

November 2015

The Review

HAY!

Milk, Meat & Markets

The Pastoralist in Kenya is winning

Changing lifestyles one bale at a time ★ Waiter, give me a double shot – of milk ★ Seeds of gold that have transformed lives





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- 04 Milk cooperatives give women an edge
- 08 Dairy revolution in the arid
- 08 Dairy revolution in the arid
- 10 A straw of hay hands youth a lifeline
- 12 Hay puts conflicts at bay
- 17 Arid world that is now home to milk and more milk
- 20 Changing lifestyles one bale at a time
- 24 Producers take charge of cattle market, brokers scurry away
- 30 A little bit of flavour makes all the difference
- 33 Waiter, give me a double shot – of milk
- 37 Steer fattening win at the market
- 40 Cattle now belong at home and children in school

Seeds of Gold that have Transformed Lives

Jackson Nabala

Too many challenges stand in the way of nomadic life in Kenya. Drought, insecurity, shrinking pastureland and exploitation at the marketplace are not only the bane of pastoralism but spell a death knell on the lifestyle.



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It was with this in mind that the European Union in 2012 funded Kenya Rural Development Programme Lot II. The project was designed to streamline the component of fodder, meat, milk and markets and to empower the communities to integrate modern management systems in their enterprise.

The project targeted three counties of Kajiado, Narok, and West Pokot.

The main objective of the project was to foster development of robust private sector market systems in fodder, fodder seed, beef and milk value chains in the arid and semi-arid areas. The project aspired to improve the potential of three value chains namely the commercialisation of fodder and fodder seed production, livestock marketing, and milk production and marketing.

Welthungerhilfe implemented the project in partnership with SNV-Netherlands Development Organisation and Neighbours Initiative Alliance (NIA).

It was fitting that at the close of the project we commissioned Rococo PR and Media, an independent communication firm to bring to us the stories of the people who were touched by this programme.

It is interesting to note that a total of 54 fodder producing self-help groups were formed in the three counties. With the support of the project, the self-help groups established fodder plots ranging in size between two to 20 acres per group. In total, 1,115 acres of grass, mainly the Boma Rhodes, was established in the three counties. In addition, on-site demonstrations were conducted during fodder establishment.

Farmers were also sensitised on the livestock Market Access Company (MAC). Consequently, three livestock market access associations have been formed. All the MACs have business models in place and are currently raising equity capital for investing in their businesses. In West Pokot, the Kapenguria MAC is already trading using the raised capital.

In the same breath, a total of 40 women groups are now organised into six formidable milk-marketing cooperatives and associations in the counties with a total of 2,332 members. The cooperatives are engaged in milk collection and marketing on behalf of their members. The groups have been trained on value addition, milk hygiene and handling, governance, group dynamics and record

keeping. Two milk-marketing models: The milk bar model and the direct supply to processors and bulk buyers are currently being implemented.

This publication brings to you life-changing stories of communities and individuals. It also shares the big dreams and hope of people who sowed golden seeds during the implementation of the programme.



Jackson Nabaala,
Head of Project



Milk co-operatives give women an edge

Until late 2014, Faith Kikulei says, milk was hardly a commodity to be commercialised in Bisil Kajiado County, and the surrounding *manyattas* (villages for the Maasai community). Most of it would go bad before it reached the market. Hawking, which women spent most of their time doing, was not only punitive, it was simply uneconomical.

“We spent lots of hours wandering around shopping centres trying to sell milk. We didn’t achieve much because the milk would be bought cheaply; while

Not any more, though.

Three years ago, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation and Welthungerhilfe (formerly German Agro Action) intervened. Soon, the community learnt that they could form groups to sell their produce collectively. That is when the idea of Emparnat Co-operative Dairy Society was born.

Emparnat, like most co-operative societies, would become a hub of milk collection and marketing.

New markets started to emerge soon after formation of the society. Brookside Dairies, a major milk processor in the country, enlisted Emparnat as a milk source. That meant an assured and stable market.

Such is true in Narok County. Here, Enlerai Women Dairy Society is doing roaring business.

“Last year alone we paid our members Ksh. 10 million. Remember, before, there was no such earning in this community,” says Richard Lang’at the dairy’s CEO.

Langat recalls that when it started two years ago, the society could



Cheery... Norah Tangus

only collect 40 litres. “Today we are doing well over 2,000 liters. Everyone is happy,” he says.

The dairy movement that is shaping up in the counties of Kajiado, Narok and West Pokot is a product of continuous engaging diverse stakeholders and famers.

SNV and Welthungerhilfe under the European Union funded programme, reached out to different communities with workshops, benchmarking and exposure trips that finally transformed the communities collective way of

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“Last year alone we paid our members Ksh. 10 million. Remember, before, there was no such earning in this community.”

-Richard Lang’at, CEO
Enlerai Women Dairy Society

from pg. 7

marketing their milk.

“We also learnt many other things like hygiene, record keeping, and that we could preserve the evening milk and sell it the following day,” Kikulei says.

So, for instance, Emparnat members came together, raised funds and bought a Ksh. 300,000 milk cooler with a capacity of processing 450 litres.

“We were told that coolers prevent milk going bad. That is why we bought it; now we can easily preserve any late deliveries, hence minimising the losses,” Kikulei explains.

This came with even more goodies for the local women and the community. First, Kikulei notes, the milk gave them financial stability. And it also made them aware that milk is lucrative. Now they are learning to look for better breeds that produce more milk.

“We earn pretty well every month. It’s just like we have been employed by the government,” says James Kuntai, who is thriving in milk transportation realm. Every day he mounts his scooter and traverses 10 villages, covering a distance of about 50 km, as he collects milk to

be delivered to the dairy.

“I also sell milk from my herd to the dairy. Now I even buy veterinary products for my animals. It is easy. I have not been broke these past few months,” he says.

In Narok, Esther Tuya is cheery too. She is the chairlady of Enelera Dairy. “Women here have gained a great deal from the society,” says. “Before the society we never imagined that we could own bank accounts. We used to think that only teachers and government officials could go to the bank. Now even us go to the bank. We have accounts,” she says.

Sayanka Ntore, the logistics officer at Emparnat is also upbeat.

“With this initiative, the future is promising. We have fairly enough milk for commercialisation. That is why we’re putting all these efforts to tap this potential,” he explains.

Ntore, however, believes more empowerment is required because communities can easily lapse to their old ways of doing things for lack of support.

“After the many encounters with SNV and welthungerhilfe, we came back and met locals in different villages. We agreed to form the society. So we elected a board

of trustees and registered the society to give it the legal mandate to operate. The association has proved to be beneficial to the community,” Ntore explains.

In late September 2015, Emparnat had 400 members; the number is growing steadily. It had employed six people.

