

# STAFF PARTICIPATES IN EAST AFRICA PASTORALIST EXPO IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

26TH JAN – 2ND FEB 2024



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.

## The objectives of the panel discussion were:

- a) To create awareness on the need to enhance ecosystem restoration for feed, food and nutrition resilience in the Eastern African drylands
- b) Identify synergies and trade-offs in the provision of ecosystem services in the East African drylands
- c) 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.
- d) 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

e) 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:

- a) Increased visibility and identification of synergies and trade-offs in the provision of ecosystem services in the East African drylands
- b) Opportunities for improving land health at the landscape scale and explore the links with human health and well-being
- c) Best practices of successful rangeland restoration interventions against both climate-induced and human-induced disasters in East African Drylands
- d) Dialogue and greater interest in collaboration among stakeholders to address pastoral rangeland challenges and effectively leverage opportunities for restoration of degraded pastoral ecosystems, and
- e) 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 for panellists (within the same thematic areas) were:**

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

The panel discussion was opened by a brief from **Madam Sadia Ahmed** of [PENHA](#) who highlighted the need for a government policy framework to entrench, guide and fund ecosystem restoration. She said for instance Ethiopia has a National Drylands Restoration Strategy.

**Dr. Stephen Mureithi** of the University of Nairobi and the Kenya Country Coordinator for [Drylands Transform](#), said drylands degradation can be reversed through restoration, recreating more resilient and productive 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 others, 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:

- a) We need to improve our understanding of restoration successes, document and disseminate proven approaches, significant outcomes and lessons learnt.
- b) 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.
- c) 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 participation at the planning and implementation stages is crucial.
- d) Continued capacity building, from land preparation, growing periods, harvesting, value addition and marketing is needed in the restoration business models that will 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. By doing during demonstrations, they learn and can replicate. He said Drylands Transform is test options to restore rangelands under grazing by engaging local communities, and developing platforms to share knowledge and scale livestock interventions that promote resilience and productivity in sites we call 'Livestock cafés', in the Karamoja border region of Kenya and Uganda. In the Livestock cafés, different technologies for harvesting water, reseeded with rangeland grasses and forage legumes, regenerative kitchen gardening, value addition are demonstrated and the communities can choose which ones to adopt.

Another panelist, **Mr. Molla Derajo** of the Ministry of Irrigation and Lowlands (MILLs) in Ethiopia added 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, including 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 Mohamad** of [AU-IBAR](#) said sustainable dryland restoration is highly needed, and there is a 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.

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