Ruminant Feed Balance Modelling in R

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1 Introduction

This course is designed to guide learners on ruminant feed balance modelling in R. The course gives an overview of the concept of feed balance modelling, and introduces the main modelling steps based by Fraval et al. (2024). Learners are taught how to gather spatial and non-spatial data, pre-process it, and ultimately assess feed balances. The methodology has be implemented in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. The codes and data in these course are for Nigeria. The course emphasizes practical learning, with learners working on hands-on sessions. Detailed explanations are provided, helping learners follow along with the material and providing a valuable resource for future reference.

2 Background

Feed balances are used to evaluate the adequacy of available livestock feed resources in meeting the dietary requirements of livestock (Mottet and Assouma 2024). Feed resources typically include natural grasses, browse, crop by-products (e.g., crop residues), and agro-industrial by-products. Feed balance assessments are conducted at specific geographical scales and over defined time periods. In this course, we focus on estimating feed (energy) balance for ruminant livestock at the national scale, while ensuring relevance at sub-national levels and across different time frames.

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this course are to:-

- Teach participants where to collect spatial and non-spatial data required for livestock feed balance assessment for Nigeria.
- Teach participants how to import, edit, and export spatial and non-spatial data in preparation for feed balance modeling.
- Guide participants in evaluating livestock feed supply and determining livestock nutritional requirements.
- Equip participants with the skills to assess feed balances, allowing them to evaluate if livestock feed supply meets demand.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, learners will be able to:-

- Locate and collect essential spatial and non-spatial data for livestock feed balance assessment for Nigeria
- Import, edit, and export spatial and non-spatial data for use in livestock feed balance assessments.
- Assess livestock feed supply and determine livestock nutritional requirements.
- Evaluate feed supply against livestock requirements to assess feed balances.

2.3 Approach

The approach involves estimating (i) feed availability using freely accessible geospatial data and (ii) ruminant livestock feed requirements, both assessed over time. Figure 1 provides an overview of the feed balance model design.
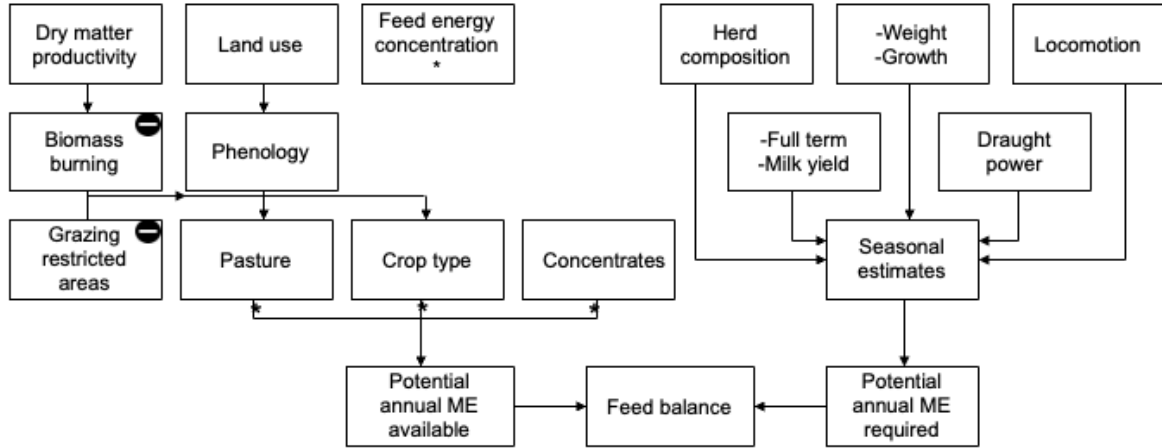
Figure 1: Feed balance model for ruminant livestock. A minus ($-$) indicates excluded biomass, while an asterisk (*) denotes inclusion of feed concentration values in subsequent calculations. ME = Metabolizable Energy.

The course is organized into three workflows: `1Data-download` for downloading data, `2Feed-geoprocessing` for estimating feed availability and `3Balance-estimates` for estimating feed balances.

3 Setting up R environment

Learners will need to install the following free and open source software:-

- R programming language (4.4+) https://cran.r-project.org.
- R Studio Desktop (3.6+) https://rstudio.com/products/rstudio/download/#download.

