

Solidaridad East Africa's Pioneering Livestock Project to help Maasai Community in Kenya to overcome poverty

Farmer Support Project / Solidaridad – GRSB



In 2013, Solidaridad East Africa identified the potential for a livestock programme in Kenya. Cattle forms an important part of the African rural landscape and pastoralists are being squeezed into smaller areas by formalisation of land tenure and urbanisation. Overgrazing caused by the reduced seasonal movements and changing climate patterns with poor access to water are some of the largest problems. This phenomenon often leads to impoverishment y. The population of both beef and dairy cattle in Kenya exceeds 13 million head and is growing., with 90% of beef cattle in Kenya in the hands of small-scale subsistence farmers and pastoralists. This project sought to enable small-scale pastoralist farmers to connect to the rapidly growing market while developing sustainable systems.

Since its inception, the project has made strides towards alleviating poverty and creating a robust value chain infrastructure. With support from Solidaridad's Farmer Support Program the project has created a viable public private partnership between pastoralists who have been organized into a self-sustaining producer organization called Loita Maasai Project Plains Fed Beef, Nyongara Slaughterhouse [the largest slaughterhouse in Nairobi] and Narok County government.

Through these partnerships, 6,000 pastoralist, with 300,000 heads of cattle, have been organized and their capacity was built on a number of livestock production systems and improved practces including breeding, disease control, pasture management and marketing. Training also included organizational development and gender and diversification activities such as bee keeping, rearing of goats and sheep and tree planting.

Through our innovative capacity development we have been able to contribute to improvement of landscapes through better pasture management and production approaches including paddocking for young stock and replanting and/or care for natural pasture lands. In addition, introduction of high value pasture for commercialization. An estimated 60,000 ha of land has been put under sustainable pasture management.

The business model adopted in this program has been very beneficial to stakeholders and target beneficiaries. Starting with well-designed business plans for both the slaughterhouse, the partners have established a closely knit and amicable relationship in carrying out the business of beef and livestock. The slaughterhouse has entered into contractual arrangement with the local CBO (Community Based Organization) to buy live cattle removing the middlemen from the chain and hence adding more value and quality to the farmers and the slaughterhouse.



Groups of livestock farmers attend public meeting creating awareness on livestock systems

The project has in addition contributed to improvement of animal welfare through appropriate feeding and animal health interventions. The project during its life has established two agro veterinary outlets from which pastoralists get drugs. They are manned by qualified staff and overall management bestowed to the CBO thus creating a sense of project continuity. Further improvements have been enhanced through improvement of slaughter processes where cattle are tracked rather than the previously trekked thus ensuring quality.



Learning from best practices; Loita farmers visit a ranch in neighboring county

Breeding improvements have been done through supply of high quality breeding bulls, rams and bucks [Zebu, Doper, and Gala]. The use of breeding stock rather than AI was informed by the Maasai cultural beliefs against AI. Consultations with local communities was crucial. 500 cattle, 1000 goats, 1000 sheep have so far been served and the expected result is transformation of the indigenous Maasai breeds.

An improved management system has been established through training of the slaughterhouse staff on Kaizen principles (continuous improvement involving everyone) on operational excellence in all the stages of slaughter. Of particular importance is also waste management in Nairobi's largest slaughterhouse, with a Biogas digester that was installed to reduce waste and produce renewable energy.

Stakeholder engagement has been greatly improved during the life of the project. The field to fork value chain approach has been largely accepted by stakeholders including conservationists, ranchers, processors and government. In a workshop in 2015 stakeholders in the beef value chain in Kenya showed clear interest in setting up a national roundtable initiative in Kenya, related to GRSB.

In a nutshell, the project has made considerable first strides towards entrenching sustainable production in the beef sector of Kenya. There is an opportunity to scale up and replicate best practices in Kenya and the region. The GRSB would be something of interesting to pursue in the region moving forward.