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## Feasibility of Organic Certification of Sheep and Goats Produced in Pastoral Systems in Northern Kenya

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### Abstract

In pastoral systems of Kenya, sale of small ruminants is the main regular income source of the majority of households. Although the meat of small ruminants produced in Marsabit county is renowned for its taste, up to now, no mechanisms are in place that allow for a respective price differentiation. Establishing value chains for branded sheep and goat meat would be an option to allow pastoralists to profit from their high process and product quality. The aim of the current study is to assess the requirements and feasibility to establish a value chain for branded products (e.g. origin labelled, organic certified) together with the primary and secondary actors of the Rendille pastoral small ruminant supply chain in Marsabit county.

Overall 28 group discussions with four Rendille women producer and marketing groups and 18 interviews with other relevant stakeholders, such as traders, veterinarians, government staffs, civil society organisations and organic certification bodies were conducted.

The results show that pastoralists' production is in large parts compatible with organic guidelines. For instance, livestock is fed on naturally growing fodder with no chemicals applied, and herding allows for animals' natural behaviour. However a number challenges hamper organic certification. These include; practice of ear notching and castrations without anesthesia, supplementary feeding of home-based animals with non-organic feeds during drought, unguided application and lack of records of veterinary drug use, challenges in record keeping and traceability system and financial difficulties to undertake internal control and monitoring due to the extensive nature of the production area. Improvement of veterinary infrastructure, innovative record keeping systems for illiterate producers, and further market studies to ascertain demand are recommended. While organic certification is desirable, labelling for designation of origin is a feasible starting point that would allow entry into higher priced markets as hurdles to organic certification are addressed.

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