

AgriTrade’s Maasai Livestock Network, Southern Rift, Kenya; developments in 2009

by Churchill Amatha and Michael Kibue¹

Kenya’s Pastoralists



There are 17 million pastoralists in Africa with Kenya having 79% of them. While livestock contributes 47% to Agricultural GDP, little is being done to promote commercialization of livestock and livestock products. Pastoralism continues to represent an economically viable production system not only for Kenya but for the cross-border region of Ethiopia, and Somalia and as such offers a variety of opportunities for business development.

The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF)

In 2009, AgriTrade signed a contract with the African Wildlife Fund (AWF) to implement the Livestock Enterprise Initiative in the Maasai rangelands of the Kilimanjaro Heartlands. The objective of the AWF initiative is to link livestock trade to conservation of wildlife in three respective conservation areas. The initiative will uplift the welfare of the Maasai pastoralist community while reducing instances of the wildlife versus human conflict through assisting them to market their livestock while reducing the stocking levels in the conservation areas. Communities are discouraged from over-stocking their animals and so reduce pressure on grazing and watering in the wildlife rangelands

AgriTrade is establishing a network of seller livestock Market Access Companies (MACs) and market Information Board Managers (IBMs) in the Kilimanjaro Heartland in the South Rift area. The network now covers

Kilitome, Ospuko and Osiram. These MACs, sell livestock to the buyer MACs in the main cattle markets. The buyer livestock MACs include Keekonyokie MAC in Kiserian and Dagoreti MAC in Nairobi. The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is providing the capital to enable the purchase of livestock from the Maasai for cash (‘cash on the horn’).

AgriTrade Facilitates Livestock Trading through Keekonyokie MAC



(From left) Wilfred Odungo, Michael Kibue, Churchill Amatha and Wilson Ilanet from AgriTrade and Keekonyokie MAC

In July, during a livestock-scouting mission in Namilock (Amboseli), AgriTrade linked Kilitome a livestock selling MAC, to Keekonyokie a livestock buying MAC. Kilitome MAC has five members; it is registered by the government and has an Equity bank account at the Loitokitok branch. John Giza is the MAC liaison person and the AWF conservation officer assisting the community in environmental conservation efforts geared towards minimizing conflict between the livestock/humans and wildlife.

On this same trip AgriTrade directors took along Mr. Wilfred Odungo and Mr. Wilson Ilanet to the pastoralist rangelands on the slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro. They were able to assess the livestock to be bought for slaughter at their MAC in Kiserian. Pricing mechanisms were discussed during the visit for the three categories of cattle (healthy, medium and weak). Keekonyokie MAC then received an advance of Ksh 300,000/= to buy cattle from the pastoralists ‘cash on the horn’; this was part of the money received from AWF for trading.

AgriTrade Alleviates Suffering During Drought through Transaction Security

In August, the drought that hit Kenya had devastating effects on the Maasai pastoralists’

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livestock. AgriTrade, through its Transaction Security Services (TSS), tried to alleviate the suffering by facilitating marketing and building trust for future trading in better times. Two truckloads of 22 animals each were moved from the selling MAC, Kilitome (Amboseli), to Keekonyokie MAC (Kiserian). Although the volumes were low the intentions were clear and the Maasai were helped in their hour of need.

The new livestock MACs in Loitokitok did their best to sell livestock at premium prices. The buyer MAC was able to pay ‘cash on the horn’ to the seller MAC upon delivery of the livestock. The price disclosure; transport security; agreed quantity; times of delivery and payment between buyer and seller MACs and AgriTrade made the TSS model a success in the test run. Michael Kibue stated that this was *“a real breakthrough to making African market chains function effectively with real benefits to poor rural farmers; a task that has defeated many donor and government initiatives.”*

The TSS model is still on a ‘test run’ basis and the risk we took is on the loss account. However, the most impressive achievement was the price disclosure between the livestock sellers MAC, the buyer MAC and AgriTrade. This experience is the cornerstone and assurance of our TSS innovation. Without price disclosure, it is not possible for the TSS to work.



A learning event for members of the AgriTrade Network to meet and discuss



Discussions at the Keekonyokie livestock field school, Olirein

Other Developments at Keekonyokie MAC in 2009

- **Product Marketing:** In June, Keekonyokie MAC signed a contract with Kentainers Company for marketing the Kentank water tanks for a commission. The MAC hopes that the water tanks will help the pastoralists to harvest water for domestic and livestock use. The containers are being advertised through the IBM network.
- **Internet Access:** In July the MAC acquired a PC and printer to assist in its TSS business. With an Internet modem bought from a loan obtained from RAVI, Wilson Ilanet (the point man at Keekonyokie MAC) can browse, post on LLL and send and receive emails. Wilfred Odungo (the Keekonyokie MAC Manager) is relieved that they will not have to struggle with travel to the cyber café.
- **Another IB in Kiserian:** Also in July, Keekonyokie MAC added another IB at the Kiserian market. The IB is placed next to the MAC office where many people pass on their way to the market. The board aims to serve the livestock sector and to benefit the Maasai pastoralists in the south Rift Valley. A few advertisements have been placed on the board for income generation for the MAC. Wilson is in charge of placing market information and adverts on the board.

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