

# AN ENHANCED ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND TRACEABILITY INFORMATION SYSTEM IN NAMIBIA: PRODUCTION SECTOR PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES: DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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In order to retain access to high value beef markets, the Namibian livestock industry, which is export dependent, had to meet growing demands of international trading partners for beef traceability. In 2004, the industry in close partnership with the government initiated an enhanced system for animal identification and traceability that is supported by a computerized information management system. The primary drivers for establishing the system were compliance with EU beef traceability requirements, verification of the *Farm Assured Namibian Meat*, a beef and lamb quality assurance scheme and supporting risk management of trade-sensitive animal diseases.

This enhanced system was built on the long-existing system for group identification of cattle, sheep and goats and a veterinary movement permit system that has been in place since the late 1960s. In addition to lot identification of cattle based on the owner's registered stock brand symbols, cattle are identified individually when they leave their herd of origin using ear tags. The cattle identification system in Namibia is currently being extended to include on farm individual identification and registration of cattle six months and older. In the case of small ruminants, lot identification has been retained using either ear tags or an ear tattoo. A computerised database has largely replaced the manual information system.

Public-private partnership was key to the successful development and implementation of a functional animal identification and traceability system. Although enforcement and general oversight is the sole responsibility of the Veterinary Authority, management responsibilities are shared with the industry. Most of the components of the system are already in place and functional. However, it is still a work in progress. For the Namibian beef industry, implementing a credible livestock identification and traceability information system is not a matter of choice but survival.

**Key words:** Beef Exports – Traceability – Sanitary Assurance – Private-Public Partnership.

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