

**Goat marketing challenges for smallholder communal farmers: The case of Beitbridge,  
Matabeleland South Province, Zimbabwe**

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**Abstract**

Goats play a crucial role in the lives of rural farmers, particularly in semi-arid regions of Zimbabwe mainly because of their adaptability to arid conditions. More than ninety percent of smallholder farmers own goats and maintain stocks of goats for both household meat consumption and household cash needs as goats are liquid. Goats therefore contribute to household food, nutritional security and household income. This study investigated the challenges that smallholder farmers faced in the marketing of goats in Beitbridge District in Matabeleland South. The study revealed that despite positive developments such as the introduction of goat auctions, small farmers in Beitbridge continue to face a plethora of challenges including: lack of feed; failure to access external markets; loss of livestock due to theft and predators; and low market prices for goats. These marketing challenges were interlinked and found along the entire value chain. Addressing them therefore require a value chain approach. The study recommends that: smallholder farmers venture into value addition to increase their income; make effort to become price makers through, for instance; selling to niche markets; and adopting the use of the marketing mix in planning and implementing their goat businesses.

**Key words:** smallholder goat production, marketing,

## **Introduction and background**

Goats play a crucial role in the lives of rural farmers, particularly in semi-arid regions of Zimbabwe by contributing to household food and nutritional security and income (S. Homann et al., 2007). This is because goats are well-adapted to arid conditions, making them a viable livelihood option for rural farmers living in such areas. More than 90% of smallholder farmers own goats and goat production has the potential to provide a strong return on investment for smallholder producers in most developing countries (Sabine Homann, 2008). This is because goats' reproduction rate is relatively high, taking 5-6 months for a kid to mature and be available for sale or breeding. In many developing countries such as Zimbabwe, smallholder farmers maintain stocks of goats because they can easily be converted to cash (Baah et al., 2012).

Despite the importance of goats to smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe, the goat sector has faced several marketing challenges including; a lack of organized marketing systems - the vast majority of goats are sold using informal marketing channels that are characterized by poorly managed and unrealistic carcass grading and pricing; and inadequate promotion of goat meat - farmers often get disadvantaged by the presence of middlemen who profiteer by paying low prices when buying goats from smallholder farmers and then selling them to lucrative urban markets where they fetch higher prices (Musara et al., 2013; Pradier et al., 1995). A number of steps have been taken in the country to deal with the above-mentioned marketing challenges: a) the formation of the Goat Forum in 2006 that aims, among other things, to explore ways for promoting profitable marketing systems for goat farmers; b) formation of several social media goat farmers groups that discuss and share vital marketing information that help farmers to gain more profit from selling goats; c) promotion of improved goat breeds such as Kalahari and Boer Goats to improve the quantity of meat from goats and; d) the setting up of goat auction systems in smallholder farming areas (Nyathi, 2008; Sarupinda & Tavesure, 2009) and the promotions of goat farmer exhibitions at high profile platforms such as at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) (Sarupinda & Tavesure, 2009), for instance.

Despite efforts implemented by goat stakeholders to improve the marketing of goats, smallholder goat marketing systems have continued to be mainly informal, and inefficient with farmers facing

numerous challenges (S. Homann et al., 2007; Sabine Homann, 2008; Kusina & Kusina, 2001; Musara et al., 2013). So far, limited studies have been done (Dube et al., 2017; S. Homann et al., 2007) to understand the challenges farmers continue to face with regard to the marketing of their goats in Beitbridge District, Matebeleland South Provinces. This study aims to unravel these challenges so as to contribute to this growing body of knowledge as well as identify ways to improve goat marketing in the smallholder sector in Zimbabwe.

### **Research methodology**

We used a qualitative research design to generate an in-depth understanding of the challenges farmers faced in marketing their goats and to gain an understanding of farmers' perceptions of what should be done to deal with these challenges. We adopted a case study research design to understand how marketing was done in Beitbridge using real-life examples of the smallholder goat companies that were operational in Beitbridge. To complement the case study, we conducted a quantitative survey to understand the challenges that smallholder farmers were facing individually in marketing their goats.

We used a mixed- method approach and made use of both quantitative data and qualitative data collection techniques. To kick-start the research, we conducted a desk study to understand goat marketing issues for smallholder farmers as well as to identify the stakeholders involved in goat production and marketing in Beitbridge. This was followed by fieldwork in Beitbridge. We started the fieldwork by conducting key informant interviews guided by a checklist of questions (see Annex 2). A total of 8 key informants were interviewed and these included: two agricultural extension officers; one agricultural extension supervisor; two staff members from CARITAS Masvingo; one veterinary officer from the Beitbridge veterinary office; and two students from Lupane University who were on attachment at the newly formed goat companies.

In addition, a total of 3 focus group discussions were organized, one for each of the three companies involved in goat fattening and marketing. We used participant observation to verify and observe various aspects of goat marketing on the ground. We also took advantage of opportunities that arose during the fieldwork and managed to witness goat-selling negotiations by

the three goat companies with various goat buyers in Beitbridge and beyond e.g. Beitbridge SPAR, Busy Curve Butchery, and other butcheries located in Beitbridge town.

To collect more data on the challenges faced by smallholder farmers, one of the researchers (Tendayi) joined one goat WhatsApp group, the Progressive Goat Farmers which was created on 14 November 2018, consisting of 587 goat farmers. Some members of the group were located in Beitbridge, others in various places elsewhere in Zimbabwe, whilst others were located outside the country – all the members on this platform were smallholder goat farmers. Discussions on this platform by goat farmers were monitored over some time (about 5 months) to understand the marketing challenges they faced and their perceptions of what should be done to deal with these challenges.

We collected quantitative data to complement the work using a questionnaire (Annex 1). We also collected records kept by goat companies for tracking the changes in weights of the goats that were being fattened for sale.

### **Data analysis**

Most of the collected data was qualitative. For the qualitative data, analysis began in the field and was done simultaneously with data collection. Meaning and understanding developed slowly over time in a non-linear fashion as the researcher was conducting the research. To analyse the data, a number of steps were used including:

- Becoming familiar with the data through reading and re-reading the data, writing down impressions, looking for meaning and determining which pieces of data have value.
- Focusing the analysis by identifying key questions that need to be answered through the analysis. This involved looking at a particular question or topic and then looking at all responses to that question.
- Categorizing the data and creating a framework by identifying themes or patterns consisting of ideas, concepts, behaviours, interactions, phrases and so forth.
- Identifying patterns and making connections through identification of themes from responses given and identifying relationships between themes or data sets, and attempting to find explanations from the data.

- Interpreting the data and explaining findings.

The quantitative data was analysed using Excel, to generate frequencies that helped the researcher to understand the characteristics of respondents. Excel was also used to assess the weight gains and losses of the goats that were being fattened for sale by the goat companies.

### **Analytical framework**

We used ideas from the marketing field to understand the challenges faced in Beitbridge goat marketing. Marketing is an important business function that deals with customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Marketing is the process of managing markets to bring about profitable customer relationships. Many times, the process of creating the relationships takes time with sellers actively searching for buyers and trying to understand their needs and wants. Even though marketing is mainly seen as an activity that is conducted by sellers, buyers/ customers to participate in marketing as they search for products and interact with companies to obtain information and buy products that satisfy their wants. With developments in information communication technologies (ICTs), buyers have increasingly become actively engaged in marketing processes. Marketing has therefore become a two-way affair, with marketers now not only concerned about how companies can influence customers, but how customers can influence companies and each other.

The modern view of marketing takes marketing as not only referring to selling and advertising, but as part of the larger marketing mix (a set of marketing tools that work together to engage customers, satisfy customer needs, and build customer relationships – see more details below). Using the new view, marketing is defined as the process by which companies (and in our case smallholder farmers) engage customers and build customer relationships by creating customer value so as to make a profit from them in return (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). To create effective relationships, sellers must look for and engage buyers, identify their needs, design good market offerings, set prices for them, promote them, and store and deliver them. Core marketing activities include consumer research, product development, communication, distribution, pricing, and service.

