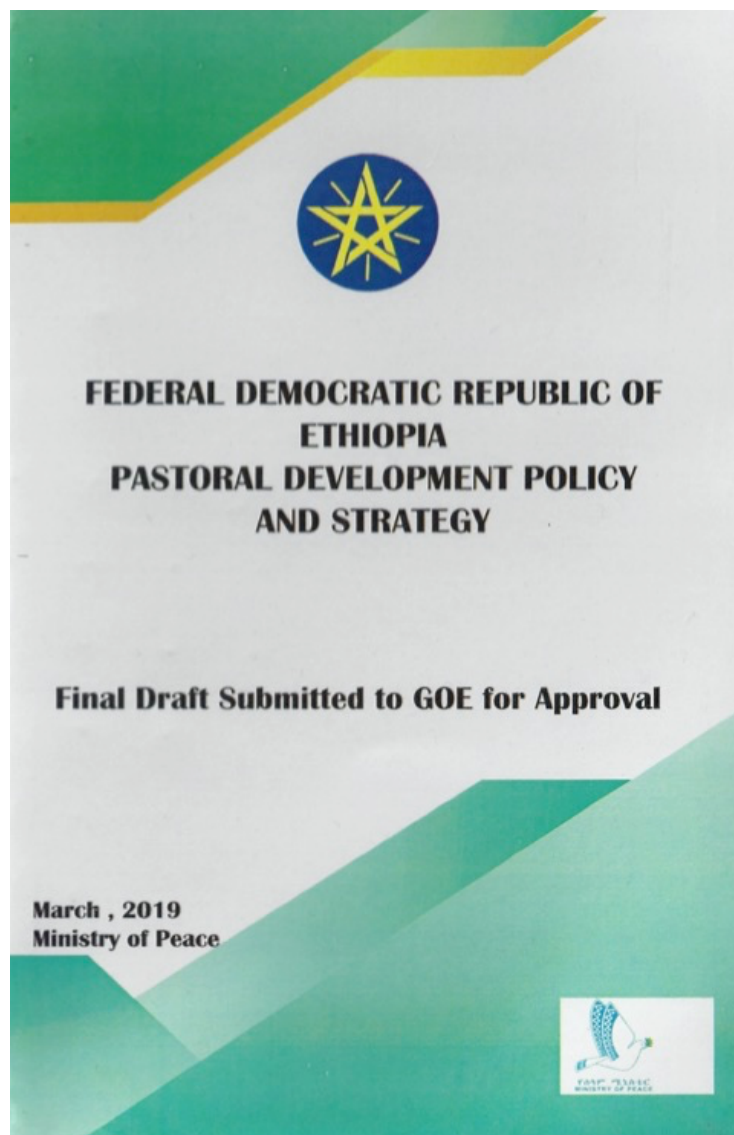


# The 2019 draft FDRE Pastoral Development Policy and Strategy

## A quick-reference tool

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## Introduction

In March 2019 a draft Pastoral Development Policy and Strategy was submitted to the Government of Ethiopia for approval. The Council of Ministers approved the policy in October 2020.

The Pastoral Development Policy and Strategy is meant as a framework for policies on pastoralism to be produced at the level of regional states.

We understand that the policy has not yet been discussed in the Federal Parliament nor at regional state level.

This document is meant as a quick-reference tool in support of those who, either directly or as relevant constituencies, are willing to represent the interests of pastoralists in the course of this process.

This document has a brief section highlighting key pros and cons with the new policy, and an alternative perspective. This is supported by more detailed information in annex.

The analysis is based on the English version of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Pastoral Development Policy and Strategy. Final Draft Submitted to GOE for Approval, by the Ministry of Peace in March 2019.

## Pros

When considered against the history of pastoral development in Ethiopia, this new policy has some positive elements worth highlighting, mostly concentrated in the introduction and the objectives.

