

MAY 2010

OVERVIEW

IIED Climate Change Group

Project name:

Total Economic Value of Pastoralism

Project leader:

Ced Hesse

Time frame:

2007 to date

Cost:

£30,000

Objective:

To provide fresh insights into the comparative benefits of pastoralism as a land use system in dryland Africa under conditions of increasing land shortage and climate uncertainty.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Tanzanian researchers are assessing the comparative benefits of pastoralist and ranching systems for raising meat. Similar studies from other dryland regions in Africa have found that pastoralism produces greater returns per hectare than ranching, in terms of livelihoods, meat, milk and cash. This traditional livelihood is ideally suited to unpredictable rainfall and better able than ranching to produce benefits in drought conditions – increasingly vital qualities as climate impacts bite. The project, now in its second phase, will measure the impacts of pastoralism locally and translate the results into a public awareness campaign using innovative communication tools including TV advertisements. Building a critical mass of public support will help advocates of pastoralism as they challenge pro-ranching policies endorsed by the Tanzanian government and promote more flexible and resilient systems.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The persistent poverty, social and political marginalisation, land degradation and conflict that afflict many dryland pastoral communities are due to failures of policy and governance, not of the pastoral system itself. The view of pastoralism as economically inefficient and environmentally destructive continues

Tracking the real value of pastoralism

A reevaluation of traditional livestock herding in Tanzania reveals the system's economic viability, climate resilience and fit with local needs

Ranching policy push

Nearly all the red meat Tanzanians consume is produced under pastoral systems – where livestock mobility and negotiated access to common property resources are central to the system's productivity and resilience.

In the northern city of Arusha, for example, pastoralists produce 96 per cent of the locally slaughtered meat.

But a new national policy is set to change everything. The National Livestock Policy of 2006 now coming into force promotes settled, intensive livestock rearing through ranching as the main way to rear animals for meat and milk.

The problem with this policy is that it could affect the country's food security. With land becoming scarcer and rainfall becoming more erratic – an impact of climate change – the costs of producing milk and meat will rise considerably, possibly beyond the average purchasing power of Tanzanians.

Yet pastoralism is capable of producing greater returns per hectare and maintaining high productivity in the face of environmental variability. Meat and milk produced in this way are theoretically considerably cheaper and more accessible to locals.

Pastoralism and food supply

So a reversal of fortune for pastoralists might affect what a typical housewife in

Dar es Salaam can afford to feed her family. Researchers from the Tanzania Natural Resource Forum, in collaboration with IIED, the Tanzania Ministry of Livestock and the University of Dar es Salaam, are working to assess the strength of this connection and raise public awareness about it through a mass media campaign.

This research is backed by earlier studies in Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya and Zimbabwe, which have shown that pastoralism is more productive per hectare than settled commercial ranching under similar dryland conditions. By producing skinnier but more animals per hectare compared to ranching's fatter but fewer animals, pastoralism ultimately provides more meat and milk.

And while ranching tends to specialise solely in meat, pastoralism provides a diverse range of outputs including meat, milk, blood, manure and traction, which collectively have greater value.

Trailing a critical kilo

To compare the benefits of pastoralism versus ranching, our research is examining the net returns for 1 kilogram of meat, taking into account all inputs and outputs along each node of the livestock value chain. For example, the costs of rearing cattle under pastoral and ranching systems are compared and expressed as a 'cost per kg' of meat (labour, pasture, veterinary care and so on).

to drive rangeland and livestock policy. Yet this is based on misunderstanding of the dynamics of drylands and of pastoral systems, and the lack of an economic valuation framework to assess pastoralism's local and national contributions. Building the capacities of pastoral communities and their advocates to challenge ingrained perceptions is necessary if pastoralists are to be part of national and local decision-making. Governments must better understand the rationale of pastoralism and its economic and environmental benefits to see the value in engaging with pastoralists and protecting their rights.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED & INNOVATIONS

- Productivity in the highly variable dryland environment tends towards 'boom and bust' — something policies on livestock and development often fail to recognise. Our work reframes dryland realities: characteristic rainfall variability, for instance, can actually serve as a resource that pastoralists can use to maximise the productivity of their livestock.
- Few statistics exist on the economics of the Tanzanian livestock value chain. We filled gaps by interviewing participants along the chain from herder to trader to processor to consumer.
- The project will produce not just research reports, but commercial advertisements in the media. By raising public awareness of how livestock policies affect food prices and the wider economy, we aim to boost the power base of partners advocating for pastoralism.

PARTNERS' VIEW

The Pastoralist Livelihoods Task Force is increasingly successful in building awareness among policy makers of the value of pastoral livestock production systems and protecting pastoral land. IIED has supported this process by helping PLTF build an emerging body of knowledge. An example is IIED's costs-benefits analysis of rearing meat under pastoral or ranching systems, providing a counterbalance to the government push to turn pastoralists into unwilling ranchers tethered to their own land.

Carol Sorensen
Pastoralist Livelihoods Task Force, Tanzania

IIED CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP

Working in collaboration with partner organisations and individuals in developing countries, the Climate Change Group has been leading the field on adaptation to climate change issues.



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Moving target: pinning down pastoralism's value means factoring in a range of elements, from livelihoods to meat, and more

The research is examining what happens once these animals enter the value chain through the market. It is looking at the number of livelihoods involved and the added value of the meat as it passes down through the chain from market trader to abattoir, to butchers, roast meat stalls, supermarkets, restaurants and hotels before finally reaching the consumer.

The hypothesis is that pastoralism, by producing more meat per hectare and having a longer value chain, provides far greater returns than ranching, which produces less meat per hectare and has a much smaller value chain.

Statistics are scarce on these inputs and outputs, and even on meat prices, but the project has gathered a significant body of data through interviews. Though details of ranch operations are not publicly reported, researchers have also built trust with certain ranchers to gain useful information.

Clout for change

In communicating their results, the team will go further than conventional research reports. They plan to work with local art students to produce a campaign of six 1-minute television commercials, as well as ads in local taverns, where meat is often consumed.

If the final findings support the idea that the government's ranching policy

could steeply raise meat prices and hurt livelihoods, the campaign will seek to bring this to wider attention.

It will raise public demand for an alternative path based on vibrant pastoralism as well as ranches. In this way, our knowledge-based work can lend political clout to partners advocating for pastoralism.

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