

# ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

*Committee on Social Affairs and the Environment*

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## WORKING DOCUMENT

on the social and environmental impact of pastoralism in the ACP countries

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Introduction

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Drylands make up around 43% of Africa's inhabited surface<sup>1</sup>. These areas are characterized by variable rainfall and an unpredictable availability of water and grasslands. Over centuries, a way of life known as pastoralism has developed, which makes the most of that unpredictability, generating productivity out of a climate variability now exacerbated by global warming. Pastoralists - mobile livestock keepers - are thought to number as many as 268 million on the African continent<sup>2</sup>. They are a key part of global culture, contribute significantly to GDP, and in some regions pastoralism constitutes the main livelihood.

If properly supported, pastoralists can contribute substantially to the economies, ecosystems, food security, and nutrition of the countries in which they are active.

### Economic value

Using indigenous knowledge, social networks, and modern technologies, pastoralists gather information about where the nutritious grazing land is and strategically move their livestock to these pastures. In this way they are able to draw economic benefits from a dry-land environment poorly suited to other land use, supporting rural populations otherwise facing urban poverty.

Although often undervalued and poorly documented, pastoralism is increasingly recognised as a significant market supplier. In West Africa, the official cross-border livestock trade is worth over US \$150 million<sup>3</sup>. In East Africa, the intra-regional livestock trade is valued at over US \$65 million<sup>4</sup>. Fuelled by a growing urban population, demand in both regions is expected to grow. Pastoralists not only meet this demand, but also export tonnes of meat, skins and hides to neighbouring states. The pastoralist system moreover supports a network of middlemen, transporters, butchers, vets and abattoirs.

The potential of pastoralism is increasingly recognised by governments and regional bodies such as ECOWAS, COMESA, and the AU, which has published a Policy Framework for Pastoralism, seeking to protect this livelihood and reinforce its economic contribution<sup>5</sup>.

### Food security and nutrition

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<sup>1</sup> African Union, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (Oct 2010) 'Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa: securing, protecting and improving the lives, livelihoods and rights of pastoralist communities' p9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Delgada, C., Rosegrant, M., Steinfeld, H., Ehui, S. & Courbois, C. (1999) 'Livestock to 2020: the next food revolution' Discuss Paper 28. 2020 Vision Initiative Food, Agriculture and Environment. International Food Policy Research Institute.

<sup>4</sup> Little P. (2009) 'Hidden value on the hoof: cross border livestock trade in Eastern Africa'.

<sup>5</sup> African Union, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (Oct 2010) 'Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa: securing, protecting and improving the lives, livelihoods and rights of pastoralist communities'.

The ability to raise livestock in arid and semi-arid lands can also enhance food security and nutrition. Studies carried out in Ethiopia, Botswana and Zimbabwe comparing sedentary to mobile livestock-keeping found that the latter does much better in terms of meat production, calories, and income<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, whilst commercial ranching tends to focus on meat production alone, pastoralism often has a diverse output, including manure, blood, milk and meat, with the latter three being particularly important for the nutrition of children and mothers.

Pastoralists may also be more adept at keeping livestock alive during drought, with research showing that herds moved quickly are larger and more balanced in structure than those remaining on ranches<sup>7</sup>. Finally, pastoralists contribute to food security through cross-border trading, returning from markets with food supplies.

### Environmental value

Evidence suggests that pastoralism in drylands - in contrast for example to more intensive and sedentary European farming - may have a positive environmental impact, diversifying pastures, enhancing seed dispersal and vegetation growth, improving nutrient cycling, and avoiding over-grazing.

Increasingly researchers are exploring the potential of pastoralism in climate change mitigation, looking at the carbon sequestration potential of the pastoral grasslands. It is likewise thought that pastoralists may be well placed for climate change adaptation, using their indigenous knowledge, specialised breeding and mobility to cope with increased climate irregularities and drought.

### The road ahead

The capacity of pastoral communities to maintain/increase their economic, social and environmental contributions will depend on various factors:

- Guaranteeing that borders and boundaries, as well as land acquisition and privatisation, do not negatively impact on the safe mobility of pastoral communities, nor on their organisational structures, and the position of vulnerable members within these.
- Ensuring access to dry season buffer zones which - as often in 'higher crop potential' areas and national parks - may require concluding land access agreements with farmers and governments.
- Enhancing the rights and political participation of pastoral peoples, empowering their customary institutions and CSOs.

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<sup>6</sup> International Institute for Environment and Development (2010) 'Modern and Mobile: The future of livestock in Africa's drylands' and Catley A, Lind J. and Scoones I (2013) 'Pastoralism and development in Africa. Dynamic change at the margins'

<sup>7</sup> Thébaud, B (2002) 'Foncier pastoral et gestion de l'espace au Sahel. Peuls du Niger oriental et du Yagha burkinabé'

- Addressing difficulties in accessing services such as education, healthcare, or veterinary care in a way that is adapted to the pastoral system.
- Aiding the diversification of pastoralist's livelihoods in order to ensure adequate income.
- Supporting pastoral communities in conflict resolution.
- Studying gender interactions within pastoral communities, in particular the role of women and children.
- Supporting those individuals who choose to opt out of the pastoral system.

The above would be significantly supported by:

- Implementing the AU framework for pastoralism.
- Ensuring in Europe that pastoralism is recognised as a valuable production system, for example within the framework of various EU programmes in the spirit of Policy Coherence for Development.