

Arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) in Kenya is not suited to arable farming and therefore extensive livestock production is the most appropriate agricultural activity. This has been and will continue to be the main economic activity and land use for a long time. The current high human population growth rates in ASAL will continue to cause serious shortages of land relative to demand and may reduce the capacity of the land to support large human and livestock populations. There is not enough land to be shared on an individual basis. The group ranch concept was implemented in various districts in Kenya in the mid-1960s and early 1970s and aimed at overcoming some of the problems related to sharing land resources. The sharing was based on a defined livestock quota system which was not implemented. Individual member's benefits depended on herd size, especially the size of the breeding herd which determined herd growth. The group ranch approach advocated a policy of destocking through periodic livestock sales aimed at achieving proper carrying capacity but this was viewed negatively by most pastoralists. In view of unequal herd sizes and disproportionate access to communally owned resources and benefits, some of the group ranches resolved to subdivide. The emergent cooperative societies in the subdivided group ranches lack adequate acreage of pastures to allow rotational grazing: they do not have the principal input for successful livestock production. To succeed they need to diversify the economic base to one which requires a smaller land base. The group ranches have unintentionally increased livestock numbers in Kajiado District and have also been effective in transferring state land to communally owned free holdings, contrary to the original objectives.