

Learning to Set Up a Fair Trade Livestock Marketing Chain from Massai Pastoralists to Consumers in Nairobi, Kenya.

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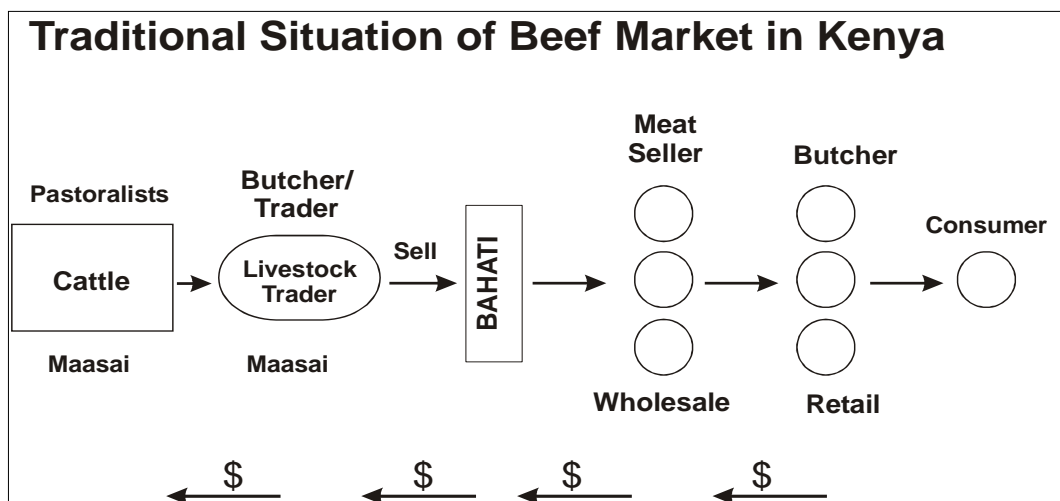
Abstract

[To be completed]



Massai moving their cattle to market

Two thirds of Kenya is arid. This massive land surface hosts more than half of the livestock in the country. Pastoralists constitute 25% of the population and are socially and economically dependent on livestock. Increasing livestock has consequences in the form of land degradation and desertification and improved livestock will bring little changes in the economic conditions without efficient market facilities. Since the Livestock Market Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Kenya Meat Commission have ceased to operate agricultural commodities marketing, livestock trade and processing is in the hands of private traders and informal micro-enterprise. This has resulted in a disorganized livestock industry with poor operational capacity, quality standards and unfair trade practices. Consequently, the pastoralists have become poorer due to low prices and consumers have suffered from high prices. On the contrary, “middlemen” have benefited from unfair trading and lack of market information.



To remove market inefficiencies and improve the returns in value chain, a small group of stakeholders including pastoralists, livestock farmers, livestock traders, meat processors and butchers set up a non-profit association called Livestock Stakeholder Self-Help Association (LISSA). The shared vision of LISSA is to upgrade and organize the livestock trade and meat industry in Kenya. It also aimed to ensure fair trade practices for all concerned through price discovery and add value in the meat products. LISSA members organized a market chain starting from the pastoralists through livestock traders to the Bahati abattoir, onto the wholesale meat sellers then to the retail butchers and finally to the consumers. The pastoralists in Kajiado and Narok have benefited from LISSA because they are able to sell their livestock for cash paid on delivery. The price discovery system reduced the middle costs within the market chain.

This is the story of our learning practice



LISSA members at their learning classroom in Limuru

LISSA members wanted to follow a process of learning by doing to realize their vision of a fair trade market chain from pastoralists to consumers. They set up the LISSA meat classroom at the abattoir and established the following principles for their 'learning by doing'.

- ✓ Our learning entails trying out new ways of working together to address a certain constraint and reflecting how it worked or failed.
- ✓ Our learning connects us with others farmers, services providers, officials, and politicians and recognizes the social aspect and use of conversation, dialogue among learners.
- ✓ Our learning builds on our shared vision, who we know, what we know and what we believe to be happening.
- ✓ Our learning takes time and needs patience as we have to revisit ideas, reflects on them, try them out and use them all of which takes time.
- ✓ Our learning is a contact sport it keeps members interested and motivated by being clear about the reasons why we want to learn something and carry out the necessary actions and reflection.

