development.

7. Closing: A Vision for the Future of Nigeria’s Livestock Sector

As we draw this presentation to a close, it is important to reaffirm what is at stake: it is not merely the modernization of an agricultural sub-sector, but more so, the **reconstruction of a national economic, social and security architecture through the lens of livestock transformation.**

The livestock sector should, and must, no longer be a peripheral or traditional activity relegated to the margins of policy attention. It is a **strategic asset** that sits at the intersection of food and nutrition security, public health, rural employment, climate adaptation, national cohesion and export competitiveness. Reforming this sector is not a luxury to be delayed—it is an existential necessity.

7.1. A Vision Anchored in Peace, Productivity and Prosperity

By 2030, with the effective implementation of President Tinubu Livestock Reforms initiatives, Nigeria would realistically achieve the following transformative milestones:

- i. Eliminate open grazing as the dominant mode of cattle production, thereby reducing farmer-herder conflicts by up to **70%**, restoring communal harmony and reclaiming thousands of lives and livelihoods lost to violence.
- ii. Double national livestock productivity, not merely through scale but through smarter systems—improved genetics, affordable feed, structured veterinary care and digitized market linkages.
- iii. Create at least 5 million dignified, inclusive jobs across meat, dairy, leather, logistics and biogas industries—particularly for youth and women in rural and peri-urban communities.
- iv. Reverse economic leakages by significantly reducing the nation’s dependence on imported dairy and animal-based proteins, as well as animal feeds, thereby saving foreign exchange, stimulating local enterprise and strengthening national food sovereignty.
- v. Position Nigeria as a regional powerhouse in livestock innovation and trade, taking full advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and ECOWAS livestock corridors.

7.2. A New Social Contract for Livestock Reform

This vision is not merely a technocratic aspiration; it must evolve into a **social contract**—a pact among government, private sector, academia, civil society and communities—to pursue shared prosperity through collective action. It is only through this web of mutual commitment and accountability that we can convert strategic intent into tangible outcomes.

What we require is not another round of pilot projects or policy pronouncements, but a **coordinated movement of execution**—driven by data, guided by inclusivity and animated by a deep-seated commitment to national development.

7.3 Conclusion

It should be clear to all, **modernizing and commercializing the livestock sector is not a luxury—it is a national imperative**. It holds the power to nourish our population, stabilize fragile regions, unlock hidden economic value and restore the dignity of rural livelihoods. The time for half-measures has passed. What lies before us is the opportunity to transform a historically neglected sector into a beacon of resilience, equity and prosperity.

As policymakers, academics, traditional leaders, business executives and community actors gathered here today, we are each entrusted with a unique responsibility—to ensure that this vision is not lost in documents or confined to conferences, but translated into action across farms, markets, research centers and legislative chambers.

Let us all, together, rise to that responsibility.

God Bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Thank you for listening and kind attention

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