



Special Session GSSA 2011



Communal rangelands and policy workshop

Aligning the realities of livestock keepers with government priorities

WORKSHOP REPORT

12 July 2011

Middelburg, Eastern Cape

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the process and results of a stakeholder workshop titled Communal rangelands and policy: Aligning the realities of livestock keepers with government priorities. The workshop was a follow up on an expert workshop held in March 2010 *Mainstreaming new paradigms in communal rangelands: How can we influence policy in South Africa?* At the workshop in 2010, researchers presented key findings from research on communal rangeland management in different localities in South Africa. Participants made practical suggestions to improve the draft Range and Forage policy. They expressed the need for a platform to facilitate knowledge-to-policy processes, and proposed to write a position paper to articulate new paradigms in communal rangeland.

It was agreed that an annual gathering would be desired to continue discussions and follow up on actions. Such gathering could best be convened during the Annual Congress of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa which is the main forum for researchers, policy makers, and development workers in rangeland management.

A half-day workshop was held on 12 July 2011 during the 2011 Grassland Congress (Annexure 1). Objectives were to:

- Provide a platform for researchers, policy makers, and development workers to dialogue on issues emerging from research and development practice in communal rangeland management in South Africa
- Discuss key components for a draft position paper on new paradigms in communal rangeland management
- Input into the draft Range and Forage Policy

PROCESS

The workshop was attended by 27 participants from Universities, research institutes, parastatals, and staff from National and Provincial Departments of Agriculture who engaged in issues emerging from policy and practice in communal rangeland management in South Africa (Annexure 2).

The workshop was preceded by a theme session on Rethinking approaches to communal rangelands, in which 5 papers were presented (Annexure 3). Many participants of the theme session stayed on for the workshop. This provided an opportunity to continue the discussions that the presentations had prompted.

To encourage active participation, plenary presentations were alternated with discussions in small groups.

RESULTS

Objective 1: Provide a platform for researchers, policy makers, and development workers to dialogue on issues emerging from research and development practice in communal rangeland management in South Africa

Igshaan Samuels and Monique Salomon presented **research with sheperds in the Northern Cape and cattle keepers in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg mountains** respectively. They identified the following key issues to be addressed in communal rangelands policy

Igshaan:

- There are too many pieces of legislation which confuse land users on access rights and land administrators;
- Land users do not understand livestock management system introduced by the Department of Agriculture on new commonage. Department staff regards people's traditional management system and farming objectives as backward and unproductive;
- Land use rights are unclear and conflicting because municipality does not understand their own regulations and others manipulate this uncertainty.

Monique:

- There are many variations in which people look after livestock. Livestock keeping in a communal context is essentially a social practice and not merely an economic venture;
- Our research and that of others challenge commonly held beliefs and assumptions underpinning Government policies and programmes in rangeland management;
- Livestock keeping practices are affected by ecological, economic and socio-political factors at macro (global and national) and micro (local) level.

They made the following recommendations:

Igshaan:

- The Department of Agriculture and local government structures need to consider objectives of communal farmers and understand their management systems
- Use existing information to develop management plans for the commons, and which should include: i) roles of commonage committees; ii) plan on 'how' to manage resources; and iii) a strategy on 'how' to implement the plan

Monique

- A complex systems perspective is needed to better understand communal rangeland dynamics, identify key drivers, and develop scenarios for positive change;
- Put 'Livestock keepers First' to ensure that national (and global) concerns and priorities are aligned with their issues and needs.

Alan Short shared his experiences in managing the **National Rangeland Monitoring and Improvement Programme**.

The NRMI Programme focused on collaboration and working with local experts. Programme support was provided by 16 intern technicians across 300 survey sites with a mix of farming types – but predominantly Moist Grasslands and Savanna Biomes-, and reporting to land user groups.

Lessons learned:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Set targets
- Capacity building must be continuous (field work, data management, research methods etc.)
- “Hierarchical” approach (regions/biomes/veldtype; multiple sites on farms/communal areas)
- Technology: Trimble GPS to capture data on site with accurate location (digital camera, Cybertracker or other software, GIS & Remote Sensing)
- Need for GIS and database programming and management expertise
- Land users’ involvement is critical (simple scoring techniques, direct benefit, short term monitoring of fodder flow)
- Arid areas underrepresented, involve new generation rangeland scientists

Objective 2: Discuss key components for a draft position paper on new paradigms in communal rangeland management

Dr Susi Vetter presented the scope of and key issues that needed to be addressed in a **position paper**.

