



# People, Land and Livestock

*Proceedings of a Workshop on the  
Socio-Economic Dimensions  
of Livestock Production in the  
Communal Lands of Zimbabwe*

Edited by  
Ben Cousins

**PEOPLE, LAND AND LIVESTOCK**

**Proceedings of a Workshop on the Socio-economic  
Dimensions of Livestock Production in the Communal Lands of  
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**Edited by Ben Cousins**

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# THE NATIONAL LIVESTOCK POLICY FRAMEWORK

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A central feature of the allocation of agricultural resources in Zimbabwe before independence was the extremely inequitable distribution of land (in both quantitative and qualitative terms), water (irrigation) resources, livestock resources, extension and research services, rural and agricultural infrastructure (including markets and broader services) and related financial resources in the form of investments, subsidies and credit. These differences were clearly reflected in the different levels of technology, patterns of labour utilisation and indices of productivity and efficiency obtaining in the various agricultural sub-sectors. The basic principles which underlay this lack of equity were (apart from financial privilege), the creation of a guaranteed supply of cheap labour from the Communal Lands, the reduction of agricultural economic competition, and the maintenance of social security at little cost.

Since 1980 the government has embarked on a range of agricultural and rural policies (see Table 1). These have aimed to encourage overall growth in the sector and to create a more equitable distribution of agricultural resources. The major thrust has been to redistribute land, develop infrastructure, services and markets in the Communal Lands, extend investments and credit in these areas, and develop skills and technologies in order to improve the efficiency of resource use and overall

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productivity. Other critical supportive measures have included pricing, subsidies, research, land use reorganisation (including grazing schemes), and conservation measures. The latter have aimed to improve the resource base of the Communal Lands and promote growth in production and productivity.

Furthermore, the government has targeted the Communal Lands for a large investment programme in development (mass education, health etc), administrative reorganisation to make participatory planning possible (through new provincial and grass roots structures), cooperative and community development, and income generating projects. These programmes have aimed to improve the standard of living and help stimulate an improvement in overall productivity and employment prospects.

**Table 1. Post-independence Agricultural Policies in Zimbabwe**

<b>Policy/Programme</b>	<b>Policy Objectives and Activities</b>
<b>A. Physical Resource-related Policies and Programmes</b>	
<b>1. Land Resettlement</b>	To redistribute land to communal area peoples through the purchase of privately owned LSCF land and using different resettlement models. Increase the access to land among the poor and landless and promote production growth.
<b>2. Land Improvement</b>	To reorganise, conserve and improve land use and efficiency through planning activities, grazing schemes, conservation measures, village and ward level organisation and responsibility within Communal Lands. To develop forestry resources for energy and environmental sustainability.

Table 1. (continued)

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Policy/Programme Policy Objectives and Activities

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(Physical Resource-related Policies and Programmes continued)

3. Infrastructure To extend marketing, roads, transportation, consumption and production water, electricity etc in the Communal Lands through parastatals, ministries, aid and the private sector. To improve access to markets and agricultural services and increase production incentives.
4. Livestock Promotion To formulate a national policy by 1988, increase animal health and production services, improve cattle marketing, and extend credit facilities to communal farmers. To promote small livestock development.

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B. Research and Technology Development Policies and Programmes

1. Irrigation To expand irrigation capacity through the continuation of pre-independence activities in dam construction and medium to long term credit, as well as the creation of a special National Farm Irrigation Fund which includes communal farmers. To rehabilitate irrigation schemes and increase the role of ARDA in irrigation development.
  2. Research/Extension To orient research to the needs of Communal Land farmers and increase the quantity and quality of extension services. These to be achieved by increasing staff training, reducing extension worker: farmer ratios and improving methods of targeting farmers
  3. Technology To develop appropriate technological capacity and improve productivity, through research and extension activities, government ploughing schemes, group tractorisation projects, the extension of medium term credit to communal farmers, and increasing foreign exchange allocations to the agricultural sector.
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Table 1. (continued)

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Policy/Programme Policy Objectives and Activities

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C. Agricultural Finance Policies

1. Credit            To extend credit to communal, resettlement and small scale commercial farmers. To use groups to increase access and develop responsibility for credit management.
2. Pricing/subsidies      To maintain attractive prices for producers and affordable consumer prices, through appropriate price setting and support and subsidies to marketing boards.
3. Exports Promotion      To encourage exports through foreign exchange allocations and organisational, administrative and transportation support measures.

