

Mobile pastoral systems and international zoosanitary standards

Devising a compatible approach

Demand for meat and other products of animal origin is increasing regionally and internationally. Yet export earnings from livestock commodities in the Horn and East Africa are low. Existing and projected market demands create opportunities for pastoralists, who own most of the region's livestock, to supply products of animal origin to meet this increased demand. However, there are constraints which severely hinder the participation of pastoralists in regional and international livestock trade. In particular, unsupportive policies do not promote the pastoral production system and stringent international standards for trade in livestock and livestock products have proven especially difficult for countries in the region to meet.

Pastoralism, livestock and rangelands

Pastoralism has played a central role in the region's local and national economies for centuries. Pastoralists own most of the region's livestock, and are resilient, tenacious and able to utilise scarce resources. Their production systems are the sole means of production in the harsh environments of the drylands, which are characterised by low and erratic rainfall, and account for some 70% of the region's land surface area. Pastoralists respond to unpredictable rainfall through mobility, making use of resources where and when they become available. By using mobile grazing strategies, they maintain the health of grasslands by allowing them to regenerate.

The study on which this Synthesis Paper is based considers the scope for increased livestock production from a perspective of compliance with zoosanitary standards that apply to international trade. It presents the need to revisit international standards in livestock trade to identify and promote applicable, accessible and acceptable standards for the Horn and East Africa region.

Two approaches can be taken to address the problem of livestock disease in Africa: either eradicating diseases altogether from countries as a precondition for trade, or ensuring that traded products are rendered free of potentially dangerous infectious and non-infectious agents by the adoption of commodity-specific production and processing standards. The commodity-based approach argues that different livestock products have different associated risks for the transmission of pathogens. It therefore requires the adoption of appropriate strategies to mitigate identified risks. This approach is more practical and accessible for Africa, and policies that create conducive conditions are needed to promote the generation of livestock products from pastoral systems.

Even though quantitative data describing the contribution of pastoralism is poor, the existing data confirms that livestock is of overriding importance as a resource in the region, and that pastoralism is indispensable as a system to manage this resource. However, even if the value of pastoralism is increasingly recognised, policies continue to undermine the system. There is an urgent need to review policies to allow pastoralism to contribute to socio-economic development, meet the increasing demand for livestock and livestock products and reduce poverty. Realising the potential inherent in pastoralism also hinges on enhancing production and trade in livestock commodities. To do this, there needs to be compliance with international standards, which requires policies that promote inclusion, reduce vulnerability and address chronic poverty.

Increasing demand and boosting production

The demand for meat and other livestock products is increasing due to population growth and rising incomes. It is projected that annual meat demand per capita in Africa will double by 2050. There is



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also growing demand for milk and dairy products. Yet, ironically, there is a widening gap between production and consumption of dairy products despite the region's wealth of livestock. Pastoralists could help to close this gap if supportive policies are put in place.

Some recent improvements have been seen in the infrastructure which supports livestock exports. Djibouti, an important transit route and quarantine point for livestock exported from the Horn of Africa to Saudi Arabia, has developed a modern quarantine facility at the port of Djibouti which now competes with the Somaliland port of Berbera, where more modest investment has been made to improve facilities for the exportation of Somaliland's livestock.

Livestock marketing from the region

Besides meeting the subsistence demands of millions of pastoralists, the region is generally self-sufficient in meat production, with the exception of Djibouti. Yet the level of exports of meat from the region is low. In contrast, all countries in the region, excluding Kenya, import significant volumes of milk to meet domestic demand.

Poor communication and a lack of infrastructure are major constraints for pastoralists seeking to access major markets and urban centres, where demand for livestock products is growing fast. A lack of cooling, storage, processing and packing facilities, as well as poor transportation and handling, all limit ability to add value to the product, compounding the problem. Currently, most livestock products from the region are marketed locally and internationally with little value addition – a consideration associated with low earnings and limited investment by industrial enterprises in the livestock sub-sector.

Trade restrictions due to the prevalence of transboundary diseases and stringent livestock trade standards are another major constraint to international trade. Veterinary authorities in importing countries are recommended to require the presentation of an international veterinary certificate that should attest that the entire consignment of meat complies with a set of criteria, including:

- the controlled movement of livestock in defined areas, for specified periods (several months);
- scheduled vaccination within specified timeframes;
- transportation to approved abattoirs that are designated for export;
- health certification after inspections before and after slaughter;
- absence of Foot and Mouth disease at disinfected slaughter premises;
- derivation of meat from satisfactorily matured, de-boned carcasses from which major lymph nodes have been removed.

These conditions are difficult to achieve in pastoral production systems.

