

PN-AAW-310

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AFRICAN



LIVESTOCK POLICY ANALYSIS NETWORK

No. 4

September 1986

NEWSLETTER



INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK CENTRE FOR AFRICA (ILCA)

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Research work on livestock policy and economics

1. In April/May 1986, ILCA went through two external reviews: an external programme (EPR) and an external management review (EMR). The EPR in particular included an assessment of the work done by the Livestock Economics Unit (now Livestock Economics Division or LED for short) since its inception in 1983. The result of this assessment of past work was most encouraging. We therefore felt that it would be worthwhile and timely to let ALPAN members be aware of what we have been doing in both the livestock policy and micro-economics area of research over the past 3 to 4 years. Accordingly a special supplement to Newsletter No. 4 contains summaries of the main findings of those research projects sufficiently far advanced for significant findings to be available. The findings of 14 research projects are summarized. The first 7 relate to policy work while the remaining 7 relate to micro economics research. The supplement also contains a list of the publications and other documents produced by LED staff and non-ILCA staff associated with specific LED research projects.

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2. In this connection, we also introduce a new feature in ALPAN through which we offer to publish occasionally a list of the work available in livestock economies on Africa, based on information to be provided to us (see the "Livestock Economics Corner" below).

LIVESTOCK ECONOMICS CORNER

Although ALPAN is a multi-disciplinary policy-oriented network, we feel that it could also be used as a medium for bringing forth some of the "fugitive" livestock economics literature on Africa which may remain hidden and unknown to a large number of interested readers and practitioners in the field. Henceforth, we are offering to produce occasionally a list of the work that economists have done or are doing relating to the livestock sector in Africa. Such work may be either policy oriented or farm level related to micro-economic issues at farm/herd level. Please send us copies of relevant documents in the case of completed work, or summary information (not more than 150 words per item) on relevant work you are currently engaged in but which you expect to complete in the immediate future. We will produce a list of the titles or summary information we receive as part of our ALPAN Newsletters. Such undertaking shall not, however, be interpreted as an endorsement on our part of the contents and conclusions of any of the documents.

In this issue

3. This fourth set of ALPAN, besides this newsletter (No.4) and its supplement, contains three network papers dealing with post-drought rehabilitation (No.10), estimation of beef supply response and its implications for policy analysis (No.11), and the development policy implications of spontaneous range enclosure in Africa (No.12).

4. The article by Camilla Toulmin is the second and final instalment on post-drought rehabilitation, this one dealing with the consequences and policy implications of livestock losses on the farming sector. The discussion on the effects of drought on the farming sector demonstrates the multidimensional nature of crop/livestock interactions in food crop production and consumption at the farm level. The wider implications of these interactions are clearly illustrated by the pattern and direction of changes in grain and livestock prices which are most likely to occur following a drought simultaneously affecting both the pastoral and crop farming sectors.

5. The paper's discussion on the options available to the farmers themselves or to the government (in

its direct assistance to farmers) largely focuses on the alternative means through which farmers can have access to tillage power to speed up post-drought recovery. The feasibility of the alternative measures proposed could be open to question (the author herself qualifies the feasibility of some of these measures by a number of conditions), and we invite our readers to comment in the light of their experience both in Africa and elsewhere. At this stage, however, it would be appropriate to bring up at least one additional point which needs further attention in considering the options available in the longer term.

6. The point relates to the introduction of less tillage-intensive systems to which the author refers in discussing options available to farmers. Frank Anderson of ILCA's Highland Programme, who presented the earlier version of the paper at the SAFGRAD Symposium, comments that "we do not know enough about minimum tillage systems - this is a critical research area". Indeed it is: minimum tillage systems should not only aim to introduce less tillage intensive crops which meet family consumption needs and requirements of easy marketing. They should also cater to poor farmers (one or no ox) or farmers who

have lost their animals due to drought as well as contribute to reducing pressure on grazing land resources. In this connection, it is worthwhile to point out that research into single-ox crop cultivation in Ethiopia has shown very promising results and that the technique was recently tested as part of a post-drought recovery scheme (for more details see Gryseels et al, 1984 and ILCA, 1986 referred to in Network Paper No. 10). Research on minimum tillage systems is thus an area which policy-makers concerned with post drought rehabilitation need to pay careful attention to and not something left as an option on which farmers alone are expected to act.

7. The explicit purpose of Network Paper No. 11 is to demonstrate the role of supply price elasticity estimates in formulating pricing policy in the livestock sector. This is an important topic and Rodriguez' work on beef and milk pricing policy in Zimbabwe is expected to make an important contribution to the scant and at times, controversial literature on Africa in this regard. A non explicit, but perhaps a more ambitious, purpose of producing this paper under ALPAN auspices is to explore whether economists

can talk intelligibly to African policy-makers with little or no quantitative orientation. I prefer to leave the final verdict on the outcome of this exploration to our readers. However, despite the inevitable usage of some economic/econometric jargon, I believe it is evident that the author has made a particularly serious effort to explain the nature and concept of supply price elasticities and their use to estimate producer response in as simple a language as is practically possible under the circumstances.

8. Getting into the several messages that are contained in Rodriguez' article prompts me to venture some opinions. There is no denying that reliable quantitative estimates need adequate quantitative data. However, despite the data problem in Africa, the argument should not be that we will never be able to use quantitative estimates to formulate price or other policies because collecting good data is considered to be too costly and too time consuming for most African governments. At the same time, many policy-makers continue to hold the view that policies of the pricing kind are mandatory areas of government intervention. While one cannot honestly suggest that all policy interventions use some

quantitative basis for decision-making, one must also consider that the longer term trade-off costs of not using quantitative techniques, where it is reasonably possible to do so, can be significant in terms of production foregone or efficient resource utilization.

9. At the risk of some overdramatisation, one can say that the pressure for a quick "turn around time" in quantitative estimation processes has its parallel in the indifference shown to agricultural research in Africa in the past -- the food crisis which has become evident in recent years in the region can be partly attributed to the consequences of this indifference. The wisdom and diligence of policy analysts in using the array of quantitative analytic techniques, which have become available over the years, to construct intelligible bases for decision-making become of ever-growing importance in policy formulation in Africa.

10. Roy Behnke's article (Network Paper No. 12) addresses resource management, institutional and related policy issues triggered by the relatively new phenomenon of spontaneous range enclosure.

In the process, the author questions some of the conventional wisdoms which have provided the rationale for government - supported/donor-sponsored range livestock development projects in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. These relate to the benefits of higher technical efficiency of range enclosure (i.e. higher pasture or livestock productivity) as well as to the conservation benefits resulting from the assumed control of stock numbers under enclosed systems.

11. These challenges to conventional wisdom equally apply to spontaneous as well as government project-supported enclosures. Past (enclosure-based) range livestock projects in Africa are said to have recorded little success, particularly in enticing the cooperation of producers to control stock numbers or improve range management. On the other hand, spontaneous (producer initiated) enclosure movements would seem to open new avenues for policy to consider responses appropriate to future livestock development in Africa. In this context, the discussion on the limits of administrative regulation on range enclosure movements should be of particular interest to those of us who hold the position that government's

primary charge is to control rather than to arbitrate or respond in some similar manner to producer initiatives.

Addis Anteneh
Editor