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D. Incomes, Employment and Organisational Policies and Programmes

1. Collective Coops      To promote collective producer cooperatives on resettled large farms and amongst small production groups in order to increase economies of scale and levels of production.
  2. Other Coops            To promote marketing and supply cooperatives, savings groups, and pre-cooperative income generating groups in order to achieve economies of scale in the circulation of services, goods, finances and skills.
  3. Incomes and Wages      To improve income levels and distribution, job security and employment welfare, through minimum wage and labour regulations. These to benefit communal areas through remittances etc.
  4. Regional Equity      Infrastructural development and drought relief to disadvantaged regions.
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## 2. GENERAL FEATURES OF THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY

This section outlines some of the general features of the livestock industry in Zimbabwe and examines how they have influenced livestock policies in the post-independence period.

The beef production component of the industry is large and sophisticated and well integrated into the national economy in terms of both forward and backward linkages. Beef contributed 15 percent of agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1987 and employed a total of about 70 000 people (World Bank 1987). In addition to supplying the internal market beef earns foreign exchange through exports, the bulk of these being to the European Economic Community (EEC) rather than to regional markets.

More than 60 percent of the beef produced is "export quality", but most of this is supplied by large scale commercial producers rather than the communal sector. The growth of beef exports has averaged 30 percent per annum since 1982. This may be compared to the 3,4 percent per annum growth in the world beef market in the same period. Zimbabwe's share of this market is only 0,2 percent, and the high rate of growth in exports is due mainly to the inclusion of Zimbabwe in the Lome Agreement. Total cattle numbers in the country were around 5,6 million in 1987, of which about 69 percent was found in the communal and resettlement sub-sectors and around 31 percent in the large scale commercial farm (LSCF) sub-sector (CSO 1988). It is projected that using current technologies (ie. a basically extensive method) around 900, 000 animals could be produced for slaughter every year (World Bank 1987). This compares to the current offtake of around 400,00 of which less than 20



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percent are from the Communal Lands.

Government policy towards Communal Land cattle has been to encourage an increase in the offtake rate so as to improve the supply of beef animals. Extension and research have been geared to this goal. Since 1980 government has also improved the supply of veterinary services to the Communal Lands, and by 1987 dipping alone was costing \$4 million per annum. Consideration is now being given to passing some of these costs on to the farmers in this sector (Madzima 1988, p 70), although doubts exist as to whether or not they are both willing and able to pay these costs.

Since independence severe droughts in the 1982-84 period and 1986/7 have significantly affected the livestock industry as a whole, with producers incurring heavy stock losses and being forced to reduce offtake in order to rebuild their breeding herds. Drought is thus a major policy constraint.

The Cold Storage Commission (CSC) undertakes the bulk of beef animal purchases, slaughterings and wholesale meat sales in the country. It operates abattoirs and cold storage works in different centres, employs 5000 people and has an annual turnover of around \$250 million. Since 1981/2 it has operated on a deficit and has had to be supported by central government funding. To reduce deficits and to keep consumer prices low, producer prices were at first held static. However, this pricing policy, together with the droughts, led to a 30 percent decline in sales by 1985/6, and 1987 saw a 30 percent increase in prices.

Another dominant factor in policy making in the short term has been the drive to fulfil the EEC export quota, which was worth \$70 million in foreign exchange initially and has subsequently risen to over Z\$100 million per annum.