“Through milk, women are earning cash, thus improving their purchasing power. Women can now pay school fees, improve their housing and contribute to each other without even asking for support from their husbands. We are hoping to streamline further so that in future we will have a bonus system like that in the coffee and tea sector. That is how people develop,” Kikulei notes.

Through milk, women
are earning cash,
thus improving their
purchasing power.

**-Faith Kikulei, milk producer,
Bisil, Kajiado County**



Jane Tipira tests milk at the Emparnat Farmers' Dairy Cooperative

Dairy revolution in the arid

Farmers go for pedigree breeds and grow own fodder

In the lands known for nomadism and low yielding indigenous cows, a wind of change is sweeping unlocking a giant dairy potential hitherto inert.

Farmers are changing their breed to pedigree ones that consume less and produce more. They are also constructing zero grazing units, growing fodder and selling their produce in a structured market system.

In Motony Village, Narok County, Catherine Towett is easy at home and her cows are just tethered next to the house. There are



some troughs of feed and water next to them.

“I sold my old local cows and bought this ones. Now I don’t need to go to the fields to herd. You see, I can attend to other domestic chores,” she says.

She has three Friesians and she wants to increase the number. She has learnt, in a sweet surprise that while her older breeds would barely give a cup of milk, the current ones yield highly.

Her next plan is to construct a zero grazing unit and a store for the feed.

“We have learned a lot in the past three years,” she says. “Now we do things differently. This village will soon be the one leading in milk production.”

She is not alone here. Her neighbor Fiola Ng’etich too is part of the revolution so is Sally Cheptoo. In total, all the 1,000 members of the Enelerai Women Group are adapting to new breeds and new husbandry.

“SNV and Welthungerhilfe have done a lot of work to transform this village. Now it is modernizing by the day. All these households you see here are changing their dairy projects. There is less movement

in search of pasture because they make their own hay. It’s a big turning point for this community,” says Richard Lang’at, CEO of the Enelerai Women Group.

All these people know that improved husbandry increases efficiency and profits. For Tuya, it goes beyond the money.

“Drought meant that my husband had to migrate all the way to the Mau Forest. Then, he would marry another woman. He always came back empty handed. Now, we are not worried about drought. There will be no more migration since we grow our own fodder and we zero graze our cows,” she enthuses.

But it was not easy convincing the community here to change from their old breeds to pedigree ones. It was also hard for them to understand how animals could be fed at the shed instead of herding.

“It was unimaginable that we could do zero grazing, keep fewer but high yielding breeds. But when we toured different farms and homesteads we gave it a try. It’s the best thing ever,” says Tuya.

And that is why today the dairy fever has hit here such that farmers like Norah Tangus are a bit uneasy. “I’ve haven’t changed my stock yet. You see what I have is not very

productive while my neighbours are going places. I need to order for a heifer so that I too can be part of this movement,” she says.

It is from this new movement in Narok that Lang’at bets on to meet his target of 10,000 litres a day at Enelerai in 2017. It is achievable if the momentum here is maintained.

“We have learned a lot in the past three years. Now we do things differently. This village will soon be the one leading with milk production.”

-Caroline Towett, dairy farmer, Motony, Narok County



A straw of hay hands youth a lifeline

Members of the Chepkobegh Youth Group after making hay.

For the past two years we have not moved our cattle. Milk production has also gone up.

- Rebecca Abraham,
West Pokot County,

Philip Rwatakoru briskly walks towards an acacia tree whose trunk is encircled by bales of hay. He holds his hands akimbo, his eyes slowly moving from one bale to another, his lips dancing, as he does the mental maths.

“We have enough to see us through any drought or emergency,” he announces after a few minutes. “These are 300 bales and we are still harvesting.”

Rwatakoru is the chairman of

Chepkobegh Youth Group in West Pokot County. His world is a vast land dominated by acacia, thorns and thistles. Ordinarily, vegetation here is sunbaked and there is little grass to feed the community cattle here.

Yet, cattle is the lifeline of this pastoralist community. “We can’t do without cattle. That is our life. It is the only thing we know in this world,” Rwatakoru says. “That is why grass is critical to us.”

Here, drought strikes at will. And when it does, Rwatakoru and his community have to trek for

hundreds of kilometres in search of pasture. Their epic treks leads them to hostile territories including across the border to eastern Uganda. In the process, they lose the cattle to diseases, rustling and malnutrition. There is always inter-community clashes that lead to loss of human life.

Hope and Pride

“Two years ago, our village lost more than 1,000 cattle in Uganda. We were so depressed and demoralised. You see, no one wants to live in perpetual calamity. But thank God, this year we are not going to move our cattle even if drought strikes; we have enough to cushion us,” he says.

His group, comprising of 22 members, planted 15 acres of rhodes That is the grass that the team is harvesting today, and the source of hope and pride for Rwatakoru and his team members.

Three years ago, a team from SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, under the KRDP II program, introduced pasture management and steer fattening to the youth of Chepkobegh. They embraced it. The group was trained in hay management and are implementing it.

This is the last day of harvesting and the group is up-beat.

“For now we don’t have modern harvesting equipment, we have manual bailing boxes and sickle which are time consuming and labour intensive. But we hope to acquire machines in future. It will make our work easier,” he says.

“This hay is very good for fattening cattle. I’m fattening my steers now. It is not like the ordinary grass. Even lactating cows love it. They produce more milk when they feed on this grass. The whole village is surprised by this wonder grass,” says Rwatakoru.

Cows Love Rhodes

Rebecca Abraham, from West Pokot County, another group member, can only count her blessing as a result of the venture. It was a difficult time for her whenever her husband migrated in search of pasture. Besides, drought meant that there were no cows to milk and the children would go without milk.

“For the past two years we have not moved our cattle. Milk production has also gone up,” she says. “The cows really love this grass. They eat on and on, and they produce more milk. We sell the extra milk

and make some money.”

Revolving Fund

Rebecca makes about Ksh1,500 from milk sales per week. Initially she never used to sell milk because it was not enough. The women like Rebecca have a group with revolving funds, popularly known as merry-go-round. Every month they contribute some money to a group member.

“We sell our milk then in our monthly meetings as women, we contribute the money to a member who uses it to meet her financial needs including boosting other enterprises,” she says. To her, there is financial and social stability from this initiative.

The community soft-loan has uplifted the lives of many families here. Thanks to the facility Rebecca she has managed to cultivate two acres of hay. She will sell part of the produce and feed the remainder on her cows. She has also started a small business of selling cloths and apparels at the local market.

“We are improving our lives. Our children can go to school and importantly we have tamed movements in search of pasture,” she says.

Hay put conflicts at bay

West Pokot in northern Kenya has for years been known for its cattle rustling and conflict between communities due to meagre resources. West Pokot is part of Kenya's arid and semi-arid.

Residents, mainly pastoralists, are always on constant move with their livestock in search of pasture and water. This has always come at a heavy price to man and livestock.

