

How Sudan's Warring Parties Exploit the Livestock Sector



Sheep at the export terminal, Radio Dabanga, sourced from Social Media

This report is a collaboration between Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker and Facts Center for Journalism

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The livestock sector in Sudan has experienced significant challenges due to the ongoing conflict and instability in the region. Despite these difficulties, the demand for livestock and meat imports in key markets such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt has led to an increase in livestock exports. In 2023, Sudan's livestock exports to Saudi Arabia were valued at approximately \$715 million, reflecting a 77.4% increase from the previous year. This surge in exports is attributed to the Sudanese government's strategic measures, including relocating veterinary services and improving transport routes. However, the sector remains vulnerable to extortion by armed groups, particularly the RSF, whose actions have disrupted pastoralists and led to significant losses for small-scale herders. Furthermore, air raids by the SAF on livestock markets have exacerbated the challenges faced by the sector, resulting in civilian casualties and livestock deaths.

Introduction

The livestock sector plays a central role in generating foreign exchange revenues for the state, and therefore the trade has been largely hijacked by politically and security-connected entities over the past three decades under Omar al-Bashir's regime. The dominance of the livestock trade was one symptom of the kleptocracy of the al-Bashir era, during which state resources were funneled to the benefit of the ruling elite and their allies, while the public was deprived of health, education, and sustainable development.

During Omar al-Bashir's rule, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) invested significant resources in the downstream end of the livestock trade, including fattening, slaughtering, processing, and export of processed meats and livestock. The army's involvement occurred through public sector companies that the SAF entirely controls, while the RSF's involvement occurred through private companies owned by the commanders of the Forces, namely members of the Dagalo extended family. Following the outbreak of the war in April 2023, the SAF companies continued to achieve significant profits, while the Dagalo family investments in the sector suffered major financial losses.

Despite the success of the December 2018 revolution, which led to the fall of Omar al-Bashir and the establishment of a civilian government in April 2019, the deep state remained in control of the economy. During the transitional period led by the civilian government of Dr. Abdalla Hamdok from August 2019 to October 2021, public companies controlled by SAF and private companies owned by RSF leaders expanded their activities in the livestock sector, using their influence and position to expand their control and obstruct government reform efforts.

As the cumulative impact of the economic reforms implemented by the civilian government grew, the SAF and RSF led a coup on October 25, 2021, against the civilian government to protect their interests. The competition for sole control over power and wealth, through dominance over state resources, was a key factor that led the military and RSF into the destructive war that began in April 2023 and has now entered its seventeenth month.

This report provides a brief overview of the general changes in the livestock sector in Sudan due to the ongoing war between the SAF and the RSF, including changes in supply chains and transportation routes. It identifies these changes, assesses their extent and impact, and their impact on local and foreign markets and the Sudanese economy as a whole. The report further highlights the new challenges facing both private companies engaged in the trade and the

public sector institutions managing the livestock sector during the war, and how they are responding. In doing so, the report aims to explain how both sides of the conflict benefit from the sector.

The report was compiled by the Sudan Facts Center for Journalism Services (FCJS) and the Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker (STPT). Research began with a review of the processing of FCJS field reports and secondary data from various reports, articles, and research papers on the livestock sector in Sudan before and during the war that the two partners jointly conducted. This report will assist stakeholders from local government bodies, international institutions, and private companies in understanding the war's impact on the sector and how to direct appropriate responses to its current challenges. The report also aims to shed light on key aspects of the war parties' financing sources.

The Livestock Sector in Sudan Before the War

The livestock sector is a vital component of the Sudanese economy, contributing approximately 34% of the GDP from agriculture, which in turn represents a third of the overall GDP of Sudan. In 2023, the livestock population was estimated at around 111.8 million head of livestock, including 41.4 million sheep, 32.8 million goats, 32.7 million cattle, and 5 million camels.¹ This places Sudan among the top three African countries in terms of livestock production.

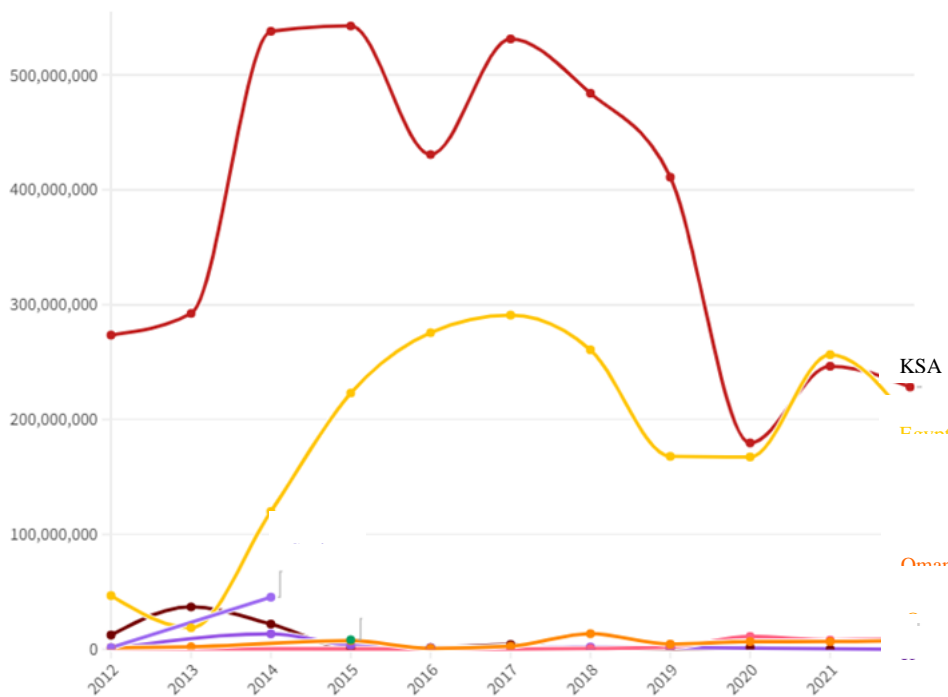
This sector is crucial not only for providing employment but also for ensuring food security. Under normal circumstances, Sudan's meat production meets 90% of the domestic market's demand, and the sector employs about 40% of Sudan's population.² According to the Ministry of Animal Resources, annual consumption of red meat in Sudan is about 1.5 million tons, while local milk consumption is approximately 4.5 million tons annually for the years 2016-2020.

