

Bushmeat Training Development Workshop
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Bushmeat: Some Experiences from Tanzania

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The Bushmeat Crisis is Nothing New

The current discussions on bushmeat are seen by some as something new. However, the first concerns about the effects of bushmeat hunting and trade dates back to around 1900 when the country was under German rule. At that time it was observed that game was becoming less numerous and it was feared that extinction might occur in a not so distant future. Who bore responsibility was in the centre of a controversy.

The majority of people, including conservationists like Schillings and Schomburgk, were of the opinion that the widespread hunting of bushmeat by the rural population with all kind of traditional weapons was the main reason. The local newspaper “Deutsche Ostafrika Zeitung” gave them a forum to voice their opinion on the issues. The German settlers were not pleased at all that the administration held the opposite view. The extension of modern agriculture, commercial exploitation of wildlife for ivory, skins and feathers and little controlled hunting by the settlers were mainly held responsible. Traditional hunting, though widespread, was seen only as one factor and not the only or the most important one.

The colonial Government conducted a nationwide monitoring exercise. The results were made available to the public in a written report. As a consequence, new wildlife legislation was introduced which terminated commercial hunting and regulated sport hunting. Traditional bushmeat hunting was also controlled in the way that hunters needed licences, which were, however, cheap and simple to obtain. In general the Government paid little attention to this subsistence hunting as it was not regarded as having a great impact at that time. Fifteen protected areas (“hunting reserves”)

covering 5% of the colony were created where all hunting including traditional bushmeat hunting was not allowed.

Bans Have not Worked in Tanzania

After Great Britain had taken over the colony in 1918, it introduced more restrictive laws concerning bushmeat hunting that followed rules similar to European sport hunting. Exceptions existed only for some tribes living as hunters and gatherers, but despite being illegal, the bushmeat trade continued to flourish. Brian Nicholson, the Warden of the Selous Game Reserve writes for example that around independence he brought within two years more than 2.000 meat poachers to court from a small area around the lakes in the Northern Selous alone.

Despite being illegal now for the past sixty to seventy years, the bushmeat trade has continued to thrive and possibly expands. What are the reasons?

- It is difficult enough to do effective anti-poaching inside the protected areas; it has proved impossible to secure the wildlife outside with police action only
- There is no public awareness of wrong doing by buying and eating bushmeat
- The demand is there, and it is growing because of growing population and increasing purchasing power
- There is no sense of ownership, leading to uncontrolled exploitation
- Bushmeat is cheaper than beef etc. and is in many rural areas the only meat available (Tsetse fly)

After having failed for such a long time fighting the trade one has to look for new ways, which might perhaps more effective.

Wildlife is a Renewable Natural Resource

To fight and ban the consumption of wildlife meat and encourage the production of meat from domestic animals is a more than questionable strategy. I read a quote some time ago by a well-known Kenyan animal welfare lady who said that we do not need game meat as long as there is enough domestic stock. The opposite might be true. European stock has driven wildlife out of many of its habitats in Africa and this has not only led to the decline of game, but also a loss of biodiversity. Wildlife is a renewable resource. It has ecological advantages over cattle and goats. Wherever wildlife production systems are possible on a sustainable basis, we should encourage them.

It makes sense therefore to turn the “bushmeat” problem into a conservation challenge and advantage. If the use of wildlife, including the consumption of venison, can help to conserve wildlife, we should encourage this instead of banning it. This might not be possible everywhere, but in many regions it is. There are no simple solutions to solve the bushmeat crisis, and what might be useful in West Africa might not be applicable in Tanzania where the situation is completely different.

Selous Conservation Programme

When the joint Tanzanian-German “Selous Conservation Programme” (SCP) started in 1987 we soon discovered that the common distinction of commercial trophy poaching and subsistence poaching for the pot was an error. Nearly all poaching was commercial. It was a well organized informal industry, well adapted to local conditions.

Anti-poaching was made more effective, but it was obvious that it was impossible to stop the widespread poaching outside the protected area. Some of the Districts did not have more than two or three game scouts and in a good number of cases these men were part of the bushmeat industry. On the other hand the wildlife still was plentiful and if it could be used on a sustainable basis it would contribute to poverty reduction and give the people a sense of ownership and an economic incentive to conserve it.

Wildlife Management Areas were created where the legitimate owners have legal user rights over wildlife resources. As soon as the respective laws and regulations are in place they will be able to choose the most profitable type of wildlife use, be it photographic tourism, resident and tourist hunting, meat hunting or a combination thereof. In the meanwhile the villages receive a quota by the Wildlife Division which they utilize to harvest a certain number of animals. The “bushmeat” is sold within the villages. The income serves to run the Wildlife Management Area, conduct anti-poaching and finance community investments. Poaching has declined significantly in community controlled bufferzones around the Selous, and mutual understanding between government law enforcers and the communities is developing and being strengthened.

Annex:

1)

Legal utilization of quota allocated to project villages around Selous Game Reserve

District	Villages.	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/2001
Morogoro	20	10,668kg.	11,095kg.	17,732kg.	8,693kg.
Songea	7	6,624kg.	3,815kg.	4,804kg.	1,696kg.
Tunduru	7	4,908kg.	4,500kg.	5,202kg.	5,102kg.
Liwale	9	3,476kg.			2,539kg.
Rufiji	2	2,448kg.	2,270kg.	2,213kg.	2,049kg.

