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POLICY POINTERS

➤ **Protect pastoralists' rights** to land and water and help them to secure their assets.

➤ **Strengthen pastoral economies** and encourage value-adding and diversification

➤ **Empower pastoralists** and encourage dialogue between pastoralists and policy makers

➤ **Invest in essential services for pastoralists**, including education, health and ICTs



Protecting and promoting pastoralism in Africa

Pastoralism supports tens of millions of people, makes the best use of harsh environments and provides many economic and social benefits. Over much of Africa, livestock convert grass into protein in areas where other agricultural activities would be risky or impossible. However, policy-making tends to favour sedentary populations and marginalise pastoralist communities, many of which are threatened by drought, fragmentation of their grazing lands, restrictions on mobility and poor access to basic services.

At the Brussels Development Briefing on *New Challenges and Opportunities for Pastoralism in ACP Countries*¹, experts highlighted the policies required to improve the welfare of livestock herding communities. Governments should introduce policies which help to secure and protect pastoralists' livelihoods. Policies should be designed to strengthen pastoral economies. Greater efforts should be made to empower pastoralists and involve them in policy-making. Governments should increase their investments in essential services for pastoralists.



Maasai herders in Tanzania. Pastoral economy is an essential component of African economies.

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UNDERSTANDING THE MISUNDERSTOOD

There is a woeful lack of data about pastoralist communities, and figures for their number vary greatly. This is partly because pastoralism is defined in different ways. Using the strictest definition – pastoral nomads depend on livestock, are mobile, use communal grazing areas and recognise customary rules as a source of authority – there are at least 20 million pastoralists in Africa. However, a less rigorous definition suggests there may be some 200 million pastoralists on the continent.

Pastoralism is often viewed as an archaic practice without a future. This is not the

case. Pastoralism is a highly specialised activity, requiring considerable knowledge and skills. Mobility is a key feature, enabling livestock owners to find fresh pastures during dry seasons and times of drought. According to a recent review by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), pastoralists achieve higher rates of productivity per unit of land for their livestock than modern, Western-style ranches operating under similar conditions.

Pastoralism makes a major contribution to the economy in many African countries. In Mali, it accounts for 44% of agricultural GDP; in Ethiopia, it provides the raw material for the leather industry, the second

¹ Organised by CTA, the European Commission (DG DEVCO), the Secretariat of the ACP Group of States and the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (Concord), in partnership with the African Union Commission, Brussels, February, 2012. <http://brusselsbriefings.net>



A Fulani cattle herder with his Angole-Watusi animals at the Oluwainshola cattle market on the outskirts of Lagos

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Pastoralism is not an evolutionary dead end. It is a specialised, sophisticated, highly productive system.”

Jeremy Swift, Pastoral Development Specialist

largest source of foreign currency after coffee; in East Africa, over 90% of the meat consumed comes from pastoral herds. Pastoralists also have an important role to play in protecting biodiversity, promoting tourism, and managing grazing lands which have the potential to sequester significant quantities of carbon.

In recent years, there have been a number of initiatives designed to stimulate pastoralist economies. The African Union (AU) ‘Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa’, adopted in 2011, is the first continent-wide measure which aims to secure, protect and improve the livelihoods of African pastoralists. Several regional initiatives are also providing greater support for pastoralism. Nevertheless, more needs to be done.

POLICIES FOR A MORE PROSPEROUS FUTURE

Securing and protecting pastoralists’ livelihoods

It is essential that governments provide pastoralists with secure access to communal grazing lands and water resources. These

rights should be enshrined in law. Just as importantly, policies should protect pastoralists’ right to pursue a nomadic way of life. Mobility enables pastoralists to seek the best grazing land and maximise the productivity of their herds. It is also an essential part of their trading strategy.

One example of the sort of measure required is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Stock-Rearing Action Plan, which was adopted in 2011. This recognises pastoralists’ right to move stock from one region to another, protects their access to water in settled agricultural regions and facilitates cross-border trade.

In Africa, the loss of livestock is a major cause of poverty. Unlike livestock owners in many developed countries, pastoralists have been unable, until recently, to take out insurance. However, a scheme launched by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Northern Kenya in 2010, based on work funded by the World Bank in Mongolia, has shown that it is possible to design insurance policies which are attractive to both pastoralists and financial institutions.

Index insurance allows herders to insure against a negative event which can be verified by proper data. In Kenya, this is a satellite measure of environmental greenery. Payments are made when data shows that the availability of forage has fallen below a certain level. Of the 3,000 policyholders in the Marsabit region, 600 received payments following the drought of 2011. These enabled pastoralists to buy food and livestock fodder. In India and the United States, governments subsidise similar index-based insurance schemes for agricultural crops. African countries could consider subsidising index-based insurance schemes for livestock.

