



WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

Transboundary animal diseases and market access: the future of beef marketing in southern Africa

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Cooperation, innovation and diversification are the keys to a bright future for the red meat industry in southern Africa. This was the message emerging from a workshop “Transboundary animal diseases and market access: the future of beef marketing in southern Africa” that was held in Pretoria, South Africa from 7 - 8 April 2008. The workshop was organised by the Institute for Development Studies of the University of Sussex (IDS) and was supported by the Wellcome Trust and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It was the culmination of a project that explored ways to overcome the impact of endemic foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) on market access for red meat in four SADC countries (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe). The workshop was attended by a wide spectrum of delegates representing the European Commission, the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Livestock Research Institute, the regional economic commissions for eastern and southern Africa (COMESA and SADC), Animal Health for the Environment and Development (AHEAD), the national veterinary services of the four project countries, as well as Swaziland and the UK, the wholesale meat industry, NGOs and producer organisations.

Workshop presentations

Presentations provided the foundations for intensive and animated discussions

- The opening address by Dr Babagana Ahmadu, Director for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission was delivered by Mr Martin Bwalya (NEPAD) and asked how can Africa benefit from the livestock revolution? The welcoming address by Dr Emily Mogajane, Deputy Director for Agriculture, South Africa, highlighted the constraints placed by disease and other factors on livestock production and marketing.
- Other invited presentations emphasised the challenges posed by FMD in the region, options for disease control, changes in international trade standards (both public and private) and the implications of ending preferential trade agreements with the EU for southern Africa.
- Papers by the project researchers explored the foot and mouth disease/red meat industry situation in each of the four countries, reflecting firstly the situation in Namibia and Botswana, both of which export beef

to the EU, secondly on the situation in South Africa, which has the potential to export but is in fact a net importer, and finally Zimbabwe, which has lost its historic export market.

Recurring issues

All presentations highlighted how contexts for both disease control and market access have changed. A number of factors were repeatedly emphasised

- Political challenges to colonial land use – and especially the demand for land and markets by historically marginalised groups.
- Markets and trade agreements – and the challenges faced following the end of preferential trade access and the growth of competition from Latin America, alongside the potentials opened up by growing demand for red meat in urban Africa and Asia.
- Public and private standards – and their fast-changing, and often confusing, nature.
- Changing structure of the livestock industry – especially following liberalisation and the growth of private players.

- Disease epidemiology and ecology – and the changing dynamics of disease under conditions of rapidly changing production and land use systems
- Technology – and the potentials of new vaccines and the problems with existing ones.
- Capacity of veterinary services – especially following economic reforms and the decline in state support.

Such changes, it was agreed, suggest the need for a rethink. The status quo – where area-based disease freedom was combined with export to a limited array of markets – was challenged. If the southern Africa red meat industry is to respond to the new contexts it must adapt and diversify options. This means expanding horizons both on approaches to disease control and market access strategies. Fortunately there was good news presented to the workshop. New options exist and are being actively explored. No single solution was seen to be ideal across all southern African situations. The challenge was to combine options to meet strategic needs – and so move beyond the status quo.

For example, commodity-based trade (CBT) was seen as an important potential option, among others. Other options discussed included the existing area-based approach with or without vaccination, compartmentalisation and managing endemic disease.

Commodity-based trade

During an informal session, delegates viewed a DVD which examined the concept of CBT, i.e. 'Trade in defined products sourced from healthy animals providing an appropriate level of protection (ALOP)'. This was followed by discussion with a panel consisting of the EC, OIE and DEFRA (UK Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) representatives, who provided the following pointers regarding acceptance of the approach:

- DFID, DEFRA and OIE have conceptualised a project proposal to assist African countries to meet OIE sanitary standards for international trade in animal commodities.
- The OIE has adopted a positive stance on CBT and a working group will meet in July to consider how to incorporate it in the OIE guidelines.
- The EC gave the assurance that standards should facilitate and not be discriminatory, and that assistance is available to countries to achieve EC standards.

Future challenges

A number of future challenges were identified by the workshop:

- There is a need to improve rural livelihoods and alleviate poverty through the integration of poor livestock producers into the mainstream red meat industry. There is a continued marginalisation of livestock producers living in FMD control zones. Trade options for such producers are critical if poverty reduction goals are to be met.

The costs of the status quo through maintaining disease free zones are high and, with ever-increasing demands for higher standards, escalating. Alternative options which guarantee safe trade (such as CBT and compartmentalisation) are not well elaborated, and there remain (often unfounded) fears about such alternatives.

- Compliance with international trade standards (SPS requirements) is undermined by the inability to supply credible assurances owing to inadequate veterinary and food safety regulation capacity in some countries.
- A lack of competitive edge in a growing global market is due to low product volume (low production and seasonal effects) and lack of effective marketing techniques (including branding, niche identification, market information and intelligence).
- There remains poor negotiating capacity in standard setting fora and new markets owing to a lack of regional and continental coordination.
- Policy and planning in the livestock and wildlife sectors is often poorly coordinated. Conflicts between wildlife and livestock production are likely to be exacerbated by transboundary conservation areas.

Exploration of issues

Faced with these daunting challenges, working groups explored:

- Access to EU and other emerging markets in Africa and Asia.
- Commodity-based trade as an alternative approach to ensuring safe trade.
- Combining disease control options to ensure widened market access.
- The role of wildlife in the livestock production equation.
- Enhancing small-scale producers' access to markets.

Key recommendations

Key recommendations by the working groups were:

- Consider the widest possible combination of production, market and disease control options to ensure a flexible, equitable and resilient livestock industry.
- Choice of options should be subject to feasibility studies, risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis and lessons from pilot projects.
- Commodity-based trade and compartmentalisation, alongside area-based disease freedom (including through vaccination) in southern Africa, should be piloted.
- A more aggressive, forward-looking and innovative marketing approach, branding the positive features of southern African red meat, should be developed. A regional approach would substantially enhance effectiveness.
- Regional negotiating and lobbying capacity to improve influence on standard-setting at the OIE, WTO, Codex and other bodies needs to be strengthened.
- Livestock production and wildlife conservation and sustainable use must be seen as complementary and not competing activities, with integrated policy and planning.

Each recommendation is relevant across national authorities, regional economic groupings such as SADC and COMESA, as well as Africa-wide efforts coordinated through the African Union and NEPAD. It was agreed that the workshop findings would be forwarded to all relevant bodies.



Our research

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Further reading

Download papers and briefings 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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