The livestock sector is also fundamental to Sudan's exports, with 2022 exports valued at \$556 million (including live animals, meat, and hides). Among these, sheep exports were the highest at \$226 million, followed by camels at \$173 million, cattle at \$46 million, and goats at \$2 million. Meat exports reached \$101 million, while hides exports amounted to \$5 million.

¹ FAO, "Special Report 2023 FAO Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM)," March 19, 2024, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/8e198344-f214-46c5-bf37-26404fccbc9f/content>

² Alfadul, Hanan; Siddig, Khalid; Ahmed, Mosab; Abushama, Hala; and Kirui, Oliver, "Sustainable livestock development in Sudan: Challenges, opportunities, and policy priorities," Sudan SSP Working Paper 19, Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2024, <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/151697>

The top countries importing livestock from Sudan (by head of livestock per year by country)



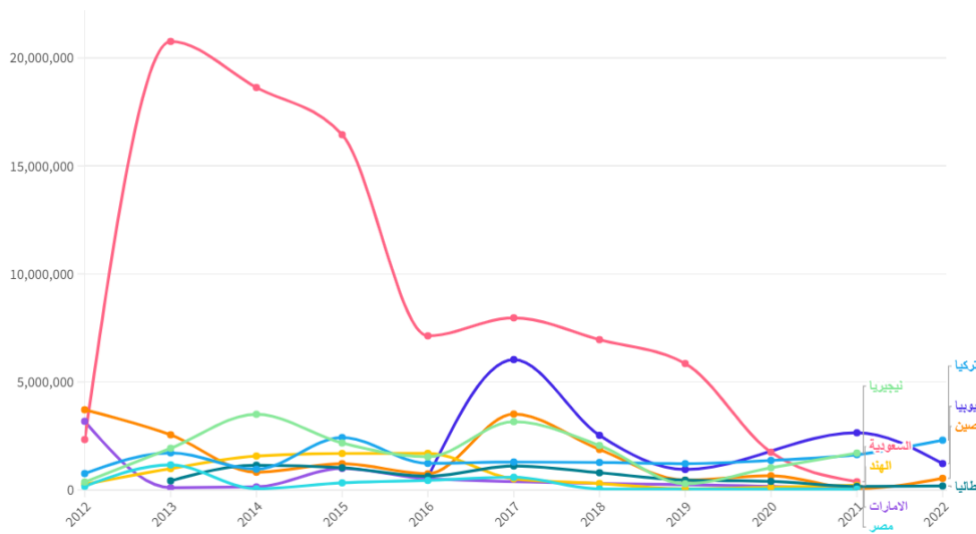
Saudi Arabia is the primary importer of Sudanese livestock, especially live animals during the Hajj season, being the world's second-largest importer of live livestock with approximately seven million head, of which Sudan supplies around 5 million. In 2022 alone, Sudan's live animal exports to Saudi Arabia were valued at \$228 million. Egypt followed closely with exports worth \$197 million in the same year. Saudi Arabia prefers importing live livestock, the value of hides and meat exports to Saudi Arabia remains modest compared to live livestock. The UAE prefers importing meat.

Most of Sudan's livestock exports were from sheep, with a value exceeding \$4 billion over ten years. It is also noted that the total exports of cattle are higher than the total exports of goats, even though the figures for cattle exports began in 2019, compared to 2012 for goats.

The value of livestock exports declined after 2019. Although the quantity exported from sheep significantly decreased in certain years, such as 2017, there was not a corresponding decrease in its value (likely a data issue).

The top countries importing hides from Sudan

■ ليبيا ■ الإمارات ■ السعودية ■ الصين ■ الهند ■ إيطاليا ■ تركيا ■ مصر ■ نيجيريا



Turkey
Nigeria
Ethiopia
China
KSA

The Presence of the Warring Parties in the Livestock Sector Before the War

SAF

Under al-Bashir era law, the Military Industrialization Corporation, established in 1993, was renamed the Defense Industries System (DIS).³ The law granted the system complete independence from all financial and administrative laws governing Sudanese government institutions, giving it the right to invest its funds without oversight from the National Audit Chamber, exempting it from procurement, contracting, financial, and accounting regulations applicable to government bodies. With such broad powers, the DIS and companies under its umbrella operate as a state within a state.

