

News

Drylands Transform at East Africa Pastoralist Expo in Addis Ababa

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The SLU-led Dryland Transform Research Project organised a panel discussion titled 'Ecosystem restoration for feed, food and nutrition resilience in East African drylands', during the East Africa Pastoralist Expo in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 26th Jan – 2nd Feb 2024. Dryland Transform was represented by the Kenya and Uganda Country Co-ordinators, Dr. Stephen Mureithi and Prof. Denis Mpairwe, respectively.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) together with The Ministry of Irrigation and Lowlands, Ethiopia organised the First EAST AFRICA PASTORALISM EXPO which was held January 26-February 1, 2024 at the Millennium Hall, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. At the EXPO, the Swedish FORMAS funded Dryland Transform Research Project conducted a panel discussion titled 'Rangeland restoration for feed, food and nutrition resilience in East African Drylands'.

The Moderator of the Panel Discussion was **Dr. Dominic Kathiya Lokeris**, Livestock and Rangeland Development Expert, IGAD

The Panelists were:

- **Dr Stephen Mureithi**, Rangeland Restoration Ecology and Management, University of Nairobi

- **Professor Denis Mpairwe**, Animal Scientist & Range Ecologist, Makerere University
- **Ms Sadia Muse Ahmed**, Country Director, Oastoral & Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA)
- **Mr Aderajaw Molla**, Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia
- **Professor Ahmed R. Elbeltagy**, Animal Production, Natural Resource Management and Resilience, African Union, INTERAFRICAN Bureau for Animal Resources (AUIBAR)

The objectives of the panel discussion were:

- To create awareness on the need to enhance ecosystem restoration for feed, food and nutrition resilience in the Eastern African drylands
- Identify synergies and trade-offs in the provision of ecosystem services in the East African drylands
- Share results from the DT research undertaken to assess land health at the landscape scale and explore the links with human health and well-being.
- Show how co-developing sustainable rangeland management interventions through setting-up knowledge sharing hubs ('livestock cafés') offers option for pastoral communities adapting technologies restoration of degraded pastoral rangelands and also serve as co-learning and knowledge exchange centres
- Engage with policymakers and restoration practitioners and provide robust science-based evidence and tools to support and guide rangeland restoration efforts at scale

The expected outputs:

The ecosystem restoration for feed, food and nutrition resilience panel discussion contributed to the Expo outcome of promoting awareness, collaboration, and policy advocacy to support and enhance the well-being of pastoral communities in the IGAD region. The envisaged outputs of the panel discussion included:

- Increased visibility and identification of synergies and trade-offs in the provision of ecosystem services in the East African drylands
- Opportunities for improving land health at the landscape scale and explore the links with human health and well-being
- Best practices of successful rangeland restoration interventions against both climate-induced and human-induced disasters in East African Drylands
- Dialogue and greater interest in collaboration among stakeholders to address pastoral rangeland challenges and effectively leverage opportunities for restoration of degraded pastoral ecosystems, and
- Engagement of policymakers and restoration practitioners for shared understanding among multiple actors into regional policies and national frameworks and governance that foster cross-border cooperation and development of pastoral rangelands.

Key questions that guided panel discussions (within the same thematic areas) were:

1. How can we achieve scaling-out and pastoralists' adoption of interventions for restoration of the drylands?
2. Are there successful models within the region that can be replicated?
3. How can we attract more stakeholder support in restoration initiatives – governments, communities, development agencies?
4. How can we convince member state governments and development partners to allocate budgets and prioritise funding towards restoring the drylands?



Stephen to the far left and Denis next to him were both part of the panel discussion during the East Africa Pastoralist Expo in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Photo: Stephen Mureithi

The panel discussion was opened by a brief from **Ms Sadia Muse Ahmed** of [PENHA](#) who highlighted on the need for government policy framework to entrench, guide and fund ecosystem restoration. She noted that many conferences, workshops and projects have been held aimed at addressing the issues affecting pastoralists, but to date, no significant step has been taken to address the problem of “moving pastoralists”.

Sadia further highlighted that technologies for restoration of rangelands ecosystems are known, the role of trees and land health are known, the role of livestock in national economies and household livelihoods are known and the effects of climate change on the rangelands have been researched, but the problem of the moving pastoralists has not been settled. She saw that part of the problem was lack of deliberate support for rangeland restoration efforts from IGAD member state governments. She challenged governments to budget for restoration activities and create multi-

stakeholder engagements for supporting and promoting rangeland restoration technologies. She encouraged governments to emulate the Ethiopian Government that has a National Drylands Restoration Strategy.

