

PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY: MARKETING OF HIDES AND SKINS FROM NORTHERN KENYA

Anastasia Kagunyu, Ellias Ngari, Moses Lengarite

Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, P.O. Box 147-60500, Marsabit, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The hides, skins and leather industry contribute an estimated 4% to agricultural GDP. The bulk of hides and skins come from Northern Kenya and it has been observed that the full potential of hides and skins has not been exploited. This led to the need for Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) Marsabit to come up with this study, which had these objectives; to establish the production status of hides and skins in Northern Kenya, to identify the key constraints faced by traders and come up with resilient strategies to reduce the constraints. This study took place in six districts of Northern Kenya, whereby seventy-eight traders were involved were involved. The study applied various research techniques to collect data, which include; Semi - structured questionnaires, documentary information, key informants and direct observation. Data was analysed by the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. This study revealed that hides and skins business was offering employment to livestock keepers. This study revealed that both traders and producers were benefiting from hides and skins trade as there were some who were getting income ranging from Kshs10,000 – Ksh 50,000 per month after deducting all the expenses involved. The results also indicated that 74.4% of the traders had employed people to assist them in the business. It also came out clearly that prices of wet salted hides and skins were better than for sun dried.

Recommendation. The study findings indicated the constraints, which were being faced by constraints faced by traders in marketing of hides and skins. These included production of low quality of hides due to poor methods of curing, poor branding, diseases and poor flaying. These could be addressed by training pastoralists and traders on better methods of curing hides and skins, proper methods of flaying, proper branding and prevention of skin diseases, which are detrimental to livestock hides, and skins. There is also need for the policy makers to consider lowering the taxes charged on hides and skins.

INTRODUCTION

In Kenya hides, skins and leather industry are estimated to earn about 4% to the Annual GDP (Mwinyijah and Magero 2009). In the local market the dealers are estimated to earn about Kshs1.8 billion annually, while in the export scene the country earns approximately Kshs 4 billion from the exports of hides, skins, leather, leather goods and footwear (Mwinyijah and Magero 2009)

The bulk of hides and skins exported and utilised for leather tanning in the country are produced in the arid and semi arid areas of Kenya (Wayua et al., 2008). However it has been observed that the full potential of hides and skins production have not been realised in Kenya and other countries due to low quality. Fox well (1999) observed that pastoralist use sun drying methods of curing hides and skins leading to poor quality products. There is declining market demand for sun-dried hides and skins as they produce leather products of poor quality. This has led to a shift from the use of sun-dried skins in the tanneries to wet salted hides and skins. Sun dried hides and skins take more time to tan and use more chemicals at the tanneries as compared to wet salted hides and skins. Wet salting is a simple technology of preserving hides using salt. If good quality wet salted hides are produced, prices of hides would go up, markets channels would increase and adequate revenue could be realised by the producer and traders (Wayua et al., 2008). In order to address the problems related to the quality of hides and skins KARI and the Ministry of livestock saw the need to come up with this study which had the objectives as stated below;

Objectives

- To establish the production status of hides and skins in Northern Kenya,
- To identify the key constraints faced by traders in Northern Kenya
- To come up with resilient strategies to reduce the constraints

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research sites

The study was conducted in six districts of Northern Kenya namely Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo, Garissa, Ijara and Wajir. The districts are occupied by pastoral communities and agro pastoralists to a lesser extent who include Somalis, Samburus, Gabbra, Turkana, Rendile and Borana. The livestock kept include camel, cattle, goats, sheep and donkeys. These regions were chosen, as they are the major livestock producing areas of hides and skins in Kenya.

Sampling and data collection

A total of 78 traders, and 528 producers were interviewed. For the purpose of this paper, we are going to report on the traders only. Purposive sampling was used to select traders, butcher men

additional information, which was not captured during the administration of the other two methods.

Data analysis

Data was analysed by the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative information was derived from direct observations and from key informants. Quantitative data was analysed through the application of SPSS software and descriptive statistics were used to generate the study findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study revealed that there were different categories of traders in the hides and skins business. They included primary traders, Secondary traders, brokers and butcher men. Table 1 gives the distribution of each category.

TABLE 1 - DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF TRADER IN HIDES AND SKINS

Different categories of traders	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Trader	34	43.6	43.6	43.6
Butcher men	37	47.4	47.4	91.0
Broker	7	9.0	9.0	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	

and Key informants. In particular, snowball method was applied in identifying the traders and butcher men whereby they assisted the research team to locate other people who were doing similar business. *Data collection methods*

Various data collecting techniques were applied which included individual interviews with the use of semi-structured questionnaires. Information gathered by this method included, background information of respondents, years in hides and skins business, type of products bought, storage, sources of hides and skins, market outlets, types of preservation, salts used, transport means among others.

