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## The Role of Pastoralists’ Induced Innovations in Managing Food Insecurity: Evidence from West Pokot Kenya

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### Abstract

Pastoralism is the main livelihood activity in the arid and semi arid lands of sub-Saharan Africa. Through extensive grazing of livestock, pastoralists make good use of the arid and semi arid lands to meet their food and income needs. However shocks such as prolonged seasons of drought lead to shortage of pasture and water. This in turn leads to fluctuations in milk and meat production and loss of livestock. This bleak situation predisposes pastoralists to food insecurity. The theory of induced innovation hypothesizes that investments in innovation are a function of change that enters the production function. Such changes include changing climatic conditions and non-climatic factors, such as economic and political environment. These changes trigger institutional innovation to reinforce adaptation meant to overcome negative effects of the new changes. In the pastoralists’ context, shocks such as droughts and livestock diseases are push factors for pastoralists to come up with innovations that will cushion them against the negative effects. Against this backdrop, this study sought to find out pastoralists exposure to shocks in West Pokot County in Kenya and the innovative ways that pastoralists cope with these shocks. Primary data was collected through a combination of methods comprising of a focus group discussion, key informant interviews and a household survey on 191 households. Results showed that local innovations manifested in herd management, range land management and ethno-veterinary practices as well as external interventions programmes such as enclosing land, bee keeping, stocking improved breeds and institutional support in form of credit and extension services had a positive and significant effect on reducing households’ vulnerability to food insecurity. These results suggest the need to incorporate local innovations in the external interventions together with more institutional support to help pastoralists overcome food insecurity.

**Keywords:** External interventions, food insecurity, local innovations, pastoralists, shocks