

P a s t o r a l i s m

Progressing Policies that favour Pastoralists

7. Facilitating Access to World Markets

The context

Pastoralist livelihoods in the contemporary world depend on the sale of livestock or livestock products and are thus intricately bound up with local and increasingly global markets. The world is seeing a steady rise in demand for livestock products, but pastoralists risk being left behind in this “livestock revolution”. Reasons include a poor fit between pastoralists’ objectives in selling their livestock and the demands of the market, and long and risky marketing chains.

The regulatory system for international livestock trade requires proof of the disease-free status of geographical areas, proof that is difficult for exporters and governments to provide, especially for remote areas. An alternative, of proving that commodities pose a minimal risk of disease transmission, is now being proposed.

Policy implications

There is a need:

- for capacity building of pastoralists, private-sector operators and governments involved in trade of livestock products from pastoral areas in promoting, regulating and negotiating trade opportunities
- to continue engagement with the international regulatory system to press for a commodity-based approach to livestock trade regulation
- to explore opportunities for achieving higher levels of return from new value chains and specialist livestock products in high-value markets.



credit: WRENmedia

“As Fulani, we’d be nothing without raising our cattle. From birth it is what we do. If there was no livestock farming, no market, no export it would be disaster for us. We need trade to be easy. Policies have changed here to make it easier to sell across the borders. We also have vet services to help us monitor for diseases and keep our animals healthy.”

Jallou Belko, cattle keeper, Burkina Faso

Pastoralists in world markets

Pastoralists face specific problems in accessing world markets. Their reasons for selecting certain animals for sale, and the timing of such sales, are hard for outsiders to understand and do not necessarily fit well with the demands of modern trading systems. Poor transport links, difficulties accessing market information and poor infrastructure also make marketing difficult.

When raising livestock in areas with a high incidence of animal diseases and under-developed veterinary services, complying with international trade regulations is difficult. In response, donors have been working to improve trade institutions and policies, including the development of commodity standards in place of certified disease-free status for a region.

Ways forward

- Policy work on commodity-based trade in livestock products to facilitate access by pastoralists to world markets should continue. Improved market access would create opportunities for pastoralists to sell more at higher prices
- Countries and sectors with a high likelihood of success should be supported to increase the capacity of competent authorities and trade associations, develop infrastructure and promote the voice of pastoralists in trade negotiations
- Progress on overcoming market entry barriers may open new opportunities for achieving higher returns from specialist livestock products in high-value markets.



“Union brings strength. If there is something heavy to lift, it is easier to lift together than if I try to lift it on my own. Uniting under the same regulations has made our cross-border livestock trade more easy, and has been a very good initiative.”

Sawadou Dieudonne, Veterinary officer, Poutenya, Burkina Faso

Evidence of change

Demand for livestock products in coastal West Africa presented an important market opportunity for traditional pastoralists far inland. However, complex and differing animal health and livestock trade regulations among Sahelian nations were hindering rather than helping livestock trade in the region. The process of harmonisation of zoosanitary standards across the region was a priority. As a result, studies were made of the existing regulations on animal health in eight countries. The second step was to draft a new regulation, through national workshops attended by producers, processors, consumers, butchers, traders and exporters. The result was the signing of the regulation for plant, animal and food health and safety in 2007, which applies in all countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). At key regional markets, such as Poutenya in Burkina Faso where pastoralists from Mali, Mauritania, and Niger also bring their cattle and goats, local veterinary staff, who monitor for diseases, are able to now issue the necessary health certificates required at border controls for live exports.

For more information: www.fao.org/ag/pplpi.html



“Camel milk is famous for being good for people with diabetes. Before, we only had income from selling camel calves but with a supply chain starting for camel milk we have another good income. The children are learning from us. With better incomes the youngsters will follow us into this business.”

Mulsingh Soda Ghaba, pastoralist, Rajasthan, India