

## Improving efficiency of the camel milk chain in Isiolo

### Introduction:

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates the total population of camels in the world today to be 22 million, of which 89% are one-humped dromedary (*Camelus dromedarius*) camels and the remaining 11% are the two-humped Bactrian (*Camelus bactrianus*) generally found in the cold deserts of Asia. Although historical records show that the domestication of camels first took place in the Arabian peninsula about 3000 years ago from where they spread to other parts of the world, over 80% of the world's camel population is today found in Africa with the highest concentration in North East Africa which accounts for 63% of the world camel population. Kenya is estimated to have the fifth largest camel herd in the world after Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Mauritania, in that order. All camels found in Kenya, estimated to number 1.06 million in 2007 are of the dromedary (one-humped) type. The national camel milk production is currently estimated to be 300 million litres annually and worth about Kshs 8 billion. More than 50,000 households in arid and semi arid lands (ASAL) directly derive part of their livelihood from camels either through home consumption or commercialization.



It's estimated that the Greater Isiolo has about 40,300 camels with a daily milk production of about 40,000 litres. Out of the 50,000 litres only about 5,000 litres raw milk (12.5%) is supplied to the main market in Nairobi Eastleigh. The rest of the milk is consumed in Isiolo town or subsistently at the household level.

### Why camel milk?

There is a growing interest for the camel and its products in the world and particularly in Kenya. This is due to various factors that include;

- Economic viability: Camel milk fetches higher than cow milk i.e. camel milk is sold at about 60-80Kshs per liter at retail level compared to about 30Kshs of cow milk; higher profit margins
- Food insecurity: Due to climatic conditions and recurring droughts the camel has proven that it can survive the drought and continue to produce milk during the distress periods
- Medicinal value: able to treat Juvenile diabetes; stomach cleansing; Vitamins
- The chain is dominated by women i.e. at bulking; storage; wholesale and; retail levels

In this regards, the government; NGO's and the private sector are increasingly recognizing the camel sector as indivisible.

### Challenges hindering commercialization of camel milk:

There are various challenges faced by the various camel milk chain actors in the attempt to commercialize the sector. These include;

- Inadequate market orientation of camel production
- Poor hygiene practices and therefore high levels of un-hygiene raw camel milk
- In-efficient transportation and storage systems
- Low investment in the sector e.g. to support processing
- Dependence on Nairobi Eastleigh as the main terminal market
- Regular insecurity incidences in the camel production areas

*SNV is therefore supporting efforts to create efficiency and market orientation of camel milk in Isiolo district as a pilot phase.*

### **What SNV is doing to create efficiency in the chain:**

**Gross margin analysis:** This is meant to support the camel milk traders to understand, analyze and interpret the costs they incur along the chain. For example they discovered that the highest cost goes to transportation i.e. approximately 450,000Kshs and 750,000Ksh during the low and high season respectively a month. They are exploring the possibility of jointly owning a truck that will transport their milk from Isiolo to Nairobi. SNV is therefore linking them to financial institutions (Equity and First community bank) to finance owning of a truck for transportation.

**Facilitate joint visioning among camel milk actors:** To achieve this objective SNV has facilitated stakeholders to an exposure visits to Nyala Dairy Cooperative; the stakeholders participated in camel milk taster faires and; facilitated multi stakeholder meetings. From these activities our client Anolei and the other chain actors are exploring the possibilities of forming a strong camel milk cooperative in Isiolo. They foresee that they will start undertaking camel milk processing; packaging; value addition etc

**Identification of new camel milk markets;** The traditional terminal market for raw milk is Eastleigh. There was need to identify other terminal markets that will increase the pull effect of camel milk from Isiolo and other producing regions in Kenya. In this case SNV has undertaken a study to identify the other markets. New markets identified include South B/C; Komarock in Nairobi; Nakuru and Kakuma in North Rift region. The study is currently concluding in analyzing the potential demand of these markets and organizing exhibitions to increase awareness on the supply of camel milk.

**Introduction of pastoralist field schools (PFS) for camel milk:** This is a new initiative that FAO is introducing. It involves integrating learning in the value chain especially with a focus on improving production; enhancing hygiene in milking and fodder management.



*SNV is dedicated to a society where all people enjoy the freedom to pursue their own sustainable development. We contribute to this by strengthening the capacity of local organisations*

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