

# The SDG's ECONOMIC GOALS for wildlife ranching

by Dr Francis Vorhies  
Photos courtesy Thaba Tholo –  
[www.thabatholo.co.za](http://www.thabatholo.co.za)



This is the last of our four-part series on the nexus between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup> and the wildlife ranching industry in Africa. In the first article, we established that wildlife ranching is fully aligned with the vision and approach of the 2030 Agenda. In the second and third articles, we highlighted key environmental and social goals respectively, to which wildlife ranching can and does make substantive contributions.



In this article, we highlight the SDG's economic goals, which are equally important for sustainable development and for the sustainability of the wildlife ranching industry. In order for the industry to maintain its positive impacts on environment and social matters, it is necessary for the industry to be economically viable, and for this economic viability to be aligned with the sustainability dimensions of economic growth.

## 1 NO POVERTY



### SDG 1

Aims to “**End poverty in all its forms everywhere**”. This socio-economic goal includes an important economic target on ownership and control of natural resources:



### SDG 1 Target

**1.4** By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.



### Relevance to wildlife ranching

The wild ranching industry is enhancing the value of land resources, particularly drylands, which are less well suited for agriculture and livestock. In so doing, it also provides direct economic opportunities to the communities living in these areas. Working with these communities, the industry can promote equitable ownership of wilderness areas and wildlife resources.

## 2 ZERO HUNGER



### SDG 2

Aims to “**End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**”. This goal also includes relevant economic targets for the wildlife ranching sector related to sustainable food production systems:



Thaba Tholo understands that, in order to ensure the best results, the best staff must be employed, trained and supported.



### SDG 2 Targets

**2.3** By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

**2.4** By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

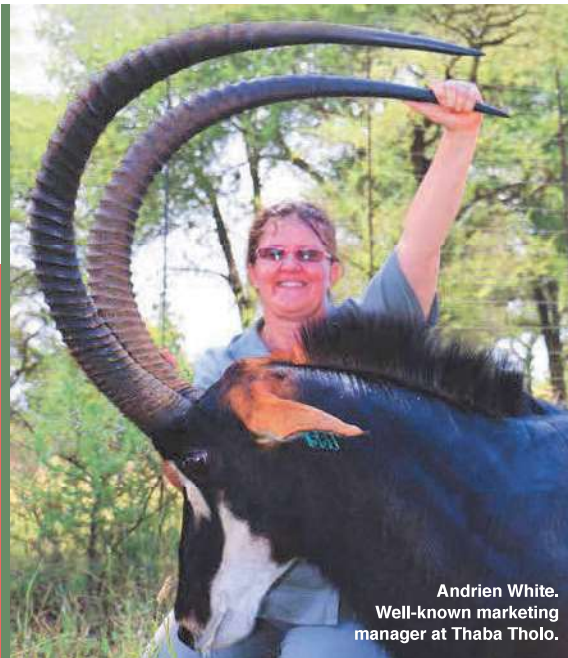


### Relevance to wildlife ranching

As a form of sustainable dryland management of drylands, wildlife ranching enhances the 'game farming' productivity of these lands. Further, through enhancing the productivity of drylands, the industry has the potential to directly provide enhanced livelihood opportunities to indigenous peoples, family farmers and pastoralists, and to link these groups to a market economy.

By ranching native/indigenous species, wildlife ranching increases landscape productivity by enhancing ecosystem services and resilience, climate change adaptability, and improving land and soil quality. In other words, the industry increases and preserves the stock of natural capital in the country.

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



Andrien White.  
Well-known marketing  
manager at Thaba Tholo.



### SDG 5

Aims to “**Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**”. The following target is aligned with 2.3 (page 37) and focuses on the participation of women:



#### SDG 5 Target

**5.5** Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.



#### Relevance to wildlife ranching

Wildlife ranches can contribute to gender equity employment by ensuring the full and effective participation of women in the ranch management and related wildlife ranching services.

>>

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



#### SDG 8 Targets

**8.1** Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.



#### Relevance to wildlife ranching

Wildlife ranches can contribute to national growth targets by developing a value-added industry in marginal, rural lands.

