

Chapter 11

Communal Livestock Farming Practice and Climate Change: The Perception From an Indigenous Ethnic Group in Namibia

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is undeniably a concern for many countries including Namibia. Although Namibia contributes relatively few emissions as compared to many sub-Saharan African countries and the Global North, the environmental impact is severely felt. There is a symbiotic relationship between the natural environment sustainability and the livelihood of communal farming settlers living in Namibia. This chapter narrates the perception of two communal farmers in the Okei settlement from a cultural perspective on their adaptation and mitigation to climate change. To achieve the desired objective of this chapter, a narrative research analysis was applied to explore the perception of communal farmers to climate change in their natural settings. The findings in this chapter show that cultural farming practices played a significant role in adaptation to climate change. This chapter provides guides to promote and sustain the core framework which supports communal farming practices in Namibia.

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change is having a profound impact on communal livestock farming around the world. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events are affecting the availability of food and water for livestock, as well as the health and productivity of the herds. These impacts can be particularly challenging for communal livestock farmers, who often have limited resources and limited access to markets and technology. To maintain their livelihoods and the well-being of their communities, communal livestock farmers must be able to adapt to the changing climate. This requires a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of climate change, as well as the development and implementation of effective strategies for reducing risk, improving resilience, and maintaining productivity in the face of a changing climate.

One of the biggest and driest nations in sub-Saharan Africa, Namibia exhibits considerable climate variability due to its frequent and prolonged droughts, irregular and unpredictable rainfall patterns, fluctuating temperatures, and water scarcity. These adverse environmental conditions have been aggravated by the impact of climate change. On the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Index (ND-GAIN index), Namibia is ranked 104 out of 181 countries in 2020. The low score in the ND-GAIN index implies that Namibia is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. The cause of the low index score is attributed to political, geographical, and social factors (World Bank, 2021). Climate change refers to a long-term shift in average temperature and weather patterns which are mostly caused by emissions. It is a long-term change in the average weather patterns that have traditionally characterised a specific region (United Nations, n.d.). It is frequently used to describe the rise in global temperatures and changes in weather patterns caused by human activity, such as the use of fossil fuels and deforestation. Studies have shown that in the foreseeable future, climate change will have a negative impact on livestock farming (Gerber et al., 2013; Rojas-Downing et al. 2017 & Thornton et al. 2009). Communal farming practices are sustainable but are not immune to the impact of climate change. Thus, communal farmers are vulnerable to climate change.

In communal animal farming, the animals are owned by the community as a whole, rather than by individual families. The community appoints a herdsman or a group of herders to look after the animals, and they are responsible for grazing, watering, and caring for the animals. The practice of communal animal farming has played an important role in preserving traditional cultural practices and maintaining social cohesion within sub-tribe communities. A case study of this type of farming practices is in Otjinene village. This village is located in the Omaheke region of Namibia, which is situated in the eastern part of the country. The village is situated

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