Everytime there is such a movement, communities clash and it comes with casualties.

But the norm is now shifting after the Welthungerhilfe and SNV introduced fodder farming as a way to provide for alternative pasture during the dry season and reduce the migration to the neighbouring Uganda to graze their cattle.

The European Union working with SNV and Welthungerhilfe introduced fodder farming to locals and the practice has quickly taken shape.

Cont'd pg. 16





Group members of Kokwoplam storing their hay

from pg. 14

Mr Emmanuel Lomwatum chairman of the Kokwoplam Fodder Farmers puts on a radiant smile as he joins his colleagues to harvest hay. For him, the project is the best thing that ever happened since they got the sponsorship that included capacity building through seminars in 2013.

“We were approached in 2013 by Welthungerhilfe in collaboration with SNV to start fodder farming. Many people did not buy the idea but a few of us were convinced this project is viable and sustainable. We could quickly see the benefits. As we speak now our output from the livestock has improved,” he says.

For years, the pastoralists have been taking their herds to neighbouring Uganda for pastures when their lands go barren. Many have lost the herds during the migration to diseases, rustling and fatigue from trekking long distances.

“In 2013 I lost 25 heads of cattle and several sheep and goats. The pastoralists on the other side are hostile and when we move across the border our cattle are always stolen. We return home with less than we went with. When we don’t risk going there we lose them to

drought,” Lomwatum recalls.

“But now we can afford to graze them within the safety of our homes because we have enough grass.”

The changing fortunes is as a result of the new effort that Lomwatum and others have embraced in growing and preserving hay to be fed to their cattle during drought.

“We’re always grateful to the European Union for starting this new initiative. The programme has brought good tidings to us – we have security, dignity and hope,” Lomwatum says, taking a short break from counting the hay bales.

“You see, this programme has improved our milk production output. In fact, through milk sales I can meet my family needs. The goats and sheep I own, I have not had to sell any because I am earning income from improved milk production. My children have not experienced any problems since then because I can comfortably put food on the table,” he says.

With the changing fortunes from fodder farming many residents of the region who had not embraced the idea first are now rushing to join the groups that have already made strides.



Members of Kokwoplam collecting hary for storage



“Now it’s like everybody wants to join us, something that we are encouraging. This year we shall plant our normal 10 acre plot jointly as a group but also each farmer will have his individual plot to plant on their farms. We’ve distributed seedlings and many are now clearing the bushes ready for ploughing,” says Lomwatum.

Mr David Kanda Kosgey, an advisor from SNV who implements the programme, says it was initially difficult to change the mindset of the residents to shift and embrace fodder farming.

“Many were skeptical.”

But with the positive results from the six groups that started, everyone is now wants to be part of the hay movement.

And in a continent where farmers have for years relied on rain fed agriculture, Kanda says this could be the solution to food insecurity. The system has proved a success in the other parts of the world.

For Mr Lonjar Amering’ole, his fortunes have turned around for the better.

After donating a 10-acre piece of land to the Chepkobegh Fodder

Group, he decided to put up his store and buy all the hay from the members.

“I have just seen that this grass is capable of sustaining us thus I’ve decided to store it for my herd. This year I’ll not move to Uganda in search of pasture because I’ve enough grass,” he says.

The quality of livestock in the region has also improved as farmers use the more nutritious fodder for fattening the herds.

Those who have already harvested have embarked on preparation for the next planting. To them it’s time to make hay while the sun still shines.

This hay is very good for fattening cattle. I’m fattening my steers now. It is not like the ordinary grass.

- Philip Rwatakoru, Chairman, Chepkobegh Youth Group, West Pokot

Arid world that is now home to milk and more milk

Naituta Sane walks stealthily to the cattle shed, known as *boma* in Orinie village, Kajiado County. Holding a long ember-brown traditional gourd, she starts to milk her cows one after the other. At times she bends, her head leans on the belly of the cows amid a soothing hymn.

Daybreaks, like this one, are a source of joy to Sane and many other women in this village. Dawn is the time to milk the cows and send the milk to Emparnat Cooperative Society, five kilometres away.

“From the sales, I make some money unlike before,” she says. “I have kept cattle for more many years but at no time have I ever enjoyed proceeds from milk as has been in the past two years,” she

says.

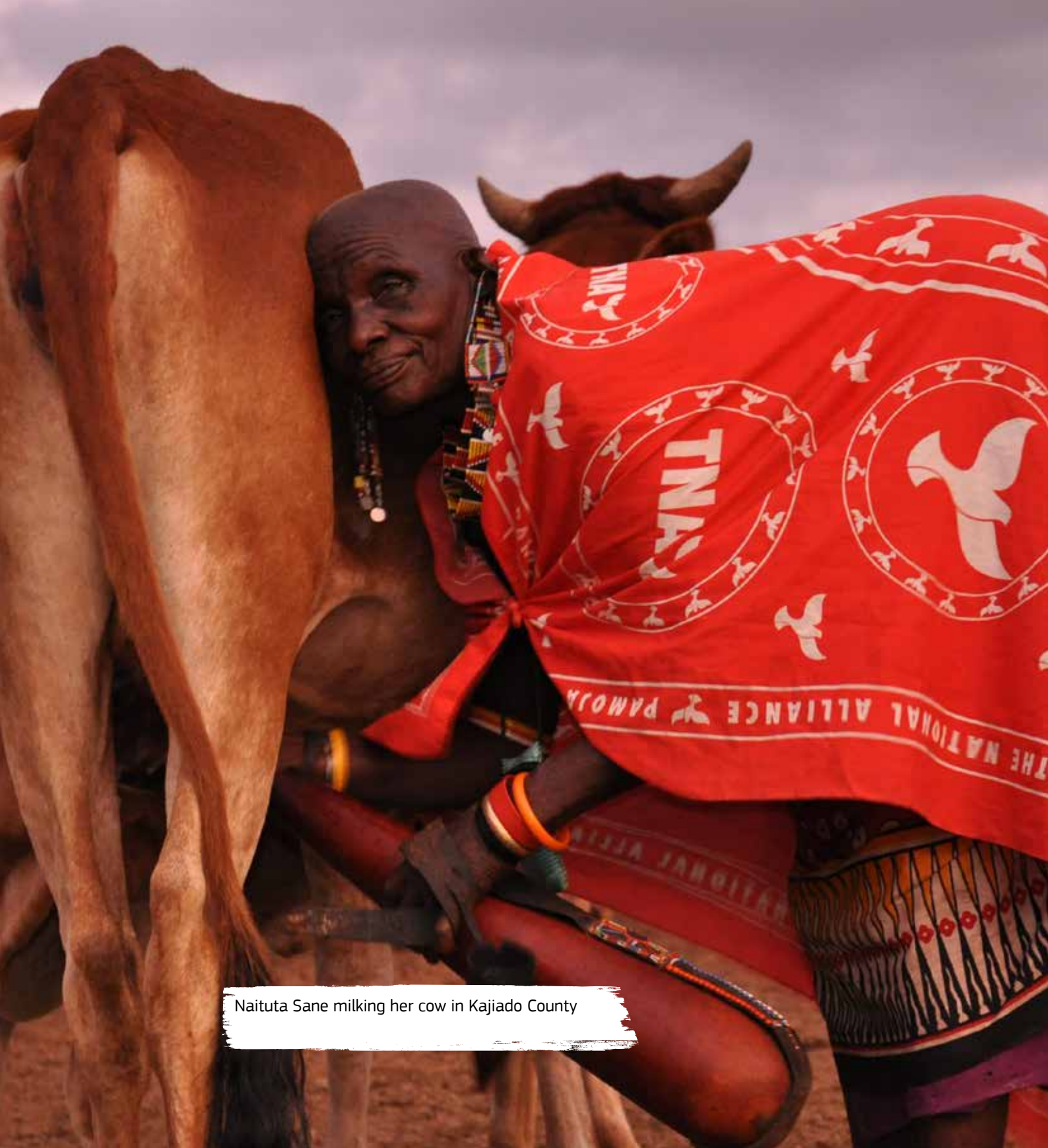
It is not that magic happened. No. It is only that, Sane and many other women came together to start selling their milk through the Emparnat Cooperative Society. This society then markets the produce to major milk processors or just to schools and other institutions.

