



## Darwin Initiative/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019)

<b>Project reference</b>	26-013
<b>Project title</b>	Conservation and poverty alleviation through sustainable ranching in Paraguay
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Paraguay – Chaco
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Wildlife Conservation Society - WCS
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Minerva Foods; National Vice-Ministry of Livestock; Faculty of Veterinarian Sciences - The National University of Asuncion; Government of the Department of Alto Paraguay
<b>e.Project leader</b>	Maria Del Carmen Fleytas
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)</b>	HYR1 – 31 October 2019
<b>Project website/blog/social media etc.</b>	<a href="https://paraguay.wcs.org/">https://paraguay.wcs.org/</a>

**1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).**

Our project started on June 1, 2019. We are making progress in line with the agreed baseline timetable, as stated below:

**Output 1: Improved sustainable ranching systems**

**1.1 Conduct baseline economic, social and environmental surveys:** During this first quarter, we initiated contact with small and large producers to present the project objectives to them and measure/identify the level of interest they demonstrated in being part of the project. We then specifically designed the baseline surveys to map the general situation and resources of each site. To date we have completed surveys with 65 small producers and 3 large producers, representing 43% of the total project beneficiaries. It is important to note that initial contact takes more time since we have to identify the potential working areas, and earn producers' trust first, after which the surveys can be more easily completed.

**Small producers (project goal: 150 families):**

From 65 surveyed producers in the Department of Alto Paraguay, 49% are in the Puerto Casado district of La Victoria, and 51% are in the locations of Toro Pampa and San Carlos, in the District of Fuerte Olimpo.

100% of producers showed a clear need for technical assistance, as reflected by the low level of productivity in their properties, as well as we the lack of basic services (access to safe water, housing, others) necessary for an adequate quality of life. 100% of producers also have low economic income, and isolated situations that aggravate their vulnerability. Women carry a heavier burden since they lack basic services such as maternal health care. 72% of the producers surveyed depend exclusively on production for their family income, and almost 100% of them consider their production insufficient to fulfill their basic needs. 28% are currently developing other economic activities.

We expect to complete the remaining 85 surveys during the next semester, as well as sign the conservation agreements with each of the project beneficiaries.

During the first quarter of the project, we also registered forest cover in the project area. We did so per property in the case of large producers, and per forest blocks in the case of small producers, these last being grouped according to their proximity one to another. We used Sentinel remote sensing images from year 2019, and compared forest cover layers with those of the National Forest Institute (INFONA) from year 2016-2017. Results showed 17,800 hectares of land owned by the 65 small producers, with a total forest cover of 15,389 hectares, representing 86% of forest still standing. These data will be used to compare forest cover throughout the project.

### **Large producers (project goal: 8 properties):**

The first three large producer properties surveyed add up to a total of 104,879 hectares and are in the Department of Boquerón. All of them are devoted 100% to cattle ranching (breeding and fattening), with an average of 18,500 heads each. They all have the necessary infrastructure needed to produce, and are provided with basic services. All three are in the proximity of Defensores del Chaco National Park, the largest protected area of the Chaco. As such, any effort made to improve their production practices, halt deforestation, and/or rationalize land use will greatly benefit this protected area and the existing and surrounding biodiversity of the region.

All three properties have cattle-felid conflicts and subsequent economic losses. Therefore, actions to mitigate these conflicts, such as non-lethal control measures for big cat predation and the prohibition of wildlife hunting, will be welcome as good practices to elevate productivity. This also motivated the three surveyed proprietors to sign the conservation agreements with commitments from WCS and the landowners. The other 5 proprietors have been identified and their surveys and Conservation agreements are planned to be ready next semester.

### **1.2 Deliver training for sustainable ranching:**

This activity has not started yet. It is expected for next semester, as per the agreed timetable.

### **1.3. Deliver training for water management and treatment**

This activity has not started yet. It is expected for next semester, as per the agreed timetable. Nevertheless, we have gathered important data on this issue through the surveys. For example, 92% of small producers have access to water, but just 7% have a safe water provision system. This means that 93% of the surveyed people only have access to water from cutwaters (constructed for animal use) which do not meet safe drinking conditions. During the next semester project staff will collect information from local health departments about the impact of this situation on the health of families. We will then work on tackling this situation through the provision of safe water systems.

### **1.4. Assist ranchers for on-the-field implementation**

Though this activity is expected to start next semester, we have installed two pilot projects with two small producers in the Puerto Casado location to help properly systematize their experience, owing largely to the fact that these producers have already committed small investments in exchange for the technical assistance received from the project. These experiences will then serve as models for future field training to other beneficiaries.

Pilot project 1: installation of pasture and rotational grazing system: this is based on a property of 30 hectares, where the proprietor has bought grass seed for 10 hectares and is aiming at an intensive fattening system. The rotational system will use 2.5 hectares per block, and the maximum stocking rate will be 15 heads of cattle. The type of grass used (Callide variety) has not been proved in this kind of soil yet, but it is highly recommended for dry soils with low rainfall regimes. Some of the indicators to be registered will be the suitability of this grass for the project area; the effectiveness of rotational practices; and the increase in kilograms of beef produced related to time and available land.

Pilot project 2: grass recovery through cleaning and rotational grazing: this is based on a property of 380 hectares, where the proprietor will implement cleaning in a 40 hectare plot with the Gatton Panic grass variety. This grass is characterized by its high nutritional value, growth potential in volume, high tolerance of diseases and pests, resistance to low rainfall, and significant seed production (Chaparro, 1994). The site already had this type of grass but was

invaded by weeds and other vegetation. We will clean this pasture with heavy machinery (tractor with frontal shovel) and complement this with manual cleaning, and will then test the efficiency of the rotational grazing system. The rotational system will use 10 hectares per block, with four blocks in total, and a maximum stocking rate of 60 heads of cattle. Some of the indicators to be registered will be the resilience capacity of this grass, translated into the increase in kilograms of beef produced related to time and available land.

**Output 2: Conservation Agreements**

**2.1. Generate Conservation Agreements**

We have agreed on and signed conservation agreements with 3 (three) of the expected 8 large landowner project partners. The other 5 proprietors have been identified and we plan to have their Conservation agreements signed by next semester.

**2.2. Monitor performance of Conservation Agreements**

This activity is planned for next semester.

**Output 3: Diffusion and replication of best practices**

Activities 3.1 to 3.3 are planned for Year 2 and Year 3 of the project.

**2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

During this period, the main task was collecting social, economic and environmental data from potential beneficiaries. The pace of this work was slow going because of availability, level of trust among producers, etc. Nonetheless, this will not negatively impact the overall performance of the project budget, as the process is ongoing and will finish in the first year as expected.

**2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with LTS:  No

Formal change request submitted:  No

Received confirmation of change acceptance  NA

**3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £

**3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully.** Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

N/A

**4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

There were minor problems related to the lack of legal invoices available in remote areas. WCS appealed to provide legally accepted self-receipts in order to overcome that difficulty, since these were the only providers available in these area (lodging, especially).

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document. Additionally, if you were funded under R25 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**