The marketing mix is a set of principles that are at the heart of any marketing strategy. The 7 elements of the marketing mix include product, price, place, promotion, people, processes and physical evidence. Each of these elements is described separately below:

- **Product:** A product must do what the customer wants it to do. It must meet the customer's need or want. To identify a suitable product, a business should conduct market research to understand the tastes, requirements and buying habits of its target audience. Conducting market research before engaging in the production of a product helps sellers come up with a product that is driven by the needs of the customer. Simply creating a product under the assumption that it will find its place in the market is a recipe for disaster.
- **Price:** After developing a product, it must be sold at a price that the target audience considers good value for money. When calculating a product's price, it is essential that all costs entailed in producing, promoting and delivering that product be taken into account to avoid making losses.
- **Place:** The product must be available where the customers expect to find it. Presentation of the product is also important. Place also takes into account the logistical factors affecting a product's profitability, such as storage and distribution. In addition, it also takes into account, marketing channel strategy, one of the major strategic areas of marketing management (Rosenbloom, 2012). Marketing channels refer to the route taken by a product as it moves from the producer to the consumer or end user of the product.

Marketing channels are critical and should be operated in such a way as to support and enhance the other strategic variables of the marketing mix in order to meet the demands of the firm's target markets. Because of developments in ICT, customers now expect more channel choices to gain access to various products and services from all over the world. Such channels include, for instance, walking into a 'brick and mortar' store to buy products, viewing products online using the internet and using a touch-screen phone to purchase the products online. Customers today expect a simple, quick, and seamless buying experience which has posed challenges for many companies (Rosenbloom, 2012).

To meet this challenge, marketing channels must be managed efficiently and effectively. Customers normally rely on marketing channels to make products and services from around the world conveniently available. For efficiency, there is need for coordination of multi-channels as this does not happen by chance. A multi-channel strategy is important for: resulting in a set of marketing channels that makes products and services conveniently available to customers wherever they are located; and enhancing synergy. An example of multi-channel synergy is when customers use online channels to obtain information about a product before purchasing it in a conventional “brick and mortar” channel. Other elements of the marketing mix are described below.

- Promotion: After creating a product, it is important to promote it to an appropriate audience using appropriate channels. Such channels may include branding, advertising, social media, promotions and exhibitions just to mention a few.
- People: It is critical to realise that after producing a product, the communication and behaviour of customer-facing staff is critical as it impacts on the perceptions of the customer. Even if a company develops a good product, if those who engage with customers are impolite, they may put the customers off. Capacity development on good communication skills for staff who engage with customers is critical.
- Processes: The processes for delivering a product to customers are important as they affect the customers experience, level of satisfaction, and lifetime value to the business. Such processes include: website user experience, delivery time, delivery methods and service, in-store waiting time, communication with customer support after purchase and aftercare
- Physical evidence: This refers to the physical context and paraphernalia like receipts, “thanks for ordering” cards etc. that come along with the product. Having these in qualities expected by the customer helps to reinforce the product’s and the seller’s credibility.

The marketing mix provides an ideal framework for effective marketing of products and for designing a marketing strategy. Each of the elements of the marketing mix must be analysed so as to come up with strategic considerations for each of the Ps (those described in the bullets above).

Eliminating any of the elements in efforts to market products can be a recipe for disaster. Analysing how each of the Ps was handled in the marketing of goats can help in understanding why certain efforts were successful or otherwise.

### The study site

This study was conducted in wards 2, 3, 5, 6, 11 and 13 Wards of Beitbridge District (Figure 4). Beitbridge was selected for three main reasons, a) its proximity to Masvingo province where the researchers were based and b) its large goat population– Beitbridge has the second largest goat population in Zimbabwe after Binga (S. Homann et al., 2007), and c) the fact that some efforts have been made to improve the marketing of goats in the District, e.g. the introduction of the goat auctions.

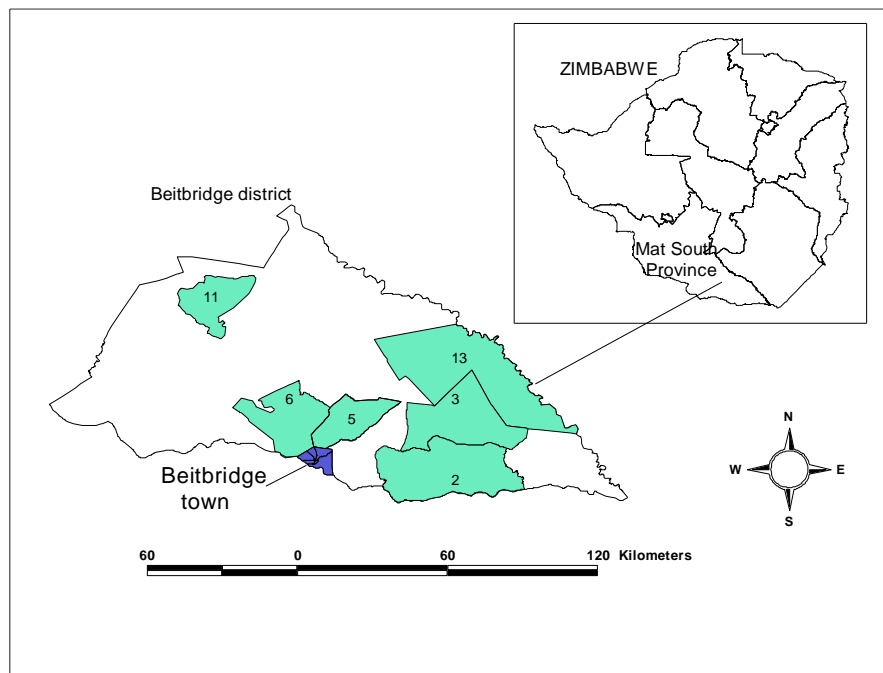


Figure 1: Map Showing Beitbridge District and the Study Sites (Wards)

Goat production in the district was done for both subsistence and commercial farming. Goat numbers kept by the farmers within the district ranged from 0 to 132, with an average of 45 goats per farmer. The common breeds of goats were the Boer, Matabele, Kalahari and different types of



crosses of indigenous and improved breeds. The main reasons farmers keep goats include generating income regularly and for household consumption.

The district lies in Natural Region V in Matabeleland South Province (Figure 1). The natural region is characterized by low and erratic rainfall and receives an average annual rainfall of 250–450 mm during the period of November and March. The district is characterised by poor, sandy soils and little rain which makes crop production unviable (Dube et al., 2017; Goat actions opening market opportunities for smallholder farmers in Western Provinces of Zimbabwe, 2009). The district is therefore mostly suited for livestock production and livestock species including cattle, goats, donkeys, sheep and pigs. Most small farmers make a living out of rearing livestock as the district has over 2 million cattle and 1.8 million goats (Sarupinda & Tavesure, 2009). The animals are used for milk production, draft power and are occasionally sold to traders who supply markets in the towns.

Studies conducted in the district show that, despite the fact that farmers own such large numbers of goats, they still do not earn enough income to meet their basic needs (e.g. food, clothes) and many fail to send their children to school. The main reason cited for this was poorly developed marketing systems. To try and deal with the problem of poor marketing systems, goat auctions have been introduced in the district (Sarupinda & Tavesure, 2009).

## **Results and discussion**

### ***Goat production systems for smallholder farmers in Beitbridge***

Focus group discussions revealed that goats were being kept for two main reasons in Beitbridge: for meat and for breeding stock. Farmers keeping goats for breeding mainly specialised in improved meat breeds such as the Boer goats, whilst those keeping goats to sell as meat kept mainly indigenous breeds and crosses (of indigenous breeds and improved breeds).

