

FAO's and IFAD's Engagement in Pastoral Development

Joint Evaluation Synthesis

Executive summary

1. This joint evaluation synthesis report (JES) has been prepared by FAO and IFAD Evaluation Offices (OED and IOE) within the framework of the 'Statement of Intent' of 2 April 2013 for strengthening collaboration across the two Rome-based agencies. The main objective of the JES is to generate findings and recommendations to inform the design and implementation of ongoing and future policies, strategies and work in pastoral development of IFAD and FAO. This extensive, desk-review process can feed into future decision-making processes on pastoral development in situations where fully-fledged evaluations are not possible. The primary audience is the management and staff and the Governing Bodies in the two agencies. The period covered by the exercise is 2003 to 2013.
2. The JES is a synthesis of existing FAO and IFAD evaluation material, covering a core sample of 65 documents from the two agencies (half each, including evaluations at project, national and regional level, as well as project documents) and a comprehensive inventory of 'pastoral-oriented' projects identified by OED and IOE (163 for FAO and 31 for IFAD). Additional external content includes some of the latest research on pastoral systems, as pastoral development theory has been fundamentally revised during the period covered by the JES and the definition of pastoralism itself has changed substantially. The relevant work of a selection of other donors was also reviewed for comparisons. FAO and IFAD have done important and useful work in the field of pastoralism for several decades. Engaging with pastoral issues was a brave decision to take in itself considering the huge challenges involved, including both practical and institutional constraints, and the fact that the foundational knowledge in pastoral development has been fundamentally transformed and is still adjusting.
3. The report is structured to look firstly at the scientific understanding of pastoral systems and drylands, before turning to FAO's and IFAD's engagement in pastoral development. The analysis of the sample projects focuses on seven themes (poverty reduction, risk and vulnerability, institutions, gender equality, natural resource management, advocacy, and knowledge management). The report then looks at the wider lessons learned in pastoral development, before concluding with a storyline of the findings, strategic implications and recommendations.
4. Drylands represent 40 per cent of the planet's total land mass and are inhabited by some 2.5 billion people, including 40 per cent of Africans, 39 per cent of Asians and 30 per cent of South Americans. The exact number of pastoralists is unknown but estimates range from 50 to 200 million worldwide. The highest concentration of vulnerable rural people is believed to live in the drylands. Rural or urban, rich or poor, keeping livestock in pastoral systems is often the best investment option for drylands populations. A recent study from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) found that 'pastoralism is still the dominant source of income and employment [and] undoubtedly a sector of comparative advantage in the semi-arid lowland regions of the Horn [of Africa].'
5. For most of the history of pastoral development, pastoral systems have been looked at with the wrong lens. The foundational knowledge of pastoral development saw a U-turn some twenty years ago, following the revision of the main explanatory model in ecology. Decades of interventions based on incorrect assumptions have left a problematic, if unintentional, legacy of distortions,

misunderstanding and invisibility that must be acknowledged today when engaging with 'pastoral systems.' The key implication concerns the pastoralist use of mobility: in the drylands, variability in the spatial and temporal distribution of rains is reflected in the patterns in which nutrients accumulate and peak in the vegetation, a variability which is exploited by mobile herds. Research shows that mobility is also key to a multitude of forms of crop-livestock integration at regional and interregional scales, often discontinuous in space and time.

