

Research Application Summary

A strategy for leveraging from wasted hides and skins in pastoral Kenya

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Abstract

The livestock sector in Kenya faces a cohort of challenges within the hides and skins value chain, which include low quality of raw materials, inefficient marketing structures, limited incentives for quality production, and export of raw and semi processed hides and skins. The pastoral areas, which predominate the livestock sector, are the most affected, with the bulk of hides and skins simply thrown away as waste. This study sought to gather information useful for developing a strategy for minimising dumping of unused hides and skins as waste in pastoral areas in Kenya. Secondary information sources (relevant literature) were reviewed, along with interviews of key informants knowledgeable about the livestock sector, and hides and skins business in particular, from three pastoral communities in Kenya; namely Garissa, Turkana and Samburu. It was clear that majority of pastoralists lacked information on marketing and formal markets of hides and skins, alternative uses of these by-products, and value addition options necessary to bolster benefits accruing from the trade of these materials. The other major constraints included lack of platforms for exposure to essential information, especially on entrepreneurial skills; access to capital incentives and building capacities for proper handling and thus reduction of wasted forms of hides and skins.

Keywords: Capacity building, entrepreneurial skills, hides, Kenya, value addition

Résumé

Le secteur de l'élevage au Kenya fait face à un ensemble de défis dans la chaîne de valeur des peaux, incluant une faible qualité de matières premières, des structures de marketing inefficaces, des incitations limitées pour une production de qualité et l'exportation de peaux brutes et semi-transformées. Les zones pastorales, qui prédominent le secteur de l'élevage sont les plus touchées, avec la majeure partie des peaux simplement jetées comme des déchets. Cette étude a cherché à inventorier des informations utiles pour développer une stratégie de minimisation le dumping des peaux inutilisées comme déchets dans les zones pastorales au Kenya. Les sources d'informations secondaires (littérature pertinente) ont été examinées, ainsi que des entretiens avec des informateurs du secteur de l'élevage et des activités de la peau de trois communautés pastorales au Kenya; à savoir Garissa, Turkana et Samburu. La majorité des pasteurs manquent d'informations sur le marketing et les marchés officiels des peaux, des utilisations alternatives de ces sous-produits et des options d'addition de valeur nécessaires booster le commerce de ces matériaux. Les autres

contraintes majeures incluent l'absence de plateformes de sensibilisation à des informations essentielles, en particulier sur les compétences entrepreneuriales, accès aux incitations de capital et opportunités de formations de capacitation pour une meilleure manipulation des peaux d'animaux et la réduction des formes gaspillées.

Mots-clés: renforcement des capacités, compétences entrepreneuriales, peaux d'animaux, Kenya, addition de valeur

Introduction

Hides and skins are major outputs from the livestock industry, particularly from the pastoral areas in Kenya (Onyango *et al.*, 2019). Unfortunately, the potential value of these livestock products is yet to be realised in Kenya since most of the materials are dumped as waste in rural pastoral areas (Wangui, 2016).

The use of hides and skins in rural pastoral Kenyan communities majorly remain traditional as beddings, cultural garments, making ropes and many other art and crafts of cultural and touristic values. In times of famine, some pastoral communities boil them for food. In spite of these local uses, majority of hides and skins are simply dumped away as waste, thus causing untold economic losses to the country. This study sought to gather information for developing a strategy for minimising dumping away of unused hides and skins as waste in pastoral areas in Kenya.

Methodology

The study was a desktop review, beefed up by phone discussions with key informants from three pastoral communities; namely Turkana, Garissa and Samburu. These areas are all located in the Northern part of Kenya. This was considered the most appropriate approach due to the prevailing risk of COVID 19 pandemic, and time and cost constrains. The information obtained was analysed qualitatively using content analysis.

Results and Discussion

Hides and skins are predominantly used traditionally in pastoral Kenya, with barely a few sold to the formal markets. The most common traditional uses of hides and skins among the pastoralists included beddings and a variety of arts and crafts for domestic use and as touristic pieces. A dismal quantity of hides and skin was sold to tanneries in major towns of the country, for individuals who had market information (Nyakiri and Amwata, 2019). The major sources of hides and skins for these tanneries were community slaughter houses and homestead slaughter of animals.

The Kenyan Government identified the Leather industry as one of the less developed sub-sectors that should be prioritised to significantly contribute to industrial development and value addition towards the achievement of the country's Vision 2030 (Wayua and Kagunyu, 2012). However, techniques used in the slaughtering process reduce the quality of hides and skins obtained from livestock (Wangui, 2016), thus leading to rejection in the market place. Otherwise, generally, hides and skins are processed manually using knives in homesteads, while in slaughter houses the

facilities used are generally underdeveloped and substandard for producing tradable high quality stuff. Thus, the leather industry has a long way to go to meaningfully contribute to the achievement of Kenya's Vision 2030.

Some farmers envisioned no immediate value in the skins and hides, and hence ended up throwing them away, as reported by key informants in the following quotations:

Garissa County: "Farmers in Garissa sell away the by-product (hides and skins) of livestock at a throw away price due to the monopoly of a few buyers, and absence of favourable alternatives. Common here are hides from the cattle and camels, and goats' skins. The pastoral farmers do not have much hope in the hides and skins because it does not yield much. Majority of these farmers who are unexposed, however, throw away the raw leather as they do not envision its domestic use"

Turkana region: "...majority of people basically dry the cattle hides and goats' skin for bedding and for cultural purposes. Donkey skin is sold out to make medicine, shoes and sandals. Otherwise, farmers in rural regions do not know that skins can bring money, and throw away, especially goat skins..."

Samburu region: "the hides and skins are used by rural communities as beddings and for cultural purposes, while some amounts are sold to Asian buyers. Despite this some women make accessories from the skin, while large quantity of cattle hides is thrown away".

Although both hides and skins suffer considerable losses as waste in the pastoral areas of Kenya, hides tend to fetch better prices and thus suffer less wastage than the skins counterparts. Besides, hides are more used at cultural occasions than skins, majorly because of the larger size. In terms of relative quantities of uncollected hides and skins, hides remain mostly unpurchased, with an average for cattle (14%), sheep skin (34%), and goat skin (29%) unpurchased (Wangui, 2016). The implication is low income and under employment in the affected areas, and reduced contribution to the national Growth Domestic Product (Liu, 2002). Pastoral communities felt that skills targeting value addition such as curing and marketing of hides and skins products would significantly elevate the livelihoods of the pastoral communities. More so, they identified the need for provision of capital and capacity building on modern uses of hides and skins, and entrepreneurial skills as key to run the skin and hides ventures.

Conclusion

The quantities of hides and skins lost as waste in the pastoral regions of Kenya are high but avoidable with strategic interventions. Skins attract the least farmer attention. Empowering communities with entrepreneurial skills and capacity building in value additions is needed for exploiting the hides and skins livestock sub-sector.

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