### 3. PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

#### 3.1 The Lack of a Formal Livestock Policy

Over the past eight years a livestock policy of sorts has been implemented by government, but there has been no formal written statement as to goals and strategies to achieve those goals. Instead there has been policy by default. Why has it proved so difficult to draw up a coherent framework for detailed decision making?

Generally government policy making with regard to agrarian reform and rural development has suffered from a number of weaknesses. Broad socio-economic patterns and structures in the society as a whole have not been seriously addressed, and in particular the continuing inequities between the large scale farmers and small scale producers have not been adequately dealt with. There is an absence of a long term strategy for overcoming the serious structural problems found in the society at large, including problems of employment and technology.

The Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) has been a powerful voice in defence of the interests of its members, and has been a highly effective lobby in terms of influence on policy making. Partly as a result there has been ideological confusion in government on issues relating to land tenure and agrarian

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reform, as reflected in debates on the effectiveness of the resettlement programme.

Government policies have also embodied somewhat contradictory short term objectives. Thus the extensive resettlement models currently being implemented (Model A schemes allow for extensive grazing allocations per household even on high potential land) involve a trade-off between the goals of allowing Communal Land farmers access to more and better quality land, and increasing export beef production - which for economic reasons tends to be concentrated on the highveld. A coherent national livestock policy would need to come to terms with trade-offs such as these.

Another reason for the policy vacuum may be a shortage of reliable data on such controversial issues as the relative efficiencies of land use in the communal and the commercial sub-sectors. Ideological factors have clouded debate on these questions, and it may be that most analyses to date have been somewhat misplaced.

### **3.2 Investment Patterns**

Patterns of investment in the livestock industry are indicative of the characteristics of the "policy by default" that has prevailed since independence. Investments in infrastructure from both government and donor agency funds have largely favoured commercial beef production eg. new abattoirs, upgrading of existing abattoirs, and Foot and Mouth Disease control fences. Commercial dairy producers have benefitted from the installation of bulk tanks, with only the funds derived from the rentals of these being available for peripheral pilot

projects in the Communal Lands. Credit for cattle production has been available from the CSC and the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), but thus far has flowed almost exclusively to the commercial producers.

In drought years commercial cattle have been moved from the dry south to the highveld to prevent losses, with the result being that prime arable land has been supporting an extensive commercial enterprise. But in any case the economics of commercial beef production have led to a concentration of the beef export herd in Mashonaland, while ranchers in Natural Regions IV and V have increasingly turned to wildlife as a more reliable source of income.

With regard to the Communal Lands, the focus of investment has been on expanding the network of sales pens (i.e. marketing infrastructure) rather than on developing the production base. The 220 Animal Health Centres which have been built are still not operational because of unresolved problems to do with the supply of drugs.

### **3.3 Macro-economic Policy Contradictions**

A general economic development strategy based on the notion of export-led growth has meant a focus on the expansion of agricultural exports, including beef. The consequences of such a strategy are twofold: (a) a reliance on the international market, which can result in a certain instability, given fluctuating prices (b) domestic markets are relatively neglected. While access to the European market for beef via the Lomé Agreement reduces uncertainty with regard to prices, at least in the short term, it has brought with it a degree of

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instability due to problems with Foot and Mouth Disease.

### **3.4 Institutional Malaise**

Some of the problems facing the livestock sector are due to a widespread institutional malaise in both central and local government. New ministries have been created to deal with Communal Land development rather than transforming existing ministries and government departments. Competition rather than integration and complementarity has characterised relations between different ministries and departments (eg. between the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development and the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Rural Resettlement). Local government structures (eg. District Councils) have remained rather toothless, and there is a lack of real content in the functioning of popular organs of planning and development (eg. WADCOS and VIDCOS).

### **3.5 Biases in Financial Policies**

Credit has been available from the AFC and the CSC for livestock development programmes but it has been directed largely to the commercial farmers. Within the Communal Lands it is the wealthier peasants who have benefitted. Even group lending schemes, now favoured by AFC and CSC, are targeted at the "better off farmers" who are less of a lending risk.

