

PRIORITIES FOR CONSERVATION ACTION AND RESEARCH ON AFROTROPICAL SUIDS

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The research and conservation action priorities for the three genera of Afrotropical Suids (*Phacochoerus*, *Potamochoerus* and *Hylochoerus*) are reviewed and constitute the "Action Plan" of the Pigs and Peccaries Specialists Group of IUCN/SSC for the Afrotropical Region. Although these Suids have large distributions across the continent, incorporating a wide range of natural habitats, our investigations reveal that basic data on their specific distribution, conservation and legal status are lacking. Nonetheless, some of the major gaps in our knowledge have been identified and prioritized for future investigation. The principal threats to the survival of these animals - habitat destruction and over-hunting - vary in importance from country to country, but the Action Plan highlights the main problem areas. Highest priority is given to conservation strategies for the taxa known to be most at risk like *Phacochoerus aethiopicus delamerei*, *Hylochoerus meinertzhageni ivoriensis*, and for local populations of *Hylochoerus meinertzhageni meinertzhageni* and *Hylochoerus meinertzhageni rimator*. More research is needed to assess the taxonomic affinities of *Phacochoerus africanus aeliani* and *H. meinertzhageni* ssp.? of South Ethiopia. Specific field surveys are recommended to determine the status, distribution and management initiatives needed to conserve these remnant populations. Among these, the review of protected areas network, the development of

projects promoting sustainable utilisation of natural resources and the role of wild pigs in crop damages and as vectors of diseases are of particular importance. Outside the Muslim countries, all Suids are important sources of protein and constitute a significant part of the bushmeat market. Subsistence and commercial hunting are virtually uncontrolled in most countries and their impact should be assessed in view of regulating the offtake and developing sustainable schemes that can contribute to the local economy. The development of education/awareness programmes in certain countries are identified as a means to focus public attention to the potential importance of conservation. Training of biologists and wildlife managers are recommended to promote adequate research, monitoring and conservation management of Afrotropical Suids. A list of specific future research priorities is appended to the Action Plan; these address the gaps in our knowledge of their systematics and biology which must be tackled in order to develop the most appropriate conservation and management strategies for these species.

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