

## ABSTRACT

### **Whatever happened to the pro-poor livestock development paradigm? Backcasting to a sustainable future for Africa's livestock keepers**

This abstract is based on a full-length paper written by Claire Heffernan in 2012. The paper is one of a series of economic papers commissioned by GALVmed and produced by a team from the Royal Veterinary College, University of London, led by Jonathan Rushton. The series aimed to address the overarching question: Africa, economics, and poverty – what do livestock add and how can this contribution be improved?

#### **Introduction**

Africa's 300 million poor livestock keepers face an uncertain future that is likely to be shaped by climate change, food insecurity and emerging diseases, amongst other factors. Such forces will also shape our efforts at livestock development.

Livestock development has often paralleled broader development theory and practice. Therefore, a focus on increased production based on adoption of better breeds and farming practices, prevalent in the 1960s, gave way, in the 1980s, to more people-centred and participatory approaches. These in turn gave rise to the sustainable livelihoods approach (in which livestock were framed in terms of three types of 'capital' – financial, social and natural) and latterly in the late 1990s, the pro-poor livestock development paradigm.

The pro-poor livestock development paradigm attempted to place the poor at the centre of strategies to enhance livestock production and regarded livestock as a means of poverty reduction. However, the paradigm attracted considerable criticism with many claiming that the poor did not really benefit from many so-called 'pro-poor policies' – the real beneficiaries of which were in fact often better off and larger-scale livestock keepers.

This paper sets out to see how the lessons and knowledge of the past can inform both the transition towards and options for, a more secure and sustainable future for the continent's livestock-dependent poor. It does this through first, revisiting the pro-poor livestock development paradigm, focusing on three core areas - livelihoods, gender and pro-poor policy. Second, via the lens of 'backcasting' exploring the component parts of a sustainable future for Africa's poor livestock keepers and the identifying the transitional pathways connecting this future to the present.

#### **Lessons from the past**

**Livestock-based livelihoods:** Much of the livestock development literature, both past and present, has remained squarely focused in the sustainable livelihoods approach. Within this discourse, livestock represent both productive and buffer assets, with their savings and food security functions reducing vulnerability during times of stress. But authors also acknowledge that livestock keeping can be inherently risky: feed, labour and animal health care costs place additional burdens on poor households. Thus, although livestock represent durable assets their owners also need circulating capital to meet costs of production, and it is this capital, which the poor often lack.

Yet, during the decade or so, the development discourse has moved on from sustainable livelihoods. This shift has been driven, at least in part, by the Millennium Development Goals and their specific targets in areas such as maternal health and education, for which support for individual livelihoods was not considered vital. But with this discursive gap, there is a risk that livestock development will become marginalised from

wider development praxis. And in doing so, the substantial body of knowledge built up around pro-poor livestock development is dismissed as out-dated and irrelevant. Therefore, the challenge now is how, this rich knowledge base can be adapted to address present and future challenges faced by poor livestock keepers in Africa.

**Gender and livestock development:** Overlooking and failing to build on the literature on livestock and gender, produced since the 1980s, risks further delays to developing effective policies and practices in this important area. For example, critical issues in animal health and gender, including understanding who is responsible for livestock care, who controls household resources and who owns knowledge regarding animal health, remain as relevant today as they were when first expounded 15 years or so ago.

Key topics include issues around commercialisation, task allocation and household nutrition. Generally, as livestock production becomes more commercialised, women become more marginalised. Although women's labour was vital to livestock production, it was often undervalued: for example, as women's workload increased in systems where men migrated from rural areas to find work, this did not translate into increased social value or financial reward. Household nutrition was enhanced when women had access to and control over a steady source of income, such as income from milk sales. Poor households, however, tended to sell a higher proportion of milk produced than those who were better off.

There has been a tendency in some of the literature to characterise women simply as traditional carers of livestock. Unless more nuanced approaches to livestock and gender issues are adopted, future efforts at livestock development efforts are not likely to reach their full potential.

**Livestock policy:** Investment in the pro-poor livestock development paradigm have often been justified by associated changes in the policy landscape, although there is little evidence that such changes have occurred. Much of the historical literature on pro-poor livestock policy has simply focused on national-level barriers and potential entry points.

Presently, the global landscape of livestock production is changing rapidly. However, the role of the poor in the rapid rise in both the consumption and production of livestock products in many developing countries over recent decades is often negligible. Arguably food security, rather than increased consumption and production, will be more important to the poor. Broad agreements in the literature on sectoral barriers, although not helpful to understanding policy nuances at the national level, provide a useful starting point to envisioning a more secure and sustainable future for poor livestock keepers and a potential means to realise them.

### **A vision for a better future**

As the future can only ever be a vision of what is to come, the field of future studies is comprised of a range of 'visioning' methods. Explorations of a 'preferable future' are often based on 'backcasting' or normative forecasting, which start from a desired future and work backwards to identify the 'pathways' to such a future. Backcasting is the method of choice when the problem is complex affecting many sectors/layers of society, requires major change and relates to externalities and cannot be fixed by the market alone. A future in which the lives and livelihoods of the poor are underpinned by sustainable livestock production, meets all of the above criteria.

