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Sustainable Agricultural Livelihood Restoration, Rehabilitation and Resilience in Kenya

Guidelines on Sustainable Ruminant Feeds and Nutrition Security for Kenya

CHAPTER 2 DRIVERS OF FEED AND NUTRITION INSECURITY

2.5 Overstocking

The livestock populations in the Counties are shown in Appendix 4. According to the National Feed balance report of 2022, Kenya is currently supporting 24 million Tropical Livestock Units (TLUs) while the country has a potential of supporting 20 million TLUs. On actual basis, the land can only support about 11 million TLUs, implying overstocking.

Overstocking occurs when the number of livestock kept exceeds the land carrying capacity over time. This has been caused by migration of livestock in search of pasture and water, poor grazing management and pastoral culture. This has resulted to increased pressure on available feed resources as well as water, and led to land degradation. Community land usually used for communal grazing and other cultural practices have made it difficult to control overstocking among pastoralists and agropastoralists, thus sustaining pressure on the available feed resources.

When overstocking occurs regularly it results in over utilisation of the preferred grass species not allowing them to seed, therefore depleting the natural soil grass seed banks. This leads to increased GHGs due to reduction in carbon sinks. Consequently this favours the sprouting and establishment of invader species which are not palatable thus reducing the feed availability. The high concentration of livestock also results in increased soil erosion further reducing pasture establishment after the long rains due to loss of top soil.