



## Politically Feasible Livestock Policy Reform in Kenya

Livestock are crucial to the economy of Kenya, where their production contributes over 12% of total Gross Domestic Product. Kenya's livestock sector is one of the best-organized in the region, and the number of dairy cattle exceeds that of any other country in Africa. Despite the sector's relative success, however, the overwhelming majority of Kenya's 8m livestock producers live in poverty. In the dairy industry, approximately 86% of milk produced comes from 600,000 small-holder households, usually with just one or two cows. The situation is worse for many pastoralists, most of whom live in the extremely difficult conditions of northern Kenya, where they face low rainfall, frequent drought and increasing desertification, as well as a history of marginalization by the central government in service and infrastructure provision and economic opportunity.

### ● Political and institutional environment

Many of the troubles for the livestock-dependent poor stem from the political economy of the country. Influenced by its colonial heritage, Kenya has developed a divided and highly personalized neo-patrimonial political system. The result has been a state with high levels of ethnic-based clientelism and corruption, as well as a history of making national economic decisions based only on political exigencies, particularly during the Moi years (1978-2002). This political situation impacts on how policy related to the livestock sector has been made. The centralization of power in the presidency and the workings of patron-client politics have tended to exacerbate neglect for the livestock-dependent poor generally,

and those in pastoralist areas in particular. Pastoralist groups have never played much more than a marginal role in the ethnic coalition-building that drives politics, and have been increasingly alienated from their most vital resource; land. The lack of development in pastoralist areas has also resulted in higher levels of insecurity, with violent inter-ethnic and cross-border cattle rustling.

Thus, considerable constraints to livelihood improvement exist for Kenya's poor livestock producers. In addition to those already mentioned, they are limited by:

- Weak governance and one of the highest levels of corruption in the world.
- A politically marginal and weak livestock Ministry (MoLFD).
- An overly complex dairy regulation and licensing system that strongly favors large-scale producers and processors over their poor, small-holder counterparts.
- Incomplete markets and poor marketing systems for meat and live animals.

Lack of service provision and infrastructure in pastoralist areas combined with repeatedly thwarted efforts by Members of Parliament (MPs) to lobby for change.

Outdated policies, regulations and laws, combined with exceedingly sluggish policy reform processes that are often stalled by the politically powerful.

A land administration system that has gradually reduced the viability of the pastoral lifestyle by alienating pastoralists from their land.

### ● Reasons for hope

Following the democratic change of power in 2002 and moves toward



economic liberalization, several major changes have opened potential doors for pro-poor reforms. These include: the electoral contestation for pastoralist votes, which increases their political salience; the growth and maturing of activist civil society; a slow but gradual acceptance of pastoralism as a viable livelihood; the growing power of the legislative branch of government vis-à-vis the executive; and the rise in respect for evidence-based policymaking.

These openings in Kenya's political space make the following four policy or institutional changes most feasible for helping the livestock-dependent poor:

- **Support to the Pastoralist Parliamentary Group (PPG)**

The run-up to the 2007 presidential election is an excellent moment in which to attempt to formalize and build capacity in the PPG, a currently-informal grouping of MPs from pastoralist areas. Pastoralist issues are gaining political salience as their votes are "up for grabs" for the first time since independence, and as MPs gain increasing autonomy from the executive.

- **Improvements for small-holder dairy**

For the first time in years, the formal dairy sector environment appears to be moving toward acceptance and integration of small-holder production and marketing. Several considerable de facto changes have been made towards recognition of small-scale marketing including the introduction of an improved Dairy Bill, suggesting that more formal legal or regulatory reforms may not meet major opposition.

- **Collaboration and Capacity-Building with Kenyan Civil Society**

The Kenyan voluntary sector is the strongest in the IGAD region, and IGAD LPI should network with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on research and policy change advocacy. With the opening of political space in Kenya, CSOs have forcefully vocalized their critiques of government programs and actions that affect the livestock-dependent poor, and this is likely only to increase in the future. Even when the government is wary of civil society actors, it has increasingly included them in policy-making processes. The IGAD LPI should take advantage of this position and of the local knowledge of CSOs.

- **Contribution to reducing insecurity**

Insecurity among pastoralist groups was the most frequently cited livestock-related problem in Kenya, and is therefore a priority. Searching for commonalities between pastoralist communities and MPs, strengthening cross-border initiatives like the Conflict Early Warning and Response Network (CEWARN), and increasing service and infrastructure provision in pastoralist areas are necessary.

Other possible areas for policy intervention by the IGAD LPI include land reform, animal marketing and exports and Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), though the authors believe these to be more difficult areas of intervention.

**Policy Brief based on:**

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