Create a new folder within your work space and name it `feed-balance-modelling`. Using R, we assign the path to the folder the variable name `root`.

For Linux/Unix systems

```
# Linux systems
root <- "/home/feed-balance-modelling"
```

For Windows systems

```
# Windows systems
root <- "C:/Documents/feed-balance-modelling"
```

Next, we set the country of interest.

```
country <- "Nigeria"
```

4 Data collation

This tutorial aims to guide learners through the key spatial and non-spatial data sources required for assessing feed balance. Learners will be introduced to a variety of datasets, and by the end of the tutorial, they will understand the necessary data requirements and know how to gather these datasets for feed balance modeling.

The tutorial leverages freely available spatial and non-spatial data to perform feed balance modeling. Recent advancements in R packages have enabled streamlined access to spatial data, including administrative boundaries, climatic variables, and environmental datasets. The required data is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: List of datasets required for feed balance modelling

Dataset	Description	Availability	Spatial resolution	Year	Source
Administrative boundaries	Administrative boundaries for target country	Global	NA	2023	NA
Aggregation zones	Areas with similar livestock management practices	Regional	NA	2018	NA
Land use	Fractional cover of different land uses	Global	100 meter	2019	NA
Above ground dry matter productivity	Vegetation's overall growth rate	Global	300 meter	2020-2023	NA
Crop type and area	Location, extent, and patterns of feedable crops	Global	10 kilometer	2020	NA
Phenolology	Seasonal pattern of variation in vegetated land surfaces observed from remote sensing	Global	500 meter	2020-2023	NA
Burned areas	Burnt scars	Global	300 meter	2020-2023	NA
Protected areas	Marine and terrestrial protected areas	Global	NA	2024	NA
Tree cover	Forest and non-forest tree cover	Global, Regional	100 meter	2019	NA
Crop harvest index	Ratio of harvested product dry weight to total above-ground biomass dry weight at plant maturity	Local	NA	2024	NA
Feed parameters	Nutritional quality of feed items/type e.g., dry matter digestibility, crude protein	Local	NA	2024	NA
Livestock population	Type and number of livestock	Global	10 kilometer	2020	NA
Livestock parameters	Animal characteristics e.g., live weight, age	Local	NA	2024	NA

We provide brief reproducible examples illustrating how to download and utilize such data for feed balance modeling.

4.1 Administrative boundaries

We create a new folder under `feed-balance-modelling`, and name it `AdminBound` and assign it the variable name `outdir`. We can download administrative boundaries of world countries with the `geodata` R package. Here we use `geodata` to download the administrative boundaries for levels `0`, `1` and `2` for Nigeria from `GADM`, and store the data in `AdminBound` folder.

```r
library(geodata)
library(sf)

country <- "Nigeria"

outdir <- paste0(root, "/src/1Data-download/SpatialData/inputs/AdminBound/",
↪  country); dir.create(outdir, F, T)

admin_levels <- c("0", "1", "2")
for(admin_level in admin_levels){
  aoi <- geodata::gadm(country = "NGA", level=admin_level, path =
↪  paste0(outdir), version="latest") %>% sf::st_as_sf()
  write_sf(aoi, paste0(outdir, "/gadm40_NGA_", admin_level, ".shp"), append =
    ↪  FALSE)
  write_sf(aoi, paste0(outdir, "/aoi", admin_level, ".shp"), append = FALSE)
}
```

4.2 Aggregation zones

We use ecological and feed distribution zones as defined by the Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (FMAFS), the most recent version can be downloaded at https://drive.google.com/file/d/10HsGspftDNgq-fjAjeUwB8QsmHZWUJyT/view?usp=sharing.

```r
library(googledrive)

outdir <- paste0(root,
↪  "/src/1Data-download/SpatialData/inputs/AggregationZones");
↪  dir.create(outdir, F, T)

drive_deauth()
```

```
drive_user()

public_file <- drive_get(as_id("1OHsGspftDNgq-fjAjeUwB8QsmHZWUJyT"))
drive_download(public_file, path = paste0(outdir,
 ↪  "/Ecological_and_Feed_Distribution.zip"), overwrite = TRUE)

unzip(zipfile = paste0(outdir, "/Ecological_and_Feed_Distribution.zip"),
 ↪  exdir = paste0(outdir, "/"))
```