Three goat production systems were being used by farmers in Beitbridge, namely: intensive, semi-intensive and extensive systems. The type of system was said to influence the weight of the goats

and hence influenced the profitability of the goats when they were being sold. Some farmers were engaged in the production and marketing of their own goats, whilst others were just involved in fattening and selling goats. Because goats are living creatures, they do not stop feeding until they are sold (and will continue to feed when they go to the new owner. Thus, the type of production system is critical as it determines the final weight and condition of the goats when they are sent for sale. The way each of the three production systems was operationalised in Beitbridge is described separately below.

**Intensive goat production systems:** Farmers using the intensive systems were said to be few. Some farmers were feeding their goats on locally produced feeds (usually a mixture of any of the following, lab lab, acacia pods, maize stover, Lucerne, banner grass, velvet bean, just to mention a few), whilst others were feeding them on commercial feeds and sometimes supplementing them with local feeds. Commercial feeds were said to be expensive and unavailable locally. For the local feeds, some farmers collected these from their fields and forests, whilst others grew their own fodder crops (e.g. Lucerne, banner grass and velvet bean).

Examples of farmers using this system were the newly formed goat companies and small scale commercial farmers with expensive goat breeds like the Boer goats. One commercial farmer who keeps Boer goats said that he purchased expensive pure breeds from South Africa and hence was not willing to let them roam around the community, where there was high risk of theft. Another example was the newly formed goat companies who decided to experiment with commercial and local feeds. The goats they were fattening were fed locally available feeds, whilst part of the stock was fed commercial feeds. The differently fed goats were involved in an experiment to compare the growth rates and profitability of goats fed on commercial feeds and those fed purely on locally available feeds. At the beginning of the experiment, the companies recorded the initial weights of the goats and thereafter continued to record the weights regularly to check on the growth of the goats.

***Semi -intensive system.*** Some farmers allowed their goats to feed on the range lands but also provided them with supplements when they came back home in the evenings. Such goats were said to be in much better health conditions as they got adequate nutrition through the supplements provided. One farmer, who was also one of the directors of the goat company in Fula community,

kept her own goats under a semi-intensive system and they were said to be healthier and weighed more than the goats that her company was keeping under the intensive system.

***Extensive Goat Production Systems:*** This was the dominant system in Beitbridge where livestock were made to find their feeds by themselves in the rangelands. For farmers with large numbers of goats, the goats were being headed by trained shepherd dogs. One farmer explained how the dogs were trained for such an important task. He said that usually when training dogs to herd the goats, farmers take puppies around three months of age. Each puppy is made to stay with the goats and is fed from the goat pen. He said that the puppy is not allowed to leave the goat pen at all and is supposed to go with the goats when they go to feed in the range lands. He said that, as time goes on, the dog will begin to think that it is actually one of the goats and it will develop a sense of belonging to the goat herd. The farmer said that the shepherd dog is usually fed at specific time periods, e.g. around lunch time and therefore it comes back with the goats at that time. He said that in the rangelands it is difficult for the goats to find water and when the dog brings them back, they get an opportunity to drink water.

Several challenges are faced when using shepherd dogs to herd goats, as discussions with farmers revealed. First, it becomes very complicated to introduce new goats to the herd. One farmer said that he once lost three goats that he had acquired. He said that he took the goats into the pen in the evening when the goat herd was back. The next morning, he only found heaps of meat as the dog killed them. He said that after that incident, he learnt that he should not drastically introduce the new goats to any herd, but must start by introducing them gradually – i.e. letting them stay in an area close to the herd first for some days until the shepherd dog gets used to them and accepts them as part of the family. Second, farmers reported incidents when goats were brought back but with wounds on their bodies. The farmers explained that such would be usually caused by a dog bite – they said that when a goat does not listen to instructions, the shepherd dog bites them, usually on the same spot. Third, farmers explained that sometimes the goats were stolen by thieves. One farmer said that even though the shepherd dogs were so good at protecting the goat herds from predators and unarmed people, sometimes armed thieves could kill them and steal the goats. One farmer once lost 56 goats when thieves killed his shepherd dog. Fourth, though extremely helpful,

in situations when a doe (or several does) give birth to more than one kid, shepherd dogs, will only be able to carry one kid home and the rest of the kids will be left in the rangelands.

Farmers said that goats being kept under the extensive system usually get inadequate nutrition as feeds were difficult to get, especially in the current year (2019) as there was a drought.

### Goat breeds found in Beitbridge

The 19 people who were interviewed had a total of 701 goats, with an average of goats 37 goats per respondent. The majority of goats owned by the respondents were crosses of improved meat breeds and indigenous breeds (Table 1). Other breeds that farmers had included Boer and Matebele goat breeds (Table 1).

Table 1: Goat Breeds in Beitbridge Communities

Goat Breeds	Number	%
Boer	48	6.85
Matebele	15	2.14
Cross between improved and indigenous	628	89.59
Other	10	1.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>100.00</b>

### Challenges that farmers faced in marketing their goats

Goat farmers faced several other challenges (Table 2). These are discussed separately below.

Table 2: Challenges faced by smallholder goat farmers in marketing their goats

Challenge	Yes		No	
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	Number	%	Number	%
Low prices	11	57.89	7	36.84
Foot and Mouth Restrictions	2	10.53	15	78.95
Stock Theft	2	10.53	14	73.68
No Formal Markets for Goats	5	26.32	12	63.16
Eaten by predators	3	15.79	14	73.68
Buyers refusing to pay after purchase	4	21.05	13	68.42
Expensive transport for sending the goats to the market	3	15.79	14	73.68
Shortages of feeds for the goats	6	31.58	11	57.89
Failing to find big buyers who buy in bulk	1	5.26	16	84.21

*Beitbridge District under foot and mouth disease quarantine hence farmers cannot access outside markets for live goats*

Beitbridge District was declared a Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) area, [together with several areas such as Mupfure area in Shamva, Rushinga, Chao Resettlement Area of Mazowe, Matepatepa, Mt Darwin, Centenary (excluding Mukumbura), Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe and Mudzi] through Statutory Instrument 250/2018 (Mphisa, 2019). The District, together with other Districts in Matabeleland South, has been put under quarantine to contain the outbreak of FMD. Farmers however felt that blanket quarantine was unfair as some areas and animals were said to be clean. Farmers involved in Boer goat production were the worse hit as many of them sell breeding stock. Due to restrictions, only live goats that were going for direct slaughter were allowed to be moved from Beitbridge to other areas whilst live animals for breeding purposes could not leave the District.

To deal with this problem, some farmers in Beitbridge had already started putting pressure on the government to conduct research and lift the blanket ban as some areas and livestock were not affected by FMD. Lifting the ban was said to enable goat farmers to access outside markets – e.g.

other areas in Zimbabwe, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates where Muslims are found in large numbers and have a huge demand for goat meat. Other farmers suggested that the government must enforce measures that help in preventing wildlife from being in contact with domestic animals (e.g. ensure farmers put fences around their farms) to prevent the spread of FMD.

### ***Lack of feeds for the goats***

Due to the drought that was being experienced in Beitbridge, some goats were starving to death, resulting in losses to the farmer. Farmers explained their difficulties in accessing good local feeds, and in situations where some farmers were growing fodder for sale, these were said to be very expensive. Commercial feeds were said to be expensive and out of reach for many farmers.