>>



Thaba Tholo believes in ensuring that their staff are provided with working conditions that match their excellence.

## SDG 8

Aims to “**Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**”. The wildlife ranching industry is and can make a substantive contribution to many of the targets under this goal, particularly with respect to economic growth in rural areas.



### SDG 8 Targets (continued)

**8.2** Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value-added and labour-intensive sectors.

**8.3** Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

**8.4** Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead.

**8.5** By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

**8.9** By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.



### Relevance to wildlife ranching (continued)

This target describes key features of the dynamic and growing wildlife ranching sectors – diversification, technological innovation, high-value-added, and labour-intensive.

Once again, in many marginal, rural areas, the industry promotes productive activities, decent job creation, and the development of rural enterprises, contributing to a developing wildlife economy.

Wildlife ranching decouples the production and consumption of wildlife goods and services from ecosystem degradation.

The wildlife ranching industry is creating new employment opportunities, particularly for the rural poor.

A key service of the wildlife industry is tourism, which is labour-intensive and provides ongoing opportunities for engagement of local communities.



## SDG 9

Aims to “**Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**”.

This includes the following target, which is most pertinent to the wildlife ranching sector in South Africa:



Eastern black rhino  
(*Diceros bicornis ssp. michaeli*).



### SDG 9 Target

**9.4** By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities.



### Relevance to wildlife ranching

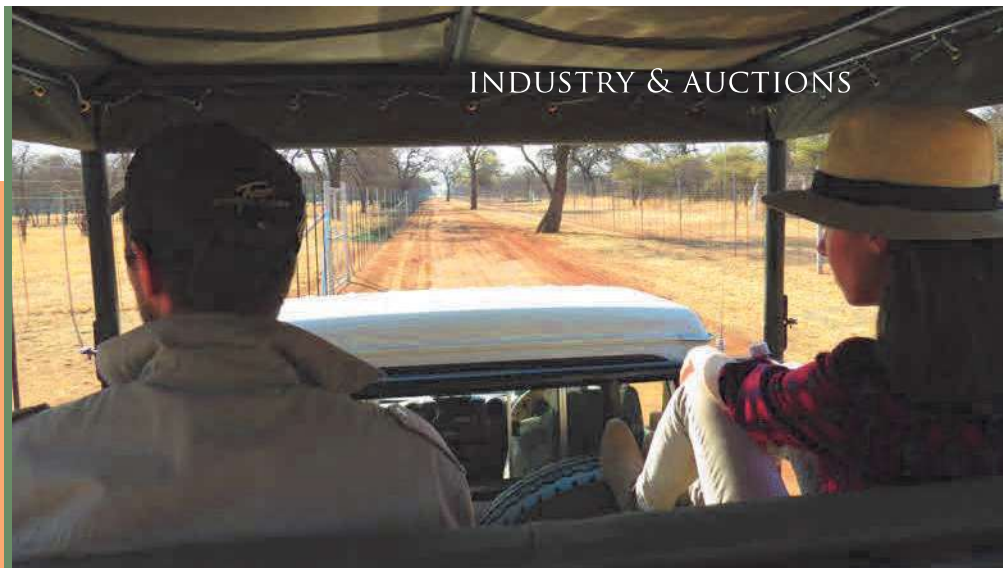
As sustainable rural enterprises, wildlife ranches are upgrading the use of drylands from previous unsustainable farming and livestock practices to the production, use and trade of wildlife goods and services that enhance ecosystem integrity, conserve wild species (including endangered species) and strengthen climate resilience.

»



Game-capturing project.





## SDG 11

Aims to “***Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable***”.

This includes the following target, which is most pertinent to the contribution that the wildlife ranching sector can make to human settlements:



Due to the increased risk of poaching, security is of the utmost importance. Thaba Tholo believes that the best line of defence against poaching and general crime is the sense of loyalty and ownership from their employees, who are themselves drawn from Thabazimbi’s local communities.



### SDG 11 Target

**11.a** Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.



### Relevance to wildlife ranching

>>

The consumers of wildlife ranching products – meat, hide, tourism and so on – come mostly from urban and peri-urban areas. The industry has the opportunity to make positive links that connect people to the natural environment.



