

Charles Herrera
Chicago HS for Agricultural Sciences
Chicago, IL
Somalia, Factor 8

Implementing sustainable practices for raising livestock in Somalia

Pearl Bailey once said, “Hungry people cannot be good at learning or producing anything, except perhaps violence.” Somalia is situated in the Horn of Africa and lies along the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Somalia is a country no smaller than the state of Texas. It is an arid and barren land with only about two major rivers. Somalia has had and continues to have a rough history. Since 1991 Somalia has been engulfed in full on anarchy and any attempt to suppress the militants or establish a government, has failed on multiple occasions. The drought in recent months and the impending famine just add more problems to an open wound that is Somalia. [5]

Somalia has many issues today, from the growing piracy rate along the coast, to being in an unstable state. The cause of many of these issues can directly be related to the growing hunger problem in Somalia. Famine has pummeled the Horn of Africa, but Somalia has been the hardest hit and the situation is getting worse. [6] It is even more daunting for Somalia, where a barely functioning central government and ruthless militant groups are undermining international efforts to respond to the most devastating famine in 60 years. Somalis have fled drought and civil war to neighboring countries like Ethiopia and Kenya. Somalis are showing unprecedented levels of malnutrition, and some children have died of hunger and exhaustion on their way out of the country. [5]

It is easy for people to be discouraged since Somalia has always been established as a failing state, but the international community must not give up on urgent efforts to help the innocent victims. United Nations officials have reported tens of thousands of Somalis died in the last four months, more than half of them children. The famine recently spread to a sixth area of the southern part of the country, putting 750,000 more people at risk in the next few months, unless the aid efforts are scaled up to reduce this growing number. Experts predict the drought will end in October, but then seasonal rains could exacerbate cholera, malaria and other diseases already infecting camps in Kenya, where more than 400,000 Somali refugees have fled.[6]

Ed Asner stated, “There are genuinely sufficient resources in the world to ensure that no one, nowhere, at no time, should go hungry.” So how do you build up a failing nation and put an end to the three million starving people in Somalia? You build it by turning to what Somalia does best, No, not piracy, but raising livestock. (Livestock is a great way to produce fresh, wholesome protein source for a family, to produce a healthy, and to produce fiber for one’s family or for sale, all of which are needed in a mal-nourished country.) [2] Also, the Somali livestock industry accounts for about 40% of Somalia’s GDP and is the main income earner for most Somali people. In normal years, livestock and its products can account for 80% of total exports. However due to periodic trade embargoes and bans, livestock exports to neighboring countries and the Gulf States have declined. Despite these setbacks, livestock continues to be Somalia’s largest traded commodity, with the main markets for Somali livestock being on the Arabic peninsula as well as Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia. Somalia’s geographic location, Islamic culture, and traditional rearing techniques puts it at a unique advantage to serve the Middle East with livestock products and supply markets in the West with organic meat produce.[3]

Meat products from Somali livestock are unusually pure, due the traditional rearing techniques practiced in Somalia: livestock in Somalia is reared exclusively in natural rangelands. This practice differs from the intensive livestock production methods of developed countries, where animals are fed a variety of potentially harmful chemicals, including processed feed, supplements, antibiotics, growth hormones, anti-parasitic drugs, and many other medicines on a daily basis. Somali meat is uniquely suited to supply

organic meat to Western and other markets. In order to promote this outcome, more rigorous certification and marketing of Somali produce is important. The Somali livestock industry should work towards the creation of a unified brand for Somali livestock. There is a lot of opportunity in the organizational and entrepreneurial aspects of the industry. Livestock herders should be encouraged to form co-operatives and partnerships with businessmen and investors to add value to Somali livestock products and to take advantage of economies of scale. [3]

What Somalia is doing to increase production? Livestock trade is vital to Somali pastoralists and is a main source of revenue for Somalia. Import bans for Somali livestock which have been imposed by countries in the Arabian Peninsula from time to time, have impacted negatively on the Somalia economy. Trade restrictions on live animals, by importing countries, have mainly been aimed at limiting risks associated with Rift Valley Fever and other trade limiting diseases. To sustain trading in live animals, Somalia and the Horn of Africa countries in general, have to develop an animal health certification system, which is acceptable by both the exporting and importing countries to ensure reduced risk of introduction of foreign diseases into the importing countries. The system should also provide for enhanced communication on sanitary information between the trading partners. [2]