The lack of feed was one of the main reasons why most of the goats that were being sold were small and did not reach the required weights. In the case of the goat companies that were fattening goats for sale and keeping them under different regimes, the results after a month of the fattening process were disappointing (Table 3)

Table 3: Average weight gain for goats that were being fattened for sale under different management systems by Tusanani Company in Fula village

Diet	Initial Weight	Animal Live Weight Measurements (Weekly Intervals)			
	12/6/2019	19/6/19	26/6/19	3/7/2019	10/7/2019
Intensive Commercial Feeds	25.35	24.2	25.2	25.95	26.45
Free Range	23.17	22.83	24.00	24.17	24.42
Intensive Local Feeds	22.90	21.00	21.05	20.52	20.55

To deal with this problem, the goat farmers suggested that all farmers grow their own fodder crops. In areas where water was scarce, they suggested that farmers adopt rain water harvesting techniques to enable them to grow fodder crops.

### ***Lack of readily available formal markets for goats***

Farmers complained that auctions were taking place only once every month and hence there was no readily available formal market for selling goats. In other communities, the auctions had not yet introduced. To solve this problem, farmers suggested that the auctions be introduced in those areas where they were not yet introduced. They also suggested the need to introduce market linkages, especially with customers in town as these were many and were offering better prices as well.

### ***Stock theft***

Farmers in Beitbridge experienced the challenge of stock theft. This was especially a problem when animals were being allowed to graze on their own on rangelands. One farmer, as explained, above, once lost 56 goats. To deal with this problem, farmers suggested the use of shepherd dogs in combination with people. This combination would stop thieves from killing the shepherd dogs to steal the goats.

### ***Livestock eaten by predators***

Some livestock farmers explained experiencing losses after their goats were eaten by predators. As explained above, some farmers have begun to engage shepherd dogs to guard their goats while in the rangelands. Again, here farmers suggested the use of shepherd dogs as these were said to be good at protecting the goats from predators.

### ***Lack of goat production and marketing information (e.g. pricing, buyers and sellers etc)***

An analysis of the discussion of farmers under the Progressive Goat Farmers Whatsapp group, revealed a serious lack of information by farmers from various places. Farmers in this group share their knowledge and skills when it comes to marketing and production information. The discussions around production and goat marketing issues are shown in Figure 2.

#### ***Conversation 1: Farmers sharing market issues on the Whatsapp platform***

14/11/18, 12:16 - +263 71 514 7990 created group "Progressive Goat Farmers"

19/07/19, 08:26 - +263 77 229 1180: Latest goat meat prices

19/07/19, 08:27 - +263 77 277 5093: *Ndemuno here?* [are these prices in Zimbabwe?]

19/07/19, 08:32 - +263 77 229 1180: Yes these are bond prices at Koala

19/07/19, 08:39 - +263 71 458 0864: Inferior goat 13 x 20 = \$260 not bad. About US\$26

19/07/19, 08:49 - +263 77 320 0854: Are these live weights or carcass weights?

19/07/19, 08:50 - +263 71 458 0864: It must be carcass I guess

19/07/19, 08:51 - +263 77 229 1180: Carcass weights

19/07/19, 09:14 - +27 74 409 0913: What is the average carcass weight of local, Boer goats


19/07/19, 09:22 - +263 71 458 0864: Without *matumbu tsb kana* 5kg [Carcass weight without offals]

19/07/19, 09:24 - +263 77 277 5093: Turkey irinani here

19/07/19, 09:24 - +263 71 458 0864: With such a pricing structure you better sell a huge old goat coz there is no incentive for quality.

## **Conversation 2: Farmers sharing production information in the Progressive Goat Farmers Whataspp Platform**

19/07/19, 20:25 - +44 7411 701501: Guys I regret not being able to fully irrigate my bana grass... am told the crop is shooting/*ukuhluma/kubukira* without irrigation. This was going to be a big relief for supplement. By the way 3 bucks are kept zero grazing without any issues

19/07/19, 20:27 - +27 74 409 0913: Zero grazing. How are you sustaining them? I need to get a buck that will be maintained like a 

19/07/19, 20:28 - +27 74 409 0913: How are costs of zero grazing one buck per month

19/07/19, 20:28 - +44 7411 701501: Bana grass, Lucerne and any other materials from garden really.

19/07/19, 20:30 - +44 7411 701501: I will say almost nothing /minimal to be honest unless if one goes for commercial ones.

19/07/19, 20:30 - +44 7411 701501: We have about 8 or so luceanea trees, a bit of moringa, then those that I mentioned above

19/07/19, 20:32 - +27 74 409 0913: You have the basic infrastructure. For me it will everything from pocket if it's zero grazing for now

19/07/19, 20:37 - +44 7411 701501: Basic infrastructure like what? Nothing major, small garden fenced, in your case a well and a few beds if each then you can try



19/07/19, 20:40 - +27 74 409 0913: How small? I mean the garden which will accommodate a buck or two 12 months a year

19/07/19, 20:47 - +44 7411 701501: They don't eat as much as we think to be honest. Am hoping to get a few pictures and you will see the body condition

19/07/19, 21:06 - +27 74 409 0913: Thank you

Figure 2: Excerpts from WhatsApp conversations by farmers on the Progressive Goat Farmers WhatsApp group

Looking at the conversations on the group, it was clear that farmers lack critical production and marketing information for goats. Production issues that farmers were discussing included: a) the different goat breeds available and their characteristics; and how the breeds are supposed to be managed. Some farmers in the group accused others of weakening the performance of expensive breeds (such as Boer goats) through pampering; b) different fodder crops, their nutritional value and their management practices; and c) goat diseases and how they can be treated – just to mention a few. Marketing issues that farmers were sharing on the platform included: prices of goat meat at different markets; prices of breeding stock for different breeds; others were buying and selling goats on the platform too – both for breeding and for meat.

To deal with this issue, farmers suggested that Agritex and the Government Veterinary Department should train them on goat diseases and how these could be treated. The farmers also needed more information about these diseases as well. The two departments could share written materials as well so that farmers become aware of the different diseases and how they can be treated.

### ***Lack of customers who buy goats in bulk locally***

Farmers complained that it was difficult to find buyers who wanted to buy large numbers of goats in Beitbridge. Such bulk buyers could only be found in far areas like Bulawayo and Masvingo and this posed transport challenges as in many cases farmers were to meet the transport costs. Farmers suggested that abettors must open branches in Beitbridge so that they can buy in bulk from farmers.

### **Market channels used by farmers and the challenges faced**

Farmers in Beitbridge utilised various market channels for selling their goats including: Butcheries, schools, traders (some who sell in South Africa and offer high prices for the goats), local auctions, local communities and processors (Figure 3). Selling products in more than one channel, like what most farmers were doing is called multi-channel marketing. Farmers faced different challenges as they used the different channels. These are discussed separately under each channel.