6. **Successful pastoralism embeds the variability of the environment in the production system.** Food production in the drylands is a risky business but one which has sustained millions of people for centuries and carved out a niche for those interested and brave enough to transform risk into opportunity. Pastoralism is a specialization that manages variability to create an advantage. Therefore, it is imperative, in the face of increasing variability due to climate change, to focus on resilience in food production. Some dimensions of risk are now beyond the reach of pastoralists' risk management strategies; brought about by new dynamic correlations with governance, development and market forces and complicated by climate change. These new dimensions of risk need to be managed at the respective scales.
7. **Pastoral systems produce substantial wealth at low opportunity cost,** despite the relative neglect of the drylands within development and the crucial loss of pastoralist resources during the 20th century. For over 100 million people, pastoralism remains the livelihood option they are best equipped to pursue, often in combination with other strategies and in the face of unfavourable circumstances which threaten to push them out of it. For many more in these regions whether rich or poor, rural or urban, keeping livestock in pastoral systems is often the best investment option. Studies on the economic value of pastoral production and livelihood systems, and their development potential, show that they usually make a substantial contribution to GDP, and in many countries supply most of livestock exports.
8. **Engagement in pastoral development is highly relevant** to FAO's and IFAD's fundamental goals. FAO's and IFAD's strategy and policy documents make explicit reference to pastoralists as amongst the 'poorest' and 'most vulnerable groups'. IFAD's determination to also target people at risk of becoming poor, and FAO's Strategic Objective 5 on increasing resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises, cannot be achieved without engaging with pastoral systems. The studies on pastoral systems produced, or supported, by FAO over the last ten years consistently state that these systems are central to drylands livelihoods and economies. They also highlight the economic rationale of supporting the conditions necessary for their effective functioning (especially through mobility) and refraining from antagonistic interventions.
9. **A systemic approach is necessary, according to both agencies,** for increasing agricultural production in contexts where sustainability and resilience are priorities. This is consistent with the new understanding of pastoralism and the drylands. FAO wants to exploit synergies between different dimensions of livelihoods and production systems; and Strategic Objective 4 shows concern for the potential correlation between economic growth based on global agribusiness and increasing poverty amongst local rural producers. IFAD emphasizes that mere sectoral growth will not help excluded groups, and that it is necessary to intervene at the structural level and address counterproductive policy environments and investments. There is also a commitment to support cross-border and regional approaches. Both agencies see advocacy work as a necessary complement to their operations.
10. **The FAO definition of comparative advantage** is useful to highlight and neutralize possible dangers of using this notion as a driving logic, especially with regard to 'difficult' contexts of operation such as pastoral systems and the

drylands: the danger of drifting away from the agency's fundamental goals when following a logic of maximizing impact; the danger of sacrificing learning and responsiveness to efficiency when meeting the current boundaries of capacity; and the danger of neglecting inclusiveness to converge with everyone else on the subset of activities that promise better returns on investments.

11. **Analysis of the scale of engagement in pastoral development** between 2003-2013, as on record, amounted to 31 projects for IFAD (generally large and long term) and 163 projects for FAO (generally working with constellations of shorter and smaller projects). These sets include projects with small 'pastoral' components or simply 'livestock' relevance. The highest concentration of projects has been in Africa. FAO's and IFAD's engagement in pastoral development is inadequately tagged in their respective project classification systems. Expertise in pastoralism within the evaluation teams was also unbalanced, at less than 3 per cent, against an average of 30 per cent of projects in the sample being specifically focused on pastoralism (42 per cent for IFAD and 20 per cent for FAO).
12. **Allocations to pastoral development** activities within projects from 2003-2013 were reviewed. Within IFAD, small projects with a clear pastoral focus are often funded through grants; for large projects, where the engagement in pastoral development is represented by one or two components, loans are clearly dominant in number as well as in amount. From IFAD's overall allocations of approximately US\$7.4 billion for the 2003-2013 period, the proportion concerning the 31 pastoral-oriented projects was about 11 per cent and when broken down to specific pastoral-oriented activities 5 per cent. FAO's current financial reports do not allow the extraction of information on the share of the amount within projects specifically allocated to pastoral-oriented activities but the pastoral oriented projects share of the overall FAO budget was about 5 per cent. The largest category of investment has been 'access to services and markets' (53 per cent for IFAD and 45 per cent for FAO). Within or beside this category, IFAD has invested mainly in 'capacity-building' (followed by 'institutional building', and 'rangeland management/animal health'), and FAO has invested in 'emergency interventions' (followed by 'policy arena' and 'veterinary services').
13. **Poverty reduction efforts** have focused on increasing income and sectoral growth (e.g. concentrating on post-production stages of the value chain). Overall, the evaluations express moderate satisfaction in this regard, but are weak on evidence: the JES found it impossible to assess reduction in hunger or poverty based on the sample. Engagement with the structural causes of pastoral poverty, or unintended negative impact on pastoral systems from projects concerned with other areas of intervention, appears low. Targeting and monitoring were frequently found to be inappropriate, especially the focus on outputs rather than outcomes. On the positive side, community-based participatory approaches to institution building (IFAD), and the training of Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) (FAO), are important exceptions that have evaluations praising the efforts in reaching 'pastoralists'. A shortfall in 'reading' the local context is sometimes highlighted, especially the lack of flexibility in the use of off-the-shelf technical packages. At times, interventions aimed at optimizing value chains appear to lack a sound understanding of the relationship of the beneficiaries to the value chain, and are thus prone to increasing their vulnerability. There is a striking lack of reference to milk in the sample, especially its characteristically pastoral importance in household consumption and food security (the few references look at milk as a commodity in a value chain).
14. **Emphasis on enhancing resilience** in agricultural settings, especially through preparedness and early warning systems, has long been part of FAO and IFAD's strategic frameworks. The attention that needs to be paid to resilience has not yet worked its way through the project cycle however, and is not substantially represented in evaluations. Risk and vulnerability, or risk-management and risk-