1. **Pastoralism has value in its own right.** The policy acknowledges value to pastoralism as a way of life in its own right, based on resilient social/communal customary organization and administration, and equilibrium between natural environment and livestock resources<sup>1</sup>.
2. **Past approach was a mistake.** The policy acknowledges a history of pastoral development characterized by prejudice, lack of understanding, hindrance to pastoral mobility, failure to listen to pastoralists' voice, poor planning and neglect. A misunderstanding of pastoralism as the opposite of modernization, in the past, and consequent efforts to reduce pastoral mobility, are presented as bearing responsibility for delaying development in pastoral areas (sec. 1.1.2)<sup>2</sup>.
3. **Pastoral development is to be centred on pastoralism.** The policy acknowledges that failing to take pastoral people's way of life and ecology into account in the past was a mistake, and sets on not to repeat such a mistake: 'animal resources' and 'local knowledge' are placed at the centre of development work in the General Objective; pastoralist's livelihood system is taken as the basis for development in Specific Objective (a); existing sectoral policies and strategies are to be revised in light of pastoralists' livelihood basis and ecology in Specific Objective (b).

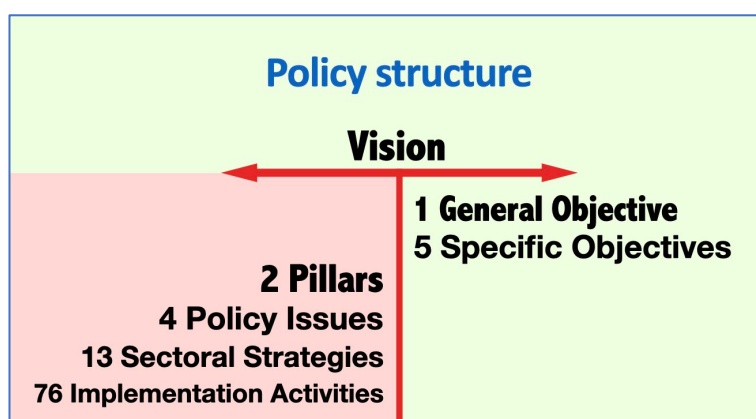
## Cons

Had the policy been developed on the basis of the three elements highlighted above, it would have represented a substantial turning point from the past, it would have been consistent with the African Union *Policy Framework for Pastoralism*, and would have been a beacon of innovation in the region together with 2012 policy for the development of Kenyan ASALs.

Unfortunately, it is hard to find any connection between the innovative elements embedded in the policy objectives and the policy's 76 implementation activities, 13 sectoral strategies, 4 policy issues

and 2 pillars. The main problems with the way the policy document unfolds from objectives to activities are highlighted below.

1. **Two diverging sets of objectives.** All the operational components of the policy, from the sectoral strategies down to the 76 implementation activities, seem to follow from the two ‘pillars’. These pillars are effectively a second set of objectives, which boil down to the historical objectives of pastoral development in Ethiopia (i. increasing animal production and productivity; and ii. settling pastoralists), plus ‘industrialization that uses livestock and livestock products as input’. The latter, is described as ‘the central point of the Pastoral Development Policy and Strategy’ (p31). Embedded under Pillar 2, is also a goal to achieve the ‘commercialization of pastoral livelihoods’. This reappears under Implementation Activity 1.1.e about livestock extension services, but without explaining its relevance to that context: ‘the main focus of this area is making the lifestyle of pastoralists market-based’.
2. **A contradictory structure.** The policy pillars and the operational components that follows from them are in direct contradiction with the innovative elements embedded in the policy objectives. They also contrast sharply with the principles of the African Union *Policy Framework for Pastoralism*, and especially principle 3, 4 and 7, that support pastoralism as a way of life (3) and explicitly support pastoral mobility (4, 7). Pillar 2 is also in direct contradiction with the 2015 Ethiopia Livestock Master Plan, which recommends that ‘The GoE and other stakeholders need to promote herd mobility as a strategy to utilize temporal and spatial variability in the availability of forage’ (p. 72).
3. **An empty core.** This policy is meant to move beyond the mistakes of the past by finally centring pastoral development on *pastoralism*: pastoral people’s way of life and ecology, and pastoralists’ knowledge. These would be the basis for a new policy approach finally aimed at responding to pastoralists’ demands (Specific Objective ‘a’). However, while acknowledging a lack of understanding of pastoralism in the past, this understanding in the policy remains minimal and superficial: a livelihood that ‘depends mainly on livestock’<sup>3</sup>. There is no evident intention of improving the understanding of pastoralism through primary research or through taking on board the way such understanding has evolved in specialist circles during the last thirty years<sup>4</sup>. What is supposed to be the pastoralist core of the policy according to the policy objectives, is effectively an empty space, dangerously open to be filled with virtually anything. Like signing a blank check.



