

Abstract:

“Rangeland” or simply “range” is, by definition, “inferior” land by reason of physical and socio-economic limitations such as low rainfall, high temperatures, poor soils, and long distances from market outlets and supply centres. It has been variously defined by others (cf. Stoddart and Smith, 1955; Pratt and Gwynne, 1977); but, in general, it is land that carries natural vegetation that provides forage for both domestic and wild herbivores. It may also be a source of other products, including water, minerals, and services such as recreation. The rangelands of Kenya, for example, receive less than 750 mm of rain per year and have average temperatures that occasionally rise to 40°C. These are extensive lands covering about 85% of the total land area of 583,000km². This expansive area is home to 25% of the total human population, estimated at 29 million (GOK, 1999). The density is as low as two persons per km² in the very arid parts. The indigenous people of the rangelands eke their livelihood from the natural rangelands by way of traditional pastoralism and agropastoralism. The range provides livelihood through the support of domestic livestock and occasional crops. In Kenya, the pastoralists, estimated at 3.5 million (Nopa, 1992), include the Maasai, Samburu, Pokot, Turkana, Somali, Borana and Gabbra. Some agropastoral communities include the Kipsigis, Nandi, Tugen and the Bantu speaking Kamba, Embu, Meru and Taita. The majority of pastoral communities in Kenya inhabit the northern rangeland districts of Turkana, Samburu, Isiolo, Wajir and Mandera, while the southern rangelands of Kajiado and parts of Narok are also typical pastoral districts. The semi-arid districts of Machakos, Kitui, Tharaka-Nithi and Mbere in the Eastern lowlands represent areas characterised as agropastoral districts, while the Tana River and Taita Districts of the coastal hinterlands are characteristic Development of and Policy on the Range and Pastoral Industry with Special Reference to Kenya N.K.R. Musimba and D.M. Nyariki agropastoral areas. In the Rift Valley we find agropastoral and pastoral communities such as the Nandi, Tugen, Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet and Kipsigis. In the North Eastern Province are found typical pastoral communities, including the cushitic Somali, Borana, Gabbra, Oromo and Rendille. The Somali, Borana and Oromo spill over to the neighbouring countries of Somalia and Ethiopia as well. An unbridled pastoralist is a seasoned manager who employs sound livestock and land management that ensures his survival under the episodic environmental vagaries such as recurrent droughts, famines, disease outbreaks, hazardous pests and other man-made disasters (Herr, 1992; Tadingar, 1994; Wilson, 1995). In Kenya and the adjacent parts of Eastern Africa, recurrent droughts occur in five out of every twenty years (Pratt et al., 1967). Such droughts are associated with famine and feed shortages for domestic animals. It is highly reputable that in such occurrences, the pastoralists, by virtue of their local knowledge and experience, use their large diverse herds of livestock to move not only within the territorial reach but also across political boundaries to meet the livestock and animal requirements, i.e., feed and water (Oba and Lusigi, 1987; Herr, 1992). Though large numbers of animals would die in a serious drought, the herds, which are shared among tribal and non-tribal members by way of intertribal alliances in adjacent good pasturelands, would not take long to recover. The small ruminants (sheep and goats) being highly prolific would be the first to recover to normal levels. In some parts of West Africa, for example, the interrelationship between pure pasoralists and agropastoralists has proved a sustainable land use system and is a source of livelihood. The agropastoralists also lease their farmlands to the nomadic pastoralists so as to utilize crop residues as well as clean up the land under crops (Payne, 1976). Other than normal disease occurrences, outbreaks of certain diseases decimate livestock in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), thus 262 N.K.R. MUSIMBA AND D.M.

NYARIKI putting the pastoralists' survival in jeopardy. Rangeland peoples keep various types of cattle, such as the Boran and the Small East African Zebu, that not only possess remarkable environmental hardiness but also resist certain diseases, including the numerous tick borne diseases. The small ruminants, though susceptible to the endemic trypanosomosis, are relatively more resistant than the large ruminants (cattle) except for the N'dama breed of West Africa (Nyariki et al., 2000). There has been shrinking land and a concomitant decline in the pastoralists' welfare and long-term survival as a result of the "invasion" of the ASALs by agricultural communities and failure of development projects meant to support the pastoralists. There is, therefore, a need to closely assess development strategies that have been introduced in the past and compare them with community initiatives with respect to the long-term survival of pastoral peoples. This paper develops arguments to support community initiatives and to acknowledge the role of indigenous knowledge on natural resource management and utilization in the backdrop of the failure of well intended, if poorly planned, donor-driven pastoral development activities in the past.