

# POLICY BRIEFING

## Veterinary science, transboundary animal diseases and markets: pathways for policy in Namibia

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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

Livestock production accounts for 90% of agricultural production in Namibia - the most important income generation option for the rural population in a mainly arid country largely unsuited to crop production. Cattle ranching is a major activity in southern Namibia, in an area that is officially free of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and has remained so for almost half a century. Here, large-scale ranching supports an important meat export industry that includes the high value EU market.

However, this depends on the presence of a highly unpopular Veterinary Cordon Fence (VCF) that divides the country into two. The VCF excludes the people who own the greatest number of cattle from benefiting by export to markets such as the EU, and therefore raises serious questions about the sustainability of the status quo. That the VCF is a constant reminder to the majority of Namibians of apartheid era separation, marginalization and military hostility makes its removal a political imperative, regardless of any

benefits it confers in terms of disease control – benefits that are in any case denied to those who suffered most as a result of it.

### Opportunities

An important consideration is the end of the preferential trade agreements that guaranteed Namibia's share in the EU market. These are replaced with new economic partnership agreements that must be negotiated with individual trading partners. These new agreements open up the doors to competition with very experienced and aggressive beef suppliers elsewhere, notably in South America. Failure to retain the current market share would not only make the present FMD control less justifiable and affordable, but

would force Namibia to look at other outlets for the beef supply.

This could have a very positive outcome, as markets for livestock products in developing countries, particularly in Asia but also in Africa, are expanding very rapidly in response to higher disposable income and exponential urbanization. This 'livestock revolution' offers producers unprecedented opportunities for trade. Namibia could supply meat to a wide spectrum of markets, from local and traditional cross-border markets to the highest value markets available, in which all cattle producers who wish to participate, can do so, thanks to a variety of disease control options that are effective in supplying the guarantees required by the target markets.

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## 🗨️ New options for disease control now exist...that can replace or combine with traditional methods of preventing diseases such as foot-and-mouth 🗨️

### Options for the future

A variety of recommendations about the VCF have been made, ranging from complete removal to moving it to the Angolan border. All of the options have advantages and disadvantages, depending on perceptions and points of view. For example, removal of the fence would have obvious political and social advantages but would certainly pose challenges in terms of disease control. While maintaining the status quo or moving the fence to the Angolan border would be technically advantageous for disease control, but neither option is well accepted politically or socially.

Fortunately, new options for disease control now exist. For example the creation of biosecure epidemiological units or compartments (of farms or groups of farms) that can be certified free of particular diseases or commodity-based trade, which focuses on the safety of the end product and the health of the animal from which it was derived, rather than the geographical area the animal came from, offer real potentials.

These are among the options that can replace, or combine with, traditional methods of preventing diseases such as FMD. It is increasingly recognized that governments cannot be the sole agents responsible for animal disease control, and that the producers themselves, as well as the rest of the industry, should play a prominent role.

### Recommendations

In order to ensure a policy that will support the creation of an enabling environment for livestock production and trade, the following steps will be necessary:

- A fundamental review of marketing and export strategy in the post-ACP (Africa-Caribbean Pacific) era, with different market options elaborated.
- A more detailed economic and market/disease risk analysis of the different disease control/safe trade scenarios and their distributional effects.
- A wider debate of policy options that

goes beyond the technical experts.

- Information sharing and discussion to allay the fears of influential groups who benefit from the status quo and to enable all potential role players and stakeholders in the livestock industry to participate in decision-making

### Further reading

**Bishi, A. and Kamwi, J. A. (2008) 'Veterinary science, transboundary animal diseases and markets: pathways for policy in Namibia', Transboundary animal disease and market access: future options for the beef industry in southern Africa, Working Paper 4, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies**

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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

This briefing was written by Mary-Louise Penrith and edited by Julia Day from a

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