



International Year of Camelids - 2024



Heroes of deserts and highlands: Nourishing people and culture



It is a great moment for all associated with well beings of the Camelids and camel herders as the United Nations has designated 2024 as the International Year of Camelids, recognizing their pivotal role in the livelihoods of millions, especially among pastoralists in arid and mountainous regions. The aims of celebrating the International Year of Camelids 2024 include raising awareness about camelids' role in protecting ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, ensuring food security, and adapting to climate change. It aims to promote their economic and cultural importance, foster consumption of camelid products, and advocate increased investment in the camelid sector.

From ancient times, camels have held significant socio-cultural importance as evident from references in the Rigveda, Mahabharata and Panchatantra, and their role along the historical Silk Route. India is home to nine registered dromedary camel breeds. In the challenging desert ecosystems of Rajasthan and Gujarat, camels are lifelines for communities like Raika/Rabari, Fakirani Jats, and Hajiyanis (Maldharis). Camel milk's unique properties help to cure diabetes and autism, make it a valuable asset in our fight against prevalent health issues. Festivals such as the International Camel Festival at Bikaner, Pushkar Mela, Rann Utsav at Kutch and arts like GI-tagged *Usta Kala* Crafts showcase the enduring cultural legacy of camels. Camels serve as a source of diverse income avenues, including camel carts, leather works, bone works, hair products, camel-based tourism, and camel dairy. Camel-based tourism activities offer economic benefits to camel rearers and also from the sale of milk, and other by-products. It is the centre of attraction for tourists in destinations like the deserts of Rajasthan, Rann of Kutch, Nubra Valley of Ladakh, and seaside areas. Camels play a vital role in advancing several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, gender equality, responsible consumption and production, climate action, and life on land.

Comprehensive and collaborative efforts by Governments, policymakers, NGOs, research institutions, and the private sectors are essential in ensuring the success of the International Year of Camelids. Increased investment in research, outreach, and innovative practices are crucial. Policymakers must formulate regulations that promote the well-being of camels and their herders,

addressing challenges such as shrinkages of browsing area, protecting common properties, accessibility to forest areas for browsing. ICAR-National Research Centre on Camel is committed to celebrating the International Year of Camelids 2024 through awareness camps, workshops, developing policy papers, promotion of camel products and ecotourism. As we embark on this journey of celebrating the International Year of Camelids, let us recognise and appreciate the incredible contributions of these majestic creatures of the planet to our lives and the well-being of communities worldwide. Together, let us strive for a sustainable future where camels thrive, and their potential is fully realised for the benefit of humankind.

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