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The role of livestock for ACP countries: Challenges and opportunities ahead

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Future Policy challenges and opportunities for the ACP livestock sector - Responding to the growing demand for livestock products

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Executive Summary

Namibia is a net exporter of meat. Approximately 80% of the country's annual production of meat is being exported mainly to the European Union (EU), South Africa, and Norway. However, Namibia could expand its exports if (a) beef exports from its rural areas north of its veterinary cordon fence, and originating from the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) buffer zone could be allowed to be exported internationally without pre - and post quarantining cattle and (b) bone–in lamb exports from its OIE declared FMD free zone could be allowed to be imported into the European Union.

The two major factors impeding international meat trade for developing are the cost of compliance with Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and the availability of beneficial trade agreements. Other factors include poor animal disease control by governments, lack of marketing infrastructure and know-how, lack of dedicated and harmonised government policies and supporting services, limited negotiating skills and power and cultural practices linked to ownership.

To smaller and fragile economies the cost of compliance with intricate, namely EU import requirements is high, e.g. for the establishment and maintenance of a high standard of public veterinary services the construction and maintenance of EU approved export abattoirs, the maintenance of boundary fences around disease zones of different status, and the enactment of supporting legislation, e.g. the prohibition of administration of hormonal growth promoters and routine antibiotics or the feeding of ruminant derived proteins (RDP). In Namibia's case the compliance costs are mainly put on the industry itself, e.g. livestock identification devices, and traceability databases. However, there are constraints limiting exports, e.g. the requirement set by the EU for 48 hour maturation and de-boning from the OIE declared FMD free zone, the procedures to formally improve its BSE status according to OIE rules, and the present animal welfare lobby.

The conclusion of beneficial trade agreements assisted Namibia and other developing countries to a large extent. However, the impression remains that trade agreements are not negotiated to the benefit of all parties that limiting quotas are still being maintained, and that exorbitant tariffs are in place if countries are not signing.

If developing countries wish to participate internationally by exploiting their large populations of cattle numbers grazing in "disease risk" areas, especially those in contact with wildlife e.g. free roaming buffalo, very unpopular or costly decisions need to be taken. It is either to enclose cattle populations with costly fences and the eradication of wildlife inside such enclosures or construct barrier fences which interfere with the normal migratory movement of wildlife, unless new ways of thinking, e.g. product certification, commodity based approach (to include FMD), etc could be developed by the OIE and other international bodies. This needs to be done obviously, without compromising importing country risk in terms of disease acquisition or zoonoses. Here again, due to financial constraints and sometimes limited expertise developing countries experience difficulties to actively participate at international level in the formulation and development of animal health standards impacting on the trade of animals and animal products.