

BOOK REVIEWS

Institutional Dynamics in Communal Grazing Regimes in Southern Africa: Proceedings of a Workshop held at the University of Zimbabwe 10-12 December 1990 Edited by B. Cousins. Harare, Univ. of Zimbabwe, Centre for Applied Social Studies, 1992, 221 pp., ISBN 0-7974-1248-4, Z\$55.00.

Southern Africa has many arid and semi-arid regions where agro-pastoral production systems predominate among the indigenous peasant communities. Livestock forms an important part of the region's socio-economic fabric, providing inputs into arable production, an investment outlet for excess funds, a form of subsistence from milk and from occasional slaughter, a source of cash from occasional commercial disposition, a means of creating ties of dependency within families and in the community. They are also important for religious and cultural ceremonies. Because of their important role, farmers tend to increase and retain their herds at levels which environmental scientists and extension workers regard as unsustainable because of overgrazing and environmental degradation. For this reason, the evolution of institutions for the conservation and management of grazing areas in the Communal Lands is an important issue in the region.

The book under review comprises papers which attempt to develop a conceptual framework for communal grazing schemes (Cousins, pp. 13-38), to make a case for the establishment of meaningful local-level common property management institutions (Murombedzi, pp. 39-58), and review Zimbabwean and regional experiences of attempts to develop full-fledged communal grazing management systems (Mache and Chivizhe, pp. 59-71; Paradza, pp. 72-80; Cousins, pp. 81-125; Nhira, pp. 126-38; Paraiwa, pp. 139-56; Robins, pp. 157-88; Merafe, pp. 189-202; and Motsamal, pp. 203-21).

The following general impressions may be inferred from the contributions to this book:

- a) Current property regimes in the communal areas are held in common rather than on an open access system which is contrary to conventional assumptions, including those of policy makers, as reflected in Zimbabwe's national livestock policy of 1988.
- b) Interventions aimed at evolving full-fledged common property management institutions should appreciate the ecological, social, economic, and political make-up of the area under consideration rather than the use of models assumed to have universal applicability. These interventions should also call for the active participation of the target communities, both in designing the institutions and in their management.
- c) Current interventions by government departments such as AGRITEX, non-governmental organizations such as World Vision, and donor agencies such as the EEC, are based on assumptions about the objectives of livestock ownership and available grazing and appropriate institutions for their management which are contrary

to those held by the farmers concerned. This results in difficulties of implementation and a wholesale disregard of the established rules of operation.

- d) Top-down planning is acceptable in those situations where it is perceived to generate material benefits in the form of funds for development projects which coincide with the target people's immediate needs.

The importance of this volume cannot be over-emphasized. The need for strategies that lead to a sustainable use of natural resources is of current global concern. Given the importance of livestock in the socio-economic fabric of the communal areas of Southern Africa, this book does well to highlight attempts to evolve appropriate strategies for a more effective management of common grazing regimes.

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People, Land and Livestock: Proceedings of a Workshop on the Socio-Economic Dimensions of Livestock Production in the Communal Lands of Zimbabwe Edited by B. Cousins. Harare, Univ. of Zimbabwe, Centre for Applied Social Studies, 1989, 461 pp., Z\$45,00.

Official policy makers consider commercial off-take in Zimbabwe's communal areas as unacceptably low, hence their concern to formulate a national policy to improve the situation. Environmental scientists, on the other hand, view current stocking levels as excessive, leading to overgrazing and land degradation. Fenced-off grazing areas (paddocks) have been established in an attempt to solve both problems. However, some of the contributors to this book cast doubts on the feasibility of both commercial livestock production and the promotion of conservation through the use of paddocks in the communal areas.

The need for a national policy for enhanced commercial livestock production in the communal areas is based on an assumption that commercial livestock production is desired by the farmers concerned but is currently constrained, among other things, by inadequate grazing. Contrary to that assumption, research findings presented in this volume assert that commercial livestock production is not a dominant objective among farmers in the communal areas. Livestock, especially cattle, are valued more for their role in providing intermediate goods such as draught power and manure for crop production and, albeit at very low levels, milk and meat for local consumption or sale. Livestock also has socio-cultural purposes, especially in settling marriage deals, and cattle are very important for religious purposes. Hence ownership of livestock is of great economic and cultural importance as it confers power, authority and social status. Parenthetically, those households or families that do not own livestock have to adopt a variety of strategies, such as hiring, exchanging cattle for field work or arranging work parties (*nhimbe*), to ensure access to the draught power of cattle (p. 267). The motivation among farmers in the