Any attempt at working towards such a future must address issues highlighted in the literature, such as poor access to natural and financial capital with related issues in accessing local, national and international markets; weak veterinary services with ineffective livestock disease surveillance, prevention and control;

gender inequities; and weak civil society/producer organisations, weak institutional structures and corruption.

Therefore, the future vision for livestock keepers underpinning this study is: *By 2050 poor livestock keepers are materially better-off than those of today, production systems are suitable to and sustainable within existing environmental conditions, producers are not constrained by animal health or wider economic, gender, policy or advocacy issues.*

The vision is complemented by a series of goals and associated changes presented in the table below.

Goal	Associated change
<b>Population</b> of livestock keepers living on/above International Poverty Line: 100%	Definition of poor livestock keepers changed to those living on/above future international poverty lines.
<b>Production</b> at the household level exceeding subsistence level.	Related income gains ensuring year-round food security at the household level
Freedom from <b>livestock disease</b> .	Access to affordable animal health services, pen-side diagnostics and knowledge providers.
Secure and stable <b>environment</b> to rear livestock.	Successful mitigation and adaptation strategies to environmental disrupters i.e. droughts and/or other extreme weather events.
Positive <b>public attitudes</b> toward livestock rearing	Public engagement in the importance of livestock keeping to global food security, evidence of sector-wide engagement in low carbon livestock development.
Secure and stable <b>livestock-based livelihoods</b> .	Equitable market access, incorporation of the poor into value chains, fair price of inputs and access to natural resources i.e. fodder and water for livestock keeping.
<b>Gender equality</b> in asset ownership.	Both formal and customary legal frameworks recognise and support gender equity in livestock ownership, control over off-take and the right to inherit.
<b>Policies</b> specifically aimed at needs of livestock keepers living on/above new international poverty lines.	Governments, donors and other actors support unified policy goals and pro-poor evidence-based decision making.
Strong <b>institutional support and advocacy</b> organisations for poor producers.	Strong producer and civil society organisations.

An important consideration in achieving these goals is their feasibility. Two of the goals present particular challenges in this regard: a 'stable environment to rear livestock' appears unlikely in the face of climate change and more frequent extreme weather events. The social environment is also challenging with the public often holding negative attitudes towards livestock rearing due to perceptions of the contribution of livestock to climate change. Changing these attitudes will require mitigation of the negative impacts of livestock through low carbon strategies, approaches and policies, and engagement with the public in this new approach.

Therefore, a new paradigm of livestock development is required. 'Low carbon livestock development' is defined as: the policies, technologies, approaches and practices that support sustainable and climate-centric livestock development with the concomitant social, economic and production benefits to the communities involved. Inherent to low carbon livestock development are the dual criteria of sustainability and effectiveness.

Achieving the vision will require both concerted action and consensus building by the livestock development community. On a practical level, low carbon livestock development must be able to meet or exceed the food and livelihood security offered by non-livestock-based activities for the communities involved. The poor must be able to access the products that they are producing; they cannot simply be suppliers to meet the consumption demands of the better-off. Any low-carbon strategies or activities must not contravene animal

welfare considerations and, finally, low carbon livestock development approaches and activities must be sufficiently detailed and flexible to meet the wide number of conditions under which the poor keep livestock.

## **Conclusion**

Development policy and practice, the global population of the poor and the livestock sector are three dynamic entities each with unique and often unrelated challenges. Yet, during the 1990s and early 2000 the pro-poor livestock development paradigm managed to bridge all three elements. Indeed, the ensuing practice was forged around the notion that improving the lives of poor livestock keepers demanded engagement with livelihoods, gender issues and the creation of pro-poor policy.

A decade later, as core elements of the approach have fallen out of favour, livestock development is no longer unified by such a paradigm. Given the challenges attendant with a population of 9 billion plus in 2050, it is clear that without such a unifying force the ability of the livestock sector in meeting the needs of this global population is likely to fall short.

Will it be possible to meet the demands of the future population of the poor without considering livelihoods, gender and an effective policy environment? The results of this analysis illustrate that this is unlikely to be the case. Gender awareness, livelihoods support and appropriate pro-poor policy are as important today as in the heyday of the paradigm. Nevertheless, this is not to say that existing notions should not be challenged; indeed there is need to move forward thinking in these areas.

Creation of pathways to the future will likely contain many elements of the livelihoods approach in relation to institutional, financial and the human capital elements. Within the context of climate change, notions of natural capital are likely to change: while in 2050 the livestock of the poor are still likely to rely on natural capital, this reliance is likely to have diminished. Conversely, in relation to gender issues, many of the issues are likely to remain relevant in the future. It is unlikely that the future vision can be met without a substantial change in customary and legal frameworks for asset ownership, including livestock. An effective policy environment is also likely to be crucial to meeting the vision. The literature illustrates the disconnect between policy and the reality on the ground. This must be addressed in order to meet poverty alleviation and sustainability goals.

Finally, by developing a future vision and outlining the need for consensus building and partnership in developing transitional pathways, it is clear that the global livestock sector now has the opportunity to engage in transformational development. Without such change the sustainability and existence of future livestock systems is under threat. The creation of any such transitional pathways must recognise that the poor cannot and should not simply be co-opted as providers of livestock products to meet the demands of the better-off. Any vision of the future which does not enable the poor to maintain power and control over livestock off-take is unlikely to be either sustainable or desirable.