## 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



African buffalo  
(*Syncerus caffer*).

### SDG 12

Aims to “**Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**”. This includes the following targets, to which the wildlife ranching sector can directly contribute:

Thaba Tholo believes in the long-term sustainability of its wildlife programmes and projects and, as such, great care is taken to improve the quality of the habitat. Thaba Tholo ensures that any farming activities are sustainable and environment friendly.



#### SDG 12 Target

**12.2** By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

**12.b** Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.



#### Relevance to wildlife ranching

>> The wildlife ranching sector, as a commercial sector, aims to manage wild natural resources sustainably and to ensure that their utilisation is efficient.

>> By integrating the provision of tourism as a wildlife service with other wildlife goods and services, the industry can develop local jobs and local economic opportunities. It has the potential to then monitor the impacts of these developments.

## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



### SDG 16

Aims to “*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*”.

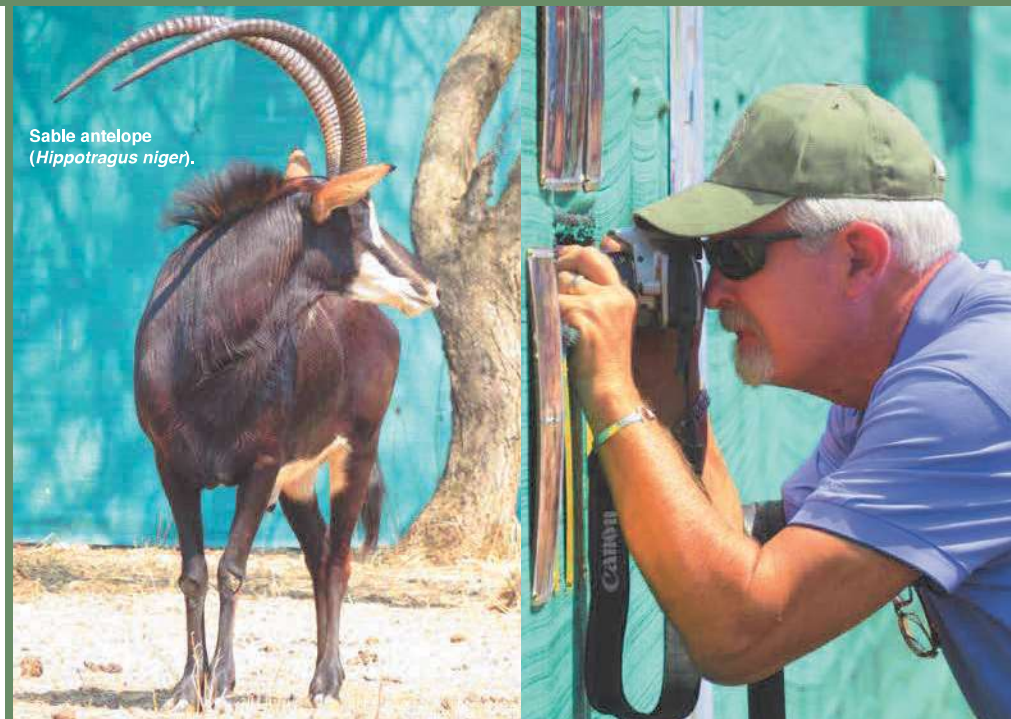
In support of this goal, wildlife ranches can work with provincial and local authorities to combat illegal wildlife trade.

Thaba Tholo's annual game auction attracts local and international buyers and visitors.

## INDUSTRY & AUCTIONS



Sable antelope  
(*Hippotragus niger*).



### SDG 16 Target

**16.4** By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime.



### Relevance to wildlife ranching

>>

Wildlife ranches provide a legitimate space for legal wildlife production, the use and trade of which provides a sustainable and inclusive alternative to illegal wildlife trade.

