

Abstract

In Kenya the ASALs form 80% of the country's land mass with nomadic pastoralism as the main activity. North Eastern Province is one of the key ASAL areas where camels are the main milk providers especially during the drought season when other livestock die or become unthrifty. About 1.7 million camels are kept in an area characterized by dusty environment, frequent drought or flooding and a high level of poverty. Although a lot of research has been done on highland milk production, little has been done in ASALs where there are unique challenges to clean milk production. In this study, experiences from training six women groups in clean milk production, is combined with interviews from one hundred pastoralists in Garissa and Wajir from 2008-2010 to reveal constraints and challenges in clean milk production in the ASALs. The key constraint is lack of water and even when water is available it is salty, dirty and brackish. Unawareness on the value of clean milk is another major constraint. Other constraints include conservative culture which believes that camel milk should not be boiled. The opportunities available include the use of traditional knowledge to slowly improve the quality of milk. Use of clean energy like solar power can lead to improvement of milk quality. Continued education of communities on health will lead to improved hygiene.