

## Livestock and food security in South Africa

**Swanepoel, Frans, Stroebel, Aldo & Moyoo, Siboniso. 2010. The role of livestock in developing communities: enhancing multifunctionality.** Bloemfontein: Sun Press. 213 p.  
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*The role of livestock in developing communities* was edited by Prof Frans Swanepoel, Prof Aldo Stroebel and Dr Siboniso Moyo. Currently Prof Swanepoel is the Senior Director Research Development and Professor of Sustainable Agriculture at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. This editor has vast experience in the fields of animal production, smallholder livestock production systems, agricultural research and innovation management as well as rural development and institutional strengthening. Prof Swanepoel is therefore extremely well qualified for a publication of this nature. The book was compiled in 2010 by the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation.

Approximately two thirds of the world's domestic ruminants are found in developing regions where they produce 30% of the world's meat and 20% of the world's milk – this provides ample justification for a book like this. The book provides essential information and data on the importance of livestock in the global effort to alleviate poverty and promote human well being. It describes and evaluates global case studies, assesses theoretical frameworks, and discusses key global policy development issues, challenges and constraints related to smallholder livestock production systems around the world.

The book is written for academic professionals, industry experts, government extension officials and other scholars interested in the facts and issues concerning the contribution of livestock to the social and economic progress of developing countries.

*The role of livestock in developing communities* explores a topic that, at this point in time, is particularly relevant to South Africa and indeed the world. The exploration of the subject matter is further enhanced by the real life case studies it is based on. For easy

reference, the book contains a chapter that summarises the major issues concerning livestock production. A multidisciplinary approach is employed by the authors to ensure that no potential reader is left out in the cold.

Despite the positive relevance of this book, too little mention is made of the role of livestock in South Africa. Another void is that too few case studies are provided to explain why land reform projects involving livestock in South Africa failed. A greater focus on the major challenges that the South African communal livestock industry face may also be valuable to the prospective reader.

The authors acknowledge the fact that there is not only a rapidly increasing population to feed, but that we will have no choice but to enhance subsistence agriculture in years to come. Whilst traditional livestock production is a part of cultural life, inefficiency should be addressed. The future direction towards enhancing livestock production is well discussed in the last chapter.

This book also analyses the challenges faced by this sector, and evaluates a number of successful development strategies that includes ways to empower women and develop small-scale enterprises, without harming the environment. This is important, as the authors further observe that investment in small-scale livestock-keeping offers risk and uncertainty, in addition to several opportunities and threats.

Moreover, recognition of women's roles and responsibilities in animal production, increasing their rights of ownership over livestock, and improving access to livestock services and markets, give women a higher status within their communities, increasing their self-confidence and self-reliance.

The editors are to be commended for treating all available data equally well and organising it in a reader-friendly manner. All arguments in the book are equally well corroborated, and all possible interpretations were included using a flexible approach. In my opinion it is an excellent book that will make a significant contribution to the industry. It can especially serve as a guideline to promote successful land reform in South Africa. Congratulations to the editors.