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"Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources"

Can an Integrated Livestock Wildlife Production System Bridge the Gap Between Increasing Knowledge and Decreasing Resources?

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Abstract

By now it is accepted within the scientific community, by regulators and to a lesser extent, by commercial producers that the agricultural sector needs to dramatically change their way of doing things to meet the challenge of feeding an exponentially fast growing population. Although a large sector of the role players are propagating more intensive/factory farming-like systems as the answer to the challenge, the reality is that large sections of the surface area of the earth does not have the natural resources to allow this type of production system. In fact, most of these areas are only suitable for extensive animal production systems.

This paper explores the suitability of indigenous wildlife species towards meeting the challenge of increasing protein production, either in isolation or combined with traditional livestock production. It further explores our knowledge, or lack thereof, as pertaining to such production systems. This paper explores the farming of cervids in intensive systems as well as the production of various ungulates in the more extensive pastoral systems utilised in Africa.

Two of the major obstacles to the development of meat production from wildlife are access to land (land tenure) and ownership of the wildlife occurring on the land. As example, in Africa it is only the countries (Namibia, South Africa) where the land owner has ownership of the fauna occurring there that we have seen an increase in wildlife numbers resulting in the sustainable usage thereof.

Another understudied area that warrants further research and garnering of knowledge is the use of mini-livestock species in the production of food. Here focus is placed in the production of species such as nutria, cavy and other rodents. Within war-torn central Africa this is frequently the only meat protein source available.

Keywords: Land tenure, livestock, Namibia, South Africa, wildlife protection

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