

# welcome to **AHEAD**

Animal & Human Health for the Environment And Development



Special Edition

## **AHEAD Update - Special Edition**

*Animal & Human Health for the Environment And Development*

### **What is AHEAD?**

Animal & Human Health for the Environment And Development was launched at the 2003 IUCN World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa. By assembling a 'dream team' of veterinarians, ecologists, biologists, social and economic scientists, agriculturists, wildlife managers, public health specialists and others from across East and southern Africa, the Wildlife Conservation Society, IUCN, and a range of partners tapped into some of the most innovative conservation and development thinking on the African continent - and **AHEAD** was born. Since then, a range of programs addressing

### **AHEAD Update - Special Edition - Breakthrough for African Farmers and African Wildlife**

#### **Changes to International Regulatory Standards Regarding Foot and Mouth Disease Adopted at OIE World Assembly in Paris**

#### **New Policy Flexibility Means Poorest Livestock Farmers No Longer Excluded from Global Beef Markets and Environmentally Devastating Veterinary Fencing is No Longer the Only Option for Managing Foot and Mouth Disease in Southern Africa**

With newly accepted revisions to the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, we've reached a critical turning point in regards to resolving the more than half century-old conflict between (a) international beef trade policy based on foot and mouth disease control fencing in the southern African context and (b) the migratory needs of free-ranging wildlife in the region and beyond.

addressing conservation, health, and concomitant development challenges have been launched with the support of a growing list of implementing partners and donors who see the intrinsic value of what WCS has called the One World, One Health™ approach. **AHEAD is a convening, facilitative mechanism, working to create enabling environments that allow different and often competing sectors to literally come to the same table and find collaborative ways forward to address challenges at the interface of wildlife health, livestock health, and human health and livelihoods. We convene stakeholders, help delineate conceptual frameworks to underpin planning, management and research, and provide technical support and resources for projects stakeholders identify as priorities. AHEAD recognizes the need to look at health and disease not in isolation but within a given region's environmental and socioeconomic context.**

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On May 27<sup>th</sup> 2015, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), which provides standards for its 180 member countries related to international trade in commodities (including beef) that are a potential source of animal disease agents, updated the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code and made it possible for African countries with wild species like buffalo that naturally harbor foot and mouth disease (FMD) viruses to be able to trade beef without necessarily requiring the physical separation of wildlife and livestock through the extensive veterinary cordon fencing that has characterized animal disease management in southern Africa since the colonial era. While there is now much to be done to make new quarantine-based value chain approaches to beef production a routine option (see new AHEAD guidelines flagged in the previous AHEAD Update [http://www.wcs-ahead.org/kaza/150313\\_guidelines\\_report\\_value\\_chain\\_final.pdf](http://www.wcs-ahead.org/kaza/150313_guidelines_report_value_chain_final.pdf)), this policy change offers the unprecedented possibility of access to new beef markets for southern African farmers and pastoralists as well as unlocks the potential for restoring migratory movements of wildlife and thus enhancing prospects for long-term wildlife population viability within individual countries as well as in transboundary landscapes like the KAZA Transfrontier Conservation Area. This new flexibility represents a true 'win-win' for sustainable and diversified land use and livelihoods, even in the face of some of the uncertainties related to regional climate change models.

New markets for beef within Africa itself and in Asia - and, ideally, more diversified beef products - likely merit increased attention. A recent piece from the Botswana newspaper *Mmegi* (<http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=51336&dir=2015/may/22>), written just before the decision at OIE in Paris, points out just how significant this policy change is for the subregion's people and wildlife.

To be clear, this is not about "removing all fences," but this new, more flexible policy paradigm represents a vitally important opportunity for the wildlife and livestock sectors to work together on collaborative land-use planning, knowing that there is now the option to realign or remove specific fences impacting important wildlife habitat corridors - since beef export market access can be attained utilizing new meat-processing value chain-based approaches, regardless of whether buffalo or other wildlife live in or near a particular locality or not.

**Of course with great opportunity, comes great responsibility.** A collective investment in earnest stewardship of natural resources, with an eye towards our children's children, must be made by all sectoral stakeholders dependent on southern Africa's precious land-base. There is now, for the first time in several generations, an opportunity to find ways to optimize land-use choices in the interest of system resilience and diversified livelihood opportunities. Neither the livestock nor wildlife sectors should seek to dominate the other. Instead, it is time to make land-use decisions that will be socially, ecologically and economically sustainable for generations to come.

There is of course still much to do, and on-the-ground change takes time and concerted collaborative effort. AHEAD's focus in our next phase of ongoing work with southern African partners includes further sensitization of key local, national and regional entities (in both the livestock and wildlife sectors, et al.) as to the significance of this landmark change in international beef trade standards. We also envision the need for critical pilot work through public-private partnerships involving local communities, with all stakeholders motivated and encouraged by the fact that we are closer to reconciling FMD-related conflict at the livestock / wildlife interface than we've ever been before.

Sincerely,



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