The considerable potential to supply international markets is severely constrained by a lack of national capacities to meet international standards which, under present circumstances, are largely unachievable. For example, in the region as a whole there are only a small number of export abattoirs, and certification processes are cumbersome and expensive. Therefore, the livestock commodities supply chain mainly supplies national markets, with informal cross-border trade on a daily basis. More affordable, practical and appropriate rules and tools should be developed to manage the risk of spreading animal diseases through trade.

Box 1: Marketing from the region

- Efforts are being made in Tanzania to explore other regional markets, like the Democratic Republic of Congo, where trade restrictions are not as stringent as those for international trade. A demand exists for ten tons per week, but limited access to credit constrains the exporter's capacity to meet demand.
- Only 20% of the livestock trade in Ethiopia passes through formal channels, compared with the estimated 80% of export trade that passes through unofficial, informal channels. Excessive regulation and formal and informal taxation of the livestock trade acts as a major disincentive to livestock owners and traders. An approach is needed that recognises stakeholder needs and interests.
- Somalia depends on exports of meat and live animals to generate the foreign exchange needed to finance the country's imports of food and goods. Most of its exports are to destinations in the Middle East, including Yemen, the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia. However, in common with other countries in the region, the trade in live animals for export is constrained by poor marketing infrastructure and insufficient facilities, leading to increased losses, higher costs and reduced quality of live animals upon arrival at destination markets.
- Hides and skins are easier to export than fresh meat or milk. Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan have 60 tanneries which generate a combined annual revenue of more than \$135 million. However, most countries have very poor processing facilities, adding little value to the product.

Strategic interventions are needed to enhance production from the region's pastoral systems, improve access to regional and international markets, and provide evidence of the benefits of the commodity-based approach to trade in livestock products. But before these interventions can take place effectively, a coherent and supportive policy framework needs to be in place.

Livestock policies within the region

Livestock and pastoralism are inextricably linked. Moreover, livestock policies have to be considered in the broader policy framework, not in isolation. There is growing awareness that pastoralists have been sidelined from mainstream national economies and that many current policies are generally unsupportive of the pastoralist system, favouring sedentarisation and 'modernisation'. Pastoralists do not have secure land tenure, unofficial trade due to unfavourable conditions for pastoralists is prevalent, access to services and market information is difficult and infrastructural development in or near pastoral areas is inadequate. However, positive policy developments are noted. Uganda has had some success, and vocal pastoralist organisations have influenced developments within the overall economic framework. Kenya's draft national policy for the sustainable development of its arid and semi-arid lands also presents pastoralism in a positive light, although evidence of the implementation of the policy is awaited.

To address transboundary diseases, the designation of disease-free zones as part of a package of measures to enhance access to

Box 2: Memberships and commitments

- Of the countries in the Greater Horn of Africa, Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Ethiopia and Sudan are negotiating their membership. Eritrea and Somalia have no formal linkages.
- Under the rules of the WTO, member countries agree to establish and apply science-based regulation of animal and plant health and food safety.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) are responsible for the development of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards. Seven of the above countries are members of the OIE. These standards include preconditions which the region generally has inadequate capacity to apply effectively.
- Many countries are even hard-pressed to provide adequate veterinary services to far-flung pastoralist areas, much less meet the stringent standards of the OIE.

regional markets has been advocated. Disease-free zones require the maintenance of fenced zones or compartments in which livestock are free of specified animal diseases. These are being promoted in Kenya and Tanzania in an effort to modernise pastoral production and enable livestock exports. Recommendations to establish disease-free zones have been made with little participation from pastoralists or pastoralist organisations, and even though the model has been successful in southern Africa, the contexts for both disease control and market access have changed and the model is no longer as robust as it once was.

Reforms have been implemented to privatise veterinary services with the aim of extending and enhancing service delivery. However, this has been slow to take root. Even though government veterinary staff plays a large regulatory role, they often operate in direct competition with private services because it provides significant income. Lessons from this experience have informed the development of Kenya's new national livestock policy and Uganda is also aware of the issues. Tanzania's livestock policy, however, does not explicitly link the important complementary roles of private sector service providers and government veterinary staff.

The potential for government-accredited or licenced private sector inspectors to perform inspection, audit and certification functions, especially in remote areas, appears not to have been addressed in the region as a whole. However, positive developments have taken place in other areas. For example, under the guidance of the Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), livestock policies have started to recognise and promote mobile community-based animal health workers as essential elements of veterinary service delivery.

