

أتر Atar

Sudan in Perspective

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Sudan's livestock

\$879m exports resilience during war

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As the Eid al-Adha prayers echo across Sudan, a tradition spanning generations unfolds. Millions gather, sheep in tow, to partake in the sacred ritual of sacrifice. Yet, amidst the cultural significance lies a tale of economic resilience and geopolitical maneuvering, framed against the backdrop of Sudan's ongoing conflict.

Despite experts' calls for the government to implement regulatory measures to mitigate the negative environmental and health impacts of individual and random slaughtering of vast numbers of livestock, such as by providing dedicated and multiple slaughterhouses to manage the slaughtering processes and dispose of the pollutants from sacrificial blood and waste, successive governments have failed to enforce decisive policies to control sources of pollution and diseases. This neglect has resulted in significant governmental expenditure on treatment and the inability to manage the massive

annual waste of livestock resources, including hides and wool, by recycling and investing them in various direct and indirect ways to generate national income and revenue.

Sudan's abundant livestock wealth, comprising over 111 million heads in 2022 (approximately 42 million heads of sheep, goats about 33 million, cattle around 33 million, and camels about 5 million heads), positions it prominently in the global trade of live animals. The strategic location near Saudi Arabia and Egypt fuels a thriving export market, notably marked by Sudan's role as a major supplier to Saudi Arabia, which represents the second-largest importer of live livestock globally, importing around 7 million heads of livestock annually (with Sudan providing approximately 5 million of these heads), equating to 70% of Saudi Arabia's total meat imports valued at about half a billion dollars.

In spite of intermittent challenges

Live Animals

87.4%

Oil Seeds,
Miscellaneous
Grains and
Fruits, Straw

7.1%

Residues From Food
Industries, Animal
Feeds

2.5%

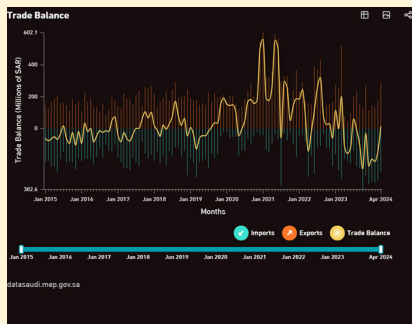
The products imported from Sudan by trade value: [Source](#)

such as disease outbreaks and maritime mishaps, Sudan has maintained robust trade relations, even amidst the turmoil of war.

Sudan often emerges as one of the largest exporters of live livestock globally, linked to several incidents of export ship sinkings and the efficiency of livestock export management in Sudan. The most recent incident was in June 2022, when an export ship carrying livestock to Saudi Arabia sank, resulting in the loss of approximately 15,800 sheep valued at around \$4 million.

According to the [report](#) of Saudi General Authority for Statistics, Sudan's exports to Saudi Arabia in 2023 were estimated at around \$800 million (with livestock exports accounting for approximately \$715 million), an increase of 77.4 per cent from 2022 "before the war broke out".

The chart below illustrates the trade exchange between Sudan and Saudi Arabia a month before the war began and a year after (from March 2023 to March 2024).



Yet, against odds, Sudan's exports bounced back, supported by strategic measures. These included relocating veterinary facilities, securing trade routes, and establishing modern slaughterhouses like the Tala facility in Nile State in December 2023, funded by Saudi Arabia.

It is noticeable that, despite the significant decline in trade exchange at the start of the war in April, Sudan's exports began to recover quickly, while Saudi Arabia's exports continued to decline.

These official statistics might be surprising, but they reinforce statements made by Sudan's Finance Minister Gibril Ibrahim to Saudi Economic Newspaper and Al Jazeera Net that livestock exports have not been affected by the ongoing war. Additionally, there is a meat processing plant relying on the old Damer slaughterhouse. Following the outbreak of the war, a new slaughterhouse was established in Port Sudan and approved, while another slaughterhouse in Al-Gadarif has yet to be approved.

The outbreak of conflict in April 2023 initially cast a shadow over Sudan's export prospects. Speculations swirled regarding the fate of Sudan's lucrative livestock exports, crucial for the nation's foreign exchange earnings. Yet, against odds, Sudan's exports bounced back, supported by strategic measures. These included relocating veterinary facilities, securing trade routes, and establishing modern slaughterhouses like the Tala facility in Nile State in December 2023,

funded by Saudi Arabia. These facilities not only bolster export capabilities but also adhere to global standards in meat processing and veterinary care.

The facility includes rooms for processing slaughter waste, state-of-the-art refrigeration units, quarantine and veterinary care rooms, export halls, and laboratories built to global standards, and it began exporting to Saudi Arabia according to the Saudi Food and Drug Authority's data.



In Saudi markets, a Sudanese “Sawakni” sheep is priced at 1,250 riyals (\$333).

Source: (Panda Hypermarket / Saudi Arabia - Eid al-Adha 2024).

The resilience of Sudan's livestock trade extends beyond Saudi Arabia, with Egypt emerging as another key importer, particularly of camels from Sudan's Darfur region. Despite logistical and bureaucratic hurdles, the trade continues, underpinned by enduring demand and diplomatic negotiations.

Musa, a Sudanese camel herder residing in Saudi Arabia, told **Atar** Magazine, "The import of live camels to Saudi Arabia ceased immediately with the outbreak of the war." He believes this is because camels predominantly come from the currently volatile Darfur region. Hussein, a sheep trader, felt luckier as the supply of "Sawakni" sheep—named after Sawakin—continued uninterrupted.

However, amidst the success stories

lie concerns. Questions linger about the transparency of revenue from livestock exports, amid allegations of mismanagement and corruption. The Central Bank's directive mandating advance payments seeks to mitigate financial risks and ensure accountability in trade transactions.

Moreover, the war's toll on Sudan's livestock sector looms large. Shortages in veterinary expertise, vaccines, and healthcare imperil livestock health, exacerbated by environmental challenges and resource competition. Reports of smuggling of unknown numbers of livestock across borders to Chad, South Sudan, and camels to Egypt and the UAE highlight vulnerabilities, risking significant losses to Sudan's invaluable livestock wealth.



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