- What are the aims of veld & forage policy (in communal rangelands and land reform areas)?
 - Greater contribution of livestock to rural livelihoods
 - Better resource management.
- Who are we dealing with?
 - What groups/types of farmers/farming systems does the policy recognise?
 - Can we identify distinct groups with different potential/needs?
 - Consider present situation and future land reform scenarios.
 - Move beyond “communal” vs. “commercial”.
- What vision etc. does the current range & forage policy have for communal farmers of different types?
 - How does this align with what is currently happening in communal rangelands, and the aspirations and constraints of communal and emerging commercial farmers?
 - What economic models underpin agricultural policy, and are these realistic given the actual situation in communal areas and land reform projects?

- What do we know about the status quo of communal rangelands (objectives, practices, outputs, constraints, socio-economic context, institutions)
 - What are the implications of these for agricultural policy?
 - Examples are small mixed herds, little real “subsistence” or “commercial” farming (but e.g. wool), multiple livelihoods.
 - What is the scope for successful interventions and what policy should be in place to support these?
 - Are these similar across agro-ecological zones?

- What science is currently underpinning R&F policy
 - Current draft leans largely on rangeland science. Is this appropriate?
 - What ecological and economic models should be underpinning range & forage policy?
 - What models have clearly failed and should be discarded (at least in particular contexts)?

- Draft Range and Forage policy emphasizes “stability” and “efficiency”
 - Does/should the policy rather focus on ecological resilience and adaptive capacity of communal farmers? e.g. to drought, climate change, economic shocks....?

- What is the ecological state of communal rangelands?
 - Are they all degraded and in need of stock reduction or other forms of improved management?
 - Are there particular habitats/ landforms/ areas/ biomes/ vegetation types that are in greater need of ecological improvement and are there others where improved veld management is less of a priority?
 - Are some more resilient to heavy grazing than others?
 - Can we generalise in a way that is useful for policy and that helps focus resources on areas where investment is needed most?

- What data are we missing but necessary for effective policy formulation and implementation?

These could include data on:

 - Livestock (e.g. numbers at different scales down to the household level, herd composition, transactions such as sales, slaughter, animal health)
 - Veld (e.g. condition and whether/how it is changing over time)
 - How these differ between land use types
 - Should the range & forage policy address these data needs, and if so, how?

- What is needed in communal rangelands but not addressed in policy?

- e.g. more mobility, access to key resources, support for diversification of rural livelihoods
- integration with other policies affecting livelihoods
- farmer typologies as descriptions of farming practices with different objectives, needs, constraints
- integration of socio-economic aspects rather than simply focus on ecology
- No “one size fits all”?
 - Policy needs to provide for plurality in ecological and economic models appropriate to different contexts
 - which are applicable under what circumstances?
 - can we generalise, make any recommendations to guide policy?
- Way forward for policy development:
 - Land users and NGOs to be involved
 - Informed by peoples objectives, practices, and constraints
 - Complex socio-economic context in land reform and communal areas
 - Coordinate aims and strategies with other Departments

It was argued that the strict distinction between “communal farmers” and “commercial farmers” is artificial and does not do justice to many facets and complex realities of farmers. Alternative concepts are needed instead.

Objective 3: Input into the draft Range and Forage Policy

Kedibone Chueu gave an update on the current status of the draft Range and Forage Policy. She highlighted that the condition of rangelands has been a concern since the early 1900s. A National Grazing Strategy was outlined in 1985. In 2003 the draft Range and Forage Policy was drafted, and reworked in 2006-2007, and renamed **Draft policy for the sustainable management of veld (range) and forage resources in South Africa.**

Objectives of the Draft Policy are:

- To provide a framework and guidelines that promote and facilitate the sustainable use of South Africa’s veld and forage resources for animal production
- To provide a framework and guidelines for effective veld monitoring, and veld and forage improvement initiatives with the capacity to support compliance to the relevant legislation/regulations regarding the sustainable use of these resources

- To provide guidance and motivation for the amendment of legislation on the sustainable management of veld and forage resources, as well as more effective and consistent regulation thereof
- To support and facilitate the revival of existing biome-linked research and technology development structures across provincial boundaries

The action plan from the policy included the establishment of the National Rangeland Monitoring and Improvement Programme (NRMIP). The programme was instituted in 2006 and had been designed to meet critical national issues such as:

- Rangeland Management Technical Capacity Building - to ensure that suitably qualified graduate are trained and deployed to all the biomes/production areas to provide technical support for the roll-out of NRMIP;
- National Rangeland Monitoring System Development - to ensure efficient animal production within the constraints of the natural resource.