The other method applied in data collection was direct observation. This method was used to acquire data on different methods used for curing hides, flaying methods, branding marks on the livestock. The researchers also visited the slaughterhouses and stores where hides and skins were stored. Another method used was gathering information from key informants. They included local chiefs, elders, Public health officers and program coordinators. The aim was to solicit

Number of years traders have been in hides and skins business

This report indicated that those who had been in hides and skins business for a period of one month to 5 years were 42.5%, those who had been in business for a period of 5 to 10 years were 29.6, while those who had been in the business for over ten years were 28.2%. This was a clear indication that hides and skins are vital resources, which are capable of providing income for many rural poor. Some of the traders have been in hides and skins business for over 30 years. A case in point is of a trader in Moyale who informed the researchers that his father started the business in 1955 and the business was still going on during the time the study took place.

Employment in the hides and skins business

This study showed that some of the traders who were involved in hides and skins business had employed people to assist in the work of collecting hides and skins from slaughter houses, small towns, sorting, selecting and salting. The results show that only 25.6% of the people involved along the value chain had not employed anybody to assist them in the work. The reason for this could have been

that they were able to do all the work alone. According to the study findings 74.4% had managed to create employment for themselves and for other people in the arid and semi arid lands some had managed to employ 4 employees reducing unemployment for the youth in the ASALS. Figure 1 gives details of outcome.

Income from hides and skins for various traders per month.

This study indicated that hides and skins traders were getting money per month to cater for their necessities and other needs. Majority of traders were getting between Ksh 1 000- 10 000per month. This category had the highest number of responses

Number of hired persons by hides and skins traders

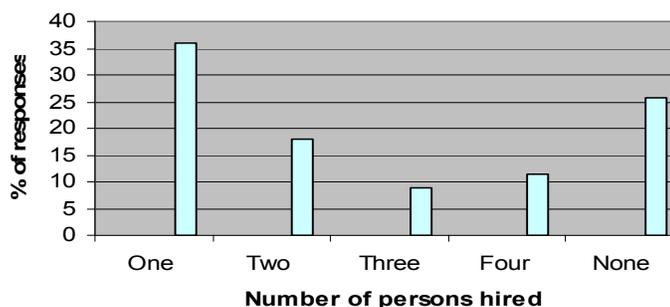


Figure 1: Number of people employed in hides and skins trade

Major sources of hides and skins

This study revealed that traders were getting their hides and skins from the producers, middlemen, and butcher men/slaughters. On the most preferred source, most of the traders said they preferred buying their wares from slaughters houses and butcheries as they were able to get many, and they were well flayed. Those who preferred buying from the producers indicated that their prices were good. Some of the respondents had double roles as traders and as butcher men.

Market outlets of hides and skins from Northern Kenya

Primary traders sold their wares to the secondary traders such as at Moyale, Garissa, Marsabit, Masalani, Wajir, Ijara and Isiolo towns. The secondary traders on the other hand sold their hides and skins to tertiary traders who were situated at Nairobi, Sagana, Thika, Nakuru and Ethiopia.

as it had 62.8%. Those who were getting from ksh 10 000 - 20 000 were 11.5%, and between Kshs 20 000 to 30 000 were 6.4%. Other categories included were between 30 000-40 000kshs and this had 5.1%. The last category had Kshs 40 000 to 50 000 and it had 14.1% responses. This is a clear indication that hides and skins business is capable of transforming lives of livestock keepers in the ASALS. Figure 2 gives details.

Prices of different forms of hides and skins.

The study results indicated that different forms of hides and skins were fetching different prices at different levels locally. Wet salted hides and skins had the highest price at both small local traders and main local traders levels compared to other forms of hides and skins, followed by raw hides and skins and then sun died hides and skins.

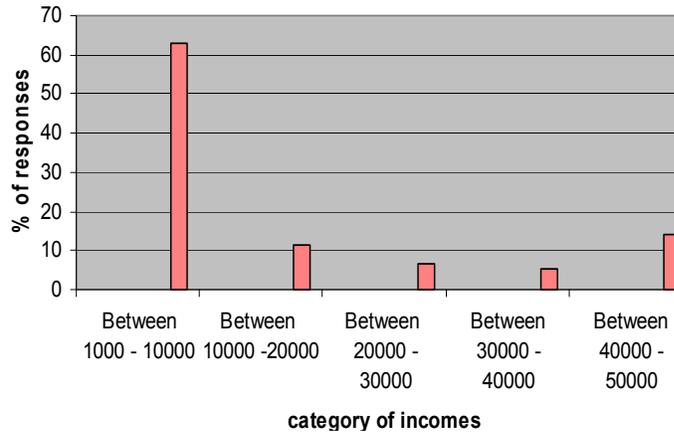


Figure 2: Traders monthly income from the sale of hides and skins

Thus, the prices offered to producers by small local traders for sun dried, raw and wet salted skins for shoats ranged from Ksh15 – 35, Ksh30 – 40 and Ksh50 – 70 respectively. In the case of cattle it ranged from kshs200 – 400, kshs300 – 500 and Ksh400 – 600 respectively.