reduction, are treated as substantially overlapping. While consistent with the mainstream approach to risk, this fails to recognize the particularity of the pastoral context in this regard, where variability is both structural to the environment and functionally embedded in the production system. A focus on reducing risk can get in the way of pastoral strategies based on taking (and managing) risk. The lack of a risk management strategy is mentioned in several evaluations. A sound pastoral risk management strategy would include an increase in the extension of rural finance interventions to pastoral communities.

15. **Building better-adapted institutions** has concentrated on the customary dimension, and on support to formal governance, but has neglected engaging reflectively with the institutional dimension of development itself (e.g. the internal organization of projects, procedures of project design, monitoring and evaluations), in order to adapt to the particular circumstances and challenges of pastoral development. In FAO, the institutional dimension is often the weakest aspect, even within interventions that are evaluated very positively (e.g. CAHWs). The opposite is the case for some IFAD projects, especially in natural-resource management.
16. **Specific attention to gender** was formalized within both agencies with its inclusion as a criterion of evaluation in 2010, and the adoption of policies on gender in 2012. So far, efforts have been largely in the form of applying a blueprint gender analysis for rural development rather than engaging with the particularity of pastoral settings. The evaluations are silent on the consequences of the sedentarization of women (and children) with regard to their long-term status and capacity to operate in relevant roles as producers within the pastoral system; or the implications this has for their control over the means of production. The economic empowerment of women in pastoralism has rarely targeted them as livestock professionals. Projects have usually operated on the assumption that women keep livestock for subsistence, with a rigid dualism between subsistence and marketing. Promoting the commodification of milk in absence of a sound understanding of the gender dimension of the milk economy and the nuanced relationship with the value chain, can shift control of milk marketing to men while trying to empower women. A remarkable exception is the small initiative that supported an international gathering of 'pastoralist women' by IFAD in 2010, resulting in the Mera Declaration.
17. **The results of sustainable natural resource management** interventions are mixed, with data on projects' environmental impacts often found to be unsatisfactory. Interventions aimed at promoting the sustainable management of the rangelands, and conservation agriculture, were sometimes faced with policy contexts prioritizing mechanization, large-scale irrigation, and the replacement of customary agreements with market-based forms of land use. The most successful projects introduced innovative 'participatory and partnership-based' approaches building on customary use-patterns, and fostering cooperation between pastoralists and farmers. Overall however, the projects operated within the old equilibrium model, representing the rangelands as self-regulated systems disturbed by uncontrolled grazing.
18. **Advocacy is particularly important** in the context of pastoral development. Some evaluations recorded significant efforts in advocacy and communication, others found them insufficient. Advocacy was identified as a top priority in the IFAD-supported Mera Declaration of the global gathering of women pastoralists, and is now a core objective of the FAO Pastoralist Knowledge Hub project. In its current strategy, IFAD is to 'step up its advocacy work' and advocacy and communication are seen as one of FAO's core functions. Negative or misleading assumptions about pastoral systems have driven rural development for most of its history, often feeding on their own effects. These assumptions are still entrenched in public knowledge in many contexts. But advocacy strategies should not escape critical scrutiny in light of the new understanding of drylands and pastoralism.