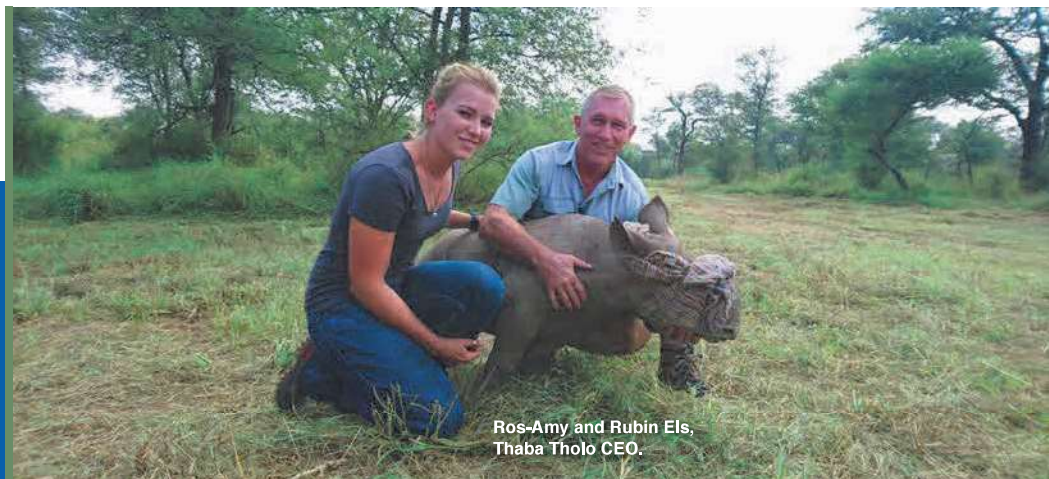


## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

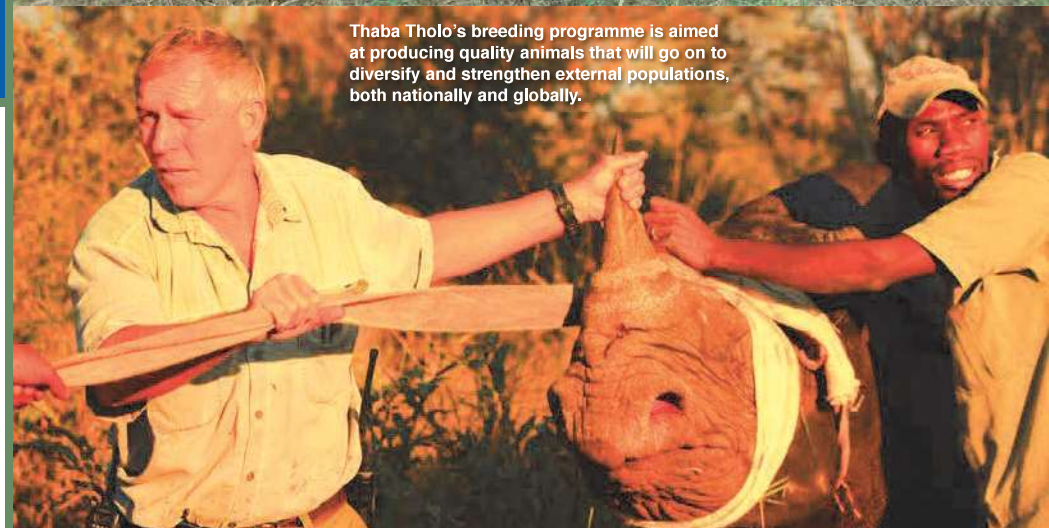


### SDG 17

Aims to “**Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development**” to ensure that we achieve the other 16 SDGs. This includes an emphasis on finance, trade and policy coherence, all of which are relevant to the wildlife ranching sector.



Ros-Amy and Rubin Els,  
Thaba Tholo CEO.



Thaba Tholo's breeding programme is aimed at producing quality animals that will go on to diversify and strengthen external populations, both nationally and globally.



### SDG 17 Targets

**17.3** Mobilise additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources.

»

**17.11** Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020.

»

**17.14** Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.

»



### Relevance to wildlife ranching

The wildlife ranching sector offers a viable investment opportunity for poor rural areas across Africa. In so doing, it creates an investable asset class of natural capital, which is restored, conserved and used sustainably.