When different curing technologies were compared at the main local traders level such as Marsabit, Isiolo, Garissa, and Nanyuki, wet salted hides and skins still fetched better prices than the sun dried with the latter attracting an average Ksh.50 – 60 and the former an average of Ksh.80 – 150. The same case applied to hides where wet salted hides attracted an average price of between Ksh.900 – 1400 compared to the sun dried that attracted an average price of between Ksh.400 – 600.

There are no raw hides and skins that are sold by small local traders to the main local traders. The reason for this is that scale local traders normally apply salt to their hides and skins before they sell to the next level.

Table (2) clearly indicates that there is value addition in terms of financial benefits by shifting from either raw or sun dried to wet salting technology of hides and skins at all levels of the chain.

Constraints faced by traders in Marketing of their hides and skins.

Traders had various problems relating to their hides and skins business. Problems identified included: poor methods of curing hides such as using the sun drying methods. Mechanical damage of hides by

TABLE II - PRICES OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF HIDES AND SKINS

Livestock species	Form of hides and skins	Average Prices offered to producers by local traders level (Ksh)	Average Prices offered to small local traders by local main traders (Ksh)	Average Price/unit offered to local main traders at the tannery level (Nbi) (Ksh)
Shoats	Sun dried	15 - 35	50 – 60	80 – 100
	Raw skins	30 – 40	Traders from the region do not sell raw products from the region	NA
	Wet salted	50 – 70	80 - 150	120 – 200
Cattle hides	Sun dried	200 – 400	400 – 600	500 – 700
	Raw skins	300 - 500	Traders from the region do not sell raw products from the region	NA
	Wet salted	400 - 600	900 - 1400	1300 –1800

thorns livestock reared in semi arid area get many scratches from the thorny vegetation. Poor branding was also identified as causing damage to hides and skins. Pastoral communities brand their livestock with hot irons and this is done indiscriminately. Poor flaying damage hides and skins, this is mainly caused by the use of sharp knives which causes holes and cuts on the hides and skins. Parasites and diseases also destroy hides and skins. The traders complained of poor roads as most roads in the ASALS District are seasonal and they are usually impassable during the rainy season. The other constraints that was highlighted by the traders was high charges of their hides and skins by the local county councils as hides were charged 10kshs while goats and sheep skins were charged 5kshs. Other problems mentioned included poor prices. The traders indicated that the prices of hides and skins have been fluctuating frequently and this affected their trade in a great deal as it becomes very hard to convince the small scale traders and the producers of the decreasing prices.



Picture 1 A live camel affected by ecto –parasite



Picture 2; Poor branding

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has shown the importance of hides and skins in offering employment, income to the rural poor rural poor and offering alternative source of income other than livestock to the livestock keepers. The study also indicated problems faced by traders in marketing of hides and skins. These included production of low quality of hides due to poor methods of curing, poor branding, and poor flaying. These could be addressed by training pastoralists and traders on better methods of curing hides and skins, proper methods of flaying, proper branding and prevention of skin diseases, which are detrimental to livestock hides, and skins. Regarding the problem of poor roads and high taxes, there is need for policy makers to consider improving the roads in the ASALS and to low taxes charged on hides and skins.

REFERENCE

- [1] Field, C. 2005: Where there is no Development Agency: A Manual for Pastoralists and their Promoters; Natural Resources International, Aylesford, Kent, UK.
- [2] Foxwell, S 1999: The camel marketing of System of Kenya: Process, constraints and improvements, University of New Castle
- [3] Mwinyijah and Magero 2009: The Dilemma in Marketing of Camel (*Camelus dromedarius*) Hides In Kenya: Paper Presented at the 14th Annual Kenya Camel Forum (KCF) 2009 at Moyale, 25th – 29th May, 2009.
- [4] Wayua, F.O., Kagunyu A 2008: Empowering Pastoralists Through Local Options for Livelihood Diversification: Hides and Skins Value Addition and Marketing in Northern Kenya; Paper Presented at the Animal Production Society of Kenya (APSK) 2008 Annual Symposium, KARI-Katumani, 7 - 9 May 2008.