



Recognising the role and value of pastoralism and pastoralists

POLICY BRIEF

We, the Coalition of European Lobbies on Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP), regard pastoralism as a rational and economically viable land-use system able to generate significant returns in the dryland areas of Eastern Africa. Widespread misunderstanding about pastoralism has left it often under protected, undervalued and an unintended victim of uninformed policies. However, this livelihood system, which evolved as an adaptive strategy to be able to thrive in some of the world's harshest regions, is ideally suited to the climatic and economic uncertainties of our turbulent century. Informed and supportive policies need to be developed and implemented to realise the tremendous potential of pastoralism.

Several direct and indirect values of this land-use system add up to a significant total economic value (TEV) of pastoralism.

Direct values of pastoralism

1. Economic values

Pastoralism contributes significantly to the economies in East Africa. In Kenya, the pastoralist sector has an overall estimated value of €750 million and an annual marketed value of €50–80 million. In Uganda, the livestock sector contributes 7.5 % to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 17% to agricultural GDP. Pastoralists own up to 90% of the national herd, providing meat, hides, skin and milk for domestic and international markets. In Ethiopia, livestock exports constitute 20% of the national exports, 90% of the live animal exports is derived by pastoralists, who also contribute significantly to the domestic supply of meat and milk. It is estimated that 80% of the annual Ethiopian milk supply comes from pastoral production. In Tanzania, 70% of the 1.18 billion litres of milk

produced comes from agropastoral and pastoral systems. In addition, pastoralism supplies goods and raw materials to others working in both formal and informal supply chains, such as butchers, restaurant operators, traders and transporters. Studies show that pastoralism is a productive system for drylands and is generally considered to be the most profitable way to use marginal lands. A study in Afar Region in Ethiopia showed that the pastoral production system brought higher returns per hectare than irrigated sugar and cotton production.

2 Subsistence and livelihood values for up to 20 million people in Eastern Africa

In Kenya for instance, subsistence and livelihood values estimated to be the equivalent of €224 million are provided by the following aspects of pastoralism:

- *Provision of milk, meat, blood, firewood, honey, fruits and medicine to individuals, families and communities.*
- *The herd as a form of insurance, savings and risk management:* Investment in the herd is the best and often only opportunity available to rural people without access to reliable banking systems. Such informal financial services provided by pastoralists are worth about €340 million in Kenya, €414 million in Ethiopia and €1.6 billion in Sudan.
- *Social cultural values and the development of social capital*

3. Human capital values

The key values in terms of human capital are employment and indigenous knowledge. In arid and semi-arid rural areas of Eastern Africa, pastoralism and agropastoralism provide employment to up to 20 million people. In Kenya, pastoralism provides 90% of the employment opportunities and 95% of the family income and security in the arid and semi-arid lands. Pastoralists who lose their cattle face unemployment (since there are hardly any alternatives) and go to urban areas, often creating a very tangible cost to the national economy.

Pastoralists are highly specialised livestock herders and breeders and have skills and

indigenous knowledge of direct national value. They rely on variable and unpredictable natural resources under changing conditions, demanding considerable knowledge of animal husbandry, sustainable rangeland management and formal and informal livestock markets. Pastoralists possess a sophisticated understanding of livestock genetic selection processes. As climate change brings greater environmental, social and economic uncertainty, harnessing pastoral knowledge and experience in livestock management in an environmentally sustainable manner will prove invaluable in the overall management of Africa's drylands.

Indirect values of pastoralism

4. Economic input values

Crop farming is a key beneficiary of pastoralism, which helps raise crop productivity by providing manure, animals for draught and transport, seasonal labour and technical knowledge for the rising number of farmers now investing in livestock. Animal draught power in Ethiopia is worth about €870 million and manure production about €430 million. Crop farmers also help pastoralists by providing crop residues as fodder that can be crucial in drought years. These reciprocal exchanges help reduce conflict and promote peaceful relations.



Traditional ceremony in Kautako. Photo: Maria Svindseth.



Pastoralist on the move in Ethiopia. Photo: Wolfgang Bayer.

In tourism, a vital input from pastoralism is the maintenance of grazing reserves, which provide critical dry-season habitats for wildlife. In Tanzania, more than one third of protected areas have traditionally belonged to pastoralists and, in Kenya, 92% of protected areas fall within pastoral lands. Northern Kenyan tour operators also market trips using images of pastoralists, while pastoralists' cultural performances and handicrafts have clearly helped spark interest in the region. As a form of land use, pastoralism has also helped the many national parks that East African tourism depends on. Unlike crop farming, pastoralism is one of the few land uses able to co-exist with wildlife, as domesticated and wild animals exploit different ecological niches in the same grazing areas. Maasai pastoralists, for example, also directly protect the Ngorongoro black rhino from poachers. This important role in terms of wildlife conservation is, however, not always recognised by local and national governments, often leading to the eviction of pastoralists from the national parks.

5. Environmental values

A number of studies (e.g. Thébaud 2004) have shown that, when livestock mobility is assured, pastoralism benefits rangeland management. Grazing animals eat dead grass and other biomass at the dry season's end, paving the way for new

growth in the rains and preventing bush fires and the spread of unpalatable grasses and shrubs. Grazing livestock disperse plant seeds that stick to the animals' bodies, and aid the germination of other seeds by eating and excreting them. Herds break up hard soil crusts, allowing water to filter through and seeds to sprout. Livestock also provide plant nutrients through their manure. More significantly, the shared management of pooled resources practised by pastoralists prevents the need for costly fencing, surveillance and land clearance.

Mobile pastoralists are in a better position to accommodate climate change than are livestock keepers tied to sedentary land uses. Through mobility and the maintenance of reciprocal and negotiated forms of access to natural resources, pastoralists are able to exploit increasing variability in the condition of natural resources. Unpredictability and the variable distribution in time and space of nutritious pastures become positive factors of high livestock productivity when mobility is secured. Pastoralists' capacity to adapt to climate change thus depends on a favourable policy environment that secures livestock mobility and protects pastoralists' land-use rights.

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About CELEP

The Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP) is an informal advocacy coalition of European organisations, groups and experts working in partnership with pastoralist organisations, groups, and experts in Eastern Africa. They collaborate to encourage their governments in Europe and Africa and the EU to explicitly recognise and support pastoralism and pastoralists in the drylands of Eastern Africa. For more information, contact the CELEP focal point Koen Van Troos at k.vantroos@vsf-belgium.org or the regional focal point Ken Otieno at kenotieno@reconcile-ea.org.

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