

POLICY BRIEFING

Botswana's foot-and-mouth disease and beef trade policy

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The beef industry in southern Africa has been a stalwart of economic development, but new conditions of trade, market access and disease dynamics, particularly of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), mean a major rethink is required. Our research addresses key policy options to allow southern Africa to benefit from the global 'livestock revolution'. It explores what options exist for trade, given changes in demand patterns, global competition and market access conditions, and asks who are the winners and losers of different scenarios for the future.

Background

Botswana has always placed considerable emphasis on cattle production. Livestock production is the major agricultural activity in Botswana, which is one of the few countries in the SADC region to achieve the standards of production and health required to market beef to the EU.

One of Botswana's most important achievements has been the successful control of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), relying on cordon fences to separate cattle from the country's rich wildlife, which includes the major carrier and transmitter of FMD virus, African buffalo.

However, implementation of this system comes at a high cost. The government has to pay for fence maintenance and veterinary surveillance. Farmers whose land lies within the control zone where vaccination against FMD is practised are severely restricted in marketing their cattle and beef. Conservationists question the use of fencing which

restricts, wildlife migratory routes. In spite of the fences, Botswana has increasingly suffered sporadic outbreaks of FMD over last few years, resulting costly trade interruptions.

Opportunities

As preferential trade agreements are replaced by economic partnership agreements that will greatly increase competition for the lucrative EU market, a key question is inevitably raised: are the costs involved in competing for that market adequately rewarded? Certainly supply-side constraints regarding cattle productivity, infrastructure and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS)

issues need to be addressed. But an extremely encouraging development for producers is the 'livestock revolution' - an exponential increase in demand for livestock products in developing countries, particularly Asia and urban Africa, linked to higher income and the enormous expansion of cities.

Therefore the exploration of alternative marketing opportunities, and more cost-effective approaches to FMD control, are urgently needed. The identification of a variety of options to enable cattle producers currently constrained by FMD regulations to obtain a better income from their herds is both necessary and desirable.

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Recommendations

As a SADC pioneer in the field of beef export to the highest value markets, Botswana can play a leading role in SADC initiatives to develop a vibrant, equitable and sustainable livestock industry in the region.

In developing an updated policy to support the marketing of beef from Botswana, the following will be important:

- A detailed assessment of market options, particularly for new export markets in Africa and Asia, where less exigent standards for importation might reduce production costs and permit new entrants into the market.
- Adaptation of disease control strategies to fit different market demands and SPS requirements, apart from country and zone freedom from FMD. Options include: freedom with vaccination; compartmentalisation - the creation of biosecure units (farms or groups of farms) that can be proven free of specific diseases; and commodity based trade, which

focuses on the safety of the end-product rather than disease status of the geographical area the animal came from.

- Cost reduction of disease control and marketing strategies through selective privatisation and outsourcing: producers who profit from marketing their livestock can be expected to invest in disease control measures that benefit their enterprises, while companies that import the products may be willing to invest in order to ensure a product that is acceptable to their clients.
- Developing innovative approaches such as compartmentalisation and commodity-based trade options in the Botswana context, and building capacity for their implementation.

Further reading

Mapitse, N. (2008) 'Botswana's foot-and-mouth disease and beef trade policy', *Transboundary animal disease and market access: future options for the beef industry in southern Africa, Working Paper 3, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies*

Download this paper and others in the series 'Veterinary Science, Transboundary Animal Disease and Market Access: the case of foot-and-mouth disease in southern Africa':

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Our research

Through detailed research and stakeholder-led dialogues in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, we have explored scenarios for tackling FMD, relating to different market access and trade options. We investigated what option, or combination of options, makes most sense, given the current context. Different criteria are evident, with often clear trade offs. The studies sought to uncover

which options result in the greatest returns, provide benefits to the broadest group of people and will be the most sustainable. This project was funded by the Livestock for Life programme of the Wellcome Trust and DFID and was co-ordinated by the Institute of Development Studies, UK.

Credits

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