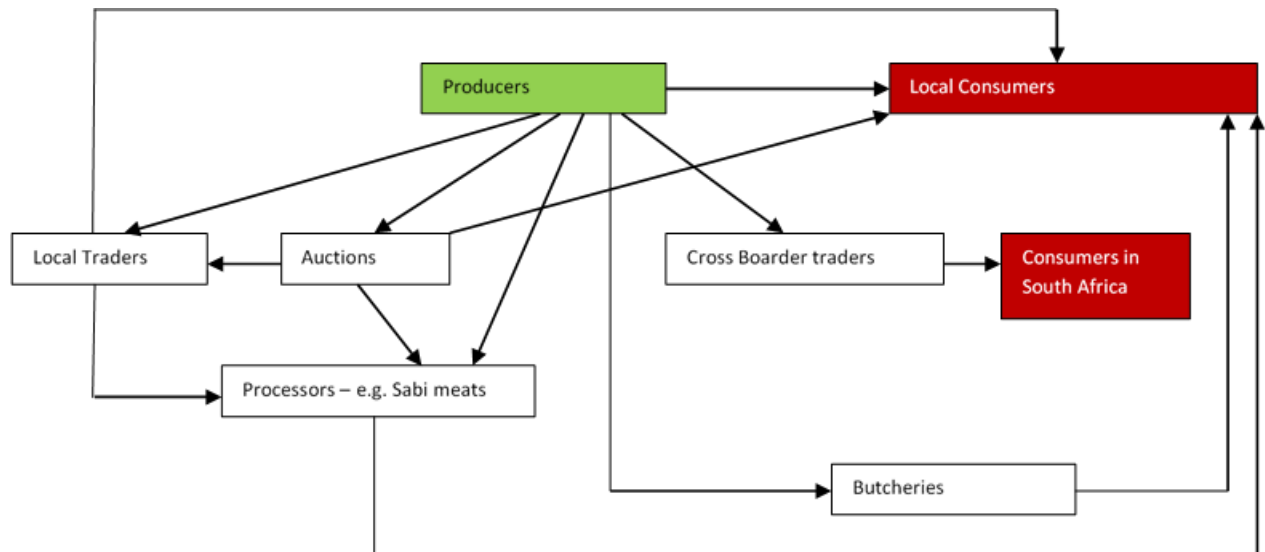


Figure 3. Channels used for marketing goats by farmers in Beitbridge

The majority of the respondents had ‘local community’ and ‘Butcheries’ as part of their main channels for selling goats (Table 4, Figure 4). Butcheries were chosen because of the high prices they were said to offer, and local communities were chosen because of the opportunity for farmers to negotiate prices with buyers.

Table 4: Market channels that were used by respondents in marketing their goats

Market Channel	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
Butcheries	10	52.6	9	47.4
Traders	7	36.8	12	63.2
Abattoirs	1	5.3	18	94.7
Schools	9	47.4	10	52.6
Local Auctions	8	42.1	11	57.9
Local Community	16	84.2	3	15.8
Local supermarkets	1	5.3	18	94.7

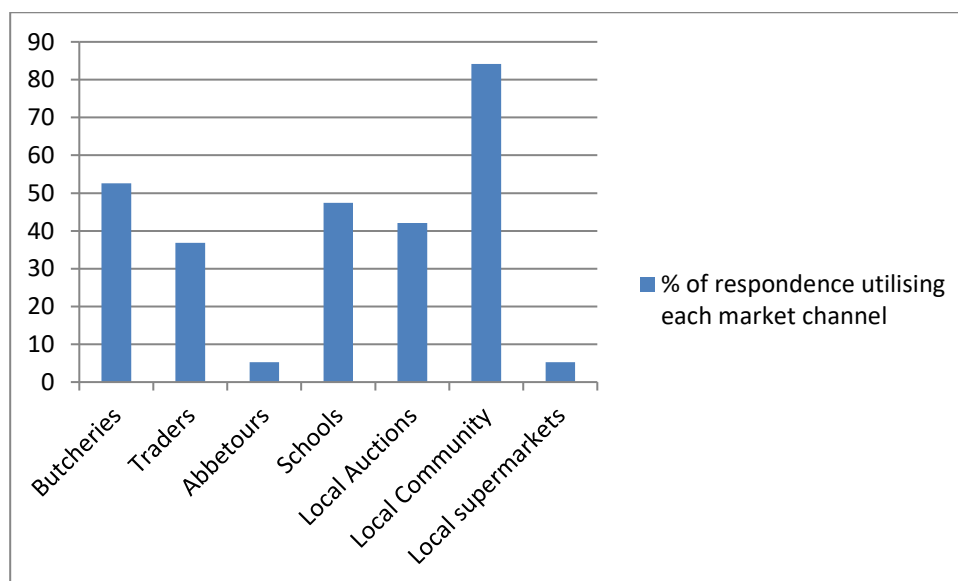


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents utilizing each market channel

When asked what market channels they preferred, respondents 26% of respondents chose Butcheries and the local community as their preferred market channels (Table 5).

Table 5: Market channels that farmers preferred

Which market channel do you prefer	Frequency	Percent
Butcheries	5	26.3

traders/ middlemen	1	5.3
Schools	2	10.5
Auctions	2	10.5
local market - sale to community members	5	26.3
local supermarkets	1	5.3
Canteens	1	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### ***Livestock auctions***

Auctions were said to be organised once every month in some communities e.g. those in ward 11. In other communities, the auctions were yet to be introduced (e.g. those in ward 3). At the auctions, goats were sold alongside cattle. The auctioneers were said to be mostly officials of the Rural District Council (RDC) who charged 12% levy on the final price of the goat when sold (According to respondents, average goats were selling for about USD25 or 350 Rands and this meant the council would get USD3 or 42 Rands when an average goat was sold). Various stakeholders were said to be involved in the auction including the RDC and the Vet Department. Before each auction, the government Veterinary Department had a role of inspecting the animals for diseases and authorising the auction to proceed or not. For the Department to do the inspection, the RDC was supposed to pay a small amount of money (RTGS10/beast) to the Vet Department. After buying the animals, buyers of goats are required to pay a once off payment of 10 RTGS (for all the goats purchased) to get a permit to move them to their own farms – in addition, those intending to send them for slaughter were also required to pay an extra 2RTGS to the Veterinary Department for each beast to be slaughtered.

42% of respondents were utilising the auctions as their market channels (Table 4) – meaning the auction was not so popular with local communities. Only 10% of respondents chose auctions as their preferred market channel (Table 5, Figure 4). Many respondents were unhappy with the prices they were getting at auctions – they regarded them as being too low. They complained that at the auctions, no scale was used resulting in big animals being sold cheaply and also there was no

infrastructure for goats. Many farmers said they were now avoiding taking their animals to auctions because of the low prices. From what they were saying, only a few buyers frequented these auctions and because of the limited competition, farmers felt that they were being ripped off at the auctions. Farmers also complained about the lack of facilities for handling goats at the auctions.

To deal with the problem of low prices, farmers suggested the need for them to speak with one voice – e.g. by forming associations/ unions. Such unions could assist farmers in seeking buyers and advertising goats for farmers.

### ***Traders***

Many respondents did not prefer this market channel mainly because of the low prices that the traders were offering farmers at the farm gate. Traders also frequented local auctions and one farmer explained that sometimes they intercept farmers who will be going to the auction and negotiate to purchase farmers' goats before the auction. After purchasing the goats from farmers, the traders would sell to various consumers e.g. those in towns (who were said to offer high prices for the goats), to butcheries, abettors and processors.

However, in rare cases, some traders were said to sell goats in South Africa. Such cross-border-traders were said to offer farmers higher prices, as high as 400 Rands/ goat. In South Africa, the traders were said to sell the goats for prices as high as 1200 Rands/ goat because of the huge demand for goats there. Because of the high prices they were offering, some farmers felt that these cross- border traders were the best market channel for their goats.

The traders were said to smuggle the animals to SA 'via the bush', and this was said to be a dangerous venture. The traders were sometimes ambushed by police/ soldiers manning the border post whilst in transit to South Africa. If caught, the traders risked losing all their animals and being arrested. Such traders when travelling to SA were said to be armed. The researcher was informed that they were also suspicious and one had to be careful when visiting them at their homestead. When the researcher got an opportunity to visit the homestead of one such trader, she was told that her vehicle was not supposed to stop on the way but go straight to the traders' homestead. Stopping to see someone on the way to the trader's home was said to be suspicious and could put the visitor

in great danger when he or she arrived at the trader's homestead. When she asked why this was so, she was informed that the trader would assume that you were trying to gather information about him/her from other members of the community and were probably moving with the police (or soldiers) and were coming to investigate and arrest him/her.

Dealing with the cross-border traders was a difficult task as these were on the wanted police list. To deal with this challenge, farmers suggested that the government takes measures to ensure that official trade in goats is promoted between the two countries – e.g. by lifting the blanket FMD quarantine for areas that do not have the disease in Beitbridge.

