

Preface

When I first came into contact with the world of draft cattle over twelve years ago, I would never have believed the importance that this topic would one day have for me. Not only did I gradually become an advocate for the positive impact of draft cattle in agriculture or silviculture, but I also became a draft cattle farmer and trainer myself. It is with great pleasure that I get to teach people about working with draft cattle each year, and I am pleased that the demand for this all-important traditional knowledge continues to grow. Draft cattle can be so much – working companions, community builders, and securers of livelihoods.

Through networking in ALHFAM, AIMA, EXARC, the German and French draft cattle working group, but also through the exchange with colleagues from all over the world, I realized how important it is to bring draft cattle more into the focus of public discussion – not as an echo of the past, but as part of the solution for a better future. The people who still work with draft cattle in so many parts of the world need to be given a loud audible voice of support, there needs to be active advocacy for innovative and animal-friendly harnessing practices, and finally, there needs to be active work on preserving and expanding the traditional knowledge of working with cattle.

Keeping all of this in mind, I would like to state emphatically that the timing for the publication of the proceedings of our World Draft Cattle Symposium of 2024 could not be better. It is the right time because it will help maintain a momentum that can actually bring change. But it is also the right time because in many parts of the world the number of draft cattle is decreasing dramatically, a lot of knowledge is lost every year and therefore there is no time to lose. Let us therefore join forces to face this challenge.

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