## An alternative perspective

Impacts from climate change and other anthropogenic causes have made the increasing variability of natural cycles a global issue.

For food production, nature's variability means variable inputs in moisture, temperature, and nutrients. There is a long tradition, in development, to represent such variability as a problem. Efforts have sought to 'externalise' variability, shielding production from the vagaries of nature. This approach has led to favour large investments in farming systems which are based on intense planning and optimised processes for stabilising uniform inputs – e.g. mechanised agriculture. Paradoxically, when nature's variability cannot be eliminated, these systems are also those most susceptible to be disrupted by it. Think of the way the advantages of mechanized harvesting drop dramatically unless the crop is sufficiently uniform.

Creating and maintaining artificially stable environments depends heavily on fossil-fuel and involves huge social and ecological costs. Even where agricultural productivity does increase substantially, this is often at the cost of large-scale destitution and of turning the natural environment into a dumping ground for externalities. Efforts to externalise environmental variability from agricultural production following the industrial revolution seem to have made variability only more global with climate change. Today, this 200-year-old approach is increasingly challenged, starting from the countries where it was first developed. With little room to manoeuvre in order to keep global warming within a 1.5°C increase, we badly need ways of saving *both* agriculture *and* the natural environment.

Could *making use of* variability rather than fighting it be such a way? Could environmental variability itself be turned into a resource? The debate on climate change is divided between those who believe that we need *more* control and *more* planning, and those who believe that we need *different* efforts, centred on flexibility and real-time management.

The regions of the world where extreme variability is neither a novelty nor an anomaly, like the Ethiopian lowlands, hold important lessons in this regard. So have the small-scale food-production systems that developed using these regions, with their millenary track-record of operation, and thus empirically tested levels of resilience. These systems use multiple options and real-time management instead of prediction and planning. Pastoralism is one of them.

Pastoralist livelihood systems specialise in producing food from the interaction with highly variable natural environments instead of isolating from it. In relation to their system of production, environmental variability is a resource, not a constraint. Pastoralists match the variability of inputs from their natural environment with variability they embed in their processes of production. In other words, as predictions about inputs are impossible, they keep their options open. The main lesson here is that introducing artificially stable environments is actually not necessary for agricultural production and ensuring food security at scale. There is a way of stabilising outputs that does not require stability in inputs.

The specialisation in working *with* nature rather than *against* it places pastoralism alongside innovative approaches such as agroecology and ecological farming. In the face of climate change, the traditional model of modernization depending on fossil-fuel, stability and uniformity is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. On the other hand, food production systems working *with* nature are the future. Although outside the spotlights of technological development, pastoralism is already in the future.

## ANNEX 1. The understanding of pastoralism in the policy

The policy does not use the definition of pastoralism provided in the African Union *Policy Framework for Pastoralism*, and does not establish its own working definition.

An implicit definition is used in statements such as ‘The livelihood mainstay and income source of the pastoral population is animal rearing and animal products’ (p.14) or ‘Since the population depends mainly on livestock for their livelihood, they are referred to as pastoralists’ (p.15). These statements effectively make use of the so-called ‘economic definition’ of pastoralism, which in its simplest form is ‘a livelihood system where the largest part of a household’s income comes from livestock’.