### ***Butcheries***

This was one of the most preferred market channels (Figure 4, Table 5). When asked why they preferred selling their goats to butcheries, respondents said that they offered higher prices. The butcheries used scales in many cases and paid according to the weight of the goats. The only challenge that farmers faced with this channel was the limited number of butcheries. Only a few goats could be sold using this channel because of the limited demand.

### ***Local community***

This was one of the most preferred market channels by respondents. This involved selling the goats to local community members for either breeding purposes or for meat (community members included staff working at local schools as well). Those who preferred this market channel did so because they could negotiate prices unlike at the auction where negotiations were not possible. Challenges faced when selling in this channel included: that some people in the communities bought goats on credit, and sometimes refused to pay for goats when farmers were demanding their payments; low prices for goats even after negotiations. To deal with this problem, it was suggested that farmers could purchase their scales and weigh their animals before sale so that they negotiate for higher prices. Suggestions were also made for farmers to desist from selling their livestock, especially in desperate situations when they were in dire need of cash, to avoid being taken advantage of by buyers.

Table 6: A summary of challenges that farmers faced in marketing their goats and the suggested solutions

Challenges	What can be done to solve them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No readily available formal markets as auctions happen once every month. In some communities, the auction has not yet been introduced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to organise farmers into groups or associations so that they can speak with one voice.</li> <li>Need to establish market linkages and market the goats in big towns</li> <li>Need to introduce goat auctions in communities where they have not yet been introduced</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low prices – especially at auctions – at the shows, they do not use scale.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To solve this problem, farmers need to speak with one voice. Need for farmers to have associations/ unions or groups that can also help to look out for buyers and advertise their goats</li> <li>At farm gate, farmers can buy a scale and use it to weigh their goats before sell – this can help them to negotiate for more prices</li> <li>Farmers to do what they can so they become price makers</li> <li>Farmers to avoid selling their animals when they are in urgent need of cash. This makes buyers to take advantage of them especially when selling at the farm gate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FMD making it difficult for farmers to sell their goats outside of the district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government to conduct research and lift the ban in areas where the diseases are not available. This will enable goat farmers to access markets outside of the District – e.g. other districts in Zimbabwe, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates where Muslims are found and have a huge demand for goat meat</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of feeds resulting in low weights for the goats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmers to adopt water harvesting techniques and grow fodder crops (e.g. velvet bean, banner grass and Lucerne). Commercial feeds are too expensive</li> </ul>

- Failing to find bulk buyers in Beitbridge. This posed transport challenges. For instance, it is expensive to send our animals to abattoirs as these are located too far away
- Lack of information on animal diseases and how these must be treated. Farmers also had problems accessing some drugs as these were not locally available and had to be sourced from South Africa
- There is need for abattoirs to open branches in Beitbridge. At the moment they are located too far away
- Need training on how to treat animal diseases
- Need information from Agritex and Vet on how to handle the diseases

### **The case study: experiences of the goat marketing companies in marketing their goats**

With assistance from the International Livestock and Research Institute (ILRI) and its partner, CARITAS in Beitbridge, local goat farmers decided to form their own companies so as to engage in goat production and marketing. The three companies were all formed and registered in early 2019 (see an example in Figure 6 of the certificate of incorporation for one of the companies). The companies were Kondelela Livestock (Private) Limited, Fhattalamatshelo Agro-Products (Private) Limited and Tusanani Livestock (Private) Limited.





Figure 5: A certificate of one of the newly formed goat companies - Kondelela in Beitbridge

Fhattalamatshelo Company was based in Chomunangana Village in Ward 11. The company consisted of five young male directors, two of whom were present and actively involved in the business whilst three had left the village. The second company, Kondelela was based in Masulungane Village in Ward 11 and consisted of seven women directors all of whom were based in the community. The third company, Tusanani Livestock Company (Private) Limited was based in Fula Village of Ward 3 and consisted of a mixture of men and women directors who were all based in the village.

### ***Capacity development for company directors***

After the formation of the companies, the ILRI and CARITAS facilitated several trainings to build the capacities of the company directors. Topics covered during the training included: livestock and meat grading, record keeping, ration formulation, post-harvest handling and marketing.

### ***Purchase of the goats for fattening***

Upon formation, the companies got loans to purchase goats from ILRI. Each company got a loan of about 2500 USD. Each company purchased the goats, at a local auction arranged by ILRI where sellers were told to bring goats that were aged between 3 and 9 months. IRLI was buying the goats at a price of \$1/kg. Farmers were told that the ceiling price was 25USD and it was up to the farmer to bring their goats if they were more than 25kg for the company would not pay for the extra kg. The young age was to ensure that the goats could be fattened and also to ensure the meat was of high quality. Using their loans, the companies, in total purchased a total of 300 goats.

### ***The management systems and the performance of the goats***

Since this was their first time to be involved in goat fattening, ILRI advised the three companies to experiment with different feeding systems so as learn about each of them. The companies therefore experimented with different systems namely intensive system using local feeds, intensive system using commercial feeds and extensive system/ free range (only one company tried this system). Commercial feeds were donated by ILRI – each company got 20bags of goat commercial feeds. The companies were required to find their local feeds. The companies recorded the initial weights of the goats and continued to monitor the weights over time. The companies were fortunate to get students who came on attachment and these helped in the record keeping and monitoring of the goat weights.

Each company was to look for local feeds as these were locally available. Each company was supposed to fatten the goats in 45 days after which they were to sell them. The overall performance of the goats for all companies was disappointing. For instance, the intensive local feeds resulted in an overall loss of weight - goats kept for fattening by Fhattalamatshelo Company lost an average of about 2kg per goat after the fattening process (Table 7). When discussing with one of the students who was on attachment on why this was so, he mentioned that this was mainly because the feeds were inadequate in the first place. Also he said that the smaller goats lost a lot of weight

because of bullying. They were all being fed in the same feeding troughs and the bigger goats chased away smaller goats during feeding.

The feed being given to the goats was too little – goats are supposed to eat feed that is 3% of their weight – according to the average weight, the goats were supposed to be given 600g of feed – but now they were being given 200g of feed. The goats at Tusanani were bought at around 30USD – they had an average weight of about 23 – those commercially fed goats had gained up to 31 kg of weight – a gain of 8kg – this gain is more than that obtained from the farmers in the other villages. The farmers were giving the goats very good attention but the feeds were just not enough for the locally fed goats. The goats being fed on the local feeds had overall lost weight; this was mainly because many of them were small and had lost weight due to bullying and also adaptation. The farmers ultimately decided to separate the goats so that the small ones could get enough feed.

Table 7: Weight gain for goats kept by Fhattalamatshelo Company under the intensive system using local and commercial feeds

	<b>Initial weight (22/05/19)</b>	<b>6/20/2019</b>	<b>6/27/2019</b>	<b>6/4/2019</b>	<b>7/11/2019</b>
Local feeds	22.37	20.64	20.54	20.65	20.4
Commercial Feeds	23.89	23.19	23.24	23.45	25.79

### ***The marketing of the goats***

By the time the study was being conducted, the three companies had a total of 300 goats all ready for selling and they were now past the 45- day period and were now almost approaching 60 days. By this time the commercial feed was finished and it was now becoming very difficult to feed the goats. The goats were at different stages though – some were big and others were small. The three companies were running out of feed and some goats were beginning to lose weight due to lack of

feed. After realising the situation, a meeting was called for by CARITAS to discuss and agree on how the goats would be marketed. This meeting came about after the new statutory instruments that banned the use of foreign currency in local transactions - this was a big challenge as the companies had bought all their goats in USD. Besides, in Beitbridge, almost everyone was selling their goods and services in Rands and no-one was using RTGS money anymore.