El-Itigahat El-Muta'adida (Arabic for the Multi Directions) Company is a holding company established in 2010 under the umbrella of the Export Development Authority (EDA), which itself falls under the DIS conglomerate. As the name suggests, the EDA company specializes in exporting traditional Sudanese agricultural and livestock products, recycling the foreign currency it earns from exports into accounts managed exclusively by the leadership of the SAF to meet the needs of the Sudanese military and pay for the extensive benefits of its senior officers. Since its establishment, the Multi Directions Company successfully created modern farms for fattening calves for live export and established modern slaughterhouses in the Al-Moweilih area west of Omdurman to process meat for export.

According to the official website of Multi Directions Company, which was intermittently active between 2017 and 2022, reported that the company has global projects in North Africa, the

³ Al Rakoba, Defense Industries System, <https://shorturl.at/HleWJ>

Gulf including Saudi Arabia, the Levant, and Turkey from records retrieved from the website the Wayback Machine. The company also had partnerships with Al-Rajhi International for Agriculture in Saudi Arabia, Al-Jabri Trading Corporation, and the Ministry of Finance and Trade in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

State-owned enterprises, such as the Multi Directions Company, owned by the security sector, including the SAF, the former National Intelligence and Security Service, renamed since 2020 as the General Intelligence Services (GIS), and the national police have benefited from state-provided facilities and exemptions and from oversight by regulatory agencies such as Customs, the Tax Chamber, and the Audit Chamber. These agencies are responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations governing private companies and government bodies.⁴ Because of this, the use of army trucks, fuel, and personnel in the transport of commodities to export terminals on the Red Sea and the border with Egypt allowed companies such as the Multi Directions Company to increase their margins of profits.

The DIS and its subsidiaries like Multi Directions Company have maintained benefits that help them to outcompete other private sector companies. For example, government relations facilitated the company's largest contract in 2017 with the Ministry of Finance and Trade in Egypt, worth nearly \$1 billion over three years. This contract allowed the Multi Directions Company to develop several livestock-related projects, such as Al-Irtiga farm for dairy production and breed improvement, located north of Omdurman, about 64 kilometers from the Shari'an Al-Shamal road. The farm has 46 barns and employs 35 workers, with storage facilities for fuel, veterinary medicines, and fodder.

The Karri farm, located west of Omdurman in Al-Hara 43, about 15 kilometers from the headquarters of Multi Directions Livestock Production Company, and near the National Karri Slaughterhouse, provided refrigerated meat supplies for export. The company also built a huge farm for fattening calves in the city of Al-Nuhud in West Kordofan. The farm is estimated to take up 269 acres and to be able to hold 20,000 head of cattle. An additional farm in Al-Moweilih is reported to take up 107 acres and to be able to hold 25,000 head of cattle.

In 2021, Multi Directions Company signed a bilateral agreement with the Egyptian Ministry of Finance and Trade to establish the Egyptian-Sudanese Company for Development and Multiple Investments with 500 million Egyptian pounds (about USD 30 million) in capital. The Multi Directions Company, as the Sudanese side, contributed 40% of the capital of the joint venture apparently from its own resources, while Egyptian public companies held the remaining 60%.⁵ The 2021 agreement was the latest of cooperation agreements between Multi Directions Company and the Egyptian Ministry of Finance and Trade, which had contracted with the company for \$1 billion to supply 800,000 Sudanese calves to Egyptian markets.⁶ This investment allowed the company to expand its infrastructure. Such massive deals made Multi Directions Company one of the largest sources of foreign currency for the DIS and the Sudanese military.

⁴ Suliman Baldo, "Sudan Struggles to Control Its parastatals," a report for The Sentry, May 2021, available at: <https://thesentry.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SudanParastatals-TheSentry-May2021.pdf>

⁵ Egyptian Sudanese Company, "Minister of Supply: The Egyptian-Sudanese company aims for Egyptian-Sudanese economic integration," <https://egyptiansudanese.com/?p=16473>

⁶ Egyptian Sudanese Company, "Minister of Supply: The Egyptian-Sudanese company aims for Egyptian-Sudanese economic integration," <https://egyptiansudanese.com/?p=16473>

