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“Resilience of agricultural systems against crises”

Strengthening Resilience of Pastoralists through Improved Economic Integration

MARIO YOUNAN¹, DAVID M. MWANGI², E. NJUGUNA², WILLI DÜHNEN¹

¹*Vétérinaires sans Frontières Germany (VsF G), Kenya*

²*Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI), Kenya*

Abstract

Many arid and semiarid environments are rapidly approaching a precarious ecological state. The session on ‘Pastoralism and Rangelands’ will look at potential solutions for a range of problems that affect pastoralist livestock production at present; these include:

1. The need for an ecologically balanced Natural Resource Management in the face of rapidly increasing human and livestock numbers in the drylands, sustainable utilisation of tropical rangelands being a major focus for this session

2. The need to improve market access and provide a more robust marketing infrastructure (agricultural value chain approach, public-private partnerships in the management of livestock markets)

3. Workable mechanisms to buffer pastoralist livelihoods against external shocks (Early warning systems, Livestock insurances)

4. Full utilisation of new opportunities created through the advance of modern communication technology, banking services and electronic cash transfer systems in remote regions

This paper proposes that increased and more stable incomes are a major contribution to buffer pastoralist households against external shocks and to strengthen the resilience of pastoralist communities. Too little has been done to improve market access, to lower transaction costs and to improve the profitability of producing and selling animals and livestock commodities in pastoralist regions. Insufficient economic integration and poor market access perhaps pose the same risk to pastoralist livelihoods as the losses related to environmental degradation, recurrent natural disasters and climate change. Based on experiences by VSF-Germany, KARI and other development actors in the pastoralist regions of Kenya and Somalia we review selected development interventions in terms of their economic viability and their impact on economic integration and incomes of pastoralist households.

Keywords: Agricultural value chain approach, early warning systems, livestock insurances, natural resource management