Wildlife goods and services from across Africa have fabulous potential export opportunities. These range from ecotourism and trophy hunting to the sale of fresh meat, dried meat (biltong), hide and other wildlife products such as bones, ivory and horn.

The wildlife ranching sector provides evidence that the objectives of the three Rio Conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification can be implemented at the landscape level in Africa. However, other international agreements and national policies that ban wildlife trade or importing wildlife goods and services go against the industry and thus against sustainable development.

## WILDLIFE RANCHES AS CATALYSTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

As the wildlife ranching industry is engaged in the sustainable production, utilisation and trade of wildlife goods and services, it is also directly focused on environmental, economic and social sustainability and with the nexus between these three dimensions of sustainable development. In short, the wildlife ranching industry is a catalyst for implementing the 2030 Agenda in rural Africa.



FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) recognised the importance of wildlife ranching two decades ago in its 1997 report<sup>2</sup> on 'Wildlife and food security in Africa.' The chapter in the report on wildlife ranching provides a fascinating overview of the sector 20 years ago:

"The feasibility and profitability of game ranching have been amply demonstrated by a number of studies. The rationale behind advocating game ranching in Africa is that conditions in many parts of the continent, whether resulting from inadequate rainfall or presence of certain disease organisms, are not appropriate for production of exotic cattle and other domestic stocks. Indigenous wild animal species on the other hand have evolved in the African ecosystem and are better adapted to the prevailing conditions and should therefore be more productive.

Game ranching is currently most developed in southern Africa (particularly **South Africa, Namibia** and **Zimbabwe**), although a private game ranch, the Galana Ranch, was established in **Kenya** in the 1970s...

Most land in South Africa is privately owned, fenced and has been used over long period for grazing domestic stock or for arable

crops. By 1992, South Africa had 3 500 game ranches; the network of private reserves and game ranches has grown from less than 2 million in 1979 to more than 16 million acres [in 1996].

In other southern African countries such as **Zimbabwe**, more and more private farmers are converting their lands into wildlife ranches or incorporating wildlife on cattle ranches as mixed ranches while communal lands are increasingly being managed for wildlife...

**Ghana's** Shai Hills Game Production Reserve (recently re-named Shai Hills Resource Reserve) was one of the first attempts at game ranching within the west African sub-region. The project was first mooted in the early 1970s and the idea was to restock the heavily depleted wildlife resources of the 22km<sup>2</sup> reserve with selected ungulates for meat production...

**Burkina Faso's** Nazinga Game Ranch has demonstrated that even in West Africa where wild animal populations are relatively low, game ranches are feasible and can be profitable.

A number of studies have been undertaken to document **the comparative advantages of wild animal production** in Africa in terms of their biological, ecological and physiological attributes, efficiency in utilising available vegetation, productivity and economic viability... The argument is that because wild animals have evolved in Africa over a very long period of time, they must be more highly adapted, physiologically and ecologically, to the natural environment than domestic stock brought in from elsewhere. Wildlife are also known to be better capable

of converting vegetable matter into protein without causing deterioration of the habitat and under circumstance such as in country infested with tsetse flies wildlife provide a more appropriate means of making such land productive.

Based on computer models, [one study in 1981] compared the value of a maned lion as a resource on the Amboseli rangelands to cattle ranching and concluded that the value of the single lion to the national economy was equivalent to a base herd of 30 000 zebu cattle or 6 400 steers in a year. The reason that **wildlife offers much higher potential returns than cattle lies in the fact that wildlife can be marketed for more than just the basic value of its meat, skin and other products.** The value can be greatly enhanced through wildlife based industries such as tourism and sport hunting, even at much lower levels of stocking and utilisation."

With the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, we have an opportunity to better articulate what the FAO had already observed in the 1990s, that is, the sustainable production, utilisation and trade of wildlife in Africa makes sound environmental, social and economic sense. In South Africa in particular, the wildlife ranching industry has a unique opportunity to make the sustainable development case for expanding an inclusive, responsible wildlife economy which restores drylands, creates jobs for the rural poor, enhances food security and increases exports based on Africa's natural wildlife capital.



For more information, visit: <http://earthmind.org>

<sup>2</sup>See: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w7540e/w7540e00.htm>