Trends in demography, land access, and livestock commercialization mean that not everyone can – or wants to be – a pastoralist.

Individual livelihood diversification options and choices differ by gender, age, wealth, education, skills training, and other factors.

Key Findings

**Poverty limits options.** The marginalization and lack of investments in basic services and infrastructure in pastoralist areas have led to levels of poverty and underdevelopment that heavily constrain livelihood diversification opportunities.

**Push and pull effects drive change.** Forces such as human conflicts, loss of grazing lands, population growth and land privatization are continuing to push poorer herders away from pastoralism and into alternative livelihoods. Meanwhile, opportunities associated with urbanization and a growing domestic and international demand for animals and livestock products are exerting a pull effect, drawing other herders into new occupations.

**There is diversity in diversification.** Livelihood diversification takes many forms, and people may adopt multiple alternative livelihood strategies concurrently or seasonally. Unskilled labor is the main form of waged employment for pastoralists. Petty trade in foods and goods is widespread, with promising potential in the sale of sustainable resources such as honey, aloe, natural resins, and gum arabic.

**Options carry costs and risks.** Short-term benefits of diversification may be moderated by high risks or long-term costs. Agricultural production is a common form of diversification, and has been heavily promoted by national governments and international programs to boost food security and incomes. Farming can be beneficial but is also susceptible to crop failure and loss, especially in dryland environments where rains are unreliable, and access to land or water resources can be disputed. The brewing and selling of alcohol is an important source of income for women in some areas, as is the sale of the natural stimulant khat (miraa) in others. But they carry important domestic and social costs. The sale of firewood and charcoal are vital activities of last resort, but exact a heavy environmental toll. Opportunistic criminality and violence draw young men as an alternative livelihood, with heavy negative consequences. Destitute women and children may resort to poorly remunerated or dangerous options, such as domestic service, begging, and the sex trade.

**Access is unequal.** Diversification options vary geographically. Urbanization and long-distance migration are more established among pastoralists in Kenya’s Garissa District than for the Borana in Ethiopia or the Karamoja of Uganda, who also face national
Pastoralist regions offer widely varying opportunities for livelihood diversification depending on access to education, markets and towns, and other factors.

Investments in sustainable local trade, education/skills, business development, and land rights training will stimulate greater benefits and resilience within pastoralist areas.

Policies limiting outmigration from their region. The livestock value chain offers stronger business linkages in the Borana region, particularly for wealthier pastoralists, while limited areas of Karamoja and Garissa offer better conditions for agriculture. Disparities are deepening. Poorer herders risk being trapped at the bottom of the livestock value chain, and increasing commercialization is widening the gap between rich and poor pastoralists in terms of livestock holdings.

Diversification is gaining momentum. The scale, range, and persistence of diversification strategies have increased in recent decades, as have urbanization and agro-pastoralism. This trend is likely to continue and grow.

Recommendations

• Reform land tenure. Work with governments to develop equitable and efficient land tenure policies, and provide training and support to customary institutions regarding land laws and rights in pastoralist areas.

• Support local value addition. Keep more value-addition from livestock production and trade (e.g. fattening operations, meat and milk processing, fodder production) in pastoralist areas.

• Invest in sustainable natural products. Support local communities in the extraction, processing, and marketing of gums, resins, aloe, and other sustainable wild products. Investigate and promote legal, marketing, and processing procedures to increase benefits among local communities.

• Invest in urban/peri-urban planning and infrastructure. Reinforce the opportunities provided by urbanization and sedentarization for improved services and conditions by investing in planning and infrastructure development, especially regarding sanitation, water, animal health services, and environmental protection.

• Promote local and regional trade. Enact policies to support livestock trade within domestic and cross-border markets to generate more local benefits, food purchasing power, employment, and involvement of small-scale traders. USAID, IGAD, and other partners are well placed to promote enabling reforms in cross-border trade policy.

• Tackle nutrition risks and challenges associated with movement into urban areas. Extend nutrition services and promotion among sedentarized communities to address decreases in dairy consumption and increases in child health and nutrition problems.

• Meet increasing demand for education. Invest in education as a key diversification, economic development, and resilience-building strategy for herders, including distance-learning models using radio programs, mobile tutors, mobile technologies, and more. Investigate which types of education support, and at what levels, offer the best resilience building in dryland environments.

• Spur training and business development. Support women and youths as drivers of economic diversification in the drylands. Create employment programs for youths oriented toward alternative livelihoods. Promote women-owned enterprises and business training. Facilitate low capital start-up enterprises in trade and services through the formation of savings and credit groups for youths and women.


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