

Seeds and Breeds – September 11-14, 2005
Panel III – Developing the tools to implement the infrastructure to deliver improved germplasm

New Initiatives – Don Bixby, American Livestock Breeds Conservancy

Publicly funded livestock breeding has produced some useful production types. Some flourished, but then disappeared like the Minnesota #3 pig, the Multinipple sheep, and Beltsville Small White turkeys. Others continue to be important production stocks such as Polypay sheep and Beltsville Large White turkeys. More recently public funding has been focused on the importations such as Tuli cattle from Africa and Romo Sinuano from Central America as well as Dorper sheep, Boer and Kiko goats from Australia/South Africa.

While there has been selection for increased production, new production systems have been largely ignored in the past few decades. Forage based, organic, antibiotic/hormone free markets are growing by genetic selection for these areas is sluggish. What is needed is a re-examination and characterization of traditional American breeds. Attention has been brought to the grass genetics of Devon and Red Poll cattle, but other cattle breeds, as well as breeds in other species of livestock and poultry may indeed possess the qualities needed for sustainable systems. Many opportunities exist to develop livestock breeds and lines for production systems