

The value of pastoralism



Pastoralism plays a critical role in the ecological sustainability and economic prosperity of drylands worldwide. In Africa, drylands make up about 40% of the land area, with pastoralism representing the main livelihood option for more than 200 million people. Pastoralism operates by exploiting what is normally considered a problem in agriculture: the climatic variability characteristic of arid lands. Carefully planned livestock mobility and the breeding of animals to feed selectively on the best available pastures are two critical strategies that allow pastoralists to create economic value rather than mere survival in difficult environments.

Today, especially in Eastern Africa, pastoralists face increasing challenges from new constraints to moving the herds and efficiently marketing their animals: agricultural encroachment, inappropriate land-tenure reforms, large-scale land-use conversion, and new administrative borders within countries. Yet, compared to other low-input food-production systems in the face of global climate change, pastoralism is still generating substantial national and regional economic benefits. The pastoral-dominated livestock sector in Sudan and Somalia supplies major exports to the Gulf States. In Ethiopia, pastoralism represents 9% of the GDP, supporting a leather industry that is the second largest source of foreign currency after coffee. More than 8% of Uganda GDP is generated by pastoralism. Through pastoralism, vast arid lands in Kenya and Tanzania that cannot be used economically for cropping are supplying substantial domestic meat markets. A growing awareness of pastoralism's economic and ecological contribution, backed up by cutting-edge scientific research, is now leading to innovative policymaking in support of pastoral production, starting from herd mobility. One major example is the Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa adopted by the African Union in January 2011.

What can the EU do?

The need for the EU to develop a forward-thinking pastoral policy is all the more important in view of the expected increase in climatic variability following global climate change, especially with regard to food security and the potential role of pastoral systems in adaptation and mitigation. Currently, in the EU and its member states' policies, there is concern for human rights, development, climate change, rural development, agriculture, food security and regional cooperation, but pastoralists, even though at the crossings of these issues, are not explicitly targeted. EU policies are needed to give systematic attention to pastoralism as motor of economic development and regional integration and to identify, support and promote the conditions that enable pastoralists to be sustainable producers and commercial actors. Therefore, CELEP recommends the EU to take the following actions with regard to EU-Africa cooperation:

- ❖ Develop a long-term vision on strengthening the economic development of the arid and semi-arid areas—recognising mobile pastoralism as a production system with high comparative advantage—in the framework of the programmes for food security, climate change, the national indicative programmes and other relevant EU policies such as the Green Paper;
- ❖ Underline the importance to invest in rural development and food production. The EU Rural Development Policy mentions pastoralists as vulnerable people but should include them as significant economic actors offering great potential return to investments;
- ❖ Acknowledge, in view of the EU Land Guidelines, the need for innovation in tenure legislation, to reflect the way that land is effectively used by men and women in pastoral production (with particular attention to mobility of livestock within and between countries);
- ❖ Promote, with African governments and international donors, the imaginative development of infrastructure, markets and public services (particularly health and education) in forms that make them easily and sustainably accessible to mobile pastoral producers. The Tool for EC Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples in ACP countries recommends involving pastoralists in the design and review of the Country Strategy Papers. Pastoralists' rights should be part of Art. 8 political dialogues with African countries.