19. **Opportunities for learning and knowledge management** in the field of pastoral development are scattered within the evaluations; they are rarely included in the highlights however. Over 65 per cent of the evaluations in the sample make no reference to pastoralism in their executive summaries or in the recommendations. In the others, the most frequent recommendation concerns the need to improve the understanding of pastoral systems, followed by an emphasis on 'productivity and marketing of livestock', and 'pastoral mobility'. In the sample of ongoing projects, a change with regard to the understanding of pastoral systems and support of pastoral mobility is emerging, but is fragmentary and limited, for example in the Pastoralist Knowledge Hub just launched by FAO, or in the support to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism by both IFAD and FAO.
20. **Beyond FAO and IFAD**, the international interest for pastoral systems is on the increase, as evident from new large programmes by the World Bank in the Sahel and the Horn, and by United Kingdom Department for International Development in Africa/South Asia. Multilateral and bilateral organizations, financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are experimenting with ways of integrating the new understanding of pastoral systems and the drylands. Securing mobility has emerged as a key priority, paying attention not to introduce new obstacles or alternative economic activities that compete with pastoral systems for the same resources. Vibrant, mobility-based pastoral economies are increasingly seen as the best ally in the international struggle to prevent remote and desert areas from becoming a breeding ground for organized crime and terrorists.

The JES recommendations are:

1. *Develop a policy of engagement in pastoral development.* Supporting pastoral development is relevant to FAO's and IFAD's fundamental mandate and goals. They cannot achieve their strategic objectives without programmes of pastoral development and this is a good moment to draft such policies. The new understanding of pastoral systems has not yet been fully translated into development practice, from project design, to implementation and evaluation. A policy would be a useful way to guide the adaptation of new concepts of pastoralism to realities on the ground. These policies should not be developed in isolation and should stress coordination within and between the two agencies. The long-term economics of preventing and managing conflict, and avoiding encouraging unsustainable rural to urban migration, should be carefully considered.
2. *Build and adapt capacity in FAO and IFAD.* Pastoral development interventions take place on the back of a problematic legacy. Misleading and counterproductive ideas from the past permeate the entire learning process. On the other hand, 'reading the context' correctly, learning and adapting are crucial to effectiveness and efficiency of impact. FAO's and IFAD's capacities to achieve their goals with regard to pastoral systems need to be expanded and adapted. This includes developing a better understanding of pastoral systems, their operational logic, and their relation to dryland economies more generally. But it also includes the development of the capacity of desk and project staff to systematically track engagement with pastoral development and its management including the format and conduct of evaluations and the composition of evaluation teams.
3. *Manage key dimensions of risk.* Structural to the pursuit of FAO's and IFAD's fundamental goals when engaging with drylands and pastoral development are different dimensions of risks: (i) the risk inherent to environments where variability is the chief structural characteristic of the natural, economic and security environment; (ii) the risk inherent to operating with a problematic legacy of counterproductive policy environments; (iii) the risk of increasing exclusion on technical basis. It is important that field and HQ staff in both agencies are fully confident in these new ideas. A contextual risk-management and resilience strategy should be prepared for every pastoral programme or project.

4. *Support advocacy by pastoralists, and on behalf of pastoralists and people whose livelihoods depend on pastoral systems.* FAO's and IFAD's significant influence in the international and national arenas represents an invaluable asset in the ongoing global effort to update the public perception of drylands and pastoral systems and come to terms with the legacy of misunderstanding and technical exclusion that represents perhaps the biggest obstacle to the development of resilient livelihood systems in the drylands. Advocacy is a crucial complement in today's engagement with pastoral development, but care should be taken to keep it within a systemic approach, subject to critical scrutiny carefully targeted in light of the new understanding of drylands and pastoralism.