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The Civet Cat and Smallholder Civet Producers in Ethiopia

TAKELE TAYE

Hawassa University, Department of Animal and Range Sciences, Ethiopia

Abstract

Ethiopia is the world's main supplier of civet musk with international export share of 90 percent and it has also a long-lasting history in trading of musk for perfume industry. This product is collected from Civet cats which are more related to mongoose and classified among mammalian species. Their habitat is mainly savannahs and forests of South and Central Africa and rarely found in arid regions. Even though, African viverrids tend to be carnivorous; they show a feeding habit of omnivores. They are nocturnal. They have been kept in captive for hundreds of years in Ethiopia and most Civet farmers keep 10 - 15 civets in individual cages. Polyestrous African Civets has age at sexual maturity of around 1 year and average life span of 15 - 20 year. More commonly, litter size varies 2 - 3 per year with 1 - 6 kits per litter. Despite its importance in the livelihoods of smallholder producers, mistreatment of civets at captivity has raised a welfare question. Moreover, increasing tendencies of perfume industries towards the use of synthetic fixatives, poor husbandry practice and the decline in wild population threatens the prospects of civet industry. However, opportunities also exist as musk is among rare commodities, the synthetic is not perfectly replacing the natural product and the product is currently in short of supply as it only covers 22 percent of the international demand. Besides it is identified among potential investment opportunities in Ethiopia. Hence this literature review work tries to pinpoint some possible recommendations to improve the allover husbandry practice and tradability of the product through integrated development and research works by taking the traditional knowledge as a core player.

Keywords: Civet cat farming, Ethiopia, musk production, musk trading, welfare