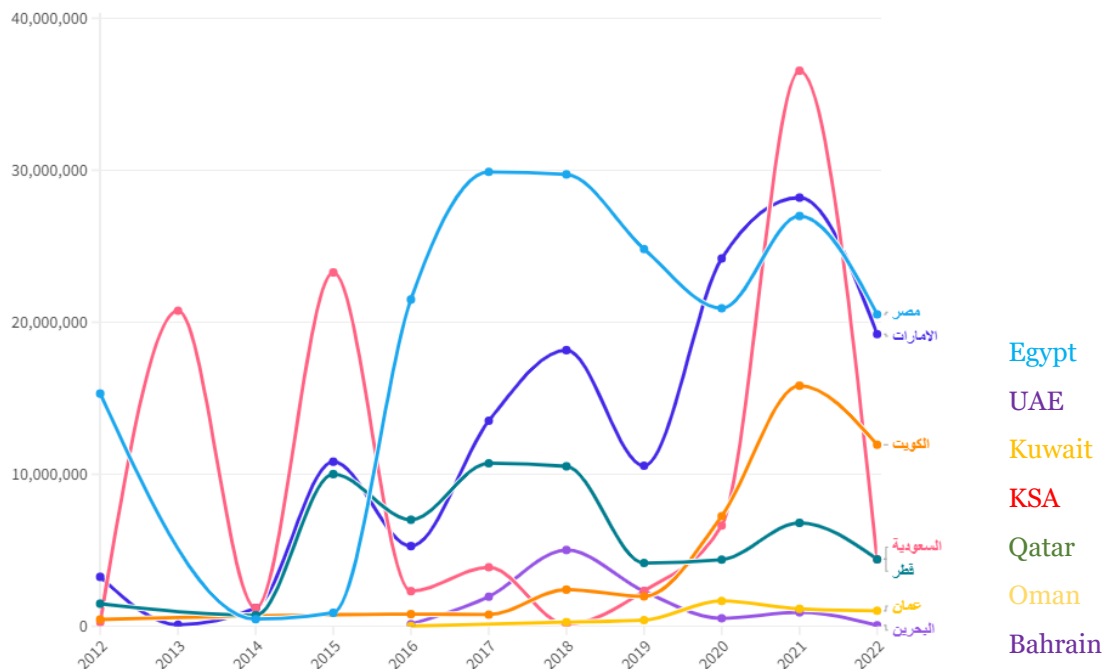
Perhaps the clearest evidence of the DIS's financial independence and lack of oversight from other government institutions and that of its subsidiaries, like Multi Directions Company, is that the Minister of Trade in the transitional civilian government learned about the formation of this Egyptian-Sudanese joint company from the newspapers!

The RSF

The RSF, their leader, Lieutenant General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, and his family were also involved in the livestock trade and export to Egypt and Libya before responding to al-Bashir's 2003 call to recruit nomadic Arabs from northern Darfur into the militias, which became known as the *Janjaweed*. The disruption of camels' trade routes to their traditional markets in Egypt and Libya resulting from the rebellion that the Sudan Liberation Movement's launched against the central government in 2003 was the main motivation for the Dagalo clan and their sub-tribe known as Al-Mahariya to join the government forces in fighting the rebels.

As Hemedti rose through the ranks of the Janjaweed, he exploited his growing security influence to expand and diversify the family business. In 2009, Abdel Rahim Dagalo, the field commander of the RSF and Hemedti's elder brother, established the Al-Junaid Multi-Purpose Company, a holding company with subsidiaries specializing in construction, roads and bridges, mining waste management, and public transportation. The Dagalo family business expanded to include the construction of a modern livestock farm and slaughterhouse in the Al-Moweilih area, which was completed in the months before the war.

The top countries importing meat from Sudan



The leader of the RSF and his family directed their focus towards the livestock sector to expand and diversify their investments, which surged especially after the monetary rewards that the RSF accumulated over the years from its participation in the Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen. After the removal of former President Omar al-Bashir's regime in April 2019, the ambitions of the Dagalo family expanded, and they invested in various sectors, including banking, livestock, gold, and cross-border trade. By mid-2021, the Dagalo family and their financial institutions had taken control of the majority of shares in Bank El-Khaleej (Gulf Bank) and the Livestock Bank, along with the infrastructure owned by the latter since its establishment as a joint-stock company in 1993 under registration number 7127.⁷

The Livestock's Bank's original objective was to finance the development and trade of livestock, with the government playing a significant role in its establishment by providing the infrastructure of Mawashi Company and Livestock Roads Company as the foundation for the bank's creation. Over the years, ownership of the bank shifted between the Central Bank of Sudan and a group of businessmen close to the al-Bashir regime, led by Jamal Abdullah Al-Wali, who served as chairman of the board from 2016 to 2018.

According to sources who spoke to researchers for this report, companies affiliated with the RSF, after acquiring the majority of shares in the Livestock Bank, implemented structural changes. They began by reshuffling the board of directors, appointing Al-Sadiq Mohamed Ali Hasab Al-Rasoul as chairman. In October 2022, the Financial Markets Regulatory Authority announced a consolidation of the Livestock Bank's shares, where every 10 shares were combined into one.

Jibril Ibrahim, the Minister of Finance, chaired the board of the authority, with several Dagalo family financial allies as members, including Hisham Al-Subat, the president of the Employers' Union, following the October 2021 coup. Al-Subat was known for his partnership with the RSFs' economic empire before a fallout, after which he became one of the military's principal economic allies.⁸

To further strengthen businesses associated with the Dagalos in the livestock sector, RSF commander Hemedti leveraged his political influence within the civilian-led transitional government in February 2021 to secure the appointment of El-Hafiz Ibrahim Abdel-Nabi as Minister of Animal Wealth. El-Hafiz is the brother of Mustafa Abdel-Nabi, who serves as the financial director for all of Abdel-Rahim Dagalo's companies in Sudan and the UAE, and is also a board member of El-Khaleej Bank.⁹

Changes due to the April 15 War

On April 15, 2023, an armed conflict erupted in Sudan between the SAF and the RSF, plunging the country into a spiral of violence and severe humanitarian suffering. The ongoing conflict has caused enormous damage, leading to a sharp deterioration in food security. Reports indicate that large areas of West Darfur and Khartoum face the threat of famine. Millions of

⁷ C4ADS, "Breaking the Bank," June 2022, available at: <https://c4ads.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Breaking-the-Bank-C4ADS.pdf>

⁸ Atar phone interviews, August 2024.

