



# 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  
Zimbabwe, held at Great Zimbabwe, Masvingo, 12th to 14th  
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**Edited by Ben Cousins**

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A. Maclaurin and Dr C. Jackson acted as rapporteurs and did a fine job of reporting in detail the wide-ranging discussions which took place.

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All those who attended the workshop should be thanked for their high level of active participation; their contribution was perhaps the most vital of all in making this event the success it was.

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## INTRODUCTION: "THE ELEPHANT IN THE DARK"

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### 1. ORIGINS OF THE WORKSHOP

Attaining a full understanding the role of livestock in the economies of rural Africa remains one of the thornier problems confronting both researchers and development planners and practitioners. One of the reasons for this is given by Little (1980, p1): "there are few development issues today which entail a greater complexity of sociological, economic and ecological variables than that of livestock development in sub-Saharan Africa".

Aside from the inherent complexities involved, in Zimbabwe little attention was devoted to communal area livestock by researchers in the pre-independence era (Mombeshora 1985, p84). This applied equally to technical and socio-economic aspects, although in respect of the latter the pioneering and still valuable work of Danckwerts (1974) and Theisen and Marasha (1974) should be noted.

Since independence in 1980 a reorientation of research work towards the needs of farmers in the Communal Lands has taken place, and government extension services too have shifted their primary focus from the commercial to the communal sector. Until recently crops received much more attention from both researchers and extension staff than livestock, even though shortages of draught power and manure have long been recognised as major constraints to production. This imbalance is now

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beginning to be redressed. Along with the recognition of the need for an integrated approach to technical matters has come an increasing awareness of the centrality of the social, cultural, economic and political dimensions of livestock production.

Particularly important is the work of the Farming Systems Research Unit (FSRU) in the Department of Research and Specialist Services, the GFA study commissioned by the Department of Veterinary Services, the goat research project in Bikita initiated by the French Embassy, and the innovative research carried out by Wilson and Scoones in Zvishavane District. Livestock development programmes being undertaken by the Lutheran World Federation, and the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) in conjunction with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), both recognise the central importance of the socio-economic issues.

At the University of Zimbabwe research on rural incomes (by Jackson in the Department of Rural and Urban Planning) and food security (by Amin and others in the Department of Economics) now include a focus on livestock as one vital component of the livelihood systems found in the Communal Lands. The Centre for Applied Social Sciences has established a Grazing Management Research Unit within a larger research programme on natural resource management in communal areas.

It is now being recognised that livestock must be taken into account when planning for the management of other critical resources too. Hence the interest by the International Centre for Maize and Wheat Improvement (CIMMYT) in mechanisms for ensuring access to draught power, and the inclusion of plans

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for grazing land management in the Forestry Commission's rural afforestation programme (Phase II). The research project on multi-species management systems currently being undertaken by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) has wildlife as its major focus, but again there is provision for the inclusion of domestic livestock as a potential component of such systems.

Finally, as pressure on the resources of the Communal Lands continues to mount, so the demand for a more thorough-going redistribution of land begins to be expressed. Agrarian reform is now high on the agenda of the rural populace, planners and politicians, and clarity on population: resource relationships is urgently required. The most comprehensive and insightful overview of the land question in Zimbabwe remains Cliffe's 1986 review, and it is notable how central livestock are to his analysis.

Thus there is at present both an increased interest in Communal Land livestock and a growing research effort aimed at throwing light on the complexity of the issues. The workshop whose proceedings are published here was originally conceived of as a small gathering of social scientists currently working on these issues, who would share ideas about work in progress. It soon became apparent that a much wider group of people felt these concerns to be of great relevance, and that a need existed for them to be discussed and debated in a larger forum.

With the assistance of GTZ a more ambitious workshop was planned, to include presentations from relevant government departments and non-government organisations as well as academic researchers. In the end 45 people from a wide range

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of disciplines (including the natural sciences) and organisations contributed to the workshop discussions.

## 2. WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS AND PAPERS

Conferences and workshops are often fragmented affairs. In an attempt to orient discussion around a core of common problems a Position Paper was commissioned, and circulated to those presenting papers well in advance of the workshop itself. Ian Scoones and Ken Wilson more than fulfilled their brief - their paper stimulated intense debate and stands as one of the most ambitious attempts to date to integrate social, economic and ecological research findings into a coherent understanding of agricultural production in the Communal Lands. Their views are controversial; in many respects they cut across the grain of conventional wisdom, and many participants expressed reservations and disagreements. However, the lively exchange of perspectives which the paper provoked can only enhance the learning process as a whole.

A major thrust of the Position Paper is the argument that seeing problems of Communal Land cattle production through the spectacles of the "beef paradigm" leads to faulty analysis and inappropriate prescriptions, with correspondingly poor responses from farmers. Marshalling an impressive array of evidence, Scoones and Wilson argue that only development programmes based on an understanding of the multiple functions of livestock (and cattle in particular), and of how farmers actually use the resources available to them in the heterogeneous environments of the Communal Lands, stand any chance of succeeding. It is disturbing to note that cabinet

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ministers continue to call on Communal Land farmers to increase their output of beef animals, as though it were a simple matter of a "change of attitude"!

