Chapter 17 - Drought preparedness and livestock management strategies by pastoralists in semi-arid lands: Laikipia North, Kenya

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Abstract

Drought is a major threat to people's food security and livelihoods in arid and semi-arid lands in drought-prone developing countries. The traditional responses to drought management have been largely reactive. The purpose of this study is to investigate the determinants of the choice behind the various livestock management of pastoralists in Laikipia North, Kenya, as a proxy for understanding their preparedness to cope with future droughts. Households in this semi-arid area ranked drought as the most important climate shock because it was the principal cause of the loss of their livestock. Using a multivariate probit model, the study revealed that access to private ranch grazing increased the adoption of modern livestock management strategies in the study area. The study also found that early warnings of drought allowed for better water management, adoption of improved species/breeds, and early selling of livestock or destocking as strategies to enhance livestock management. Another finding was that, as distance to market increased, pastoralists' market participation decreased, driving them to stick to traditional livestock management practices, which in turn exacerbated the households' exposure to climate shocks. Thus, improving access to markets could play a significant role in improving pastoralists' livelihoods and their traditional livelihood systems within the framework of climate change. In addition, although early warning system (EWS) is not well known in Laikipia North, there is a need for well-managed EWSs to enable households to act early on an announced drought. Since the main source of

early warning information after government channels was community leaders, targeting such leaders with this information could reach many households and help them prepare adequately for climate shocks especially, severe droughts.