



Livestock, Liberalization and Democracy: Constraints and Opportunities For Rural Livestock Producers in a Reforming Uganda

Robin L. Turner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper explores the policy environment surrounding livestock policy improvements in Uganda, a country that has undergone substantial reforms in the last 15 years. It aims to identify opportunities for pro-poor interventions—reforms that would improve the livelihoods of poor rural livestock producers. Towards this end, the paper reviews challenges facing for livestock producers and analyzes the broad political economic context in which livestock sector dynamics are situated. The adoption and implementation of pro-poor livestock sector interventions are in some ways constrained and, in others, enabled by civil conflict in several parts of the country, the semi-authoritarian nature of the Museveni regime, and the reform alliance between the Ugandan national government and its international development partners. Ugandans face an uneasy trade-off between political stability and democracy that inhibits participation.

A review of the livestock sector highlights the constraints facing poor rural livestock producers. Livestock production contributes to rural livelihoods by serving as a source of food, a store of wealth, and a source of cash. Missing or inadequate infrastructure—such as roads, electricity, weighing stations and cattle dips—serves as a serious constraint to the marketing of livestock. Inadequate infrastructure raises transaction costs, exacerbates information asymmetries between producers and traders, and discourages investment in processing. Although the government has begun rebuilding the infrastructure destroyed during the civil conflicts, much of the responsibility for animal health services provision and marketing infrastructure has been devolved to local governments that have not prioritized the livestock sector. Policymakers and livestock producers are also challenged by the small size of the domestic market and limited capacity to service international markets.

Livestock producers are situated in a complex political environment. Many residents of northern and eastern Uganda continue to suffer from violent conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army, the government, and civilians or from predation by cattle rustlers. These conflicts have devastating humanitarian costs, they divert resources toward security and away from investment in livestock and other areas, and they reinforce the influence of the security apparatus relative to elected officials and civil servants.

In stable regions, Ugandans encounter the semi-authoritarian political regime established by Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM). This regime combines elections and other opportunities for citizens to influence public policy with restrictions on political participation and occasional violations of citizens' civil liberties, sending mixed signals to citizens. The "Movement" political system allowed individuals to contest elections but prohibited political parties from engaging in core activities such as preparing platforms, holding regular meetings, and opening branch offices. The Ugandan government also has implemented decentralization measures ostensibly intended to bring government closer to the people. Local governments enjoy substantial

authority, and many village councils enjoy popular support. However, much of the decision-making authority is concentrated at the more difficult-to-access district level where officials often operate in a corrupt or clientelistic manner. In this environment, most citizens will not fully exploit existing opportunities to participate.

Since 1986, the NRM government has implemented major liberalizing economic reforms that seek to alter the state's basic approach to the market and service provision. These reforms have been pushed by an alliance of major multilateral and bilateral donors and reformers within government who worked together on an ongoing basis. Although neoliberal reform rhetoric pervades policy discourse, many civil servants are sceptical about this approach. Although donors have sought to work around resistance by creating new, reform-supportive agencies, the cases of the National Agricultural Advisory Services and the African Development Bank Livestock Sector Development Program loan show that it is difficult for reforms to succeed without allies within more established agencies.

The donor-government reform alliance also has focused attention on poverty, and the government has institutionalized processes through which associations, organizations and local governments can participate in policy formulation. The Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) is the Uganda's central policy document on poverty and development, and it is now revised through a participatory process. During the most recent revision, pastoralism-supportive organizations engaged in a concerted effort to alter the way in which the PEAP addresses pastoralism and pastoralist issues with some success. While the Poverty Eradication Action Plan revision process highlights the potential for propoor reforms within a liberal paradigm, the privatization of the parastatal Dairy Corporation highlights the limits of reform. Although the privatization of the Dairy Corporation directly affected thousands of livestock producers, producers and potential buyers were largely excluded from the decision-making process until a series of newspaper articles revealed irregular actions by members of the Cabinet and the President. Eventually, it was announced that the corporation would be sold to dairy farmers. In this case, the media played a crucial role in opening up processes for review.

The concluding section outlines several interventions that could improve the livelihoods of poor rural livestock producers in Uganda. Working within the dominant neoliberal reform context, the proposed interventions seek to reduce barriers to producer benefit and improve the functioning of livestock markets. In particular, information provision, investment in infrastructure, and development of measurable indicators of how reforms affect poor Ugandans could have substantial impact. Proposed interventions include:

- Facilitating provision and maintenance of livestock-specific infrastructure
- Disseminating livestock market information to livestock producers
- Eliminating or reducing fees on the sale or slaughter of livestock
- Establishing standards or branding mechanisms to identify high quality livestock products
- Incorporating indicators of poor people and pastoralists' participation and benefit into the assessment of government supported programs; and
- Building the capacity of membership associations to participate in policy processes.

The proposed interventions would increase livestock producers' capacity to engage with the market and with the state. The interventions discussed above would not alter the fundamental political context of semi-authoritarian governance and enduring violent conflict in much of the country. Ugandans will decide how to address these problems through their individual and collective actions over the long-term.

Pro-Poor Livestock Policy Initiative (PPLPI)

Website: <http://www.fao.org/ag/pplpi.html>

Working Paper: <http://www.fao.org/ag/aginfo/projects/en/pplpi/docarc/wp29.pdf>