The systemised marketing design is thanks to the intervention efforts that provided education, and exposure tours to the women. Kajiado too was a target for this project where SNV and welthungerhilfe traversed to offer new perspectives to the people.

But it doesn't end with Sane or her village. The milk bug has bitten other producers in Narok County and West Pokot too.

Esther Tuya, from Motony Village, Narok, has a zero grazing unit that





Naituta Sane milking her cow in Kajiado County

she constructed last year. She keeps five Friesian cows.

“We now have enough milk for domestic and for the market. We can make money. I earn up to Sh10,000 every month something unheard of here,” she says.

And her tale of triumph is classic and runs like a thread in the community. If the milk collections at Enelerai are anything to go by, then fortunes have greatly changed here.

“Our quality and quantity of milk has changed, it has increased and now we are able to produce three times more milk compared to before,” explains Richard Lang’at the CEO Enelerai Dairy Cooperative Society.

Indeed, traversing Motony, on the banks of Mara River, one cannot miss signs of a dairy revolution.

Ms Catherine Towett has just acquired three Friesian cows; she is planning to go for more. She is also putting up a zero grazing unit, so is Ms Flora Ng’etich, her neighbour, who is spraying her cows as we interview her.

The group manages the fodder jointly. Mainly, this fodder is meant to mitigate during drought. However, the surplus is sold to

other farmers who don’t have pasture and are not members of the cooperative.

“This is an interesting model,” Tuya says. “We never imagined that we could sell grass. Now it has become a great source of income for us. Besides, our cows can still produce milk because there is enough hay year round.”

This is what has turned their fortunes. Even her husband, she says, who had earlier expressed reservation about the project, is nowadays its ardent support.

Julius Alimakori the manager Pkomo Dairies in West Pokot says his milk production has changed for the better. Most farmers, him included, now deliver to an organised society to beat the network of brokers.

“Farmers are happy since we were encouraged to form marketing group. We are in control of our produce and the price per litre has also gone up,” he says. Pkomo Dairies is also enjoying increased deliveries.

The level of milk production now earns each farmer at least Sh15,000 every month.

“I take the money from milk in the morning and my wife in the

evening hence she is able to handle her issue as a wife and a mother while I take care of mine as the head of the family from milk,” says Alimakori.

The cooperatives collect milk from the West Pokot farmers, then processors such as Brookside Dairies and New Kenya Cooperative Creameries buy from the Sacco at a better price. Payments are also prompt.

“Our milk now has a better value than before. We used to sell at Sh30 per litre, but with the added value we sell at about three times that price. We have been able to



buy milk cans and storage facilities hence reduced losses. Initially, farmers could carry their milk in dirty plastic containers and it would get spoilt,” Alimakori explains.

With improved earnings from milk, many farmers in this region are now considering quitting traditional cattle breeding; they are ready to take to the challenge of fodder farming for increased pasture and milk production.

For Norah Tangus, a producer and supplier to Enelera society, milk sales have improved with time thus boosting her financial base.

“I planted fodder in a two acre plot. That is what I feed my cows with during dry season. The move has increased my milk production from three litres to 10,” she says.

Tangus dream is to replace her herd with high yielding ones like the Friesian.

“Once I do that, I know my milk yield will shoot and I will make more money,” she says.

“We have attended a series of workshops on proper cattle management and hygiene on handling milk. The empowerment programme has enabled us to improve on the production,” she says.

“We were given comprehensive education. We learnt to feed the cows, to warm water, clean our hands and teats and to clean the containers. Nowadays our milk remains fresh and therefore good for our earning,” Tangus says. Adding: “In our culture we all know, if you have a cow that is your life.”

In Bisil, Kajiado County, Jane Tipira is busy receiving, testing and recording milk. “It’s a bit overwhelming at times,” she confesses as she takes readings from her alcohol gun. “This season there seem to be an improvement in production,” she says.

Improved Quality

Tipira collects about 2,000 litres every morning, which she sells, to Brookside Dairies, one of the largest private milk processors in the country. She also has other outlets like schools, hotels and just individuals who walk in and buy.

“The quality of milk has improved lately. Initially, most of the milk we got barely met the quality standards. Either it contained excess water or was just contaminated due to poor handling. Nowadays the rejection levels are very low,” she says.

Lorngoswa is a village tucked in Kajiado County. Here, Siisi Nchoche milks her cows as she talks to us.

“I’m glad this milk will reach the market and earn me some money,” she says. “For a long time, small producers like myself have suffered in the hands of brokers. Most of the time they would buy the milk at a very low price. At times, the brokers don’t show up and before you know it, your milk has gone bad,” she recollects.

Not anymore. There is a motorbike rider who does the rounds in her village and many others to collect milk. The collection is then delivered to Emparnat in Bisil, about 15 kilometres from her village. This way, drop-by-drop, Nchoche collects her monthly cash, which in her own words “has changed my world. I have learnt I can make money from milk... the money is giving me some financial independence.”

And for Sane, she looks forward to tomorrow morning when she will wake up again and enjoy milking her cows.

Tipira collects about
2,000 litres of milk every
morning

Changing lifestyles one bale at a time

On a hot dusty Thursday afternoon, John Emoi treks with his cattle along the Nairobi-Namanga Road in Isinya, Kajiado County.

He stares blankly at the skies; they are azure blue. He shakes his head.