⁹ Alrakoba, "Alrakoba reveals the secrets of a security guard's leap to the position of "Minister of Animal Resources" in Sudan," January 26, 2023, available at: <https://www.alrakoba.net/31801351/الراكوبية-تكشف-خفايا-قفزة-حارس-امن-سيكي/>

Sudanese are suffering from hunger and malnutrition, with rising hunger-related death rates among internally displaced persons. With 12 million people displaced from their homes—10 million within Sudan and 2 million to neighboring countries¹⁰—about 25 million of the country's 42 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian aid and protection, while 18 million people face acute food insecurity.¹¹ This is mainly due to agricultural and pastoral lands becoming conflict zones, which previously played a crucial role in supplying local markets with various foodstuffs, in addition to radical economic changes, cash shortages, and high inflation rates, which reached 145% in 2024.¹²

Normally, the livestock sector has not been isolated from these changes, as a large number of herders lost their livestock for various reasons, including looting, the spread of diseases, severe shortages in production inputs such as fodder, grains, and vaccines, displacement from grazing areas, and changes in supply chains and main markets due to the expansion of the war.

The supply chain consists of markets and the roads connecting these markets and customs stations for export at the end of the supply chain. There are three types of official livestock markets: primary, secondary, and final/export markets. Most of the primary markets are located in Darfur and Kordofan, where 80% of Sudan's livestock are found. Secondary Markets, where livestock are gathered from primary markets, are located in Al-Obeid, Al-Khwei, Al-Nuhud, Al-Damazin, Al-Gadarif, Nyala, and Ghubaysh. Final/export Markets are Al-Moweilih market in Omdurman and Al-Damer livestock market.

The pattern of livestock movement from production areas to local markets or export markets depends on the season, age, gender, and condition of the animals. In Sudan, livestock is mostly transported by road in trucks, by rail, on foot, or by boat. Road and rail networks are relatively well-established across the country. The paved road from Al-Nuhud through Al-Khwei to Al-Obeid connects to Omdurman, Port Sudan, and Suakin (export outlets). However, the high cost of transporting animals from production areas to consumption areas by road or rail remains one of the main constraints facing the sector due to high fuel costs. The cheapest option for transporting livestock is driving them during the winter or rainy season, but not during the dry season, when there is a high rate of mortality and weight loss. The known supply routes connecting western Sudan to the east have been disrupted for over a year and a half due to insecurity, and most of Kordofan and Darfur's livestock are now sold locally, negatively impacting the income of the herders negatively. A new route was adopted through the Al-Dabba market in northern Sudan to resolve this crisis, but even this market caught fire in June 2024.

The livestock marketing chain in Sudan starts with input supply and livestock production, then passes through multiple levels of markets, from direct sales from the farm or herd to final markets in major cities like Omdurman and Suakin. Livestock are gathered by independent middlemen (*jellaba*) or agents who buy from herders and sell in secondary markets. Middlemen and guarantors play an important role in confirming the legitimacy of transactions. Traders rarely use bank credit, relying instead on their own capital to move livestock to final markets or for export.

¹⁰ IOM, "Sudan Internal Displacement Set to Top 10 Million as Famine Looms – IOM," June 6, 2024, <https://www.iom.int/news/sudan-internal-displacement-set-top-10-million-famine-looms-iom>

¹¹ UN OCHA, Situation Report, September 3, 2024, <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/>

¹² International Monetary Fund, "Inflation rate, average consumer prices," <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PCPIPCH@WEO/VEN/IRN/ARG/SSD/SDN/AFQ>

The figure illustrates the proportions of export types (live livestock, slaughtered meat, and hides) from the total received by each country. The figure clearly shows the preferences of the countries, such as Saudi Arabia's preference for importing live livestock compared to the UAE's preference for importing slaughtered meat. It is also noted that Saudi Arabia was among the top importers of hides and slaughtered meat; however, the value of both items remains relatively small compared to live livestock imports. In the figure below, it can be observed that live livestock constitutes the majority of the value generated from Sudan's exports among all the different types.

The export slaughterhouses in Sudan include ones in Kadero, Shahin, Karari, Port Sudan, Suakin, and Al-Gadarif. As for local consumption slaughterhouses, there are many, but with smaller capacities. For instance, in Al-Damer, there is a single slaughterhouse, along with five other slaughterhouses spread across the state's seven localities. All the export slaughterhouses in Khartoum have gone out of service, including Kadero and Karari slaughterhouses, and Shahin Slaughterhouse for Saudi investment. On the other hand, Tala Slaughterhouse – Saudi-funded – was opened in December 2023 in River Nile State, as a source of high-quality chilled meat. It features waste treatment rooms, advanced cooling chambers, quarantine facilities, veterinary care, export halls, laboratories, and other facilities built to international standards. It has started exporting to Saudi Arabia, according to data from the Saudi Food and Drug Authority.¹³

In a survey by the FAO, approximately 86% of respondents reported that farmers in their geographic areas face challenges in marketing their crops and livestock, with 41% citing significant challenges. The main challenges included high transportation costs (61%), rising cost of food for livestock and related commodities (59%), inability to physically access markets due to insecurity/conflict (38%), a shortage of transport means including trucks and vehicles (27%), the destruction of markets (24%), and the destruction of infrastructure like bridges and roads (21%).¹⁴

Both before and after the conflict break out, the costs of feed and veterinary medicines have been on the rise. These increases reflect the multiple crises affecting the sector, including shortages of feed and animal medicines and the deterioration of logistics and infrastructure. Urgent intervention is needed to rebuild the sector and improve the living conditions of communities that rely on livestock as a primary source of income.

