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Sustainable Agricultural Livelihood Restoration, Rehabilitation and Resilience in Kenya

Guidelines on Sustainable Ruminant Feeds and Nutrition Security for Kenya

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.2 Livestock feed and nutrition situation in Kenya

Kenya's history is marked by recurrence of periodic droughts, which have been exacerbated in the recent past due to the escalating effects of climate change and variability arising from global warming. The ASALs bear the brunt of these effects, experiencing the greatest degree of devastation. These cyclic droughts have far-reaching socio-economic and environmental consequences, necessitating prompt and appropriate responses to safeguard lives, livelihoods and ecosystems that support sustainable livestock production.

Feeding is a key factor influencing animal production, health and reproduction. Poor animal nutrition remains a key constraint to sustainable livestock production in Kenya. The livestock feeds industry in Kenya has been growing steadily, attracting several new entrants every year due to the high demand for feeds posing danger as to the maintenance of the required feed quality standards. Numerous studies have shown that most enterprises are operated under poor animal husbandry and management practices resulting in malnourished animals whose production is well below the breed potential due to over reliance on seasonal rain-fed poor-quality forages. Natural pastures constitute the main feed resources for ruminants in most regions of the country. With only 20% of the country described as medium to high potential, the availability of these pastures varies with region and there is need for supplementary feeds in case of deficiencies. This calls for a lot of efforts towards ensuring availability of adequate feeding in order to enhance livestock productivity across all agroecological zones.

Availability of accessible and affordable feeds, in both quantity and quality is a key determinant of sustainable livestock production in Kenya. Drought, often associated with water and feed scarcity, is a frequent phenomenon in Kenya. Under the circumstances, lives and livelihoods of pastoralists suffer most. The increasing frequency and severity of droughts can mainly be attributed to the effects of climate change and variability. During such periods, the Government of Kenya as well as local and international development partners are always called upon for support with a view to protecting the lives and livelihoods of the affected communities.

However, most of the time, the exact animal feed requirements (fodder supply) in tons per year distributed by region, county and by specific livestock categories have not been determined with certainty (Appendices 2 and 4). In this regard, the State Department for Livestock in collaboration with the Food Agricultural Organisation (FAO) initiated the National Feed Inventory and Feed Balance Report in the 47 Counties that determined the livestock species, available feed and the



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subsequent shortfall in each County (Appendix 2). This document can then be used to plan for the feed shortages and annual distribution across all counties. Therefore, current status is attributed majorly to inadequate livestock policy to allow for regular feed assessment with intent to plan for envisaged shortages and inform conservation strategies. Consequently, the programming of drought related livestock feed repositioning for effective and efficient response options become increasingly important. However, the said programming is not sustainable. Hence the need for a paradigm shift from emergency responses to resilience building.

The key determinants to sustainable livestock productivity include availability of quantity and quality feeds as well as their affordability by smallholder farmers. Feeds alone account for between 60 and 80% of the total production costs for any livestock production enterprise (Association of Kenya Manufacturers [KAM]). Adequate feeding entails ensuring that the diet supplies all minerals as well as meeting the energy and protein requirements of the animal, which directly influence the health, fertility and productivity of livestock.

Thus, the animal feed industry needs to be better re-positioned for commercialisation and competitiveness in the region by providing strategic guidance for improved feed policy and legislative environment. In an effort to drive sustainable feed value chain development and in line with one of the national big four agenda on food (feed) and nutrition security for our country, it has become necessary to develop a national feed strategy with a view to guiding the feed industry development for investment in Kenya. Further, production of animal feeds has a consequence on land use and land use change whose effect may lead to decreasing greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions that contribute to global warming and climate change. The animal feed industry is therefore expected to mainstream emission reduction strategies for sustainable livestock production and productivity, and address shortages of raw materials due to low production (especially protein sources). The livestock sub-sector can contribute to food security, income generation and wealth creation via products such as, meat, milk, eggs, hide, skin, wool, blood, hair, manure and feathers that are used raw or processed. The animals also provide essential draught power in 70% of smallholder farms in the region.