

# Cavy between food security and conservation in Kahuzi Biega National Park, Sud-Kivu, DR Congo

Thierry K. Metre,<sup>1,2</sup> Anthelme B. Mugisho,<sup>2</sup> Fidèle K. Kababalire,<sup>2</sup> Brigitte L. Maass,<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Wimba,<sup>4</sup> & Christian Amboya<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Université Evangélique en Afrique (UEA)/Panzi-Bukavu/DRC, E: [thierrymetre@yahoo.fr](mailto:thierrymetre@yahoo.fr); <sup>2</sup> Union des Eleveurs de Cobaye en RD Congo/Sud Kivu/DRC, E: [ueccoasbl@gmail.com](mailto:ueccoasbl@gmail.com); <sup>3</sup> University of Göttingen, D-37083 Göttingen, Germany, E: [Brigitte.Maass@yahoo.com](mailto:Brigitte.Maass@yahoo.com); <sup>4</sup> Institut National pour l'Etude et la Recherche Agronomiques (INERA), Centre de Recherche de Mulungu/Sud Kivu/DRC, E: [b.wimbabenj@gmail.com](mailto:b.wimbabenj@gmail.com); <sup>5</sup> Parc National de Kahuzi Biega (PNKB), Bukavu/Sud Kivu/DRC, E: [christianamboya@gmail.com](mailto:christianamboya@gmail.com)

## Background

- The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and, especially, its Sud-Kivu province face **serious problems of food and nutrition insecurity** due to recurring wars, continued armed conflicts, and poor governance, resulting in low agricultural production.
- **Kahuzi Biega National Park** (PNKB) is a UNESCO World Heritage site in Sud-Kivu; but it has become the major resource for local populations adjacent to it, to achieve certain food security.
- This includes game hunting, tree felling, and mineral extraction, among others. But, this **contradicts the main goals** of the park in terms of **nature conservation**.
- To ensure protection, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Union of Cavy Keepers in Congo (UECCO), Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) and local communities are developing cavy (*Cavia porcellus*) as an **alternative to bushmeat consumption**.



## Results & Conclusions

1. Since its inception in 2016, the project has reached about 600 households, with 150 families effectively involved with cavies.
2. On average, beneficiary households keep 38 cavies, selling about 6 animals/month and consuming 3/week. Some restaurants have started selling cavy meat dishes.
3. Project beneficiaries have stated they are **switching from bushmeat** since cavy meat has been made available.
4. As so-called '**local champions**', many cavy producers from the project area **have become trainers** in the region.
5. Cavies have demonstrated to be a **secure income source**, serving also to pay for primary education; and they **contribute to the empowerment of women, youth/children and former hunters**.
6. Université Evangélique en Afrique (UEA) in Bukavu has become a **cavy knowledge center** in sub-Saharan Africa.



Planting vegetables (*Amaranthus*) with cavy manure



Photo by UECCO



Infrastructure for improved cavy production and reproduction

## Objectives & Approach

- The main objective of this project is to develop an alternative to bushmeat consumption.
- Communities around PNKB are assisted to increase cavy production through adequate housing, quality feed of sufficient quantity, controlled reproduction, and disease management.
- Communities also receive training in culinary preparations and cavy marketing.



Planting forages for cavies



Cavy manure for crop production

## Advantages of Cavies

- Cavy has low start-up and upkeep costs.
- Cavy is a strict herbivore, has high feed conversion ratio, high growth rate, & significant levels of high-quality proteins in the meat together with low fat content.
- Manure is valued as fertilizer and helps increase production of market garden crops.
- Vegetables grown with cavy manure fetch better prices in the market.



Feeding cavies with planted forages improves production and reproduction

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Improved forages seed production (*Mucuna pruriens*) with cavy manure

