

The role and economic contribution of working equids in Afghanistan



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Background: The problem

Afghanistan's national economy is largely based on agriculture and livestock production. There are 1.7 million equids, of which 92% are donkeys¹.

Working equids play an important role in the livelihoods and resilience of poor communities in rural, urban & semi urban areas. Donkeys are primarily used as a pack animal for carrying a diversity of loads, including construction materials and water.

They are also used during irrigation, harvesting wild plants for animal feed, and garbage collection, however the value of donkeys is invisible to policy makers.

Aim

This research aimed to explore the role and economic value of working equids compared to other livestock species in two provinces in Afghanistan.

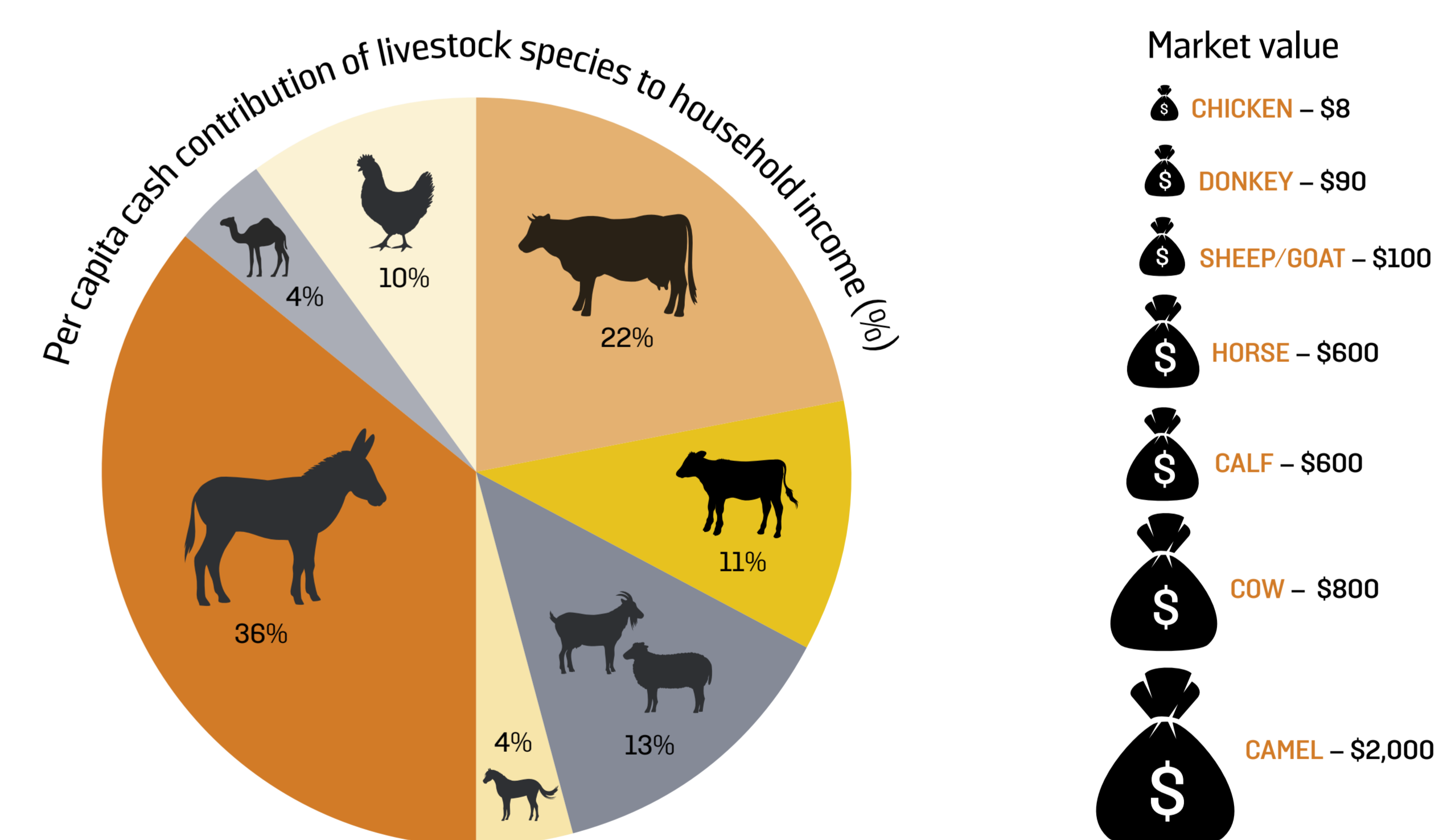
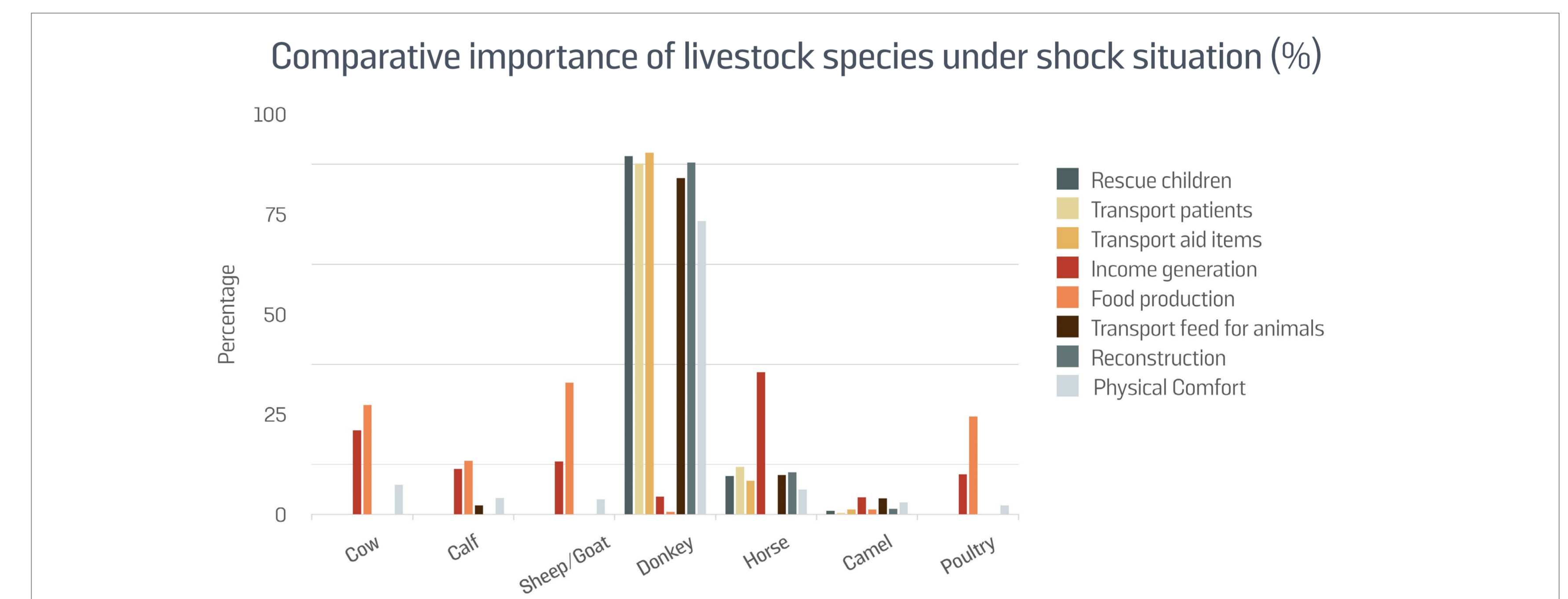
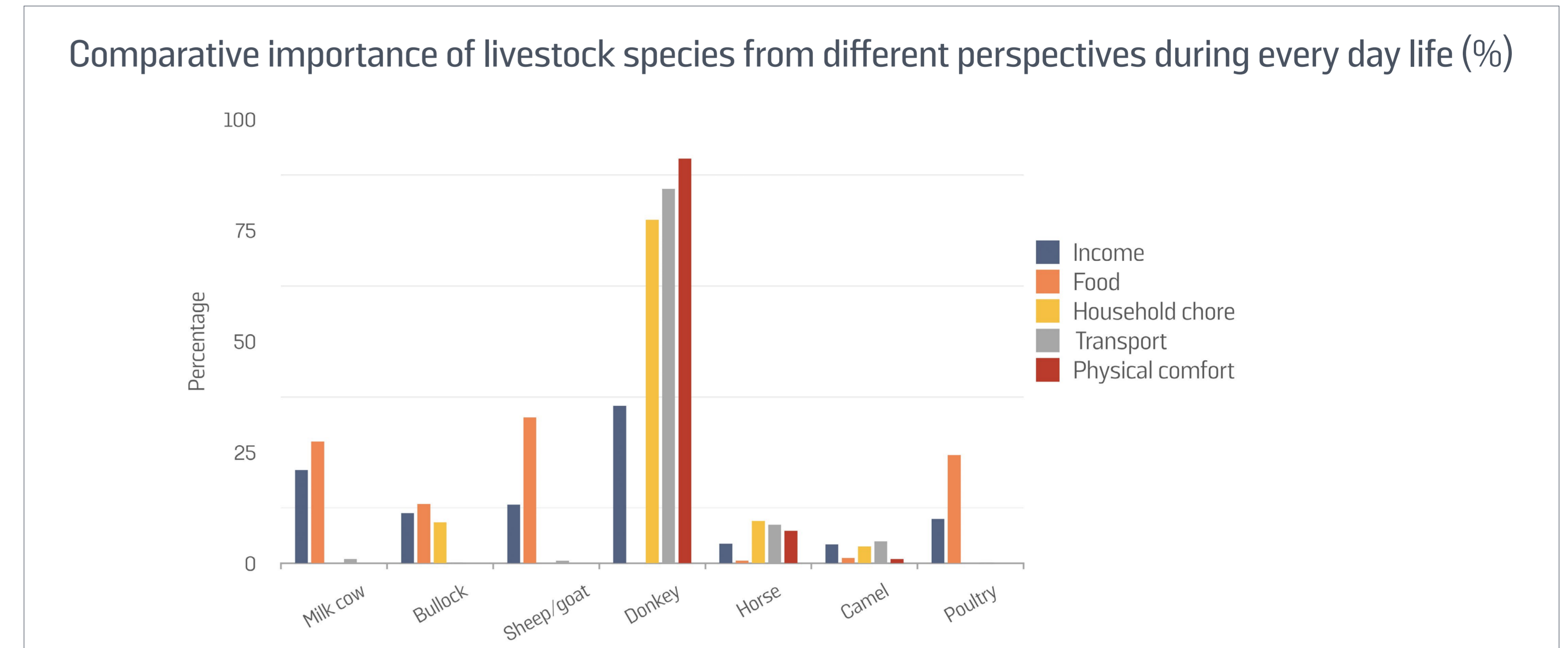
Methodology