4.3 Feed parameters

Several feed parameters are needed for model parameterization. In this course, we estimate the metabolizable energy (ME) concentration of feeds using species-specific estimates derived from literature reviews and databases such as the Sub-Saharan Africa Feeds composition Database (Link: https://feedsdatabase.ilri.org. Feed quality parameters include metabolizable Energy (ME), neutral detergent fibre (NDF), in vitro organic matter digestibility (IVOMD), and crude protein (CP). To facilitate model parameterization, a comprehensive feed parameter file has been prepared and is available for download at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Sp B1p9i4MGU1gMahF4M3Uc-HZr8FGoqd

```
outdir <- paste0(root, "/src/1Data-download/Tables/inputs/", country,
 ↪  "/CropParams"); dir.create(outdir, F, T)

drive_deauth()
drive_user()

#folder link to id
public_folder <-
 ↪  "https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SpB1p9i4MGU1gMahF4M3Uc-HZr8FGoqd"
folder_id <- drive_get(as_id(public_folder))

#find files in folder
public_files <- drive_ls(folder_id)

for(i in 1:nrow(public_files)){
  public_file <- public_files[i, ]
  file_name <- public_file$name
  drive_download(public_file, path = paste0(outdir, "/", file_name),
   ↪  overwrite = TRUE)
}
```

Other useful websites for feed parameters include:

- Feedipedia https://www.feedipedia.org
- Tropical forages http://www.tropicalforages.info

4.4 Livestock parameters

Several livestock parameters are needed for model parameterization. In this course, we utilize the Gridded Livestock of the World (GLW) database (Gilbert et al. 2018) to spatially disaggregate herds and flocks into species and categories including sheep, goats (adult and young), cattle (bulls, steers, cows, heifers, and calves), horses, and donkeys. We compile essential livestock parameters to characterize herd dynamics and productivity. These parameters include: live weight, age, daily weight gain, fertility rate, lactation length, daily milk yield, annual milk yield, daily walking distance, and proportion of population used for work. To facilitate model parameterization, a comprehensive feed parameter file has been prepared and is available for download at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-3N_kmMgcHr_tayylSxlMJAr-2PBGFXd

```
outdir <- paste0(root, "/src/1Data-download/Tables/inputs/", country,
↪  "/LivestockParams"); dir.create(outdir, F, T)

drive_deauth()
drive_user()

#folder link to id
public_folder =
↪  "https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-3N_kmMgcHr_tayylSxlMJAr-2PBGFXd"
folder_id = drive_get(as_id(public_folder))

#find files in folder
public_files = drive_ls(folder_id)

for(i in 1:nrow(public_files)){
  public_file <- public_files[i, ]
  file_name <- public_file$name
  drive_download(public_file, path = paste0(outdir, "/", file_name),
    ↪  overwrite = TRUE)
}
```

Extended workflows and detailed scripts for collating other required datasets are available at https://github.com/ilri/ruminant-feed-balance/tree/main/src/1Data-download

5 Feed-geoprocessing

References

Fraval, S., J. Y. Mutua, T. Amole, A. Tolera, T. Feyisa, P. K. Thornton, A. M. O. Notenbaert, et al. 2024. "Feed Balances for Ruminant Livestock: Gridded Estimates for Data Constrained Regions." *Animal*, May, 101199. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.animal.2024.101199.

Gilbert, Marius, Gaëlle Nicolas, Giusepina Cinardi, Thomas P. Van Boeckel, Sophie O. Vanwambeke, G. R.William Wint, and Timothy P. Robinson. 2018. "Global Distribution Data for Cattle, Buffaloes, Horses, Sheep, Goats, Pigs, Chickens and Ducks in 2010." *Scientific Data 2018 5:1* 5 (1): 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2018.227.

Mottet, Anne, and Mohamed Habibou Assouma. 2024. "The Feed Balances Sheet: A Tool for Planning the Use of Resources and Enhancing Resilience in Tropical Grazing Livestock." *Frontiers in Animal Science* 5 (March). https://doi.org/10.3389/fanim.2024.1354728.