

Wildlife Production: Promoting Development and Conservation in Southern Africa

Livestock farming in southern Africa is fraught with difficulties. Most of the region is characterised by infertile soils and poor rainfall (half of the region receives less than 750 mm of rainfall per year) as well as the dangers posed by tsetse flies and foot and mouth disease. World beef prices have declined steadily making it uneconomic to rely solely on cattle. So it comes as no surprise that during the past thirty years in southern Africa, more and more commercial ranchers have started using wildlife to supplement their farm income. Community-managed wildlife schemes are also multiplying, especially in Zimbabwe, Namibia and Zambia. In many areas game ranching, safari hunting and wildlife tourism provide higher economic returns than livestock farming or agriculture.

Conservation benefits

Wildlife production systems (or “multi-species animal production systems”) help significantly in biodiversity conservation. In Namibia for example 80% of wild animals are found on private land. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) estimates that 16% of southern Africa (1.2 million km²) is currently used for mixed wildlife/livestock production systems, and there is more wildlife on communal and private land than all the National Parks and protected areas combined (Fig 1).

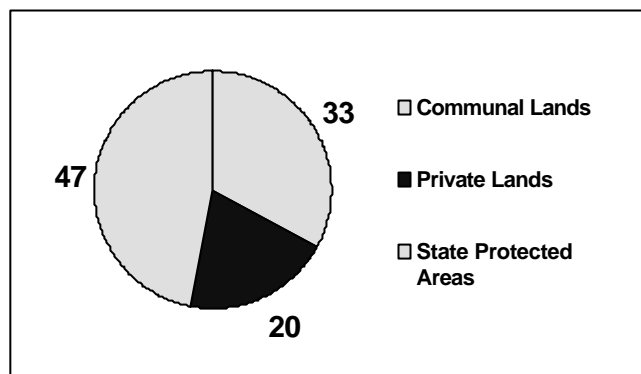


Figure 1: Land % allocated to wildlife use in southern Africa

Wildlife production as agricultural insurance

Farming compatible domestic and wild animals together frees farmers from depending on one species or one commodity which can be disastrous - such as during a drought year or when the price of milk or meat plunges on the international market. During the 1979-1982 drought, communities in northern Namibia lost 80% of their cattle, which formed the mainstay of their livelihood. There are, however, important reasons why rural communities prefer not to give up livestock altogether but use wildlife to supplement their livestock farming (Box 1).

Using wildlife can allow more flexibility in farming strategies in three ways —

- wildlife is more drought resistant than cattle;
- wildlife prices (tourism or meat/livestock sales) are not subject to cattle price cycles; and
- wildlife is more likely to be used for subsistence consumption than cattle (for social and cultural reasons)

Box 1. Why it is better for wildlife and cattle to share the land

A recent study undertaken in Namibia showed that wildlife production should be complementary to and not a substitute for cattle for several reasons :-

- *cattle are valued for their draft power, milk, status value and meat - wildlife cannot replace all of these functions;*
- *cattle are valued for their draft power, milk, status value and meat - wildlife cannot replace all of these functions;*
- *cultural reasons - there is an Oshindonga saying that means "a man is not a man without cattle";*
- *wildlife production requires different management skills to livestock farming and sometimes requires expensive infrastructure such as game fences and refrigeration units;*
- *unless controlled carefully, private companies derive greater incomes from wildlife tourism than communities, whilst communities suffer from lack of privacy and cultural intrusion; and*
- *in some areas significant livestock farming subsidies make it more economic to keep cattle than generate revenues from wildlife tourism.*

Community management of wildlife

Before colonial policies established national parks for the preservation of wildlife, rural communities used their wildlife as a supplement to cattle for meat, clothes, medicines and other products, which they harvested on a sustainable basis. Community-based wildlife management, building on these age-old traditions, enabled African rural people once again to manage their wildlife, using it to assist rural development. Such programmes are springing up all over southern Africa.

- In Malawi people living near two national parks collect honey, caterpillars and thatching grass in the park with the assistance of park staff who have been trained in bookkeeping methods. The demand for honey has grown so much that some villagers have been earning the equivalent of US \$5.70 a day - ten times the national average wage!
- During 1991 in Zimbabwe over 58,000 crocodile eggs were collected for sale, mostly from Kariba, and the industry earned US\$2 million in hide sales. A large proportion of the eggs was brought from rural communities, which manage their wildlife under CAMPFIRE (**Box 2**).
- In Mozambique a community has recently established the Tchuma Tchato project for managing their wildlife, run on a CAMPFIRE basis. The community provided labour, poles and thatch for construction of their project office and set up an anti-poaching unit staffed by locals. They will receive benefits from hunting concessions in the area and plan to derive some of their development funds from their abundant supply of crocodile and elephant.
- In Namibia through enabling legislation, communities are currently establishing communal area conservancies in the Caprivi, Kunene and Otjozondjupa regions. With the designation of conservancies communities are awarded conditional rights to wildlife and are responsible for the sustainable management of the conservancy's wildlife and other natural resources. They are also able to directly benefit from this management through hunting and tourism activities within the area. At present 4 conservancies have been established and a further 12 are in the process of development.
- In Zambia local people are running the Luangwa Integrated Resource Development Project (LIRDP) which collects tourist and hunting income from its locally run safari company. Funds have been used to build a health clinic, improve the roads and establish the LIRDP bus service and trucking company. Through community co-operation, elephant poaching in the areas decreased significantly by 1989 — before the ban on ivory trade.

Box 2. Community Wildlife Management : Zimbabwe well on the way

Zimbabwe's Communal Area Management Programme For Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) is often cited as the best example of community-based wildlife management in Africa. Through the programme, rural communities design and implement their own wildlife management systems using the profits for development projects. Community members sell natural products such as hides, meat, crocodile eggs, caterpillars and wood, which are harvested on a sustainable basis. They also allow trophy hunting and wildlife tourism where appropriate. Revenues raised from these projects have been used to build schools and clinics, develop roads, drill wells and install grinding mills. Funds have also been used to compensate villagers for crops and livestock lost or damaged by wildlife and to supplement household incomes especially in times of drought. Some 25 districts are participating in CAMPFIRE and those best endowed with wildlife can earn up to US\$500,000 per year, mainly from hunting concessions.

Making the most of community wildlife production

Increasing the number of successful community wildlife management programs will involve —

- putting into place legal systems, which allow landowners to use their wildlife in a sustainable manner;
- providing training and technical assistance to rural people in natural resource management; and
- developing more effective techniques of reducing conflict between wildlife, livestock, crops and people.

Compiled by **ResourceAfrica**

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