



Pastoral livestock herding

Past, Present, Future

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The extensive livestock industry in Mongolia



- ◆ An almost half of the national employment
- ◆ 34% of GDP
- ◆ 31% of export earnings
- ◆ it still remains largely subsistence economic activity

The major characteristics:

- ◆ Absolute dependence on an extremely harsh and highly variable natural environment
- ◆ The most extreme natural hazard is dzud, a winter disaster involving the mass starvation and death of livestock.
- ◆ The next danger is drought that usually happens due to the failure of principal precipitation in mid summer, in June-August.
- ◆ Low and basically constant yield per animal over time.

What happened during the transition?

The dominant policy was pursuing livestock privatisation and price liberalisation expecting that market would do the rest. What is the result?

- Opening Mongolia to the globalizing world had a drastic effect in increasing human demand.
- Privatisation provided tremendous incentives for increasing livestock numbers
- State cancelled its subsidies in most livestock related areas and herders responded by increasing livestock numbers to overcome the risk
- Break of the centralised livestock procurement and an absence of adequate replacement significantly curtailed marketing of animals.
- Increasing livestock numbers, as 'savings' against future uncertainties became a dominant risk management strategy.
- Low to moderate growth in other industries made herders save more animals for their children.
- State continued its policies to encourage the growth of animal numbers
- Destruction of thousands of wells because of inadequate ownership and maintenance curtailed utilisable pastures
- Large migration of herding families from remote to central regions worsened ecological imbalances.
- Livestock privatisation resulted in the fragmentation of the industry: 84% of herding families own less than 200 livestock

The above changes speeded up by private interests of newly born small household economies and free competition occurred with the untouched land tenure system: state ownership and largely customary/informal arrangements for 'common property' resources. Result?

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- ◆ Private interests of individual herders to maximise livestock numbers contradicted the national interest to ensure long-term sustainable development of the industry by maintaining the potential of pasture resources.
 - ◆ Under pressures of increasing numbers overstocking and violation of grazing technologies began to destroy ecological balances, a keystone for the nomadic pastoralism.

- ✦ In 1999-2002 Mongolia faced three consecutive years of dzud.
 - ◆ About 2.4 million livestock lost in 1999-2000
 - ◆ 2.2 million in 2000-2001
 - ◆ 1.5 m so far in 2001-2002 adding to the ranks of the rural poor and destitute.
 - ◆ There was a surge of aid to dzud-affected areas. Unfortunately all this happens after dzud happened.
 - ◆ The true question is how to make the industry capable of fighting better with dzud i.e. How to put the industry on sustainable path of development

Outstanding problems:

- ◆ Improper use of pastures accomplished with expanded distribution of rodents, and other insects led to accelerated degradation and damage and overuse of pastures.
- ◆ Broken herd structure and exceeded stocking rate along with over concentration of people and animals in certain locations cause increased grazing pastures resulting in rapid overloading.
- ◆ Rapid and mass destruction and drying up open water sources, caused by climatic and ecological changes and poor maintenance by the users has negatively proven upon the water supply to pastures.
- ◆ Enormous collapse and breakage of many wells left unattended during the so-called transition years cause significant difficulties over the survival of pastoral livestock sector.