What science seeks:

- What opportunities exist to integrate different components of rangeland management, biodiversity & farmer land & water management practices to increase productivity & livelihood benefits of livestock production systems, while enhancing ecosystem health?

Critical need:

- To translate Research into Policy that will influence Practical Decisions on the ground
- Improve linkages between Development- Transfer- Adoption

Further input into the draft policy was elicited through **discussion in small groups**. Results were presented in plenary.

Group 1 PEOPLE: What livestock keepers are included, who are excluded in the R&F policy; which other policies are relevant to those excluded?

- A definition is needed that focuses on all: farmers, livestock owners, and livestock keepers;
- Regulations are needed for land reform and commonage. For example, absentee owners using communal range land new and old commonage;
- Recognition and the need to support local institutions, including customary/traditional institutions, is a challenge, and new associations, indigenous practices and knowledge systems

- Needs an equal balance of social, economic, and ecological dimensions of livestock keeping and rangeland management, the draft policy as it stands emphasizes “economic viability and ecological preservation”.

Questions from the floor:

- How about other rangeland users who are not livestock keepers?
- Policy is needed for animal husbandry in urban areas and on municipal commonage; animal protection laws do not allow backyard slaughter in townships

Group 2 SCIENCE: What science(s) are currently underpinning the R&F policy, which sciences must be included, what theoretical/conceptual framework(s) should be used?

1. Rangelands are not just about keeping livestock, but multiple uses, especially in the communal sector;
2. To assess the ecological state of the veld and forage base need to look at broader set of ecosystem health indicators: hydrology, biodiversity, ecosystem services etc. Holistic way of assessing desirable state of rangelands;
3. Climatic variability and degradation is emphasized, based on assumptions on ecological dynamics. Equilibrium thinking is not useful as it leads to polarization. Rather emphasize variability and key drivers. All rangelands are characterized by variability, however arid or humid. Define bounds within which variability remains in some ‘desired’ state. National policy should provide for that. Local provincial and municipal levels specify ecological variables across the country;
4. The Veld and Forage policy has not defined natural veld and planted pastures, additional feed, artificial water points, and the nature of this relationship to be addressed. Infrastructure framework should serve policy.

Group 3 POLICY GAPS: What we know now: what must we get rid of, what must be included, what gaps must be filled?

How to get additional info:

1. Mentorship
2. Extension practitioners to revitalize extension, increase ratio;
3. Fire management
4. Research efforts and collaboration (e.g. WRC, CSIR)
5. Intensify/duplication of efforts in veld management.

Way forward

- Participants were asked to indicate their involvement in the position paper as co-author or reviewer. 5 participants offered to be co-author, while 15 indicated to want to review and comment. Susi Vetter and the organizing team would take the lead in drafting the position paper and circulate a first draft for input.
- Participants expressed satisfaction with the session. A government official said that although he had worked for many years in rangeland management he learnt some new things.
- It was proposed that a special session on communal rangelands would be repeated at the 2012 Annual Grasslands Congress.

Annexure 1 Programme

Opening and welcome

Knowledge-to-policy: voices from the field

- *The perceptions of communal livestock keepers on veld condition, veld degradation and options for improving livestock production: A synthesis of studies from Sterkspruit in the Eastern Cape* - Wiseman Goqwana, Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture, Dohne Agricultural Development Institute [Cancelled]
- *Understanding commonage policy: A challenge for pastoralists in the semi-arid regions of South Africa* - Igshaan Samuels, Livestock Business Division, Agricultural Research Council
- *Facilitating bottom up policy development in communal rangelands in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg* - Monique Salomon, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Position paper on New paradigms in communal rangeland management – Susi Vetter

The Draft Range and Forage Policy – Kedibone Chueu

Way forward

Annexure 2 Participant list

Name	Affiliation	Contact Email/No.	Willing to contribute to position paper?	
			Co-Author	Comment/ Review
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Annexure 3 Theme session: Rethinking approaches to communal rangelands

Chair: Igshaan Samuels, ARC Animal Production

- *Sustainability in communal socio-ecological systems (SUCSES). Characteristics of rural households most vulnerable to environmental change – Wayne Twine, Wits University*
- *Is rangeland condition a reflection of municipal commonage policy? The case of two Nama Karoo towns – Doreen Atkinson, University of the Free State*
- *The growing indifference of youth towards agriculture in pastoral systems in Namaqualand – Melvin BV Swarts, ARC Animal Production*
- *Rethinking herding as a livestock management strategy in South Africa – Clement Cupido, ARC Animal Production*
- *People, cattle, and the commons. The case of Ehlanokhombe, western KwaZulu-Natal – Monique Salomon, University of KwaZulu-Natal*