Livestock is the backbone of the country's economy. It is estimated that Somalia has over 20 Million Goats, 14 Million Sheep, Seven Million Camels and Five Million Cattle. Animal husbandry is an important activity throughout the country, large percentage of livestock is produced in the marginal rangelands of Central Regions, and coastal areas. Generally, livestock species in Somalia have low productivity. [2] Main livestock species in Somalia are indigenous cattle breeds, sheep, goats and camels. Nomadic herds are made up of a mixture of species that allow the full exploitation of range resources. In the river areas, cattle are the most important followed by sheep, in the coastal areas, sheep are most valued, as high numbers of it are produced for export purposes. The camel and goats are found in the inland area where taller vegetation for browsing is plenty. Pastoralists utilize for grazing in the communal rangeland within their territorial clan integrity while Agro-pastoralists, beside the communal land practice private enclosures to keep milking and weak animals supplementing with agriculture residues. [3]

During dry seasons or droughts herds may not be able to reach places where food and water is available due to the distances of the permanent water sources, as the animals are in depleted body conditions at the peak of the dry period and cannot stay without being watered for a long time. In the case of drought, livestock may die in large numbers. Prolonged dry periods and droughts will reduce the vegetation cover in the open rangelands. Pastoralists and Agro-pastoralists gather around permanent water sources and adjacent grazing areas as supplies of temporary water sources dry up. Cattle are frequently watered every second day, small ruminants twice a week, while camels can endure for week not being watered and remain substantially productive. [1]

In order to insure a sustainable livestock market in Somalia good livestock practices must be met so nothing is short-lived. Normally, herds remain for long periods during dry seasons in adjacent areas of permanent water sources subjecting to overgrazing of some palatable species of grasses, which ultimately may disappear from the area. [7] Overgrazing and bush clearing are the major root causes of land degradation which starts in reducing the vegetation cover per unit of land and narrowing the biodiversity of the eco system, resulting in barren land. In fact, the scattered bare grounds found in the central regions are highly susceptible to water erosion where rills and gullies are formed in close succession in the inclined landscape, creating a huge runoff out of a defined range site in many cases. The runoff can easily wash exposed topsoil and litter, disturbing mineral and water cycles of the eco system. The nakedness or reduced vegetation density affects negatively to energy flow to the eco system. Therefore it is highly evident that overall succession of the ecosystem components will remain negative. Integrated livestock and range development is a priority in Somalia. [7]

In the coastal range lands, the same trend is occurring, but aggravated by wind due to the nature of coastal area. Open rangelands with high velocity of winds made the ecosystem highly fragile and susceptible to wind erosion, creating pedestals, scours and mobile sand dunes toward inland directions occupying the farmlands, roads, water sources and sometimes settlements leaving behind patches of bare ground in the area along the coastal land of Indian Ocean. The soil in the area remains poor, inorganic and loose in structure as the litter and top soil are blown first, therefore high water percolation rates are evident with the consequence of less water retention in root zone, which may eventually result less perennial grass re growth. Ultimately, it is overgrazing and selection pressure imposed on the rangelands for long periods that affect the energy flow to the eco system, mineral and water cycles and in fact, the community dynamics of the whole eco system. Such effects create a situation of low productivity, less food availability and may result of high levels of food insecurity in the pastoral/agro pastoral community. Lack of adequate policy, instability, poor inputs and high degree of land degradation contribute to the poor quality and hygiene standard levels of the commodities produced in the rural areas of Central and southern Somalia.[1]