“Do you think this El-Nino will come?” he poses almost rhetorically, then continues: “I don’t think so. Who knows how God works... but we need rain. It’s too dry. Our cattle will die.”

“There is a big problem among the pastoralists,” he says. “All the land here is subdivided and fenced. The best we can do is to graze along the road,” he says.

Modernity is swiftly sweeping across the plains of Kajiado. Pasture is scarce. Emoi is a frustrated man, and he is not alone. Lack of pasture and water is a catastrophe pastoralists dread. Along with the vain search for pasture suffering heavy losses of cattle and livelihoods is a reality they have to contend with.

Cont'd pg. 24



But all is not gloom as the pastoralists are also adapting to the challenges.

Anyone traversing Kajiado, Narok and West Pokot counties, will encounter a new phenomenon – tracts of land flourishing with fodder for hay, sheds filled with hay and traders selling bales.

“Hay management is taking deep roots here,” says Mr Julius Almakori, Manager at PKomo Diaries Cooperative Society in West Pokot County. “Most homesteads are now planting grass, harvesting and preserving it for the rainy days.”

And beyond feeding cattle, hay has emerged as a lucrative business. Farmers are selling part of a bale of hay for up to Sh300. And the demand is high.

Almakori is among the many farmers who have benefitted from a European Union funded programme that sought to promote and strengthen enterprises and market systems in drought prone areas.

“We received a lot of training and field exchange visits organised by SNV and German Agro Action (GAA). We’ve learnt a lot in the past two years. We are now better prepared for the dry spell,” Almakori says.

Welthungerhilfe, Neighbours Initiative Alliance and SNV implemented the three-year EU project.

Mr Jackson Nabala, the project manager at Welthungerhilfe based in Kajiado says: “We are acutely aware of the old and emerging challenges that beset the pastoralist.

“That is why we run an empowerment project on fodder management, milk, and access to markets.”

Maps on his office walls show parts of the counties where the project runs. “I’m pleased we are surmounting these challenges,” he says pointing at the maps.

The farmers use sickles to harvest. They then put the grass in a wooden box for baling. Here, they stash the grass, step on it to make it firm then tie and store.

“We had to find local solutions. And this is how we were taught,” says Almakori.

The fodder groups are also constructing stores for the hay. In West Pokot for instance, two fodder stores are located at Kokwoplam and Chepkobegh.

With land sizes shrinking and the

risk of losing cattle to rustlers, diseases or famine nomadism has become a dangerous and expensive exercise.

“That is why we have to devise ways of dealing with this situation. Hay management is the best strategy. We are also improving our herds to those that are more productive so that we can keep a small but high yielding herd,” says Julius Muntunkei, a producer in Orinie, Kajiado County.

Fodder is the fuel that drives the cattle sector here. It determines the price of the cattle at the market, milk production and even the quality of meat.

Milk deliveries are on the rise so is the quality of cattle for beef at the market.

Isaac Nemuta, an official at Keekonyokie slaughterhouse in Kiserian, Kajiado says there has been a significant improvement in the quality of cattle being taken to the abattoir.

“We attribute this to hay management. We have been working closely with the experts to help the producers understand the importance of managing hay. It has paid off,” he says.

In Narok, Japheth ole Kisua started

with just two acres of Boma Rhodes. Now he is targeting 15 acres. “I grow the grass for my animals and for commercial purpose,” he says.

Kisua is among those who adopted the concept early when welthungerhilfe and SNV came calling.

He is planning to construct a store that can accommodate 30, 000 bales of hay.

“We have 54 fodder producing self-help groups in Kajiado, Narok and West Pokot counties,” says Nabaala. “The groups established fodder plots ranging in size between 2 to 20 acres. In total, 1,115 acres of grass, mainly of the Boma Rhodes variety are.”

One of the key players is Kuraru Fodder Company in Narok. Kuraru is a full-fledged commercial entity that facilitates bulking, quality control, transportation and marketing of hay on behalf of small-scale producers. Kuraru handles more than 10,000 bales of

hay in a year.

With the availability of fodder, many farmers have now restocked their herds, controlled their stock and changed their approach of handling animals.

“This venture has succeeded well because of the field trips we made. We went to other parts of the country to study how they are managing their hay and their livestock. We learnt a lot,” explains Almakori.

He observes that engaging pastoralists to grow and preserve hay has been a major game changer in the community.

“Everyone is upbeat,” Almakori says, “we never imagined that one day we would cut down on cross-border movements and still keep our cattle and produce milk.”

Mr Emmanuel Lomwatum, a

producer in West Pokot, is now a happy man. “It’s amazing. We had never thought of this idea, and so every year we trekked to eastern Uganda in search of pasture. Our trips were filled with tears. Last year we did not go because we fed our cattle on hay.”

West Pokot is at the border of Kenya and Uganda. During dry season people like Lomwatum crossed the border, which sparked conflict and even fatalities

Women are part of the initiative and are leading in the effort of adopting to the new ways.

Esther Tuya is such a woman.

“Today I sell about 40 litres up from 15. You see, we’re catching up,” she says.

It is why all hope is not lost for Emoi. Soon his life will change for the better.



Producers take charge of cattle market, brokers scurry away

Chepararia open-air market is literally a sea of cattle and people, pulsating to the beat of chatter, clutter, moos and shoos. Many people congregate here in groups; making animated conversations and gestures while pointing at a cow here, or a bull there. There are intense, multiple-negotiations as producers meet buyers, both keen on striking a deal. It's like a cacophonous bazaar with booming business.

For most traders, however, there is a slight difference from the practice of yesteryears. One such trader, Paul Koske, says for the past 20

years brokers bought and sold his cattle, but nowadays he does it himself – through the Kapenguria Livestock Market Access Company.

The company assists producers by collecting cattle from them, searching for markets, and collectively bargaining for best deals.

For long, middlemen dominated the cattle market in rural Kenya. Their word was final. They set the prices and subtly barred producers from accessing markets. Things are changing now and the establishment of marketing



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Cattle market in Bissil, Kajiado County, and inset, a buyer counting cash

from pg. 26

associations by producers could be the beginning of the end for brokers.

“Nowadays I do not sell my cattle through middle men,” Koske whispers, as if afraid of being overheard by a hovering broker. “They used to exploit us before we learnt that we could sell our cattle directly to the market,” he says.

He is not alone. Producers in Narok, Kajiado and West Pokot are increasingly getting control of the cattle market as marketing information becomes available and clearer. Three such marketing forums already exist – Narok Livestock Traders Co-operative (Narok), Keekonyokie Slaughterhouse (Kajiado) and Kapenguria MAC (West Pokot).

Now the value chain has tilted in favour of the producer. Initially, brokers would descend on villages and buy livestock for a song. Many farmers became disillusioned.