This definition was initially introduced in the late 1970s to help targeting development interventions in the complex socio-economic context of the Niger Delta in Mali, where virtually everyone both cultivated and kept livestock. The simple and quantitative focus of the economic definition makes it a valuable targeting tool, especially when the context of application is clearly defined and well understood, as in the case of the Niger Delta. However, the economic definition is of no help when it comes to understand the particularity of a pastoralist livelihood system and its ecological basis. By the economic definition alone, the owner of a chicken factory or the workers in a crocodile farm could qualify as ‘pastoralists’ as long as the largest part of their household’s income comes from those livestock-based activities. This does not make the definition ‘wrong’: it simply was never meant to fulfil the role of providing an understanding of pastoralism. As it says nothing about the actual strategies of production, the way producers interact with their environment or what makes a system more productive and more resilient, it is of no guidance for designing a pastoral development policy.

In as much as the understanding of pastoralism for the purpose of this policy is based on the economic definition, there is not much of it.

Beside the reference to the economic definition, the only other description of pastoralism is in section 1.1.1, which says that ‘Pastoral people are moving from place to place not only in search of water and grazing ... but their mobility has social, economic, and cultural reasons and consequences that they developed through years of experience which kept them resilient in the face of natural and man-made harsh and hostile environment’ (p.14).

While acknowledging the rationality of mobility is an improvement on the past, neither the ‘reasons’ or the ‘consequences’ of mobility are explained. Moreover, describing pastoralism as ‘moving from place to place ... in search of water and grazing’ (even if ‘not only’) is a characteristic mark of poor understanding, as no pastoralist in the world moves ‘in search of water and pasture’. There is little room for mistake in pastoralism, thus mobility is carefully planned based on thoroughly assessed information. Herders move with their livestock once they know where to go and are satisfied with what to expect.

The characterisation of pastoral rangelands as a ‘harsh and hostile environment’ is also a sign of superficial understanding, typical of an outsider’s point of view. The mostly hot and dry lowland environment in which pastoralists operate is not easy to deal with, but it is no harsher or more hostile to them than the cold and wet highland environment is ‘harsh and hostile’ to highland farmers. Natural environments long inhabited by people are neither inherently hostile nor inherently favourable. Whether people experience an environment one way or the other depends on their particular skills and competence. Pastoralists specialise in making

good use of the lowland environments and *in as much as people can use their specialisation* such environments support their livelihoods and therefore by definition are not 'hostile'.

An alternative wording that avoids these pitfalls with minimal changes to the policy text, while adding much needed information on pastoralism, could read somehow like this: 'Pastoral people are moving from place to place not *in search* of water and grazing as traditionally upheld, but *as a strategy to maximise the productivity of their herds in the context of highly variable natural conditions*. Their mobility has social, economic, and cultural reasons and outcomes which were developed through years of experience, and which remain key to pastoralists' resilience and their unique capacity to benefit from their particular environmental conditions'.

Compare with the way pastoralism is described in the AU *Policy Framework for Pastoralism*, which makes explicit reference to pastoralists' specific strategies and ways of engaging with the natural environment, and linking this to the economic dimension:

*Pastoralism is a way of life and a production system... The key characteristics of the system are: i. A semi-arid or arid environment, with marked variability in rainfall both spatially and temporally within and between years; ii. The use of livestock to maximise the uncertain distribution and availability of grazing resources in these environments; iii. The need for strategic mobility to access and use grazing resources in an efficient manner. ... It is these technical and social aspects of pastoralism, developed and adapted over centuries, which enable pastoralists in many African countries to supply the bulk of livestock for domestic meat markets. [African Union 2010: sec. 2.1]*

The absence of even such a minimal explanation of what characterises pastoralism, pre-empties the otherwise innovative attention the new policy shows for the specificity of pastoral livelihood systems and the importance of building pastoral development on it.

