



CASE STUDY

Advocating for Cattle Policy Reform

The Southern Africa Trade Hub assists the efforts of Botswana's Cattle producers to achieve trade liberalization in the beef and cattle sector



Photo: Southern Africa Trade Hub

The Hub's technical assistance in forming a private sector association to represent Botswana's 60,000 cattle producers and the economic analysis it provided through the policy paper "How Trade Liberalization Can Contribute to Solving the Crisis in the Cattle and Beef Sector" has resulted in effective private sector advocacy for policy reform. The Botswana Cattle Producers Association is now recognized by the private and public sectors as the proper forum for consultation on all matters related to cattle production and marketing.

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CHALLENGE The Beef and Cattle industry has long been key to Botswana's economic well-being given its potential contribution to economic activity in the rural areas, export diversification and poverty alleviation. Yet Botswana's beef and cattle sector is facing a serious crisis, with declining exports and losses being experienced by both cattle farmers and the state-owned monopoly export abattoir, the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC). The industry is heavily protected, limiting the scope for trade, competition and the price mechanism to bring about the necessary adjustments.

INITIATIVE The Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub responded to a request from Botswana's cattle producers for assistance in forming a national association to represent and promote their economic interests. The Hub provided technical support to constitute the Botswana Cattle Producers Association (BCPA) and to assist it in persuading the Government to liberalize trade in the industry.

The Hub's Economic Advisor, Dr. Keith Jefferis, prepared a policy paper proposing alternatives for revitalizing the industry. The innovative proposals included: (a) a shift to weaner production, (b) the creation of a weaner auction system modeled on Namibia's, (c) lifting the ban on live cattle exports and (d) the removal of the export monopoly enjoyed by the BMC. The resulting higher prices paid for cattle would benefit farmers and provide an incentive for switching to weaner production, which in turn would make more cattle available to the BMC.

In May 2005 the Hub assembled industry stakeholders for a formal presentation of the paper and an immediate flood of media coverage on the proposed alternatives sparked a nation-wide debate.

RESULTS As a result of the broad debate which has since emerged significant progress has been made in getting Botswana legislators to consider the recommendations. The BCPA has gained an effective advocacy voice and an audience among decision makers in the country.