“It was a vicious cycle of suffering. We could barely make ends meet because of the meagre income realised,” recalls Koske.

“But now we sell cattle and milk collectively through the society. That way, we earn double, even

triple, of what brokers used to pay us,” says Koske triumphantly.

The new marketing system is systematically dismantling the exploitative old order, giving people like Koske more power over their products.

“It’s encouraging to know that we can make good money from our efforts. This model has encouraged many farmers here to take cattle rearing seriously. They have even invested more in fodder production. It’s impressive,” he enthuses.

Renewed interest in cattle rearing could be the reason abattoirs in Kiserian (Kajiado County) and Keekonyokie are abuzz. Many cattle stream in for slaughter, with most of the traders being members of recently-created societies.

Through this initiative, three Market Access Companies (MAC) have so far been created. And the future, according to Koske, “can only be brighter. “Livestock keeping will be big and lucrative in Asal areas (arid and semi-arid lands),” he says.

The new marketing system emerged after a series of sensitisation efforts that included workshops, field trips and brainstorming sessions.

These MACs include Kapenguria in West Pokot, which has 26

members, Keekonyokie Slaughter House in Kajiado with 16 members and Narok Traders Co-operative with 128 members.

“The companies buy cattle directly from members and sell them jointly. This has given members high bargaining power. They have locked out brokers,” says Mr Isaac Nemuta, an official at Keekonyokie Slaughter House in Kiserian.

For the MACs to work, welthungerhilfe and SNV took officials and members to a series of training – including record keeping, planning, business development and exposure tours.

“We went to Ol Pajeta Conservancy in Laikipia County, the Kenya Meat Commission, and even to Murang’a County. We learnt many things like how the bonus system works, meat packaging and handling, and value addition,” Nemuta says.

This explains the optimism and confidence exuded here at Keekonyokie this sunny Friday morning. Nemuta and his team are bubbly owing to the rapidly growing and efficient beef marketing system.

Nemuta says there is improved quality for cattle, especially the ones under a controlled mechanism that incorporates hay rations

during drought.

“Ranchers who feed their cattle on hay during the dry spell always have an edge over those that don’t. Hay fattens cattle and increases the market value,” he explains.

The Keekonyokie group is also managing cattle-keepers’ herds by ensuring that they grow enough hay. When the cattle is ready for the market, the group helps in keeping middlemen at bay. The cattle are taken from farm to slaughterhouse to butcher.

The new approach has boosted the morale of farmers such as Simon Kuntai. He knows he can count on Keekonyokie to offer him the best advice and market prices for his bulls.

“It is easier nowadays. When I have cattle to sell, I call my friends at the slaughter house and we agree on the delivery date. That is much better than going through middlemen. We always suffered losses. They would never give you a good deal,” he says.

“The missing link before this programme was lack of market information,” Nemuta explains, “We are streamlining that. Beef is going to be big business once producers learn to take control of the value chain.”

Beefing the market



Keekonyokie in Kiserian is evidently a beef world. If you arrive at 6am, you are way too late. Here, work starts at midnight. Should you arrive at dawn, like we did, half the work will have been done already.

Still, you are greeted by the din of knives being sharpened, moos, bleats human talk and the incessant revs of vehicle engines. Everyone is busy and on the move – amid the overpowering smell of sweat and manure.

The slaughterhouse is a key hub that feeds Nairobi with its beloved

delicacy – meat. Nairobians love meat – it’s a statement of achievement. That is why the typical Kenyan family strives to buy meat from the nearest butcher.

“This is not just an abattoir,” says Monica Muthemba, a director of Keekonyokie. “Apart from providing the usual slaughterhouse services, we have emerged as a market access company that also empowers the producers. We educate them on market trends, productive breeds and how to evade brokers,” she says.

Equally important, Keekonyokie is positioning itself “as the ultimate meat centre.” Indeed, the meat market is a low hanging fruit that MACs are positioning themselves to pluck.

Keekonyokie is a unique abattoir. Unlike many others strewn all over the country, it is a family enterprise maintained by family members of the founders.

Of late, under the support of SNV and Welthungerhilfe, Keekonyokie is becoming an even more strategic outlet for cattle. The group is providing market access to producers by seeking outlets for processed beef.

The team has now streamlined

the management and developed a strategic business plan.

“We are handling up to 200 cattle on a good day. Before, the volumes were very low. But since we started interacting with Welthungerhilfe and SNV, and the training we get at workshops, we have learnt a lot on how to streamline and improve our business,” says Muthemba.

Keekonyokie is establishing direct markets with leading butchers and government institutions.

“That access to the final market alone will earn the producers 50 per cent more than they would have gained from just selling live

cattle,” says Jackson Nabala of Welthungerhilfe

According to him, brokers who supply beef from slaughter houses to butcheries make double the buying price. The MACs are now seeking a share of this profit margin.

And that is not all. “We want to have meat shops at strategic places in estates so that we can get direct access to the market. When we manage this value chain from production to market levels, producers will be the winners. One day, Keekonyokie will can beef, too,” says an optimistic Muthemba.



And the weight is... workers weigh meat at Keekonyokie before it is dispatched to the market

A little bit of flavour makes all the difference

This nondescript tin structure in Chepareria, West Pokot, can pass for anything but a manufacturing firm. Yet this building owned by Teleu Farmers Dairy Co-operative is an emerging cottage industry. It is here that local women joined hands and started making and packing yoghurt and fermented milk, known as *maziwa lala* locally.

Caroline Rotich, the clerk of the society, receives milk, tests it using a lactometer, accepts some and rejects others. She makes entries in an A4-size ledger book, counts the containers in the room and reads charts on the wall.



“This is our factory,” she says, almost amused by her statement. “It is a small place but it is here that we make our yoghurt and fermented milk.”

Embers on a charcoal stove crackle after a gust of wind as the cooking pan heats up water. A smaller pan containing milk is immersed into the one with boiling water for heat transfer. It is not advisable to heat milk directly, she says.

The charcoal stove and the heating pans complete the factory’s production unit. As the milk heats, Rotich acidifies it with a glass of sour milk, stirring it gently as she takes down the readings on her thermometer. After 15 minutes, she removes the milk and lets it cool.

“It will be ready for consumption in 18 hours,” she says, wiping a thin film of sweat from her face. Then the process begins again.

This technology takes a far shorter time compared with the method Rotich’s mother used back in the days when she was young. “It took up to five days for the milk to be ready for consumption. And it didn’t have as great a taste as this one,” she reminisces.

The Teleu debut is a totem of the rise of a dairy cottage industry in a

hitherto remote area that had little interest in commercialising milk production, let alone value addition.

Indeed, for many communities in arid and semi arid regions, milk has always been available. Households would easily make traditional ghee and sour milk from it. But there was no one to sell the milk to – attempting to do so would be like selling ice-cream to an Eskimo.

