

Climate change financing opportunities for drylands: Food insecurity and the Elephant in the Room

Wairore John Ndung'u^{1,2,3}

¹Department of Land Resource Management and Agricultural Technology (LARMAT), University of Nairobi

²Triple L Research Initiative (www.triplel.se)

³Finance Innovation for Climate Change Fund (FICCF) (www.ficcf.com)

Correspondence: john.wairore@ficcf.com

In his fable “The Inquisitive Man”, Ivan Andreevich Krylov, a Russian poet and fabulist writes of a man who goes to a museum and notices all the tiny things, but fails to notice an obvious elephant. It is from this very beginning that the phrase “Elephant in the room” became proverbial. Simply, the expression implies or applies to an obvious problem or risk that no one wants to discuss.

Feeding an increasing global population in the face of climate change, whose impacts vary in complexity and scale; is increasingly becoming elusive a dream. Recognition of the fact that climate change is exacerbating the food insecurity crisis, hence making feeding the world a complicated task has led to increased lobbying for climate financing to spearhead climate-smart agriculture and natural resource management (NRM). However, and to the dismay of many practitioners, drylands are constantly missing in these debates, deliberations hence not given consideration when it comes to the appropriation of these funds.

Addressing the intertwined challenges of feeding the world while combating land degradation, climate change and halting the loss of biodiversity, coupled with other interrelated issues calls for all of us to shift from ‘business-as-usual’ to ‘business unusual’ scenarios. Climate proofing agriculture and natural resource management is a sure way to address crosscutting issues along the value chain, improve productivity, food security and enhance climate change adaptation with mitigation as a co-benefit. In a ‘business unusual’ scenario; it calls for the adoption of new, environment-friendly and climate smart

approaches and technologies. However, these practices require extensive bankrolling in terms of funding for piloting research, particularly in extension, adoption, implementation, monitoring and evaluation before eventually upscaling to other areas. In a bid to address food insecurity and adapt to climate change, low emitting developing countries such as Kenya are increasingly leveraging funds to finance climate change adaptation in agriculture and NRM, particularly through Climate-smart Agriculture (CSA) and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EBA).

Successfully, Kenya has been able to obtain financing for both CSA and EBA in the past few years. Under CSA, Kenya is expected to benefit from a financing of up to US\$ 200 million from the World Bank to finance low carbon growth and combat climate change. Already, UKaid under its Department for International Development (DFID) is piloting CSA through a private sector approach in Kenya. These interventions have been boosted by the development and validation of the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Programme, supported by the Government of Kenya, DFID and NEPAD through COMESA, to provide a framework to inform, influence and catalyze various climate smart agricultural approaches amongst farmers in Kenya.

On the other hand, the **Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA) in Africa** was created during the 2nd Africa Ecosystem Based Adaption for Food Security Conference 2015. Under the declaration entitled “**The Nairobi Based Agenda on Africa’s Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Food Security**”, the African Union (AU) supported Assembly promises to spearhead the adoption and mainstreaming of EBA for food security in Africa.

Interestingly, although drylands account for approximately 85% of Kenya’s land area and have high food insecurity crisis; they are consistently missing out on these climate change adaptation financial commitments. DFID’s CSA programme, for example, is being piloted in various Non-ASAL counties in the Country. The just validated Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Programme gives few and vague mentions of Kenya’s drylands and rangelands. Also, the recently adopted assembly-EBAFOSA-to push the agenda of

mainstreaming EBA for food security in Africa gave an even rare glimpse of rangelands despite the gravity of food insecurity and the huge potential of these vast areas to help adapt agriculture to climate change and address climate change itself.

But why are the drylands missing out? First, the country lacks a vibrant and comprehensive rangeland/dryland association to highlight, advance and promote issues facing drylands in Kenya. The absence of key organizations, by extension, means that we lack a vibrant civil society and activists who participate in matters rangelands and more importantly push to have them entrenched in various upcoming national agricultural and environmental developments such as climate financing. Secondly, and regrettably, the term agriculture is increasingly being used to refer to crop production with livestock production as a sub-set. The fact that rangelands are prominently used for livestock production means that they are constantly overlooked when it comes to financing climate change adaptation in agriculture.

In the end, the drylands will continue to miss out on key climate change finance developments and investments meant to address food insecurity and promote environmental integrity unless we form a vibrant association of dryland practitioners; one that has a national outlook and is representative of the 24 ASAL counties in Kenya. This association will be critical in lobbying for funding for various development programs in the drylands. The forum will also contribute favorably in addressing climate change, particularly if livestock production, a key contributor to climate change through greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, can be transformed in cognizance of the current and projected climate scenarios.