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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

1.4 Feed and nutrition security

Feed and nutrition insecurity is a major hindrance to livestock production and productivity. Feed and nutrition security exists when all livestock, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to an adequate quantity and quality of feed which meet their dietary requirements and preferences, and is supported by an environment of adequate sanitation, health services and care, allowing for a healthy and productive life.

The main animal feed resources consist of water, roughages, concentrates, minerals and vitamins. Ruminants, in particular, rely heavily on roughages primarily derived from pastures, browse, fodders and crop-residues. Concentrates on the other hand serve as highly nutritious supplements to roughages and other feeds. They are compounded from energy and protein rich feedstuffs. Concentrates can be produced at farm level as well as commercially. Commercial concentrates are expensive and therefore the level of usage among smallholder producers is low.

To overcome the challenges posed by feed shortage, it is imperative to reduce reliance on rain fed feed production considering the recent erratic weather patterns resulting from climate change. As a solution, the implementation of irrigation either from the rivers, harvested water from the water pans/dams or other sources harnessing runoff is recommended. There is also great need to conserve fodder and grasses using various methods of hay, silage, haylage, pelleting and feed blocks/cubes for use during times of scarcity. In this regard, appropriate storage and distribution strategies should be put in place to facilitate the movement of feeds from regions of plenty to those experiencing deficits. This should be informed by a well-tailored information and data system that tracks feed availability, utilisation and deficit so that relevant timely actions can be undertaken to avert loss of body condition and mortalities that have a direct effect on marketability of livestock and their products. A policy on regular inventory on livestock numbers and available feed stuff on a regular basis to inform contingency planning and some legal framework to allow for the enforcement of regulations within the livestock feed sector. The drivers of the feed insecurity, including natural fires, natural phenomena of floods and drought, diseases, land degradation, overstocking among others contributes to livestock feed shortages.