Now the times have changed. New market places have emerged and demand for milk and affiliated products is rising. It is this opportunity that outfits such as Teleu are tapping.

Yet this new venture was not a spontaneous response to market realities. Until two years ago, Rotich and other households here had not dreamt of such a business. Credit goes to SNV and Welthungerhilfe, who mooted the idea with the support of the European Union.

“That is when our eyes opened and our lives started to take an interesting, positive direction,” Rotich says.

SNV and welthungerhilfe organised capacity building activities with the local women group to sensitise them on the vast opportunities available to them from milk.

Caroline Rotich (in white overcoat) prepare milk for production of yoghurt in West Pokot County



To crown it all, the Teleu group and others received a four-day training by experts from Egerton University on how to manufacture yoghurt and fermented milk.

“Value addition is critical to any producer. That is why training was essential for the women to understand how to gain more from their raw material. We are glad the skills learnt have been beneficial to them,” explains David Kanda, an SNV official based in Eldoret.

The new approach is now spawning a vibrant cottage industry. From West Pokot to Narok, many communities are progressively emerging as manufacturers.

“It’s encouraging to see the rise of such start-ups. It’s the rise of industrialisation. The most encouraging thing is that it is rural women who are at the heart of these ventures. The government should always be at hand to offer incentives and technological support to such groups,” says Leonard Mwangi, a Nairobi-based economist.

According to Rotich, milk and yoghurt sales are helping stabilise the women financially.

“Processed milk – yoghurt and sour milk – earns us double what we would get from sale of fresh, raw

milk. For every litre of processed milk, we get 100 per cent profit. The earnings are partially ploughed back to the society, and the rest are shared out among the members,” Rotich says.

She notes that locals love milk and yoghurt for the refreshing taste and affordability. For yoghurt, Rotich learnt that sweetening, flavouring and colouring makes it more likable. This explains the beeline that townspeople make to the dairy.

“We also maintain high standards of hygiene. We were trained to produce under strict hygienic conditions. That is what we are doing. Customers trust us.”

“Also, we were taught that if our products are bad, we will lose customers and the government will punish us, even closing our business,” she explains.

Clean utensils and smokeless sources of heat are key. The team currently uses charcoal, which is better than firewood. Going forward, they aspire to use electricity.

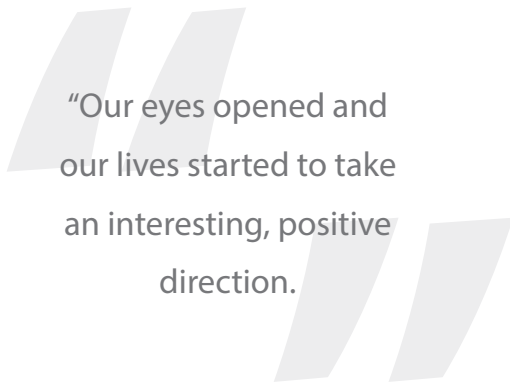
Teleu is a hive of activity in the mornings and evenings as milk deliveries flow in. The dairy secured a cooler, reconstructed its policy on quality standards of milk delivery and handling, and boosted

its hygiene requirements. Today, deliveries are going up by the day while wastage has been curbed.

At the trainings, group members learnt about food colouration and use of diverse flavours. “There is no much difference in taste and quality between this yoghurt and that from big manufacturers,” says Daudi Kaka, a resident of Chepareria. “The only difference is that this yoghurt is cheaper. We are happy to consume it to promote our dairy farmers,” he says.

Rotich and her team plan to expand the group’s sales and marketing to tap an even bigger market. They also want to invest in proper packaging and labelling so that their products can compete effectively in the wider Kenyan market.

“We have developed a business plan for the expansion strategy. We hope we will achieve this dream,” she says.



“Our eyes opened and our lives started to take an interesting, positive direction.”

Waiter, give me a double shot – of milk

It's not your ordinary bar in the village, but it answers to the same name. And instead of selling your favourite cold beer, it offers milk. Milk bars are sprouting in Kajiado, Narok and West Pokot counties and producers are smiling all the way to the bank.

On this Monday afternoon, Bisil, a dusty township in Kajiado County, is hot and windy. Julius Lokiridi dashes to Emparnat Milk Bar, panting and sweating. In between heavy breathing, he orders a glass of cold milk. He drinks it in hefty

gulps and, when two thirds down, he says: "This is refreshing! I was so thirsty. During hot seasons like now, it's great to get some cold milk to cool you down. I come here twice a day."

The bar is abuzz and is much loved by the patrons. This is music to the ears of the owners, a group of local women who came together and initiated a business concept hinged on the dairy society.

The milk bar has also expanded the economic portfolio of local women. When milk is delivered, Jane Tipira and her co-workers boil it and then let it cool. Then they put it in a refrigerator. But when the weather

is cold, they serve the milk hot.

"We like to come here because the management seems to take hygiene seriously. The attendants are also friendly," says Lokiridi. He finishes his drink, pays the attendant and strolls out, melting into the heat of the afternoon.

"Sales from the bar have increased over time," says Tipira. "Town people are now buying into the idea of milk bars. With time, this model will be the in-thing in this part of Kajiado," she says optimistically.

A litre of milk at the bar fetches Sh100. This is 150 per cent profit. Sayianka Ntore explains that the

dairy management is developing expansion strategies that will accommodate a bigger sitting area and more coolers.

These milk bars are enterprises initiated and managed by community groups that sell the produce in small portions directly to the consumer, as opposed to selling through brokers. A typical milk bar has a cooler, milk containers and an attendant draped in white overcoat whose top sides spot the European Union logo and the Government of



Yummy... Julius Lokiridi at the Emparnat Milk Bar, Kajiado County

Kenya coat of arms.

The bar is busy in the mornings and evenings, ideally the times when villagers make deliveries. Men and women, on foot and on motorbikes, stream in carrying yellow and white jerry cans bearing the white gold of semi-arid regions.

Town dwellers also stream in to buy milk. "Milk is cheap at this bar," says Hellen Kapurai, a customer. "If you buy from other vendors, you are likely to get contaminated milk because of poor handling," she says. Today she is buying a pint (about 1.5 litres).

Through the bars, suppliers are making better profits, unlike before when middlemen traversed the villages squeezing out every drop of milk for a measly pay.

A total of 40 women groups have now been organised into six milk-marketing co-operatives and associations, with a total of 2,232 members. These associations collect and market milk on behalf of members.

"Our biggest challenge was in warding off middlemen and maintaining good hygiene. We suffered heavy losses when milk went bad due to poor handling," Tipira says.

That's not a worry anymore. At this milk bar, there is order and cleanliness. The Mazzi cans supplied by the EU project are easy to clean, durable and portable. The project also trained women intensively on milk hygiene and handling. Therefore the milk delivered passes the quality test done at the dairy, can after can.