The inspiration to start our learning came from the Linked Local Learning workshop in Nyeri, Kenya in 1998. Here the LISSA founder member worked together with others to understand the LLL process including the activities to undertake to work together towards a shared vision. Some LISSA members owned and managed a small abattoir in Limuru. Their challenges concerned issues of unfair trade, disorganized livestock marketing systems, poor consumers and low incomes of producers. Moreover, low returns rendered investment fragile while lack of knowledge and skill led to resources being wasted. Members wanted to create fair trade and better business for all members of the marketing chain. They wanted to learn how to make meat affordable to the poor and access their greatest meat market, the Nairobi city. Their aim was to operationalise the meat chain to consumers in fair trade and profitable manner for benefit of all. Soon after the Nyeri workshop LISSA members organized a multi-stakeholder learning workshop for those in the meat marketing chain, from pastoralists to butchers selling to consumers in the Nairobi slums. This workshop posed the critical learning or empowerment questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How shall we get there?

- ✓ *Where are we now?* All stakeholders attending the workshop agreed that they had four main challenges: 1) Disorganized livestock marketing; 2) Unfair trade practices that marginalized the Maasai; 3) Poor meat quality and unhygienic meat production; and 4) environmental issues including pollution from slaughter houses.
- ✓ *Where did they want to be?* Stakeholders had a future vision of fair trade among all parties including price discovery and better pricing mechanisms; empowerment of pastoralists to manage change and conserved natural rangelands; hygienic meat processing and higher quality meat and consumer satisfaction and increased trade volume from new market opportunities.
- ✓ *How shall we get there?* We proposed to get there through partnership and co-operation between all stakeholders forming the Livestock Self-Help Stakeholders Association (LISSA) to bring together pastoralists, traders, Bahati abattoir, Butchers, Market centre managers, and vendors. LISSA aimed to ensure fair trade practice for all concerned through price discovery.

The first actions of the newly formed LISSA were to try out many new ideas to realize our future vision.

The first of these ideas was to better organize our Livestock marketing. Here we undertook to organize a market chain starting from the Maasai pastoralists through the livestock traders to the Bahati abattoir and on to the wholesale meat sellers, the retail butchers and finally to the consumers.

Our second action was to put in place *Fair trade practices*: The Maasai in Kajiado and Narok have benefited from LISSA because today they are able to sell their livestock not for promissory notes but for cash paid on-the-nose! There is a system of price discovery making the prices within the market chain transparent to all the members. LISSA has been able to turn over a lot of money to the pastoralists community hence, 'poverty alleviation in the pastoralists community'.



Bio gas provides energy for hygiene and cleaning utensils

Good meat quality and hygienic meat production was our third action learning point. Here LISSA has developed innovations for hygienic processing by building a biogas plant at Bahati abattoir at converts waste from the abattoir into gas which is used for lighting and heating water for cleaning. In the LISSA

classroom regular training on hygiene; aspects of meat production and environmental issues, is conducted.

Our fourth learning point was conserving the environment. Bahati abattoir is situated next to a small lake; so environmentally acceptable waste disposal methods are essential for legal operations. The waste water used at the plant is treated through a set of ponds to ensure that it does not pollute the lake. Trees have been planted around the area to prevent soil erosion and to encourage birdlife. The sludge from the biogas plant is composted and sold to local farmers.



Ponds and trees make for a clean environment at the abattoir

The last few years has taught us that learning is a continuous process. We have moved from one learning agenda to another. We are now facing the challenge of getting hold of specialized meat processing equipment. The lack of critical product processing equipment and technical know-how has led to income and resource wastage. In effect, we urgently need to try out meat processing machines that can add value to our meat products. It is evident we have been doing something. On the ground we have capabilities and assets including material and social resources that are ripe for further development. Unfortunately, we lack the financial resources to try out value adding equipment. How we can augment our resources and investments to access more capital has become our new learning point.

We have also learned what factors have contributed to our success so far. Perhaps the most important critical factor was our ability to come up with a shared vision that was agreed by all the key players along the market chain. The other major factor that contributed to success was involving all the key players in the market chain in the local learning process. Another important realization was that learning needs a local champion on the spot to keep the group spirits high never giving up even in times of hardship. The availability of an energetic private learning facilitator operating at Bahati abattoir contributed to the success of LISSA. The LLL group also provided very essential backstopping to the LISSA learning initiative. LLL kept our learning agendas moving forward, resolving problems and linking us to sources of funding and technical know-how. LISSA remains an active member of the “Linked Local Learning” initiative for demand driven services in East Africa.

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