Dr. Stephen Mureithi of the University of Nairobi and the Kenya Country Coordinator for [Drylands Transform](#), noted that drylands degradation can be reversed through restoration, recreating more resilient and productive land that will fix more carbon especially in the soil, restore ecosystem services, promote new and viable enterprises and create employment especially for the youth and women while reducing conflicts and migration. He added that restoration is really a triple win for the SDGs, and targets for the Rio Conventions - Desertification, Climate Change, and Biodiversity. He noted that there is a growing momentum in the national commitments for drylands restoration within the Bonn Challenge among other, but we need to change the approach and concerted efforts with the scarce financial resources so that we can be effective and have pragmatic outcomes. On the question of how we can achieve scaling-out and pastoralists' adoption of interventions for restoration of the drylands, Dr. Mureithi added a few points:

- We need to improve our understanding of restoration successes, document and disseminate proven approaches, significant outcomes and lessons learnt.
- Sustaining restoration and achieving scale is only possible when the community members in catchments and landscapes are involved through owning the challenge and they decide to invest in relatively low-cost restoration actions, which already produce short-term economic and environmental benefits.
- Community engagements takes time and layering and sequencing of drylands restoration projects and programmes is crucial, to avoid the engage-disengage scenarios where a lot of resources are wasted with on pragmatic outcomes. Here, the governments need to take a lead role, in coming up with a plan for the county/district/region or country, and engage developmental stakeholders towards the achievement of that plan. Community partition at the planning and implementation stages is crucial.
- Continued capacity building, from land preparation, growing periods, harvesting, value addition and marketing is needed in the restoration business models that will them drive the restoration efforts by community groups and individuals.

Professor Denis Mpairwe of Makerere University and the Uganda Country Coordinator for [Drylands Transform](#), emphasised on the need to come to the level of the people, the communities and train them on technologies through the experiential learning approach. Prof. Mpairwe highlighted the following as the successful models within the region that can be replicated for rangeland restoration in the drylands of East Africa:

- He noted that through "Livestock cafés"/knowledge sharing hubs, Drylands Transform is testing options to restore rangelands under grazing by engaging local communities. Different technologies for harvesting water, reseeding with rangeland grasses and forage legumes, regenerative kitchen gardening and value addition are demonstrated and the communities can choose which ones to adopt. Kitchen gardening is now picking up as a common practice in the Karamoja cluster region and there is need for supporting this intervention in other drylands in the region.

- The contribution of various pasture restoration techniques in enhancing livestock water productivity on degraded bare surfaces which was conducted in Nakasongola drylands of Uganda by [Mugerwa et al 2012](#).
- The use of [enclosures as a land management tool](#) for food security in the drylands. and in transforming land, livestock and livelihoods in drylands of West Pokot, Kenya. [Enclosures transformation was associated with land rehabilitation](#), fodder production, and land and livestock management.
- Fodder reserves and storage for use in times of severe shortage practiced in Zimbabwe could be adopted in the East African drylands.

Responding to the question of how to attract more stakeholder support in restoration initiatives, **Mr. Molla Derajo** of the Ministry of Irrigation and Lowlands (MILLS) in Ethiopia noted that stakeholder support and involvement in the drylands livelihoods resilience projects is important. He gave examples of integrated livelihoods such as fodder and multipurpose trees, apiculture, aquaculture, and livestock finishing that can be supported from the restoration of the degraded drylands. He also added that it's important to align the restoration effort with national development goals, include business models for scaling climate resilience. Finally, he emphasised on the need for collaboration and networking and dissemination within the region to exchange knowledge.

Dr. Ahmed R. Elbeltagy of [AU-IBAR](#) added, while discussing how to convince member state governments and development partners to allocate budgets and prioritise funding towards restoring the drylands, that sustainable dryland restoration is highly needed, and there is need to focus on evidence-based interventions built on sustainability and robust stakeholder involvement especially the communities. He added that the modalities of intervention need to consider, i) involvement of the private sector, so as to, ii) mobilise sustainable funding for restoration from investments, iii) knowledge sharing from success stories, and iv) highlighting the economic viability to stakeholders.

In conclusion, the panel discussion attracted audience attention and raised many constructive and contributing ideas. The Drylands' stall within the IGAD exhibition was busy with many participants seeking knowledge on restoration of degraded rangelands and mostly excited about the innovation of "Livestock cafés" as knowledge sharing hubs. The DT IGAD videos from [Kenya](#) and [Uganda](#) were screened throughout the two days of exhibition.

Facts:



Drylands Transform

Drylands Transform (DT) is a research project led by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in partnership with an interdisciplinary team from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Linnaeus University, Makerere University, Umeå University, University of Gothenburg, University of Nairobi, and World Agroforestry (ICRAF).

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Links:

[Read more about when Drylands Transform was featured in the Resilience Focus Magazine #8 by Intergovernmental Authority for Development \(IGAD\) in 2023.](#)

[Read the Resilience Focus Magazine #8 2023](#)

[View the film: Drylands Transform - a research project in East Africa](#)

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