To come up with a price of their goats, the farmers were asked to consider the buying prices of the goats and all the costs incurred including labour, water and feeds so that they would make sure they did not make a loss. They were also advised to take into account the high quality of their meat as the goats were young and tender. After the meeting, the representatives of the three goat companies, together with staff from CARITAS, decided to visit several butchers in Beitbridge to find out if they wanted to buy their goats.

The first port of call for the Company representatives was SPAR. At the beginning of their goat projects, a representative from CARITAS was asked to discuss with the manager at SPAR Beitbridge who had promised to buy all the 300 goats at once when ready for the market. Now when they got to SPAR, the representatives heard the manager for SPAR had travelled and had gone to South Africa for a funeral. Efforts to try and reach him were fruitless. The representatives then decided to start fresh discussions with the acting manager who had no idea about the previous discussions. The acting manager informed them that SPAR had only capacity to buy only 20 goats per week, and would only pay for the cold-dressed mass (Figure 6). He told the representatives that they were supposed to meet their transport costs as well (Table 8). The representatives of the companies, during the discussions, looked uneasy and lacked confidence and the CARITAS staff continued to respond to the manager when he asked questions about the goats – the numbers, sizes and prices etc. This is probably because the representatives were participating in such discussions for the first time, and were also unsure about the details of goats for the rest of the companies – in this particular case, they were trying to sell all the 300 goats that the companies owned together. After the discussions, the team realised that they were going to make a loss. Besides, they would need to find more feed for the goats as SPAR was not going to buy all the goats at once. Immediately they decided to visit other butcheries and contact other buyers elsewhere.



Figure 6: One member of the group (a representative from Tusanani Company) and the SPAR representative during the visit to explore an opportunity for SPAR to buy the company goats

The outcomes of the discussions with the different buyers are presented in Table 8. The group also called abattoirs outside Beitbridge (e.g. Caswell Meats in Masvingo and another abettor in Bulawayo) and discovered that they were willing to buy all the goats – the prices they were giving however, were quite low although the farmers were to meet all the transport costs for transporting the goats to the abettors.

Table 8: Buyers that goat companies visited in trying to sell their goats and the findings

Name of organization	Their conditions and prices
Beitbridge	They were willing to buy 20 goats per week (they said they preferred to buy only a few goats per time so that the meat remained fresh – said the meat turns darker if it stayed in the cold room for a long time). SPAR would only pay for the cold-dressed mass and farmers would have to meet the transport and slaughtering costs for
SPARs	

the goats. SPAR also said that they were willing to pay cash depending on the amount they would have received per day in sales.

#### Busy Curve

The shop was willing to buy 10 goats per week (due to lack of space in the cold room) but could increase its capacity to 15 goats per week if the quality was good and the meat was selling fast. In negotiations that followed, the manager agreed to pay a price of RTGS19/kg for the cold dressed mass. The farmers were to meet the cost of transportation of the goats to the abettor, and the manager agreed to pay the slaughter fees. The manager on this day did not have any goat meat in stock and was eagerly waiting for the farmers to bring the goats.

#### Jayas Restaurant

This restaurant was frequented by Muslims and the owner was Indian. The owner refused to come out of her house and told her worker that she didn't have money to buy goats. At this restaurant, *sadza*<sup>1</sup> with goat meat was selling at a higher price than *sadza* with beef - *sadza* with goat/chicken/ fish was selling at 25Rands/plate; *sadza* and beef was 20Rands/ plate

The visit to potential buyers in Beitbridge revealed that none of the buyers were willing to buy all the 300 goats at once. However, phone calls to abattoirs in Masvingo and Bulawayo showed that these were willing to buy as many goats as possible – the abattoirs however were offering low prices, and farmers were supposed to meet the costs of transporting the goats to the abattoirs. After the discussion with a trader in Bulawayo who was offering a slightly high price (in Foreign Currency), it was agreed that the companies further pursue this buyer and try and negotiate with him so he could buy all the 300 goats at once. By the time these discussions were done, the companies had already run out of feeds and the condition of the goats was deteriorating due to insufficient food.

### ***Final selling of the goats***

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<sup>1</sup>Zimbabwe's staple food – a thick porridge made from maize flour

When the Bulawayo trader came and saw the goats, he proposed to only select the big goats from the three companies and buy these using Rands. The company directors, with guidance from CARITAS, refused to sell only a few goats. When the directors refused to change their position, the trader left. The situation of the goats was further deteriorating and as CARITAS was informed about this, they negotiated with a butcher in Beitbridge who asked the companies to bring all their goats and only selected the big goats that he wanted and paid for those in Rands. The remaining goats were sold to Sabi Meats in Chiredzi and the companies had to meet the transportation costs – they used the Rands they got from selling the goats in Beitbridge to meet the transport costs. For payment, the farmers received the money in RTGS transfer and Eco-cash. Overall, they made a loss and were unable, after the sale to pay back the loans they received from ILRI. The companies decided to use the little money they received in RTGS to start purchasing new goats for the next fattening project.

## **Discussion**

The data provided above has clearly shown that despite improvements that have taken place in the marketing of goats (e.g. the introduction of the goat auctions), goat farmers in Beitbridge still face many marketing challenges. The challenges span across the whole value chain from input supply, production and marketing of the goats and these are related and intertwined. When it came to input supply for goat production, farmers faced several challenges as they lacked feeds – the commercial feeds were said to be too expensive, and local feeds were hard to find. The farmers faced many production challenges including a lack of knowledge of the different breeds and how they are supposed to be managed, lack of knowledge about fodder crops and their management systems, theft of livestock, and threats of predators and diseases. Marketing challenges were many and included: no readily available formal markets for goats, low goat prices, farmers failing to access markets outside of Beitbridge District because of the FMD quarantine, failure to find bulk buyers locally, and lack of marketing information.

The study has clearly shown the inseparable relationship between challenges related to input supply, production and marketing of goats. From the case study, it is clear that the type of system used for producing the goats had a strong bearing on the prices that farmers finally fetched for

their goats. In goat fattening systems, the local feeds resulted in an overall loss of weight by the goats for all three companies – and this caused the companies to make losses. It is important to realise that goat farmer's will only stop incurring the costs of feeds after the goats are purchased. The marketing efforts must ensure that goats will have enough feed all the time before sale. The companies had bought enough feed for the goats for a fixed period and when the goats were not bought after this period, the situation deteriorated as there was no more feed for the goats.

For farmers producing goats for sale, the issue of feeds for the goats cannot be over-emphasized. Farmers need to choose the best system and ensure that adequate feeds are available before embarking on goat production ventures. When adequate feeds have been sourced, the issue of the death of kids due to lack of feeds will be eliminated. When well organised, farmers will benefit when their does give birth to more than one kid as this boosts their stock numbers. There is a need for various opportunities to be explored to save the kids from starving to death.

### ***Goat marketing in Beitbridge and the marketing mix***

As already mentioned, marketing is a process of engaging customers and building customer relationships in order to create customer value to make a profit in return (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). To create effective relationships, sellers (like the goat producers) must look for and engage buyers, identify their needs, design good market offerings, set prices for them, promote them, and store and deliver them. After understanding the different customers and their needs, effective marketers then plan on addressing the elements of the marketing mix so as to create value and make profits. To understand goat marketing efforts by smallholder farmers in Beitbridge, I will critically look at how they addressed each of the elements of the marketing mix.

### ***The product: the goats***

Looking at the case study presented above, it is clear that farmers in Beitbridge did not understand the needs of their customers clearly. The companies aimed to produce goats with quality meat to sell at high prices. By looking at their marketing processes up to the final selling of the goats, it is clear the company did not realise their objective of making huge profits. Although buyers like Busy Curve had an interest in the quality of the meat, all of the buyers were mostly interested in the size of the goats – and they wanted to pay for the cold-dressed mass. The trader from Bulawayo



was only interested in buying the big goats that would also give him more meat when selling them. This clearly shows that the companies had little understanding of the needs of the customers. The companies, when embarking on the fattening project, were guided by the product-concept-orientation (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). This orientation assumes that consumers will favour products that offer the most in quality, performance, and innovative features. Guided by this concept, marketers focus on strategies that make continuous product improvements. According to (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018) too much focus on the company's products can also lead to marketing challenges as the needs of customers are ignored. This was a key reason why the marketing efforts for the goat companies were unsuccessful.

