

Farmers harness solar power to produce livestock feed from the bush

A [study](#) conducted by De-Bushing Advisory Service Namibia, has revealed that the production of animal feed from encroacher bush has the potential to transform agriculture in the country.



Image Supplied.

In a country where 30 million hectares of farmland are affected by bush encroachment, bush-based animal feed production has become a viable option for Namibian farmers.

The new *Bos-tot-Kos* (bush-to-table) methods and machinery has begun turning a threat into a valuable biomass resource. The downside to this solution, however, is that it is electricity-intensive, and that can be the stumbling block for farmers in remote locations with expensive and/or limited grid power supply. Solar energy company SolarSaver is providing a unique rent-to-own solution to address this.

The company recently installed a 52kWp off-grid solar PV system with 160 solar panels, batteries and a back-up generator at Farm Otjomasso North (Bronkhorst), a cattle and sheep farm in Hochveld. The farm, located 50kms from the nearest power line, now uses the off-grid solar system to successfully power the *Bos-tot-Kos* machinery the farm installed to produce livestock feed from the bush.

Enhancing farming operations

Stefan Kleemann from SolarSaver says there is huge potential to provide farmers with solar power for this type of machinery and other needs in the most remote locations. "The energy we can harness from Namibia's abundant sunshine provides enough power for the machinery required. This significantly enhances the sustainability of farming operations in these areas," says Kleeman.

"Solar installations enable remote farms like Farm Otjomasso North (Bronkhorst) to use the machinery they need at a much lower cost than diesel generators. For example, the off-grid solar battery system at Bronkhorst is operating at N\$ 25 000 per month, while operating with diesel generators would cost close to double that."

While Kleeman says transporting these complex off-grid systems to remote locations and ensuring they continue to operate most effectively can be a challenge, SolarSaver has, for example, developed an innovative containerised solution to solve these problems. "The containerisation of the system on the farm is a very neat solution which allows the panels to operate at maximum capacity. Built-in air-conditioning ensures the temperature in the container is kept at 25 degrees for optimal performance of the equipment."

In terms of affordability, both *Bos-tot-Kos* and SolarSaver offer rental options to counteract the usually prohibitive capital costs associated with these systems. "Customised systems are designed and installed free-of-charge, and clients then only pay against the actual performance of the system, benefiting from the cheaper, greener power that is produced," says Kleeman.

"With farmers facing major challenges, this at least offers a Capex-free, hassle-free way to harness solar power," he concludes.

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