Introduction

Background

These fragile drylands are characterized by high temporal and spatial variation in water availability and biomass production and do not support sustainable crop farming. Due to this prevailing production risk, pastoralists earn their living through mobile animal husbandry with mixed livestock herds and following the available forage resources in space and time. The changing environmental conditions; as a result of global warming poses a more dynamic twist in planning for livestock production systems. This situation has been coupled with drastic environmental catastrophes, including floods, droughts and erratic rainfalls which in many cases hinder optimum production. Meeting these challenges needs highly adaptive animals and husbandry practices that are resilient to the unforeseen conditions in the future. Camels prevail in the herd mixes because they are better adapted to water and feed stress than other livestock species.

There are approximately 900,000 camels in Kenya, about 6% of the continental camel population. They make up 25% of the domestic herbivore biomass in the Kenyan arid lowlands with a density of 3.1 camels per km² in the arid and semi-arid northeastern areas of Kenya, a density only exceeded in Somalia. The importance of the Camel to the residents of the former North Eastern Province, Isiolo and Marsabit Counties cannot be overstated. Scarcity of breeding stock, low
genetic potential, inefficient post-harvesting and value addition techniques and lack of dissemination framework and marketing infrastructure have limited its production to full potential. The project will address these challenges through multiplication and dissemination of climate-smart Somali camel breed lines to private multipliers in priority Counties. In this case, multipliers and camel pastoralists will be capacity built to enable them get full potential out of the improved breed lines. In addition, multipliers will be expected to undertake some minimal level of performance recording and evaluation to enable a community based enhanced breeding scheme. This work will enhance camel productivity, resilience, income generation, employment creation and guarantee food and nutrition security as envisioned in the Big Four Agenda. This will be in addition to increasing farmers’ resilience under a changing climate.