Policy objective (a) is centred on the idea that growth and development will be built on the basis of the pastoralist livelihood system. Policy objective (b) reiterates this idea in saying that the current legacy of sectoral policies and strategies is 'to be revised in light of the livelihood basis and ecology of pastoralists'. In several other places, the policy refers to the specificity of the pastoralist livelihood system as the basis for evaluating the implementation of strategies and actions, strategies 2.4, 3.1, 3.2 and 4.1. and relative actions (a) and (c).

None these objectives, strategies and actions represents a real value for pastoralists as long as the policy's understanding of the pastoralist way of life and production system is limited to 'depending mainly on livestock' rather than acknowledging pastoralists' role in *creating value* from livestock.

Besides, 'depending mainly on livestock' is value loaded, with quite a negative connotation in English. The dictionary definition of 'dependence' is 'the state of relying on or being controlled by someone or something else', also used to refer to 'addiction to drugs or alcohol'. Dependence is a condition to get out from, not to grow within.

Thus, representing pastoralism as 'dependence on livestock' offers no basis on which to build pastoral development and certainly no adequate basis for a policy aimed at responding to pastoralists' demands for the recognition of 'pastoralism as a viable mode of production' and for a policy that 'takes the livelihood basis, the lifestyle, and ecology of pastoral people into account' (p.2).

## **ANNEX 2. Coherence with the African Union Policy Framework for Pastoralism**

The AU Policy Framework for Pastoralism is organized into 8 guiding principles, 2 objectives and 14 strategies to achieve them.

There is sharp contradiction between the Pillars/principles in the FDRE Policy draft and several principles of the African Union *Policy Frameworks for Pastoralism*. The latter emphasises the need to secure pastoralists' rights, participation and self-determination (principles 1, 2 and 8), and the crucial importance of supporting pastoralists' strategic mobility (principles 3, 4, 7 and strategies 1.4 and 2.2). The former decides for pastoralists what is best: assigning them the role of commercial suppliers in an overimposed industrial animal production value chain, while promoting sedentarization, diversification and commercialization of their livelihoods.

Key relevant excerpts from the African Union *Policy Framework for Pastoralism* are provided below, organized by theme.

### ***On services and settlements***

'In Eastern Africa, with the exception of Ethiopia (which was never colonized), pastoral development policy in British colonies, mainly Kenya, was influenced by the widely held view that pastoralism using communal rangelands was inefficient, with low productivity, and perceived environmental degradation. Thus, a sedentary life was imposed on pastoral communities, confined on permanent rangelands where they were supposed to benefit from public services more easily. Pastoralists were stripped of their property rights on large portions of rangelands, which were given to the British colonial administration for ranching. These negative views on pastoralism were misguided but proved to be remarkably persistent, with apparently unproductive pastoral land still being appropriated up to the modern day.' (AU 2010: 13)

### ***On industrialisation, modernization and commercialization of agriculture***

'Decolonisation of many African countries was followed by the processes of nation building and modernization. Former colonies inherited models of development from Europe and America with emphasis on industrial and socio-economic progress and sophistication, which came to be popularly known as modernization. A major part of the move towards modernization was the commercialization of agriculture, characterized by the shift from subsistence to commercial farming, from pastoral communal ownership to privatization of pastoral land, and from pastoral traditional institutions of land management to seemingly modern ones. Within these frameworks, pastoralist mobility continued to be viewed as irrational and economically inefficient, despite an emerging body of research which demonstrated that pastoralist production was at least as efficient as modern ranching. One outcome of the misunderstandings about pastoralism was widespread appropriation of pastoral rangelands, especially in eastern and southern Africa.' (Au 2010: 14).

