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“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Livestock Mobility in the Context of Changing Land Tenure on Community Lands of Kenya

HUSSEIN WARIO¹, BRIGITTE KAUFMANN²

¹*Center for Research and Development in Drylands, Kenya*

²*German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL), Germany*

Abstract

Kenya is on the path of transforming land governance and tenure by putting in place various legal and institutional reforms. A significant shift in the land reforms is the proposed changes in ownership and management of the community lands in the arid and semi-arid areas, which were previously managed by government as trusts on behalf of the communities. In these arid and semi-arid areas, livestock production, through extensive pastoral systems, remains the main economic stay, where the practice of mobility is the main strategy in accessing feed and water resources that are variable in distribution over space and time. Mobility of livestock already faces a number of constraints, however within the context of the changing land tenure on communal lands the constraints may well be heightened. This is particularly so due to the fact that the need for securing resource tenure rights and the requirement for a spatially flexible resource use system for successful pastoral production are contradictory. This presentation therefore explores the possible challenges posed to mobile resource use systems by the implementation of the community land act in Kenya. The presentation further recommends efforts that need to be considered during the implementation of the community land act to maintain livestock mobility. It assesses the opportunities in application of different internationally acknowledged legal and policy guidelines such as the Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Tenure (VGGT), strengthening of pastoral institutions and the use of experiences from other regions in order to understand how nested tenure rights can be protected under formalized arrangements. The presentation concludes that unless deliberate measures are taken to maintain mobile resource use systems, the implementation of the community land act can exacerbate conflicts along communal resource borders, curtails livestock mobility further and increases the vulnerability of pastoral populations to climate related disasters, which is a polar opposite of what is envisioned in the land reform agenda.

Keywords: Community land, flexible resource use, livestock mobility