

# The Contribution of Rangelands to the Economy of Uganda

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## Introduction

Rangelands in Uganda form 44% of the country's land mass. They constitute what is known as the cattle corridor stretching from the south east through the central region and to the north eastern area. The area's contribution to the economy is largely understated due to a number of factors including inadequate or unreliable data, inaccessibility to the power centres due to poor infrastructure, wrong assumptions that the rangelands are homogeneous and general poor understanding of the drivers of the socio-economic factors in these areas. This short presentation seeks to show that there is a need to pay more attention to the rangelands by appreciating its enormous contributions.

## Objective

The objective was to document the multiple functions of the rangelands so that the interest of policy- and law-makers to appreciate the benefits arising from these areas and allocate proportionately the resources thereto. Some important facts here below show that people of influence need to understand the dynamics and contribution of rangelands in Uganda.

The rangelands provide a unique environment for flora and fauna that is of great use to the economy of the country. The benefits, however, are taken for granted and minimal public investment is made to improve the lives of people who live in the rangelands especially the pastoralists. Livestock products like meat, milk and butter play a big role in providing food security for the concerned communities but also in downstream industries like food processing, hotels and restaurants where milk and meat are regular features of the menu. In 2014, indigenous breeds of livestock that are commonly raised in the rangelands produced 745 million litres of milk or 48% of the total, despite the relatively low investment in the sector.



Rangelands are a rich depository of diverse cultures that help to preserve indigenous knowledge and promote tourism.

The main economic activity in the rangelands is livestock raising. This accounts for 4.5% of GDP and contributes substantially to the 70% employment generated by the agricultural sector. The bulk of the country's livestock is concentrated in the rangelands. Karamoja sub-region, which is the driest part of the country though comprising 11% of the country's landmass, hosts a substantial part of the country's livestock (see Table 2). The next important activity is tourism. In the year 2014, four major national parks all found in the rangelands accounted for 156,341 visitors to parks making 77% of the 202,885 that the country registered.

The bulk of the River Nile basin in Uganda falls within the rangelands. The river is a big source of fish with a catch of 5,390,000 tonnes from the Albert Nile alone comprising 1.167% of the national catch of 461,726,000 tonnes in 2014.

The rich flora includes medicinal plants like *Aloe vera*, commonly used for a wide range of medications and as a formulation of organic beauty products. Also found in Uganda's rangelands is the shea butter tree, common for the production of very expensive oil used in formulation of body creams, soaps and lotions.

Uganda's rangelands are increasingly attracting the attention of investors in the mining industry. The oil and gas proven reserves are all found in the Western Rift Valley dryland areas. Karamoja area in the North East already has operational exploitation of gold, marble and limestone.



Livestock play a big role in maintaining ecological equilibrium in the rangelands ecosystem. By eating the biomass, they control growth and encroachment of various species. The dung acts as manure while their bodies are active agents of seed dispersal.



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### References

Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014 Statistical Abstract, Kampala, October 2014  
Charles Kabiswa, Karamoja's Land and the Management of the Mineral Extractive Sector, Kampala, 20th October 2015.  
Photos: Kristin Tonne

## Materials and Methods

The information used was derived from documents including public statistics as well as other international sources and most especially in those institutions to which Uganda is affiliated. The main areas of concern were those that directly affect the pastoralists as key users of the rangelands.



Livestock are at the centre of the rangelands economy. They provide income security and insurance to the pastoralist communities who inhabit these areas.



Sustainable rangeland management is promoted through community discussions to plan optimal utilisation of scarce and erratic resources (water and pasture).

## Results and Discussion

The objective was to document the multiple functions of the rangelands so that the interest of policy- and law-makers to appreciate the benefits arising from these areas and allocate proportionately the resources thereto.

Table 1: Number of Visitors to Game Parks in 2014

Game park	Visitors	Percent of total
Murchison Falls	66,990	0.33
Queen Elizabeth	58,870	0.29
Lake Mburo	26,390	0.13
Kidepo Valley	4,091	0.02
Total Rangelands	156,341	0.77
Total Uganda	202,885	100

Table 2: Uganda Livestock Population

Livestock type	Uganda	Karamoja	Karamoja as % of total
Cattle	11,400,000	2,250,000	20
Goats	12,500,000	2,000,000	16
Sheep	3,400,000	1,700,000	50

Table 3: Land Surface and Milk Production

Item	Uganda	Rangelands
Land surface in km <sup>2</sup>	241,550.9	106,282
Milk production in million litres in 2014	1,550	745



Livestock play a big part in the economy of Uganda. Cattle traded in a market in Kotido (north eastern Uganda) end up in South Sudan and urban domestic markets. In 2014, livestock contributed 4.5% of Gross Domestic Product.



Milking livestock provide food security at family and community level. In times of drought, families in the rangelands without livestock are more exposed to food insecurity. In Uganda, indigenous cattle kept mainly by pastoralists in the rangelands in 2014 produced 48% of the milk, despite the fact that this is low-input production.

## Conclusion and Implications

The marginalisation of pastoralists and failure to appreciate the importance of rangelands is premised on failure to appreciate the multiple functions the area plays in the economy. Unfortunately, this perception permeates the bulk of the population acquired through school and not helped by the majority of decision-makers from sedentary backgrounds. This poster clearly shows the diverse functions of the rangelands i.e. livestock rearing, extractives, environmental protection, employment, trade translating into food and income security. These aspects need to be fully internalised if the value of the rangeland economy is to be appreciated.