Government institutions manage and influence the livestock sector in Sudan at multiple levels. At the federal level, the Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries leads sector development, sets national policies, and provides disease control services and vaccine production. At the state level, Ministries of Animal Resources implement federal policies, ensuring alignment with national goals, and coordinating with federal agencies in service delivery. At the local level, local authorities manage direct health services for livestock and provide veterinary guidance, while tribal administrations play a role in enforcing local regulations and cooperating with the government in resource management and tax collection.

¹³ Atar field monitoring since December 2023.

¹⁴ The Food and Agriculture Organization, "Impact of shocks on livestock inputs, food supply chains and livestock livelihoods," August 2024, available at: <file:///Users/sulimanalibaldo/Documents/Relevant%20Reports/2023-202%3F%20War/cd1722en.pdf>

Livestock marketing has been gradually improved over time, not through drastic steps but through incremental changes. For example, roads have been paved, and quarantine and vaccination facilities have been established. Increasingly, some lean livestock purchased from herders in pastures are fattened before being slaughtered or exported live.

Regarding the impact of the war on livestock health, veterinarian Manal Al-Naim, working in River Nile State, told "Atar" Network that the entire state is experiencing a crisis in vaccine availability, with many vaccines becoming unavailable since the beginning of the war, and prices of those that are available rising due to the high cost of transportation, "Recently, vaccines have become available but for a fee, which some breeders refuse to pay even though it is very symbolic value. No private company can import vaccines; they only come through government agencies and are distributed across Sudan. The central laboratory was moved to Kassala after the war broke out, and the River Nile State has not yet made official arrangements with them."

Due to the war, breeding improvement services and the introduction of new breeds have also ceased due to the lack of availability of testing for Brucellosis (Rose Bengal).

The war has created serious challenges for producers. The FAO report showed that 71% of livestock input traders encountered severe economic shocks due to the war, with 45% reporting unprecedented increases in fuel and transportation costs, 23% noting a rise in food prices, and 21% being affected by movement restrictions imposed on trade. These changes led to financial pressures on producers and significantly increased production costs, impacting the sustainability of agricultural and livestock production operations.

Further damage to livestock was evident in the drying up of pastures, lack of feed, and scarcity of drinking water, as grazing areas were reduced due to tree-cutting for the charcoal trade. Several herders mentioned that in the absence of authority, many forests dedicated to grazing in Kordofan and Darfur States were destroyed due to the absence of forest wardens and other government oversight.

Secondly, there has been a clear decline in production levels, with 58% of animal husbandry workers reporting a decrease in livestock production due to a 65% deterioration in pastures due to ongoing conflict and violence, and a 64% shortage of veterinary services. Additionally, the spread of animal diseases and dwindling water resources exacerbated the situation, contributing to a sharp decline in livestock productivity.

Herders also face major difficulties in marketing their animals due to the closure of markets and the lack of buyers, as previous consumption areas are currently inaccessible due to the war. Many also experienced violent robberies, with transportation means often hijacked by the RSF and other armed elements, including looting gangs who armed themselves amid the security breakdown. Consequently, the transportation of livestock between state markets has halted.

Despite the significant disruptions caused by the war across all levels of the supply chain, the livestock sector has demonstrated remarkable resilience. A recent investigative report by "Atar" magazine revealed that as traditional livestock sources in Western and Central Sudan struggled, and trade in these regions declined, new sourcing areas and markets emerged in

White Nile and Blue Nile states, compensating for the downturn in the traditional areas.¹⁵ Exporters informed Atar reporters that "livestock exports to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have significantly increased during the war," supporting Finance Minister Jibril Ibrahim's optimistic statement in March 2024 that Sudan would not declare bankruptcy, as the economy has been bolstered by increased gold and livestock exports.¹⁶

How the war has affected private sector companies

SAF's Companies: Business as usual

The negative impacts of the war on the livestock sector notwithstanding, it seems that the war has not significantly affected the exports of the DIS, which specializes in livestock and meat through its company, El-Itigahat El-Muta'adida, to its traditional markets in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Just a little over a year after the war broke out in Sudan, El-Itigahat El-Muta'adida continued to sell to Egyptian markets. In the first week of March 2024, a shipment of five thousand head of livestock arrived in Egypt from Djibouti, marking the first installment of twenty thousand head that the Egyptian-Sudanese Development and Investments Company contracted to supply to Egyptian markets to meet the demands of Egyptian consumers for meat during Ramadan.¹⁷

The director of the Egyptian Company for Meat and Poultry, which distributes meat imported from Sudan, confirmed that "despite the political crises in Sudan, livestock supply from Sudan has not stopped since the contract with the Sudanese El-Itigahat company began in 2015 and continues until now. To anticipate any potential political circumstances, the holding company has diversified its import sources. He added that 50 to 75 tons of frozen Sudanese meat are sold daily, rising to 120 tons daily during Ramadan."¹⁸ He also mentioned in this statement that there are 5,000 head of livestock waiting to complete clearance procedures at the Sudanese-Egyptian border, and another 15,000 head on their way to Egyptian ports from Djibouti.