### **3.6 The Bogey of Parastatal Viability**

There has been an increasing tendency in the post-independence period for consumer subsidies to be whittled away, with pressure being exerted on the parastatals to become "viable

enterprises". This has undermined their social responsibilities. This pressure has led to both the CSC and the Dairy Marketing Board (DMB) raising their prices to consumers. The question must be raised, however, of the appropriateness of such a policy thrust in a situation of great inherited inequalities.

### **3.7 Regional Differentiation**

There are great differences in the resource endowments of the different regions within the country. Both before and since independence this has resulted in a concentration of high value agricultural enterprises, employment and incomes in a few favoured areas, and a relative backwardness in those not so fortunate. Policies to date have not attempted to redress these inequalities in any significant manner.

### **3.8 Market Biases**

Current livestock policies are biased in favour of supplying meat and milk to export and (national) urban markets. Little consideration appears to have been given to local (Communal Land) consumption, or to integrated livestock-based rural development projects.

## **4. ELEMENTS OF AN INTEGRATED LIVESTOCK POLICY FOR THE COMMUNAL LANDS**

What are the necessary elements of an integrated national livestock policy which addresses the problems outlined above?

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#### **4.1 Land Ownership and Land Use Rights**

There are enormous pressures building up in the Communal Lands for a change in the basic pattern of unequal access to land. Policy makers are at the same time debating the thorny issue of land tenure change. A livestock policy must make sense in terms of whatever decisions are made with regard to these central questions.

Linked to the issue of land rights is that of appropriate inheritance legislation, particularly in respect of the rights of women.

#### **4.2 Regional Differentiation**

A national policy must include provision for redressing regional inequalities. Measures to be considered could include subsidies for transport and infrastructure, differential prices, investment decisions and social mobilisation. Tractorisation in those Communal Lands found in the high potential regions of the country should be considered. Both legislation and incentives for intensification of land use in these regions also need to be looked into.

#### **4.3 Absentee Livestock Owners**

Many urban dwellers own livestock in the Communal Lands, and this issue needs to be addressed by policy. Some of these absentee owners are bureaucrats involved in policy formulation and implementation, and tackling this issue will help to break the policy stalemate on agrarian reform.

#### 4.4 Institutional Development at WADCO/VIDCO Level

For meaningful development planning and management to take place at a local level Ward Development Committees (WADCOs) and Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) will have to achieve a degree of autonomy from central state agencies. This will only be possible as they develop appropriate technical and administrative skills. In planning for livestock development these bodies will have deal with conflicts within local power structures, for example between traditional leaders and large herd owners.

#### 4.5 Mechanisation of Draught Power

Government policy with regard to the mechanisation of draught power in Communal Lands needs to be sharpened. The further development of tractor hire services needs to be considered, taking full account of District Development Fund (DDF) experiences in recent years. Linkages with manufacturing industry in the provision of the necessary machinery and equipment are a vital aspect of such development.

#### 4.6 Multiple Livestock Functions

The multiple functions of Communal Land livestock and the ways in which their production relates to broader needs and constraints (including, for example nutrition, food security, and cash flow security) need to be integrated into the overall livestock policy.



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#### **4.7 Grazing Management**

The experience derived from recent attempts to develop sustainable management of communal grazing land needs to be incorporated into policy. Important aspects of this experience are the role of local leaders, and appropriate identification of the problem at a local level.

#### **4.8 Appropriate Investment**

Investment programmes aimed at Communal Land livestock should focus on developing productive infrastructure and the resource base itself (the land), rather than on marketing facilities alone. A dimension which merits greater attention from policy makers is the integration of a livestock feed component into local development plans and packages.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

The evolution of integrated but decentralised food and agricultural production systems, linked to local processing and local market satisfaction, constitutes the realistic and dependable framework within which livestock development in the Communal Lands can occur. Agrarian reform, employment promotion and appropriate technology development are essential elements needed to sustain the broad-based demand and production structure so far lacking, a lack which has placed constraints on household strategies for livestock improvement.

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