Papers on current national policies and extension programmes were presented as a backdrop to papers on particular issues. Unfortunately the National Livestock Policy was still in process of being formulated at the time of the workshop, and an official summary and statement of government policy could not be made. Instead a senior government official commented on remarks by Sam Moyo of the Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies (ZIDS) and Ian Scoones, in a panel discussion. Moyo's remarks have been written up and are included here. Frank Chinembiri's paper outlined the thrust of livestock extension in the Communal Lands, and reiterated the importance placed on grazing schemes as the basis for many other technical interventions.

Two papers focused on methodological problems which often bedevil socio-economic research on livestock. Alistair Sutherland emphasised the need to define clearly the purpose and the end-user of research before beginning data collection exercises, and reviewed the wide range of methods and approaches available for different kinds of investigation. Jeremy Jackson analysed two aspects of livestock income: the problem of valuation of non-terminal products, and the implications for household income of the highly skewed distribution of cattle.

Five papers explored key problems of Communal Land livestock production. Manfred van Eckert and Bright Mombeshora of FSRU collated research findings from a number of different sources

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and research sites and sought to show the regional variations in farmer objectives and livestock functions. The paper also described some of the cultural roles of animals, although it was unable to answer the question of just how important these actually are in farmer decision-making. The paper also presented a useful review of data on small livestock, which are often neglected.

Mary Muchena's paper discussed the question of draught power and in particular the issue of how non-cattle owners manage to gain access to draught animals. Given the importance of the draught function, this is a critical issue in need of further attention. Ian Scoones presented his findings on farmer knowledge and ecological processes in Mazhviwa, and reiterated the need to take seriously the understanding that local people have of "key resources".

Ben Cousins examined emerging definitions of "community" and how they relate to the increasingly apparent inequalities among Communal Land populations, in the context of grazing management schemes. Stephen Chipika also discussed the question of inequality in his review of the evidence on livestock ownership collected by the Monitoring and Evaluation section of the Department of Agricultural Technical and Extension Services (Agritex).

On the final day of the workshop the experiences of three non-government agencies were reported. John Harrison and Hugues Fourault presented data on goat production in Bikita and posed questions about appropriate means of encouraging smallstock development. Dexter Chavunduka reviewed the experiences of the cattle programme undertaken by the Lutheran World Federation,

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and Gladman Kundhlande and Robson Mutandi outlined the progress and findings of the Coordinated Agricultural Rural Development (CARD) programme initiated in Gutu by ARDA and GTZ.

All of these papers are included in this proceedings, with the exception of that given by Harrison and Fourault, which was unavailable at the time of going to print. Some have been revised in the light of comments made at the workshop.

### 3. WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Dr. Weyl of GTZ was rightly concerned that the workshop be not merely an occasion for informal discussions, but also an opportunity to think through the practical implications of research findings. One of the objectives of the workshop was thus to produce recommendations for policy makers, extension staff, implementing agencies and researchers. With this in mind workshop discussions consisted of (a) general discussion sessions which followed each formal presentation, and (b) small working group sessions focused on particular problems. Workshop rapporteurs then collated the results of all these deliberations into a summary of tentative recommendations, which were discussed and amended at a final plenary session.

The discussions and recommendations are summarised in the final section of these proceedings. They have already appeared in print, in the form of a booklet entitled Socio-economic Dimensions of Livestock Production in the Communal Lands of Zimbabwe. Report and Recommendations of a Workshop (CASS and GTZ 1989). This has been widely distributed in an attempt to

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encourage discussion and debate in government departments and other agencies actively engaged in livestock development efforts.

These recommendations, it must be emphasised, did not always represent a consensus of opinion among workshop participants. Discussions were characterised by disagreements and differences of perspective as much as by agreement, and the summary of discussion attempts to reflect the full spread of views.

### **4. "THE ELEPHANT IN THE DARK"**

Missing from the presentations was a detailed consideration of the gender issue. The Position Paper touched on the question of women's ownership of stock, and the importance of gaining a better understanding of the issue, and of evaluating the impact of livestock development projects on women, was emphasised both in general discussion and in the working groups. Clearly this is an aspect of Communal Land livestock production in need of further research.

Other aspects which were not fully dealt with at the workshop include a detailed consideration of the economics of Communal Land livestock "enterprises", and a comparison of benefits from wildlife utilisation versus cattle in marginal environments such as the Zambesi Valley. Small stock, while now better served by research and extension than in the past, remain somewhat neglected.

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The question of inequality and differentiation in Communal Land populations is now receiving recognition as an important dimension, and several of the workshop papers included a consideration of the implications of this. In general, however, we are still at the stage of describing the problem and outlining its magnitude, and have not advanced very far in offering explanations of why and how these patterns have emerged.

For all these reasons the workshop represents only a beginning in the attempt to develop a thorough-going and deep-rooted understanding of the social, economic and political processes determining livestock production in the Communal Lands.

We are perhaps only a little further advanced than the four villagers who approached a visiting circus at night to investigate the nature of the gigantic and wondrous animal which they had heard about but never seen. One man felt in the darkness and declared that an elephant must indeed be like a fan (he was touching its ear). Another touched its leg and said that he disagreed; he could liken it only to a living pillar. A third felt its trunk and concluded that the creature must resemble a hosepipe, while the fourth put his hand on its back and became convinced that it was some kind of throne.

The result of the expedition was confusion. Each man was sure he was right; none of the other villagers could understand what had happened or what the investigators had actually experienced. The moral of the story? "The whole is greater than the parts".

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