2)

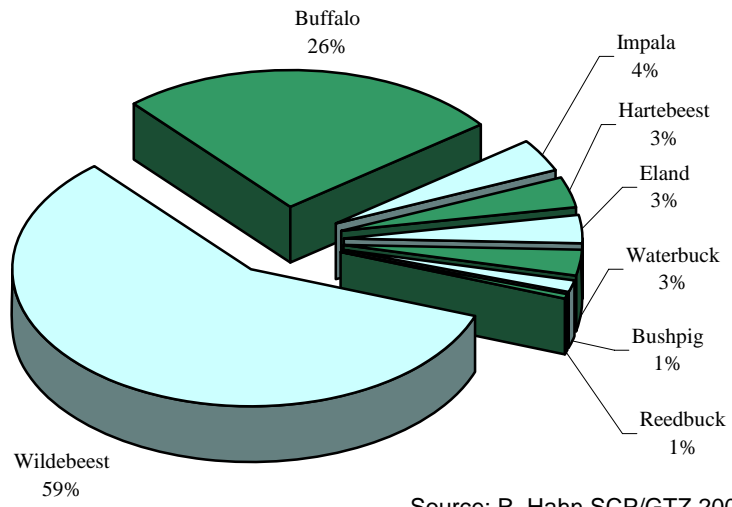
Results of anti-poaching by village game scouts in Wildlife Management Areas around Selous Game Reserve.

Description	Morogoro	Rufiji	Songea	Tunduru	Liwale	Total
Modern weapon	3	-	3	7	3	16
Muzzle loader	1	-	78	1	-	80
Ammo s/gun	30	-	2	7	27	66
Ammo rifle	-	-	12	5	-	17
Poacher elephant or rhino	-	-	-	-	3	3
Poacher meat or fish	76	-	-	16	35	127
Timber	12	-	-	-	-	12
Vehicles, motorboats	-	-	-	-	-	-
Canoes, bicycles	8	-	-	-	-	8
Wire snares	3,707	54	7	-	130	3,898
Nylon-rope snares	-	9	65	183	74	331

Source: SCP/GTZ

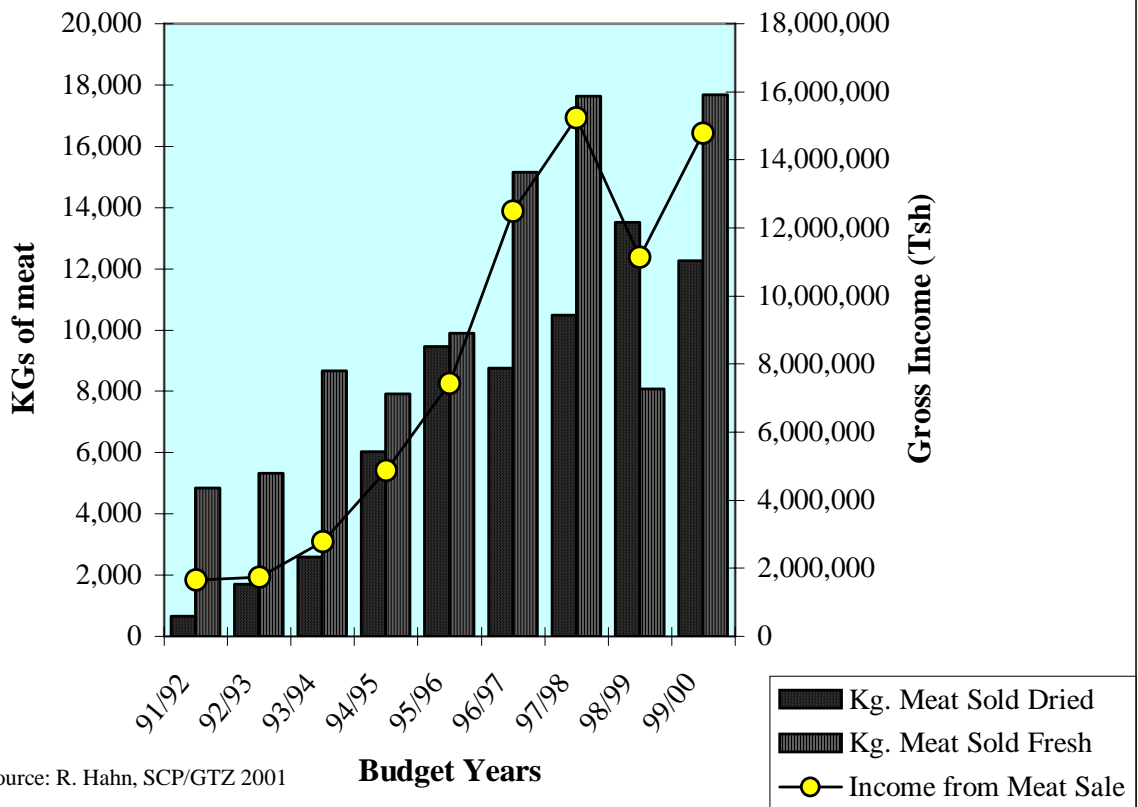
Chart 3

Quota Hunting 1999/2000



Source: R. Hahn SCP/GTZ 2001

Chart 4 Gross income from village quota hunting in the bufferzone of Selous Game Rerserve (1991 - 2000)



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