On October 17, 2023, six months after the outbreak of the war, a team from "Atar" Magazine visited Port Sudan to study the indicators of Sudan's foreign trade volume. During the visit, the team observed 15 ships in Port Sudan's waters, and were told that six more were expected to arrive within a week of the visit. The team queried the movement of ships in the two weeks preceding the visit and examined the sizes, loads, and routes of the ships, concluding that

¹⁵ Atar magazine, "Sudan's livestock: New routes, new markets, more difficulties," September 23, 2024, <https://atarnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/ATAR-English-Issue-13-Sudans-livestock-New-routes-new-markets-more-difficulties.pdf>

¹⁶ El-Eqtisadiyah, "Sudanese Finance Minister to Al-Eqtisadiyah: Sudan will not declare bankruptcy: Gold and livestock exports support the financial situation," March 15, 2024, https://www.aleqt.com/2024/03/15/article_2709091.html

¹⁷ Economy Plus, "How the Supply and its Institutions are Preparing for the Ramadan Season," March 6, 2024, <https://economyplusme.com/en/120378/>

¹⁸ Economy Plus, "How the Supply and its Institutions are Preparing for the Ramadan Season," March 6, 2024, <https://economyplusme.com/en/120378/>

most specialized in transporting livestock between Osman Digna Port, designated for this purpose, and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. The team also noticed oil tankers arriving from Fujairah Port in the UAE, as well as several cargo ships transporting various goods between Port Sudan and Egyptian, Turkish, Indian, and Omani ports.¹⁹

Despite all the aforementioned factors negatively impacting the livestock sector, it is clear that the continued demand for livestock and meat imports in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, in particular, has created a demand that Port Sudan authorities responded to, resulting in actual increases in the volume and value of livestock exports to these markets.

The Saudi General Authority for Statistics reports that Sudan's exports to Saudi Arabia in 2023 were valued around \$800 million, with approximately \$715 million coming from livestock exports. This represents a 77.4% increase compared to 2022, before the war broke out. Sudanese Finance Minister Jibril Ibrahim confirmed in statements to the Saudi "Economist" newspaper and "Al Jazeera.net" that livestock exports were not affected by the ongoing war.²⁰ Observers attribute this to measures taken by the Sudanese government, such as moving the veterinary laboratory from Soba in Khartoum to Kassala to inspect exports, securing the road from North and West Kordofan to transport livestock, and opening the Tala Slaughterhouse (described above) in River Nile State.

In Egypt, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics reported that Egypt's import of live livestock from Sudan in 2023 was estimated at around \$164 million, with camels as the leading export. At the same time, and as is sought to make up for huge losses in government revenues as a result of the war, the Ministry of Finance increased the customs tariff index by about 46%, which posed a challenge for Sudanese exporters.²¹

It appears that the movement of export and import trade began to regularize six months after the outbreak of the war, with the export of live livestock being at the forefront of Sudan's sales to traditional markets in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Given that a significant amount of the livestock exported through the Osman Digna Port comes from areas under the control of the RSF, this implies that the circumstances created by the war in livestock-producing areas have not prevented the movement of livestock traders across frontlines as evidenced by the number of trucks carrying sheep from the RSF areas in Western Sudan to the SAF-held areas and export terminals in Eastern and Northern Sudan.

¹⁹ Atar magazine, October 19, 2023, <https://sudanfacts.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ATAR-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%AA%D9%80%D9%80%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%AF-2-%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84-2-1.pdf>

²⁰ Al-Eqtisadiyah, "Sudanese Finance Minister to Al-Eqtisadiyah: Sudan will not declare bankruptcy.. Gold and livestock exports support the financial situation," March 15, 2024, in Arabic, available at: https://www.aleqt.com/2024/03/15/article_2709091.html

²¹ Radio Dabanga, "New rise in the dollar and criticism of imposing fees on livestock exports," February 22, 2024, in Arabic, available at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/ar/all-news/article/ارتفاع-جديد-للدولار-وانتقادات-لفرض-رسوم>

RSF's Extortion Schemes & Protection Rackets in the Livestock Sector

The flow of livestock from western and central Sudan to Port Sudan, also serves the interests of the RSF, as it presents an opportunity to impose illegal taxes and protection rackets on this traffic. However, due to the relative independence of RSF factions, the lack or absence of military discipline among them, and their reliance on looting, levies have not prevented incidents of killing pastoralists and looting livestock. For example, in the city of Wad Ashana in Um Rawaba locality of North Kordofan State, which was controlled by the RSF in October 2023 before being recaptured by the army last February, the residents lost more than 750 goats, 180 sheep, and 90 dairy cows, according to an unofficial statistic obtained by "Atar" from the local veterinarian. Another example occurred in South Kordofan State, where a herd of 157 female and 43 male camels was looted by armed men who killed three pastoralists and injured four others in July 2023. Salwa Issa, a veterinarian at the Ministry of Animal Resources, described a significant loss of herds by small-scale herders in an interview with "Atar" magazine. She said that rebuilding herds is extremely costly and added, "Small-scale herders always use arduous methods in selecting animals and improving their breeds, and when they lose them, they are forced to work for a long time to rebuild them again."²²

According to a journalistic report by *Radio Dabanga* dated June 3, 2024, a number of livestock traders in El Obeid, which is besieged by the RSF, agreed with a field commander named Major General Abu Shanab to protect a convoy of 38 trucks loaded with sheep to Tandalti, which is controlled by the SAF, in exchange for 3.5 million Sudanese pounds so that they could be exported to Saudi Arabia.²³ Despite the agreement, a group of RSF fighters looted 80 of the sheep. On June 14, there was a clash between RSF factions in the city of Um Rawaba due to a dispute between their leaders over the levies imposed on trucks loaded with sheep on their way for export.²⁴

Small-scale herders have also become victims of air raids by the SAF's Air Force, which targeted many livestock markets and their watering areas in areas controlled by the RSF, including the capital Khartoum. Secondary and final livestock markets are considered comprehensive commercial centers where livestock trade is sold and bought. Due to the opportunities these markets offer the RSF and its fighters to create new sources of income, the SAF have launched regular air raids on livestock markets in RSF-controlled areas. These raids have led to the deaths of dozens of civilians and hundreds of livestock.

