

Biodiversity in Namibia



Ministry of Environment
and Tourism

The basis of the economy and livelihoods

Mining, fisheries, agriculture and tourism are the backbone of the Namibian economy. Each of these sectors depend on the wise management of natural resources and biodiversity to ensure their long-term contribution to the economy. Around 70% of Namibia's population also relies on the natural resource base for their livelihood needs in terms of income, food, fuel and shelter.

Commitment to Biodiversity Management

Article 95(l) of the Constitution commits the state to the "maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and biological diversity of Namibia and utilization of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians."

Nature Conservation Amendment Act (1996) and Forest Act (2001): Devolved user rights over wildlife and forest resources to communities through the establishment of communal conservancies and community forests.

Environmental Investment Fund Act (2001): Led to the establishment of the Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia, which provides financial and technical support to activities conserving and sustainably utilizing the country's biodiversity.

Marine Resources Act (2000): Promotes conservation of marine ecosystems and the responsible utilization, conservation, protection and promotion of marine resources on a sustainable basis.

Environmental Management Act (2007): Provides a foundation for the wise management of the country's fragile environment and the legal basis for Environmental Impact Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessments.

Our Remarkable Biodiversity at a Glance

- World's largest populations of cheetah and free-roaming black rhino, and increasing populations of other globally threatened mammals
- Two global biodiversity hotspots – the Sperrgebiet in the Succulent Karoo Biome and the Namib escarpment zone – as well as four Ramsar Sites of International Importance
- Entire Coastline under national park status, and a network of national parks covering over 17% of the country
- Over 19% of the country under community-based resource management including 76 communal conservancies and 13 community forests
- The Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem, which graces Namibia's 1500km coastline with cold, nutrient-rich waters and sustains abundant shoals of fish and other marine and birdlife.

Sustainable utilization for the Benefit of all Namibians

Experience in Namibia has shown that benefits derived from the sustainable utilization of biodiversity are a powerful incentive to ensure further conservation. Resource use is commonly guided by quota and permit systems and resource monitoring. Examples of efforts promoting sustainable utilization follow over the page.



Wildlife

Wildlife management is actively promoted as a land use option in Namibia and wildlife contributed 4.1% to gross domestic product in 2004. Wildlife viewing through tourism generated 62.5% of this contribution, followed by hunting tourism and live game sales. Other opportunities such as the export of game meat and local level processing of game meat and hides are largely untapped. Wildlife's contribution to the economy is expected to triple over the next 30 years.

Fisheries

Rebuilding depleted fish stocks has been a key focus since Namibia's independence. A range of sustainable utilization measures are now in place including:

- Total allowable catches and quotas for all species of commercial importance
- Implementation of the Ecosystem approach to fisheries management
- Namibia's first Marine Protected Area which covers 12,000km² of the country's most sensitive and biodiversity-rich coastal ecosystems

Indigenous Natural Products

Many of Namibia's indigenous plants, traditionally used for food, medicine, oils and other products, are now being promoted on a commercial basis. Namibia's most successful commercially-sold indigenous natural products include those derived from Devil's Claw, Hoodia, Marula and Commiphora. Although it is estimated that indigenous plant-based products only contribute about .5% of GDP currently, there is considerable scope for this to be expanded to the benefit of rural communities across the country.

Threats to Biodiversity

- Unsustainable Water Uses mainly through large scale irrigation, pollution, damming and over-abstraction of groundwater
- Climate Change mainly through increased drought and flood events; shifts in vegetation types and species distribution; and effects on the Benguela Current system
- Mining and Prospecting, especially in ecologically sensitive areas (including off-shore) and through habitat loss and destruction, and increased demand for water and electricity
- Unsustainable Land Management Practices leading to soil erosion, land degradation, deforestation and bush encroachment
- Alien Invasive Species, which are causing species loss and ecosystem simplification and breakdown
- Human Wildlife Conflict with increasing damages to community livelihoods in terms of crop destruction, water point damage and livestock mortalities

Way Forward for Namibia

- Strengthen mechanisms for the adaptive and well-informed management of natural resources
- Improve international collaboration and linkages between the private sector and resource managers for value addition and value chain development for biodiversity-based products
- Increasing the benefits to communities from the sustainable utilization of biodiversity and
- Improving the management of protected areas and promoting integrated approaches to land management



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