"We learnt a lot about milk management. I'm glad we no longer face big losses as was the case before," Tipira says.

Tipira sees a bright future for the milk bar. "With increased populations in urban centres, the bar will definitely be a place to go to," she says.

Sales from the bar have increased over time. Town people are now buying into the idea of milk bars. With time, this model will be the in-thing in this part of Kajiado.

- Jane Tipira





Steer fattening win at the market

Bisil, on the Nairobi-Namanga highway in Kajiado County, is a vibrant town. Comprising mainly of tin structures on the semi-arid valley, it teems with livestock on Mondays and Fridays, outnumbering the people.

Again, do not write off Bisil just because of its tin structures. Money – big money – changes hands here that would put to shame many established townships in Kenya.

“We deal in high volumes, worth over Sh 50 million a day during livestock market days. This is a hub,” notes Sammy Tunai, a cattle dealer at the market.

Indeed, cattle is big business. And to Tunai, the past two years have seen improved stock getting to the market.

Cont'd pg. 38

from pg. 37

“Producers are feeding their cattle better with hay. Cattle here is no longer sold for a song during drought. Instead, producers get hay either from the shops or the ones they preserved to feed the cattle. Nowadays, the herds are fairly healthy,” he explains.

The same is true at Kiserian Cattle Market where John Sironik affirms that producers are managing drought effectively using hay.

“I know they are fattening their steers before getting them to the market,” says Sironik, who is an official of Keekonyokie Slaughter House in Kiserian. Sironik has dealt in cattle for the past 20 years.

“With all these years in the business, I can tell the patterns. Farmers have become smarter. At many of the markets you go to, you will notice a certain change,” he says.

The big winners are livestock market access companies like Sironik’s, which over the past two years have secured better deals for cattle keepers. And it pays well.

This project ensured that producers were trained on fodder management. They were also taught how to plough, get certified fodder seeds, and on how to protect

the grass till harvest time.

To Joseph ole Masikonte, the programme is transformative: “My living standard has changed greatly for the better. I’m now able to control my herd and the benefits are much more from the cattle I have when compared with what other farmers stuck in the old ways of rearing are getting.”

David Kanda, an advisor at SNV tasked with implementation of the programme in West Pokot, notes that fodder production is gaining momentum. He attributes this to diverse trainings, exchange visits and participation of diverse stakeholders in the programme.

“With proper storage facilities and the right amount of time to dry, fodder can provide much needed supplementary feed that can be accessed by pastoralists to protect livelihood in the event of drought,” he says.

In the fattening programme, farmers borrow a leaf from the Portuguese – during drought they buy frail and emaciated cattle. Then they deworm the cattle and feed it with the hay they had planted for about three months. When the cattle become healthy again, they take them back to the market where they fetch triple the

original price.

“Our families are happy. We are role models to the community due to this project. As pioneer farmers in our regions, we are shining and the sky is the limit for us,” says Pius Lokori, one of the steer fatteners.

And the cattle’s good health is also celebrated. This is thanks to the fattening component that has seen herders feed their cattle systematically. The quality of livestock in these regions has also improved as farmers resort to more nutritious fodder. These efforts lead to better rates at the market and more milk.

James Sakuda from Oletapes, Kajiado county, recalls that since fodder became constant and movement became less and less, his cattle have been attracting premium prices at the Kiserian market. “I fatten my cattle. When I go to the market, everyone wants my bulls. I’m impressed. I need to do more of that so that I can continue making a kill,” he says.


Indeed, Nemuta is ebullient about the empowerment effort.

“The quality of the cattle has greatly improved,” he said when we caught up with him at the market. He touched a bull here, a cow there, and a heifer here.

“We have educated communities about the importance of fodder management and steer fattening. Now those communities that we have sensitised are bringing in quality cattle. Their earnings are far much higher than before,” he said.

Kiserian is a strategic cattle market. Since it neighbours the capital city, Nairobi -- with a population of over four million people -- the market for meat is high. “But there is also great competition. That is why our support to the farmers is crucial so that they can compete well at the market,” Nemuta explains.





Cattle now belong at home and children in school

“Our children are lucky. I’m happy they are going to school. We’re now growing fodder. There is enough for the cattle, so the children can go to school.”

School or grazing fields? Well, two years ago the answer in most of ASAL areas was definite – search for pasture. Children in this part of the world grow up knowing their fidelity is to the meadows and herd. Not even when there is free primary education as is the case in Kenya.

“Cattle has always been our lifeline. We don’t know anything else, and therefore our children have to learn the art of cattle keeping,” says Geoffrey Kiplai, a resident of

Chepararia, West Pokot. Most of his children didn’t get much formal education because they were in and out of school, moving with parents in search of pasture.

But something is changing in his village.

“We’re now growing fodder. There is enough for the cattle, so the children can go to school,” he says. “My two youngest children are in school. I want them to get jobs in Nairobi.”

The revolution is not in Chepararia alone. In Motony, a village at the banks of the Mara River, Narok

County, fodder and dairy saves lives and also opens classroom doors.

For a long time, the main economic activity here has been charcoal trade. Women call the shots. They have become the breadwinners, says Richard Langat the CEO of Enelelai Women Dairy Cooperative Society.

To Langat, the dairy project is taming wanton destruction of the Mau forest, and ending the misery of children and their mothers who encounter danger in their search for charcoal. Motony borders the Mara Game Reserve.

“The problem is women, accompanied by children, trek for more than 22 kilometres into the forest to collect the charcoal. The children therefore used to miss school,” says Sally Cheptoo, a former charcoal dealer now

an attendant at the Enelelai Cooperative Society.

The charcoal enterprise has also been catastrophic. Lions and other wild animals have mauled children in the forest. “That is why this dairy project means a lot to the community here,” Cheptoo says. Her children no longer go to the bush; they go to school.

Philip Rwatakori of Chepkobegh, in West Pokot says he is proud to offer his son what he himself did not get during his childhood. “I didn’t go to school either because I had to herd. Livestock is our lifeline. But now we have fodder let our children learn.”

Rwatakori is among the ardent fodder producers here. He is ecstatic that his child, Hosea 10, is now getting uninterrupted education and so are many others in the village.

“Our children are lucky. I’m happy they are going to school. For the cattle, we now know how to handle the issue of hay,” he says.

The journey to becoming a doctor has already started for Hosea.

“I have always wanted to be a doctor yet most of the time I never attended school. I had to herd,” he says. “But now my father says I don’t need to herd. He planted fodder. I go to school,” he says.

Fodder farming has also firmed family ties as Rebecca Abraham, a villager in Chepkobegh, reckons. “Families are spending more time together. Initially the men and the boys could move out in search of water and pasture and stay away for a long time. This has now changed.”

And so, it is a win for the many children in the arid and semi-arid areas.