²² https://factscenterforjournalism690-my.sharepoint.com/personal/arif_e_sudanfacts_org/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Farif%5Fe%5Fsudanfacts%5Forg%2FDocuments%2FAtar%20Editorial%2FEditorial%20%2D%20Arabic%2F6%20%D9%85%D8%B5%D9%85%D9%85%2F44%2Fpdf%201%2FATAR%2D%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%A9%2D44%2Epdf&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Farif%5Fe%5Fsudanfacts%5Forg%2FDocuments%2FAtar%20Editorial%2FEditorial%20%2D%20Arabic%2F6%20%D9%85%D8%B5%D9%85%D9%85%2F44%2Fpdf%201&ga=1

²³ Radio Dabanga, "Rapid Support Forces militias loot Al Hadi exports in Al-Abyad," June 3, 2024, <https://shorturl.at/Hllk0>

²⁴ Radio Dabanga, "Cautious cam in Umm Rawaba after clashes between Rapid Support Forces," June 14, 2024, <https://shorturl.at/lttMI>

One of these air raids was the bombing of the Al-Moweilih market on June 7, 2023, which left dozens injured and killed.²⁵ The market, which was the largest and most important livestock market in Sudan and played a central role in Sudan's livestock exports, was completely destroyed. According to a news report by Radio Dabanga, an air raid on April 25, 2024, on a well site where civilians and livestock gathered near the city of Mellit in North Darfur killed seven civilians and led to the death of more than 250 camels. RSF fighters were not among the victims.²⁶

The SAF and its Islamist supporters justified the air raids on civilian targets in RSF-controlled areas, including in residential areas, markets, and livestock watering points, by claiming that those areas serve as "social incubators for the RSF," a thinly veiled justification of collective punishment of population groups from which rebels against the state's "legitimacy" hail, a practice in which the SAF has a long history. Speaking from his exile in Turkey, the extremist cleric Abdel Hay Youssef has given in a controversial fatwa a religious legitimacy to this unacceptable justification for what is, in reality, a violation of the laws of war. The cleric stated that collateral civilian casualties of air strikes on supporters and sympathizers of rebels were religiously admissible.²⁷

Recommendations

To address the possible exploitation of the livestock sector as addressed in this paper, we recommend:

- *Implementing Ceasefire Agreements:* Immediate implementation of ceasefire agreements and respect for humanitarian corridors will protect livestock routes and markets from violence. This can facilitate the movement of goods and services necessary for livestock trading.
- *Long-Term Development Programs:* Once peace is achieved, long-term development programs focused on improving the livestock sector should be prioritized. This includes investment in sustainable agricultural practices, veterinary services, and market access, which are critical for the recovery and growth of the sector.
- *Policy Reform:* The Sudanese government should consider reforming policies related to livestock trade and export, particularly concerning customs tariffs that may hinder competitiveness in international markets.
- *Improving Infrastructure:* Investments in infrastructure, such as transport and veterinary facilities, should be prioritized to facilitate the movement of livestock and improve the quality of exports, an investment that should be under the supervision of a civil government, supporting the collaboration of the public with the private sector.

²⁵ Arab Sputnik, "Sudan... Dozens killed and wounded in airstrike on Muwailih market in Omdurman," June 7, 2023, <https://shorturl.at/rbJ0d>

²⁶ Radio Dabanga, "Seven people killed and 250 camels killed in an airstrike on Mellit," April 26, 2024, <https://shorturl.at/E3fGj>

²⁷ Al-Taghyeer, "Abdel-Hay Youssef's fatwa to kill "Rapid Support Incubators"... Does it turn him into a war criminal?!" in Arabic, available at: <https://www.altaghyeer.info/ar/2024/08/31-فتوى-عبد-الحى-يوسف-بقتل-حواضن-الدعم-ال/>

This could include the construction of new slaughterhouses and enhancing the existing ones.

- *Supporting Small-Scale Herders:* Initiatives should be developed to provide support to small-scale herders who have suffered losses due to the conflict. This could involve financial assistance, access to veterinary services, and training in herd management practices.
- *International Collaboration:* Engaging with international organizations and neighbouring countries to ensure the stability of the livestock trade in the region can help bolster Sudan's economy. Collaborations should focus on establishing fair trade practices and addressing security concerns that affect cross-border livestock movement.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Establishing a robust monitoring system to track livestock trade dynamics and the impacts of the ongoing conflict will be essential in adjusting strategies and policies effectively.

By implementing these recommendations, Sudan can better navigate the complexities of its livestock sector, ensure the livelihoods of pastoralists, and enhance its position in regional livestock markets.