

ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION AND TRACEABILITY: PUBLIC SECTOR PERSPECTIVE AND EXPERIENCE FROM BOTSWANA

Musa Fanikiso

Botswana.

The Botswana Livestock Identification and Traceability System (LITS) is Botswana's national system for cattle identification and traceability to facilitate market access, food safety and disease control. The system was introduced almost 10 years ago following changes in various European Union directives making it compulsory to identify beef from farm to fork as Botswana, a beef exporter to the EU was forced to align its regulations to the requirements of the EU Directives. Before the introduction of LITS, a group cattle identification system based on branding was used. The LITS was implemented by the Department of Veterinary Services and is fully funded by the Government of Botswana but a cost recovery instrument exists through an abattoir slaughter levy. A legal framework has been established and LITS activities are well coordinated among relevant public and private sectors as recommended in the OIE standards.

The LITS identifies all cattle in the country with a unique individual identification number (in a microchip) from three months of age.

The main components of LITS are the Field Data Acquisition System (FDAS), the LITS computerised database, the reticular bolus permanently inserted in the stomach with the Rapid Frequency Identification Device (RFID) or microchip. Any updating done on the system is automatically transmitted to the central database. LITS is a robust system with a wide provision for additional features as the need arises. The individual animal identification number is linked to the owner (name, ID, brand), the area where the animal is reared, the date of the event and the event that is done.

Although LITS was successfully introduced and implemented in Botswana, some implementation problems continue to be experienced such as delays in acquiring equipment and other supplies which are manufactured out of Botswana and poor service delivery by contracted IT companies in the country. The extensive nature of Botswana's farming system also poses another challenge to the implementation of LITS.

In conclusion, LITS has provided an means for the Botswana cattle industry to access international markets and the system has been subjected to rigorous inspection by various trading partners and results have been positive. The system is continuously assessed for its long term sustainability in terms of its cost effectiveness and applicability as compared to alternative systems such as eartagging.

Key words: Animal Identification –Traceability –Reticular bolus –Brand –Farm to Fork.