Strengthening pastoral economies

Governments should introduce measures to promote the trade of pastoral livestock.

This could involve investments in infrastructure, the reduction of non-tariff barriers, and the harmonisation of animal health stan-

“Traditional pastoralists are very adaptive. There is no conflict with modernity.”

Boureima Dodo, Billital Maroobe Network, Niger

dards across borders. An example of the latter is a regulation, signed in 2007, which applies to all the countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA).

Pastoralists should also be encouraged to add value to their produce. This is what the Tiviski Dairy has achieved in Mauritania. Founded over 20 years ago, Africa's first camel milk dairy now has over 1,000 suppliers and 200 employees. Tiviski sells milk and cheese directly to small retailers in the capital, Nouakchott. By creating a market for fresh milk, and processing milk into cheese, Tiviski has enabled pastoralists to participate in local markets and improve their incomes.

Although current regulations make it difficult for pastoralists to sell their produce on the international market – Tiviski cannot export camel cheese to the EU – pastoralists could still consider taking advantage of the Geographical Indications (GI) schemes which link the quality and uniqueness of a product to a specific location. GI status – think, for example, of Roquefort cheese or Parma ham – guarantees authenticity and adds value for producers.

Pastoralists should be encouraged to diversify their economies. This could involve taking advantage of schemes which protect the environment – such as carbon sequestration – or setting up new businesses, for example in tourism and handicrafts. The Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya has shown how pastoralism can benefit from its coexistence with wildlife. With an expanding membership of community conservancies, controlling over 1.5 million ha of land, the Trust is promoting conservation and land rehabilitation, helping pastoralists develop their own business ventures and improving social services.

Empowering pastoralists and encouraging policy dialogue

Livestock herders now have their own representatives in some national parliaments; in some countries, they are increasingly active in local government. However, pastoralists

need to become more involved in designing policy and influencing the political process at every level. The AU is encouraging pastoral networks to set up forums which will help them to engage more effectively with the AU itself and the regional economic communities. In many African countries, Members of Parliament representing pastoral areas are now joining together to lobby on behalf of their constituents.

An important requirement for greater visibility is better statistics. For a variety of reasons, statistics concerning pastoral society and the pastoral economy are non-existent or deeply flawed. These include basic figures such as the total number of pastoralists, and their contribution to national economic affairs. Improving statistics of this sort is a vital task.

Pastoralists should play a key role in determining their own future, a principle which guides the activities of Pastoral Field Schools, first established in Africa in 2006. Field School sites are mobile, but weekly sessions are usually conducted near a water source. Consisting of 30–40 pastoralists who meet at regular intervals, the schools encourage them to identify challenges and develop practices to overcome them. These could include animal health and disease prevention, improved breeding practices and technical innovations that increase the animals' resilience to drought and disease. Pastoral Field Schools have helped to improve incomes and family welfare.

Scientists need to pay much greater attention to the traditional knowledge of pastoral communities. This is particularly relevant for the issue of climate change. Most of the information provided by meteorologists is inaccessible and unintelligible to pastoralists. At the same time, meteorologists are failing to benefit from the pastoralists' long experience in coping with variations in the climate.

In 2011, CTA, the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPAAC) and the Association des Femmes Peuples Autochtones du Tchad hosted a conference in N'Djamena, Chad, which brought pasto-

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Threats to mobility are a threat to both pastoralists' livelihoods and the health of the environment."

Francesca Mosca,
European Commission

ralists and meteorologists together to share knowledge. Initiatives such as these could play an important role in future climate-change policy making.

Investing in essential services

There is no clash between the traditional way of pastoral life and modernity; on the contrary, pastoralists willingly embrace new technologies and new ideas. However, government investments in basic services, such as education, health and communications frequently fail to acknowledge the significant contribution pastoralists make to national and regional economies.

There is an urgent need for greater investment in the education of pastoralists' children. Education strategies must be tailored to the specific needs and lifestyles of specific communities, and should pay particular attention to disadvantaged groups, especially women. Mobile schools, which involve teachers and schools moving with livestock migrations,

have had some success in Nigeria, although they face problems of staffing, supervision and quality. Governments should also consider investing in 'distance learning' through the use of radio, and in improving vocational training for adults. Pastoralists would also benefit from greater investment in human health and veterinary services.

Mobile phones allow pastoralists to receive up-to-date market information, identify where to sell their livestock, send and receive remittances and participate in insurance schemes. They also help to reduce transaction costs when buying and selling livestock and provide livestock owners with access to advisory services. Although they have not yet been used among nomadic populations, there is every reason to think that mobile phones will soon offer a significant new mechanism for 'distance learning' of a sort suitable for pastoralists. Investing in improvements in communication technologies in rural areas should be a priority. ■

Further reading

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