If Somalia wants to break free from the bans of other countries, an animal health certification should be established to determine if the animal is well suited for market. This would certify that livestock is suitable for consumption and would increase trade. In turn, this will promote standards for live animals and is acceptable to both importing and exporting countries. Somali public and private personnel should be trained on animal health certification, and the international standards and requirements of trading partners. Investment funding to public and private sector institutions should be provided to support the implementation of the animal health certification system. Veterinary professionals in Somalia should be trained on disease data collection and analysis. Web-based databases on animal health certification and trade should be maintained in order to keep an orderly system. Public and private institutions should improve access to international livestock markets to boost the economy of growing countries like that of Somalia's. Fair trade is essential for the welfare of Somalia and can only be developed through the formation of better policy. [4]

The situation has been long aggravated by the ban of livestock export to Gulf States with its consequences of high levels of food insecurity and poverty to Somali community, in particular to pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, such as Sustainable Resource use and Environmental Conservations, Disease Control and Public Health. Also Fair Trade, private institutions and organizations have to play a vital role in setting such policy for the well-being of Somali community. Such policy might be implemented to accomplish the required standard levels of quality and hygiene of the products to be marketed externally. For practical implementation of the said policy, to crack down on the persistent poverty cycle in Somalia, it is recommended that an integrated program promoting activities such as resource management, disease control, public health and proper marketing. The components may be carried out simultaneously throughout the Pastoral and Agro-pastoral areas of Central and Southern Somalia.[4]

Re-establishment of effective Somali Governmental institutions might be an effective large scale implementation of a Sustainable Livestock Program, but perhaps it's wise to start implementing activities in small scale at community levels, where conditions are appropriate and well accommodate such interventions. Integrated Livestock and range development is a priority in Somalia. Marketing may also enhance productivity at grassroots levels, but may impact negatively to the environment. Therefore the feel for the purpose of sustainable livelihood in Somalia is important, and it is important that all aspects are considered such as resource utilization, socio-economic, and cultural situation in the area. [4]

Ultimately, to achieve the purposes of Sustainable livestock practices in Somalia it is very essential to set up an effective coordination of food security, resource management, livestock health and marketing not only at national but also at regional levels. It is necessary to complement each other and struggle for solutions to the poverty situations engulfed to Somali communities. This proposed program may alleviate

and overcome the poverty in Somali communities and create situations whereby livestock producers together with the related private and public institutions upgrade product quality and hygiene. The Socio-economic groups of the local community will benefit the impact of the proposed program and perhaps thrive with the expected higher incomes and living standards.[4]

Somalia shouldn't have to be a state of intolerable insecurity. There are many resources and people out there that can turn around the situation that Somalia is in. In-turn, implementing sustainable livestock practices may reduce the growing hunger problem with a larger productivity of livestock. Also, an improved livestock industry would reduce the ongoing violence by creating more jobs, which would reduce the need to commit crimes and participate in piracy. Implementing sustainable livestock practices would not only increase Somalia's GDP, but end the countries crime and hunger problems, as well as move Somalia into the future and make it a more developed country. The solution to Somalia's problems is not as distant as people think they are.

Works Cited

- "Sustainable Agriculture Network Subsection." *Sustainable Agriculture Network Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.sanstandards.org/sitio/subsections/display/11>>.[1]
- "Area Harvested of Poultry Meat (Total) in Somalia - 1961-2009." *Placeholder for data.mongabay.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2011. <<http://data.mongabay.com/commodities/category/1-Production/4-Livestock+Primary/1808-Poultry+Meat+++Total/31-Area+Harvested/201-Somalia>>.[2]
- "Livestock - SATG | Somali Agricultural Technical Group ." *SATG | Somali Agricultural Technical Group* . N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.satg.org/work/livestock/>>.[3]
- "Programs in Somalia." *International Rescue Committee (IRC) | Rescue and Refugee Support*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.rescue.org/program/programs-somalia>>.[4]
- "Somalia." *Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts* . N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~jmroth/index.htm>>.[5]
- "Somalia: Hunger and terror | The Economist." *The Economist - World News, Politics, Economics, Business & Finance*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.economist.com/node/12059342>>.[6]
- "Sustainable Livestock Production, Part 1 | Small Farms." *home | Small Farms*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2011. <<http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sfn/f08livestock>>.[7]