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Adaptive Strategies by Pastoralists to Cope with Drought Episodes in North Kordofan, Sudan

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Abstract

The northern part of North Kordofan State of Sudan is considered as a real pastoral area, dominated by camels and dessert sheep herders. As a result of the recurrent drought spells that hit this arid Sahelian area, pastoralists face multitude of challenges that trigger development of some adaptive strategies to cope with such environmental crisis. The present paper scrutinizes the adaptive strategies tailored by pastoralists in Hamrat Elsheikh Administrative Unit in North Kordofan State. It intends to develop a model for proper management of the pastoral system in the drought-stricken areas in this tate. This model is expected to resolve problems within the system as shortage of biomass and range/and species resulting from drought episodes jeopardise the natural pastures. Historical, descriptive and analytical approaches were followed via direct interviewing with questionnaires, addressing key informants randomly selected from pastoralist villages in the study area. The majority of the interviewees (61%) quoted the main adaptive strategies that prevail in the area. These include herd mobility in search of water and pastures, keeping drought resistant animals by having a higher proportion of desert sheep, goats and camels than cattle, diversifying livestock species in favour of resilience to drought, synchronising livestock breeding time with rainy season, and herd splitting with assistance from relatives. These strategies mitigate the impact of drought on pastoralists' life in the area. Furthermore, they have also contributed very much in boosting-up livestock populations, pave the way for pastoralists to survive in the area and sustain their animal resources. However, some shortcomings were observed by pastoralists like the lack of some extension and veterinary services and lack of dispersion of seeds of range and species. In conclusion, strengthening these adaptive strategies could reduce vulnerability of pastoral resources which is key to reducing drought risks.

Keywords: Adaptive strategies, livestock, pastoralists, resilience to drought