- The study was conducted in Balkh and Samangan provinces in Afghanistan between January and February 2016.
- Forty focus group discussions were conducted (20 male and 20 female)
- A standardized, semi-structured interview script was followed (based on the Department for International Development's Sustainable Livelihoods Framework).
- For all groups, peer ranking and proportional piling techniques were used to facilitate participatory focus group discussions.
- Participants were asked questions in relation to their ownership and usage of different livestock species and to estimate the value and relative contribution of each species to various aspects of daily life at household and community levels.

Peer ranking of perceived importance of each species compared with the donkey

Peer ranking of animal species in the lives of poor households	
Cow versus donkey	100% donkey
Calf versus donkey	97.6% donkey
Sheep/goat versus donkey	99.5% donkey
Horse versus donkey	100% donkey
Camel versus donkey	100% donkey
Poultry versus donkey	100% donkey

The results



Conclusion

- Donkeys have almost the lowest monetary value, but play a central role in the livelihoods of people in Balkh and Samangan provinces.
- Almost all interviewees recognized their donkeys as a key resource, without them they could not cultivate and/or keep other species.
- Given the central role of working equids to day to day livelihoods, access to sustainable/affordable health and welfare services for working equids are vital for poor communities who rely on them.
- Lack of recognition of the important role and contribution of working equids at the policy maker level is a global issue.

