

compared to the rest of Namibia, it is relatively underdeveloped. This is due to the mountainous inaccessible geography and the low rainfall that significantly hinders agriculture.

### Farmers in communal areas

Communal livestock farming is a tradition within Namibian rural systems. Namibia's rural areas are where communal farmers reside and practice agriculture as their main household income. Land allocation in the communal lands remains a source of conflict, with local government, and traditional authorities all having varying degrees of control.

Cattle are very important for the small farmers, more so in the low rainfall areas. They represent a more viable production system than crops and are used as a form of financial security. Thus, every farmer aspires to have more cattle leading to over-grazing as cattle numbers exceed the carrying capacity of the land.

### Education

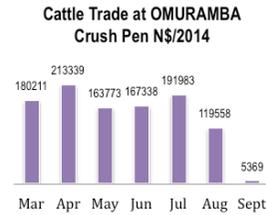
The Sesfontein constituency has a total population size of 8,434 people and 50.7% fall in the age group of 15+ years, of which 16% never attended school, 9% are currently at school and 72% left school. Most of the children from the Omuramba village attend the Hungua Primary School, until Grade 7, thereafter and thereafter they would mostly attend the Secondary School in Opuwo. The school is located some 60km north of the Omuramba and the majority of the learners lodge at the boarding school in Hungua.

On a recent visit to the school it was indicated by the school principle that the parents are expressing their reliance on the cattle trading days at the Omuramba crush pen for an income for food, clothes, school fees and transport to the nearest town, Opuwo.

### Strategies for improving cattle marketing

It is evident that an integrated approach is likely to underpin an efficient livestock marketing system. This entails an understanding of farmer livelihoods (household characteristics) and their development in a much more explicit context of community dynamics.

The decentralization of livestock markets and the wider dissemination of well updated information to the communal farmers by the government and other stakeholders can play a role in improving communal farmers' access to formal cattle markets. The timely provision of market information will strengthen farmers' negotiating ability during trading.



### Conclusions

The transition of the communal sector towards commercial production will eventually be determined by its access to markets. The issues that need to be addressed are practical in nature and would require a joint effort by all stakeholders, including government, communal farmers, producer organisations and private sector role players. It can be concluded that marketing of livestock is probably one of the most complex policy issues to be addressed for improving household food security in the Northern Communal Areas of Namibia.

The decentralisation of livestock markets and the wider dissemination of key information related to markets can play a pivotal role in improving access to formal cattle markets. The provision of such market updates will strengthen negotiating ability of farmers during transactions with auctioneers, abattoirs and individual speculators.

### MEATCO FOUNDATION

Tel. +264 61 3216 400

E-mail: [kkwenani@meatco.com.na](mailto:kkwenani@meatco.com.na)

[www.meatco.com.na](http://www.meatco.com.na)

*Meatco Foundation Case  
Study Series, 2015*

# NAMIBIAN COMMUNAL FARMERS AND THE MARKETS

**A case study on the Omuramba village, a crush pen and cattle trading in the Kunene region of Namibia.**





An “AuctionPlace” for livestock trading directly translated from Afrikaans, means ‘Vendusie’. Two decades after independence, the Vendusie is still the preferred point of congregation for the purpose of livestock trading in Namibia. The farmers trek long distances with their livestock to the nearest ‘Vendusie’ or incur transportation costs to get their animals to the market.

At a ‘Vendusie’, you can usually find just about anything, from a ‘fleamarket’, fresh vegetables, kapana (grilled meat) and people socialising. The regular assembly at the Omuramba Crush Pen, where trading of cattle, goats, and other goods takes place, can be classified as a ‘Vendusie’. From the outset, it can be stated that easy access to a crush pen and auction place can be considered a major advantage to the small farmers and their families because they no longer need to travel over long distances to reach livestock auctions. The roles are now reversed – butchers, abattoirs procurement teams, speculators and private buyers are now taking it upon themselves to travel to the Omuramba Crush Pen for livestock trading.

In a recently published booklet by the Danish Coop in Denmark, ‘Realising Africa’s Potential’ (2014), it is mentioned that Africa is a fascinating continent with lots of possibilities and many challenges (Bolander, 2014). The Danish Coop’s initiative in Africa includes the Savannah series; a line of goods from Africa based on joint development projects in the supply chain and also includes the “Beste Beeste” from Namibia-(Best Cattle in Afrikaans). The Coop’s initiative to buy beef from Namibia is targeting 1,750 cattle farmers in the Northern Communal Area of Namibia (NCA) over a period of 3 years ending in 2015.

Within this context, the Danish Coop joined forces with Solidaridad, Netherlands and Meatco Foundation for the gen-

eration of funds for the implementation of environmentally sustainable techniques to secure sustainable growth for communal commercial farmers in the Northern Communal Areas (NCA) of Namibia. It is the aim of the project to provide technical assistance and training in rangeland management, to assist in the implementation of infrastructure that will grant better access to markets and lastly, to improve the genetics of the herds through the introduction of pedigree bulls.

The in-country project is managed by Meatco Foundation on behalf of Solidaridad, Danish Coop and Meatco, who all form part of a consortium providing the funds. Meatco Foundation is a Trust, created with the aim to find solutions for social and economic issues within the local communities. Through Meatco, the communal farmers enjoy guaranteed access to an abattoir in Oshakati and the Meatco procurement staff also regularly visit the communities in remote areas using custom designed trailer-crush pens equipped with scales for on-the-spot weighing and animal condition checks. This initiative provides a vital service in facilitating market access to farmers in the remote grazing areas.

The bar chart shows the number of cattle purchased by Meatco for the period, March to September 2014. It is notable that there is a trend of increased sales from March to April whereas the decrease in the number of cattle sold in August to September 2014 could be attributed to various factors, such as the condition of the animals or better bargaining power by competitive forces. The total estimated gross output of the Omuramba community amounts to N\$4.3 million Namibian dollar derived from the total recorded sale of 514 cattle in 2014.

### Better bulls for better calves

As part of the Farmer Support Programme, a Solidaridad Initiative managed by Meatco Foundation, a ‘Better Bull Scheme’ was introduced to improve the herd structure and genetics of the communal farmers.

Bulls reaching their commercial working retirement would be sent to the Northern Communal Areas to work for their last few years. This free access to pedigree bull stock would improve the genetics of the herds both in terms of reproductive capacity but also in the stature and suitability of the animals as slaughter cattle. The Omuramba community is delighted to announce the arrival of the first ‘crossbred’ offspring at their kraal! As part of the key project interventions, tested young pedigree bulls were deployed in the target communities in 2014 with the objective of gradually improving the herd structure in the NCAs. It is a key belief that such pedigree bull stock would not only improve the genetics of the herds but also increase the reproductive capacity and contribute considerably to the stature and suitability of the animals for slaughter.

### Vibrant Livestock Market Days

Encouraging farmers to sell animals for slaughter at peak condition and not when too old or during times of drought forms a key objective of the Solidaridad Farmer Support Programme. The Omuramba communal farmers now have the benefit of a crush pen where livestock market days are organised for the sale of livestock. The crush pen serves as a multi-purpose facility for various livestock management activities, such as, weighing, branding, tagging, vaccinations, holding sick animals for recovery and auctions. During the market days are vibrant and colourful with the charm of the women in their traditional dresses selling crafts and food, for an additional income.

The Omuramba community is situated in the Sesfontein constituency, in the north-western Kunene region of Namibia. The Kunene Region is one of the fourteen regions of Namibia. The region’s name is derived from Kunene River which forms the Northern border with Angola. The largest town and capital is Opuwo. The region is a mountainous area and