

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

communal areas is, therefore, to retain and increase their herds rather than to sell them off.

The inadequacies of the orthodox grazing scheme in the communal areas are said to arise from the inability of the system to take cognizance of what Ian Scoones calls 'farmer knowledge' (p. 227), especially in their adaptive use of 'strategic resources' in dealing with insufficient grazing. In most cases such 'strategic resources' are not included in the paddocks so the paddocks may worsen instead of improve animal health. This view, however, misses the point that current farmer strategies are a desperate attempt to deal with a desperate problem. Current livestock holdings per household in Zimbabwe's communal areas are meagre and very difficult to sustain. In fact, as many as half of the households in the communal areas do not own cattle. In most cases, the cattle owned by a household do not provide sufficient manure or draught power for crop production. The situation is even worse now after the devastating drought of 1991/2 than when this book was published. The major factor of this scenario is pressure for land in the communal areas. Nothing short of an effective national policy for land redistribution will make livestock production, even as a source of intermediate goods for crop farming, a successful venture. Without such a reorganization, romantic views about the use of 'farmer knowledge' and 'strategic resources' will serve to sustain only the current, insufficient stock levels during normal rainy seasons. In situations of severe drought the survival of even current stock will be threatened.

On the whole this book, another contribution by the University's Centre for Applied Social Studies in the area of sustainable resource management, is of use for both practical policy making and academic research. It has its limitations, however, most of them being those associated with any collection of conference papers. There is a great disparity in the quality of the contributions: some are thoroughly academic, based on rigorous methodologies, presenting substantial research results and containing lengthy bibliographies, while others are short, descriptive accounts of livestock production policies and programmes. In addition there are numerous editorial and typographical errors which should have been corrected.

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Rivers of Gold By H. Ellert. Gweru, Mambo Press, Zambeziana 22, 1993, xii, 194 pp., illus., ISBN 0-68922-529-4, Z\$68,00.

Rivers of Gold is a socio-cultural treatise on the role of the Portuguese in the Zimbabwean plateau from the beginning of the sixteenth century until about 1900.

The first chapter describes the history of Portuguese settlement in East Africa from 1498 to the late seventeenth century, dealing with their arrival in Mozambique and their gradual contact with, and ultimately settlement in, the Mutapa state in what is now northern Zimbabwe. This