



AFRICA ANIMAL WELFARE CONFERENCE

Policy Brief

Animal welfare as a nature-based solution for wildlife protection and environmental conservation in Africa

Introduction

An excessive extraction of wildlife for illegal trade [Katherine J. WU, 2019ⁱ; IPBESⁱⁱ; National Geographic, 2014ⁱⁱⁱ; TRAFFIC, 2020^{iv}], habitat loss and pollution due to industrial agriculture are constraints to environmental conservation [FAO 2019^v]; for sustainable development in Africa, and predispose local communities, and human societies at large, to serious zoonotic diseases [Pimentel, et al., 2005^{vi}; E. M. Mrema - UNCBD^{vii}, 2020]. Wildlife trade, legal or illegal, predisposes society to zoonotic disease [D’Cruze N *et al.*, 2020^{viii}; Can ÖE *et al.*, 2019^{ix}; Tappe D *et al.*, 2011^x; Jones KE *et al.*, 2008^{xi}; Karesh WB *et al.*, 2005^{xii}; Brown C. 2004^{xiii}], and 75% of all emerging zoonotic diseases arise from wildlife.

Dilemma of industrial agriculture in Africa

One in three Africans; i.e. 422 million people, live below the global poverty line, and thus representing more than 70 percent of the world’s poorest people. It is projected that by 2030, this will represent 87% of the poor globally [Kristofel Hamel *et al.*, 2019]. This implies that the African community is uniquely vulnerable to disease outbreaks, and unless drastic and urgent measures are taken to change this trend, the future will be at stake.

According to the WHO, there were 56,982,476 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 1,361,847 of who had died, by 21st November 2020. This is a rapid rate of increase considering that by September 12, 2020, the pandemic had overcome over 900,000 people, and infected over 28 million people globally [WHO, 2020]

According to recent UN forecasts, the human population in Africa is likely to double by 2050, from 1 billion to nearly 2.4 billion inhabitants [Kristofel Hamel *et al.*, 2019]. This will create a big food burden for Africa; especially access to animal protein, which calls for urgent action to increase the productivity of the animal sector. Additionally,

about half of that population will be less than 25 years old, which will create a huge demand for sustainable livelihoods. The economies of most African Union Member States are agro-based. Among other sectors in the agriculture sector in Africa, the animal sector therefore, is perceived to offer great opportunity of economic growth and development.

The factory farming systems in industrial agriculture cause extreme suffering to animals. Whereas this system of farming increases productivity, evidence shows that the suffering the animals endure is not only the cause of the zoonotic disease outbreaks ravaging the global society today, but also the main cause of antimicrobial resistance and drug residues in foods of animal origin.

Uncertain livelihoods and food security

Out of the 2.5 billion people globally in poor countries living directly from the food and agriculture sector, 1.5 billion people live in smallholder households. The smallholder households produce about 80% of the food consumed in Sub-Saharan Africa [UN-FAO, 2020]. For that reason, the UN-FAO has proclaimed that Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development should focus on improving rural livelihoods and satisfying the economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations of the present generation without endangering the ability of future generations to do the same.

Globally, many studies have shown that efforts to satisfy the rapidly growing demand for human and animal feed through industrialized farming threatens the future survival of humanity on this planet to its population, habitat and biodiversity loss, and climate change. A study conducted by the UN-FAO in 2015, focusing on 40 countries, 4 commodity crops, and 4 livestock commodities showed that industrialized farming costs the environment the equivalent of about US\$ 3 trillion/year [FAO, 2019^v].

A case of One health, one welfare

As mentioned above, factory farming is known to be a distractive method of industrial agriculture. Large natural habitats are altered to pave way or to create space for their establishment in the tropics. These have been observed to have devastating effects on biodiversity and fragile ecosystems.

Industrial Agriculture generates large volumes of solid, liquid and air pollution that compromises both the environmental and human health in the surroundings. Recently, industrial systems in the US and UK have been forced to compensate for these damages. Apart from being the epicenters of previous pandemics such as swine flu and bird flu, animals in factory farms, are known to have high anti-microbial resistance that lead to prolific antibiotic use, whose residues can be traced in high amounts in human food products emanating from the system.

It is therefore critical that as Africa strives to enhance the productivity of the agricultural sector, it focuses on methodologies that do not jeopardize stable natural ecosystems.

Sustainable Agriculture in Africa must protect the environment from the vagaries of environmental pollution, stress in animals, and the disruption of natural ecosystems by preserving their integrity and eliminating habitat loss and extensive wildlife trade.

Recommendations from the 4th Africa Animal Welfare Conference

This Policy Brief is derived and based on resolutions from the 4th AAWC. The conference outcomes made observations that will cumulatively strengthen nature-based solutions to enhance productivity in Africa, without disrupting the fragile ecosystems of the continent, that support Africa's agriculture and ecotourism, and by extension help to steer the African community away from the bleak future that is predicted by experts.

