14. FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY OF GAME CROPPING IN MACHAKOS DISTRICT, KENYA

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SUMMARY

This chapter reports on the financial returns of game cropping, which is one of several options for utilization of wildlife. The case study presents data on Game Ranching Ltd. (GRL), a game ranch in Machakos district, Kenya. Investments and operational costs of game cropping are presented for the financial year 1994. In addition, the contribution of the different species to the company result is indicated. Utilization of wildlife is put into perspective relative to livestock ranching, the current type of land use in semi-arid areas of Kenya. The compatibility of game cropping with livestock ranching is discussed.

Besides wildlife cropping, GRL is involved in livestock ranching, the production of hay, tourism and education. Two-third of the gross income is wildlife related. The cropping operation is not limited to the ranch itself. In 1994, the major part of the venison production was derived from neighbouring livestock ranches in the district. Game cropping is an additional source of income to these ranches and an opportunity to exert control over wildlife numbers. GRL is able to obtain a net benefit from game cropping which appears to be related to the following factors; the scale of the operation, the relatively high prices for the venison produced, the proximity

*Addresses Grootenhuis and Prins, see Chapter 6 and Chapter 5 respectively.

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to a well-established market in Nairobi and the accessibility of the terrain. Most of the income from game cropping is derived from a few species, namely Coke's hartebeest, zebra and wildebeest, which are abundant in the district. Giraffe and eland yield the highest income on a per-animal basis, but because of their low numbers their contribution to the overall ranch income is small.

Consumptive wildlife utilization offers a financially realistic opportunity for diversifying land use, in the current situation, mainly as an additional activity to livestock ranching. The present policy on wildlife in Kenya does not allow utilization to its full extent. Legalization of safari hunting and live animal sales, and improvement of the possibilities for marketing and export of products will increase the financial incentive to manage wildlife in a sustainable manner. For this to be achieved, it is extremely important that landholders have a guarantee of their wildlife use rights in the long-term.

INTRODUCTION

For much of human history, animals have served material needs for food, sinew and hides, a dependence which has played an important role in cultural and perhaps even biological evolution (Harding and Teleki, 1981; Prins, 1994). However, with escalating demand for land and changing attitudes towards wildlife, ecosystems are deteriorating rapidly and numbers of wild animals declining. Recent trends suggest that wild ungulates may regain some of their importance in an expanded economic role; commercial production of wildlife has earned respectability as an agricultural strategy (Hudson et al., 1989). This may be of significant importance for wildlife conservation. Wildlife utilization is viewed positively in the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN/UNEP/WWF, 1980) as a part of their global initiatives for sustainable development, and the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). In their view, conservation should be part of development rather than at odds with it. This approach offers chances to influence land use by redirecting tangible benefits to landholders, by stabilizing markets for wildlife products and by securing gene pools of species threatened in the wild (Hudson et al., 1989; Prins, 1994).

Within the framework of sustainable and consumptive use of wildlife resources, several modes of production can be distinguished: subsistence hunting, herding, ranching, farming (Hudson et al., 1989) and safari hunting (Hurt and Ravn, Chapter 15). Game ranching refers to the management of an assemblage of wild species on natural vegetation. It is an extensive land use type in which animals are harvested in the field. Game ranching may involve sport hunting, live animal sales and cropping. The primary objective of game cropping, studied in this paper, is to generate income through production of venison, hides and other wildlife products. Many species are suggested to be more efficient than domestic stock in climatic stressful environments or where certain endemic diseases are prevalent (Fairall, 1989; Grootenhuis and Olubayo, 1993). Supposedly, assemblages of wild ungulates make better use of the primary production, due to their specialized and complementary