To understand the needs of the customers, market research should have been done before the goat companies embarked on the goat production process. In hindsight, the companies rather, would have focused on buying young goats that were bigger in size and weight to ensure that they would yield more money when sold. The smaller goats would have been eliminated.

Market research could have helped the companies to know the channels they were going to use for marketing their goats. Due to limited knowledge, the companies planned to sell to one client, SPA Beitbridge. However, it later turned out that SPA would only buy a limited number of goats per week. The goat companies ended up using multi-channel marketing and sold to butcheries and processors. A careful understanding of available marketing channels could have helped the companies to think about multi-channel marketing in advance.

### ***Pricing of goats***

Determining the price of products is critical to marketing efforts as explained already in chapter 3. The price determines whether the consumer will buy the product or not and also determines the profitability of the business. The price must take into account all the costs incurred in production and should be seen as value for money by the customers. Goat farmers in Beitbridge however, were price takers and not makers and this was one of the reasons why the companies, for instance, made huge losses after selling their goats. At auctions (a formal market), negotiations are eliminated and the sellers do not have control over the final price of their goats. Farmers therefore are mere price takers and not makers – and in the case of Beitbridge, they got low prices for their

goats, and many farmers shunned this channel. The low prices at the auctions were also partly because of fewer buyers who were frequenting the auctions thereby providing only little competition. To get higher prices, farmers should consider participating in much bigger auctions like those taking place in the province where more buyers are likely to come and compete (Gipson, 1994).

Looking at the case study, the farmers were price takers everywhere where they sold their goats, and they were not happy with the prices they received of their goats. There is therefore a strong need for the farmers to take steps to ensure that they become price makers and not takers. Efforts such as selling to niche markets, e.g. selling the goat meat in healthy shops where health-conscious customers are willing to pay higher prices. Even though several health concerns have been raised on red meat, such concerns do not apply to goat meat. Goat meat is said to compare favourably with chicken in terms of calories and protein, but it is lower in total and saturated fat, making goat meat superior (Luginbuhl, 2007)

### ***Promotion of the goats***

Promotion of products is critical to get the product and its features known to customers. Looking at the marketing process by the goat companies (provided in the case study), it is clear that the promotion was done way too late, and little effort was put in letting people know the product and its quality. The companies waited until the goats were ready for sale and then started contacting the buyers in Beitbridge and beyond – this was too late as the situation of the goats became dire after the companies ran out of feeds. A lesson learnt from the case study is that it is critical that efforts to promote the product be made way before the goats are ready so that customers are secured (either through contracts) in advance. Another lesson from the case study is that verbal contracts are unreliable – it is critical to secure the market by having a written contract that both customers and sellers can rely on.

To improve competition at auctions, the auctioneers can also make an effort to promote the goat auctions to customers even beyond Beitbridge – where more customers come to the auctions; this creates more competition and can result in the farmers getting higher prices for their goats. It is however important to realise that the Blanket quarantine that was imposed on Beitbridge for FMD

is a hindrance to promotion efforts to lure customers from out of the district to come, especially for those looking for breeding stock. Farmers need to take the initiative to put pressure on the government to conduct studies for identifying areas that are affected by the disease and lift the ban for areas that are not affected. In addition, measures to contain and eradicate FMD must be taken into account. Such measures include (Syed & Graham. J, 2013):

- Encouraging farmers to fence their farms as well as fencing game areas to prevent contact between domestic livestock and wildlife populations, especially in areas where FMD is known to circulate.
- Rapid culling of infected animals and appropriate disposal of their carcasses, which is particularly important in non-endemic areas.
- Restriction on movements of animals back onto premises which have been infected.

### ***The place***

This was a critical element in the marketing of goats. In the case study, it became clear that most bulk buyers (e.g.) that could buy the goats in bulk were located at far distances (e.g. Masvingo, Chiredzi and Bulawayo). Since the companies wanted to sell their goats to one buyer, knowing about the various transportation options and negotiating in advance for cheaper transport could have helped to reduce costs. Efforts to secure cheaper transportation could include; negotiating the costs and developing a contract with the transporter in advance; or negotiating with customers in advance for prices that ensure that they realise their profits.

A critical look at the case study shows a lack of understanding of the marketing channels and hence there was no strategy for managing the multi-channels to enhance synergy. Companies initially were planning to sell their goats using one channel but ended up selling them using multi-channels. There was no channel strategy as the channels were just chosen randomly as the farmers became desperate as the condition of the goats was rapidly deteriorating.

### ***The people***

The people who offer a service/ product to final customers are critical as they can make them buy or not buy. Discussions between the company representatives and the SPA Staff showed that the

company representatives lacked the skill and confidence to sell. It is critical that going forward, the companies' capacity to market and sell their goats be built up.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study and these are discussed separately below:

- Challenges that farmers face with goat marketing are numerous and are found along the entire goat value chain –a value chain approach must be employed in efforts to address these challenges.
- Goat marketing efforts that fail to embrace and take into consideration the marketing mix elements are bound to fail.
- Careful planning about channels to use for selling goats is important so that farmers are aware of the cost implications involved in the different channels. With multi-channel marketing, farmers will be able to reach many customers seamlessly and efficiently.
- Though local community auctions create a local formal market for goats, they offer far lower prices that most farmers shun them.
- Several recommendations can be made from this study to improve smallholder goat marketing in Beitbridge and in the smallholder sector elsewhere in Zimbabwe. The recommendations for farmers include. The need to
- make efforts to become price makers rather than their current position of price taking. This can be done by them embarking on value-adding activities for their products. Value addition can be done through for instance producing and selling biltong rather than fresh meat or live goats. Biltong is an expensive dried meat that can be easily stored. By selling biltong (or other value-added products), farmers will be focusing on a certain segment of the market (niche marketing) and hence they become price makers rather than price takers. Farmers can also become price makers by, for instance, promoting and selling goat meat as a healthy meat to healthy conscious customers through healthy shops. Healthy-conscious customers will pay a lot of money to eat healthy food – and hence can be an important segment to target when marketing goats.
- venture into goat contract farming to secure markets for their goats. This involves farmers negotiating with various buyers in advance, and signing contracts (rather than oral promises like what the goat companies did when they spoke with the SPAR manager). Looking for

a market when the goats are ready for slaughter like what the goat companies did, is a recipe for disaster.

- explore online marketing channels to reach a wide range of customers e.g. those in areas outside of the district and outside the country like those in the Arab countries. A huge market for goats exists in Arab countries, for instance, and farmers in FMD clean areas should be able to access such markets to sell their goats. Improvements in ICTs have already occurred and many farmers can access the internet through their mobile phones. Such ICT developments should be taken advantage of as well.
- join hands and market their products collaboratively to gain market power. When they are selling jointly, the farmers will be able to speak with one voice and hence will be able to determine the prices of goats. On the other hand, when working jointly, farmers will be able to take advantage of economies of scale – this helps them to buy their inputs cheaply.
- embrace fodder production as part of their goat production ventures. This will help them to reduce the costs of feeds and ensure that their goats have enough to eat until they are sold. Various fodder plants are available in Beitbridge District already and farmers need to actively seek knowledge on how these can be produced. To complement this, farmers need to consider soil and water conservation techniques such as rainwater harvesting techniques as water is a critical resource for livestock and fodder production. and
- identify and participate in bigger regional auctions that have opportunity to provide them with better prices for their goats

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