Recommendations

1. To realise sustainable development under the spirit of African Unity, the ANAW, UNEP and AU-IBAR partnership should continue convening the annual Africa Animal Welfare Conference, through which the principle of inclusivity and participation spurs the growth of this continent in Animal Welfare, Wildlife Protection and Environmental Conservation, where all Member States of the African Union commit to implement the resolutions arrived at for Africa.

2. To maximise on the intellectual and material resources in the Continent, the Academia, Private Sector, NGOs and CSOs from the Animal Welfare, Human Rights, Wildlife Conservation and Management as well as Environmental Conservation & Management should continue supporting the AU MS in implementing the resolutions that advance the innovations for Animal Welfare, Wildlife Protection and Environmental Conservation.
3. To optimize the impact of enhancing the sustainability of Africa's animal resources through the One Health-One Welfare Principle under the pillars of animals, people and the environment, the AU MS should embrace the importance of a multi-sectoral approach in policy and project design and public engagement.
4. To avert the risk of Africa becoming the epicenter of future zoonotic pandemics, Africa should take urgent measures to stop the ongoing biodiversity loss due to industrial agriculture and prevailing wildlife trade, which include:
 - a. Strengthening a continental, regional and national collective approach to disease surveillance, prevention and control, both for domestic and wild animals
 - b. An immediate ban of wildlife trade that feeds the luxury demands in pet, entertainment, fashion and research.
 - c. An urgent awareness and sensitisation creation, to promote the recognition of the value of the wildlife heritage among the African Community, so that they protect this heritage.
 - d. The promotion of alternative sources of income and nutrition, so that wildlife meat becomes less dependable to local communities, while at the same time increasing their engagement and participation in wildlife conservation programs.
 - e. The establishment, upgrading, updating, enforcement of the continental, regional and national legal frameworks to protect the marine and / or aquatic and terrestrial wildlife heritage of Africa.
5. To enhance the sustainability of animal resources in Africa the AU MS should promote and adopt regenerative agriculture principles and technologies.
6. To enhance animal welfare standards in animal resource management for sustainable African Communities, the AU MS should sensitise the public, using factual and effective delivery methods, on the short-term and long-term impacts of the irresponsible utilisation of natural resources such as poor animal welfare and environmental pollution, including the consumption of products from irresponsible food production systems.

7. To ensure pragmatic solutions to the food insecurity issues in Africa, the AU MS should:
 - a. Incorporate the Nature-Based-Solutions-rich indigenous knowledge in the application of solutions to the challenges on productivity in the animal resources sector, using appropriate the backing of objective scientific evidence to validate the proposed interventions and methods.
 - b. Promote the nutritional and food security value of indigenous food crops and livestock to vulnerable communities, especially in the fragile ecosystems of the expansive arid and semi-arid lands of Africa.
8. To avoid the risk of public health hazards, biodiversity and environmental pollution hazards from industrial farming; and the intrinsic poor animal welfare in industrial farming, the AU MS should:
 - a. Resist the introduction and proliferation of Factory Farming Systems in Africa
 - b. Develop policies and legislation that will prevent the introduction and spread of Factory Farming Systems and practices in Africa
 - c. The AU MS should embrace the need to establish, update and upgrade their animal protection legislation, and specifically regulations prohibiting the use of Cage Production Systems.
 - d. Ban cage animal production systems in order to uphold and safeguard animal health, environmental health and public health simultaneously.
9. To protect the vulnerable but large population of donkey - dependent communities in Africa, from the unsustainable donkey depleting donkey skin trade that is ravaging Africa through legal and illegal means, the AU MS should:
 - a. Urgently ban the sale of donkeys into the donkey skin trade.
 - b. Urgently take donkey protection measures including the establishment and enactment of supporting policies and legislations, which are effectively implemented.
10. To acknowledge that animals are an integral part of sustainable development in Africa, the AU MS should:
 - a. Support the process of lobbying for the adoption of an Animal Welfare resolution at United Nations Environment Assembly.
 - b. As the de facto members of the APAW, affirm their support for the UDAW as an African Union resolution to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which will unlock the continental and global support for the animal welfare agenda for Africa.
 - c. Commit to implement the Animal Welfare Strategy for Africa.
 - d. Using modern practical innovations such as the Animal Protection Index, establish, update, and upgrade their animal protection policies and legislations.
 - e. Empower the academia, through innovative digital technologies, to use modern tools such as simulation models and tools, instead of animals, during research and training, to enhance the effectiveness of the learning process and to safeguard, enhance and uphold animal welfare and good environmental health.

Acknowledgement

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Disclaimer

Views expressed herein are of the conference participants and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the AAWC Secretariat; Africa Network for Animal Welfare and its partners.