Integrated system of camelid livestock and agriculture in northern Chile's high-Andean and pre-Andean regions

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

ONE WELFARE MOMENTS

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SUMMARY

Currently, in the High Andean region and the Northern Precordillera of Chile, access to diverse and sustainable food resources may be shaped by the characteristics of the territory and the effects of climate change. In response to these challenges, the Aymara, Quechua and Likan Antai communities maintain an integrated system of camelid livestock farming and agriculture. This system provides them with multiple resources, such as food, fibre and leather, and represents a key source of income. These practices are also part of the communities' ancestral knowledge and offer a sustainable alternative in the face of climate change.

In 2024, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations celebrated the International Year of Camelids and, in 2025, recognised the integrated system of camelid livestock farming and agriculture of the High Andean region and the Northern Precordillera of Chile as a GIAHS, or Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System. These recognitions have generated positive impacts within the One Welfare framework. First, they have contributed to improving and standardising animal welfare through official good-practice guidelines for livestock management developed by FAO for the communities. Second, they have given greater visibility to the benefits derived from camelids — food, fibre, leather and economic income — as well as to the cultural identity of these territories. This may help reduce depopulation in these areas. Third, because these animals graze in a way that preserves plant roots, the system promotes livestock practices that respect vegetation and help prevent soil erosion. In addition, camelids require little water and feed, which represents an advantage in a physical environment where these resources are scarce.

Case study impacts

- **The integrated system of camelid livestock farming and agriculture in northern Chile's High Andean and Pre-Andean regions not only provides local communities with food, artisanal resources and economic income, but also supports their cultural heritage and generates environmental benefits.**
- **FAO's efforts to increase the visibility of this system help to preserve and promote it, along with the animal, human and environmental benefits it brings.**

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One Welfare Pillars

ANIMAL WELFARE

The recognition of Chile's camelid livestock and agriculture system as a GIAHS can support improvements in animal welfare by promoting official livestock management guidelines and strengthening community awareness of good animal care and management practices.

HUMAN WELLBEING

The visibility and promotion that FAO is bringing to the system may contribute to improving food security and increasing economic opportunities for local communities.

ENVIRONMENT

Physical

- Camelids require limited food and water resources, which are scarce in Chile's High Andean and Pre-Andean territories.
- Camelids also help preserve vegetation and prevent soil erosion.

Social environment

- Chile's camelid livestock and agriculture system forms part of the ancestral knowledge of local communities, passed down through generations, and contributes to strengthening their cultural identity.

Multidisciplinary relevant areas

Food safety, nutrition, sociology, veterinary science, agronomy, geography, history.

References / Source

- FAO (2025) The legacy of the International Year of Camelids in Latin America.
- FAO (2025) The integrated system of agriculture and camelid livestock of the high Andean region of Chile.
- FAO (2024) Good management of camelid livestock in the HIgh Andean territory in order to achieve sustainability (Buenas prácticas para un manejo sostenible de la ganadería camélida en el territorio altoandino).