The importance of policies that promote the availability of inputs into the pastoral production system, in terms of land, access to grazing and the provision of services, is clear. Ease of access to markets is another area where supportive policies are needed. To meet the policy objectives of increased livestock production and marketing – such as the government of Ethiopia's objective to

increase meat exports from about 8,000 tons in 2005–2006 to a target of 30,000 tons by 2008 – appropriate supportive measures are needed that build on the strengths of pastoral production systems, provide support where it is needed and avoid further constraints on pastoral development.

Commodity-based trade as a rational approach to promote livestock exports

Two approaches can be taken to address the problem of livestock disease in Africa: either eradicating diseases altogether from countries as a precondition for trade, or ensuring that traded products are rendered free of potentially dangerous infectious and non-infectious agents by the adoption of commodity-specific production and processing standards. Commodity-specific standards, however, have been poorly developed in the animal health sub-sector. This creates a bias towards producers in developed countries who have effectively managed to eradicate disease, to the disadvantage of producers in the Greater Horn of Africa.

All countries, even those that have not succeeded in eradicating transboundary animal diseases, are measured against the criterion of presence or absence of a disease in a country and not the presence or absence of a specified pathogen in a product of animal origin. Therefore, the standard approach to the restriction of transboundary diseases has been to ban the importation of live animals from countries where there have been outbreaks. However, the global eradication of transboundary diseases is not feasible, giving rise to the concept of the commodity-based approach for livestock trade.

There are currently relatively few examples of African countries successfully exporting livestock products to the more lucrative markets. Even within Africa, the application of SPS and other standards limits market opportunities. The African Union (AU), however, aims to attain a 6% growth rate in annual agricultural production by 2015, and AU Member States are committed to spending 10% of total public expenditure on agriculture and rural development.

The important role of the livestock sector in achieving this goal is well recognised, and regional organisations such as the AU, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community are aware of and promote the commodity-based approach for Africa. For example, there is a proposed commodity-based approach to trade in de-boned beef, where lymph nodes and BSE risk material have been removed. It is argued that this product can be safely traded internationally irrespective of the transboundary animal disease status of its country of origin since risks have been contained. Although the OIE has accepted the rationale of this approach – with the proviso that it should be done based on scientific principles and in compliance with other requirements – and has stated that it will promote opportunities to develop new standards for risk reduction in trade in livestock commodities, these standards are not yet in place. This is still a positive step as the OIE currently addresses trade on a commodities basis by mainly promoting disease control rather than trade facilitation.

Successes in the region

A number of initiatives are noted around the region. In Somalia, an ongoing project addresses key issues of compliance with SPS requirements, namely certification, risk analysis, traceability and

animal welfare. The project addresses product quality requirements at terminal markets in Kenya and is piloting a traceability system for animals that uses a permanent, unique identification number for each animal, encoded in radio frequency identification devices, and linked to a database. In Tanzania, pastoralists are being supported to access premium export markets. Beef from feedlot systems in Ethiopia and chilled beef from Somali pastoralists are supplying markets in the Middle East. Infrastructural development at the port of Djibouti provides capacity to support livestock exports.

Conclusion and next steps

Pastoral production systems have indisputable strengths and great potential. Existing and projected market demands create opportunities for pastoralists to meet this demand by supplying products of animal origin to the region's expanding urban populations and to lucrative international markets. The critical issue is improved access to these markets.

The potential for increased production and market access is seriously constrained by weaknesses in the pastoral system. Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs that development projects and private enterprises are tackling these constraints constructively and successfully. Furthermore, the OIE has made a commitment to review regulations related to livestock commodities and to assist in the development of new, commodity-specific standards to facilitate international trade.

As a next step, the pragmatic approach is for the phased, integrated development of pastoralist capacity to deliver high-quality products to lucrative markets. The region must also engage in robust dialogue to identify approaches that enhance food safety and animal disease control. The significant potential for the region to develop its food industry to process livestock commodities, create employment, add value and diversify the range of products for local, regional and international markets must also be recognised.

At the level of the pastoralists themselves, there should be a sustained programme to educate and sensitise communities on a range of issues, to increase their capacities and competencies. The broad approach should be inclusive. It should engage stakeholders along the commodity chain and encourage and facilitate dialogue to improve the quality of inputs and outputs at each stage of value addition. Animal vaccination and disease reporting should also be placed in the context of commodity chains. This elicits a constructive discourse that is supportive of producers and qualitatively different from the well-rehearsed controlling discourse of state veterinary services.

Livestock commodities from mobile pastoral production systems and international zoosanitary standards are not mutually exclusive. But for such commodities to comply with standards, development initiatives will have to be guided by coherent, unambiguous policies that are matched by the allocation of adequate resources for their timely, concerted implementation.