### ***On commercialization***

'Demographic trends are very much linked with other trends in pastoral areas, especially loss of rangeland and commercialization of livestock production and marketing. For example, the 'high export' and relatively commercialized pastoral areas of Sudan and Somalia are characterized by a gradual transfer of livestock from smaller/poorer herders to larger/richer herders, with the former falling out of pastoralism and the latter expanding their herds and



selling more animals into the export markets. Simultaneously, richer and more politically-connected herders are able to create private enclosures on the rangeland, which further limits the productivity and growth of poorer/smaller herds. This displacement of smaller production units by larger units is typical of agricultural development globally, and in pastoral areas contributes to pastoral destitution and out migration.’ (AU 2010: 17)

### ANNEX 3. A timeline of the main stages of the process to produce the draft policy

2016	The GOE accepts pastoralists’ long-standing demand for ‘a pastoral policy and strategy that recognizes pastoralism as a viable mode of production’ and ‘that takes the livelihood basis, the lifestyle, and ecology of the pastoral people into account’.
2017, March	A policy draft is presented at a National Consultative Workshop on Pastoral Development and Pastoralism in Ethiopia. Criticisms were raised especially with regard to the way pastoral mobility had been addressed. Participants found that the policy fell short of engaging with the reality of mobile and cross-border pastoral production and showed a poor understanding of pastoral systems and their use of the land. In the words of a pastoralist leader: ‘Pastoralists do not just move in search of water and pasture but also to improve productivity. These other reasons are ignored at the moment. Pastoral land should be certified as such, not considered as empty land ... Pastoral land use should be incorporated as one of the formalised uses within the policy document’ <sup>5</sup> .
2017, July	MoFPDA embarks in reworking the draft policy document in collaboration with Mercy Corps, the USAID core advisory team to the ministry, and other development partners.
2018, June	Completion of background study ‘A Summary of Context Analysis of Pastoral and Agro-Pastoral Areas to Enrich and Update Draft Policy and Strategy Framework, Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs .
2018, December	Completion of new policy draft.
2019, March	Final Draft Submitted to GOE for Approval.
2020, October	Final policy draft approved by the FDRE Council of Ministers.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> ‘pastoral people have their own particular way of life’ (p.13); ‘The livelihood of the people depends on their resilient social/communal customary organization and administration; and the equilibrium between their natural environment and livestock resources’ (p.15).

<sup>2</sup> ‘pastoral development policies, laws and strategies ... developed in isolation and found in a dispersed fashion [must] be organized and harmonized and a consistent pastoral development policy and strategy that takes the pastoral people’s way of life and ecology into account.[must] be developed’ (p.13); ‘the attitude that considers pastoralism as a backward livelihood system, without clearly understanding it; practices that restrict mobile pastoralism/animal husbandry; and absence of development plans that were relevant and participatory have



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been observed as contributing factors to the underdevelopment of the pastoral areas' (p.13); '[pastoral peoples] have been neglected and forgotten for years' (p.13); 'Pastoral areas in Ethiopia are ...adversely affected by limitations in human resource capacity; economic growth; social and infrastructure development relatively more than other places' (p.15)

<sup>3</sup> 'Since the population depends mainly on livestock for their livelihood, they are referred to as pastoralists' (p.15); 'The livelihood mainstay and income source of the pastoral population is animal rearing and animal products' (p.14). 'Pastoral people are moving from place to place not only in search of water and grazing as traditionally upheld, but their mobility has social, economic, and cultural reasons ... developed through years of experience which kept them resilient ...' (p. 15).

<sup>4</sup> Recent and accessible overviews are IFAD 2018. [How to do. Engaging with pastoralists – a holistic development approach](#), IFAD, Rome; and Misereor 2019. [Pastoral Development Orientation Framework. Focus on Ethiopia](#), Misereor, Aachen. FAO is also finalising the publication of a document on pastoralism along these lines: FAO 2020, *Pastoralism: Making Variability Work*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome.

<sup>5</sup> Dr Atsbaha Gebre Selassie and Dr Saverio Krätli were amongst the participants, for Misereor. These quotes were confirmed by comparing notes respectively from the original intervention and from its English translation.