

Donkeys in farming systems and livelihood support in East Africa

Titus Sagala

Country Director Send a Cow Kenya

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"To the whole world it might be only a donkey, but for the poor owner it is the whole world."

Introduction

- This presentation aims to highlight the place of the donkey in the farm system and its importance in enhancing nature based solutions for livelihoods of smallholder farm communities
- It also provides highlights issues affecting donkeys and efforts in place by stakeholders to address them

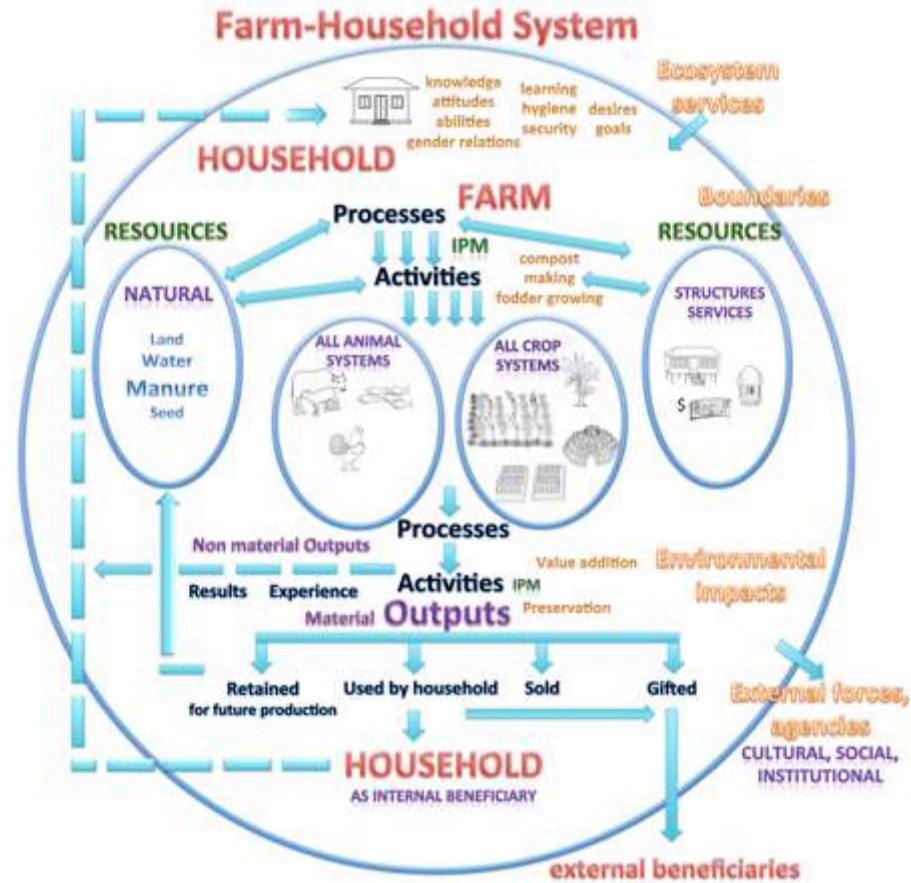
The Donkey – some key information

- Donkeys originated from East Africa and spread to other parts of the world
- There are over 44 million donkeys in the world and just about 3.2 million in east Africa
- Have been used by humans for many years for pack transport and agriculture - they are depicted in Egyptian tombs and there are many references to donkeys in the Bible
- Nearly 60% of donkey owners own 1-2 donkeys with 36% owning 3-5
- There are many negative beliefs and myths about the donkey that impact on their welfare and utilization.
- In many societies they are associated with poverty and low status

- They are very resilient animals and are used for multiple purposes in the farm system. Can be used as guard animals for other livestock
- In ASALs e.g Turkana they are used to gauge the severity of drought by observing their behavior
- They have a slow reproductive cycle. Gestation period ranges from 353 -421 days and they encounter fertility issues on farm conditions
- Conceiving - depends on amount and nature of work donkey is subjected
- A KALRO research in Kenya indicated their growth rate as 1.04% per year

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What is a farm System



Contribution to the vulnerable livelihoods

- Donkeys support livelihoods and generate income for the most marginalized households across East Africa
- They have played an important role for people who have been marginalized by the wider development policies and practice.
- They are used mainly for traction and transport of goods and people. They are a cheap, affordable and a sustainable source of power
- They can be seen on road sides in rural and peri-urban centres pulling carts to busy market hubs in town centres or carrying packs of firewood and other goods on their backs to homesteads in some of the most challenging environments of East Africa e.g mt. Elgon area and Turkana.
- For many poor communities donkeys are essential for their survival in this period of climate change, desertification and food insecurity.
- They empower owners through independence, status, employment, health and happiness



Donkeys in the farm system

- Donkeys are a crucial element in the farm system
- Working donkeys generate vital direct disposable income that enables families to access the food they need and to pay for a wide range of expenses.
- They provide essential support to households' main income generation activities especially in the agriculture sector.
- They carry feed and water for cows and other livestock and connecting farmers to cooperatives and markets.
- They enable households to save on expenses by transporting families to the market, hospitals, schools etc.

Donkeys and the 5 capitals

- Human capital – enable time saving and workload easing
- Natural capital- A natural resource and support other natural resources
- Physical capital – Enable physical access to places and key in agriculture , construction etc.
- Financial capital – Provide direct income, savings , facilitate access to credit (Ksh 11,390 per month per family)
- Social capital – Support in carrying out social functions, increasing community engagements

Donkeys and SDG

Donkeys make a huge direct contribution to SDGs and especially

- SDG 1 No Poverty – Support income generation
- SDG 2 Zero Hunger – Agriculture & food production
- SDG 5 Gender equality – Help in consuming work & income for women
- SDG 6 Clean water & sanitation – Access to water for people and animals
- SDG 13 Climate action – Resilience during climate shocks/disasters
- SDG 15 Life on land – Support to many – ‘Beast of burden’

- Despite this clear huge contribution by donkeys their contribution is largely unrecognized.
- The contribution is less visible compared to other livestock that provide food directly
- Their social and economic contribution is overlooked in development policy.
- Due to the neglect there is only a limited amount of knowledge on donkeys for extension workers, in Kenya they have been classified under 'emerging livestock' as indicated in National livestock policy 2019.
- Research and development into donkey use and management has been minimal leaving mostly owners to use indigenous knowledge about their utilization and management

- More work is needed to collect, refine and put into use the evidence around the impact of working animals on rural livelihoods, agriculture and food systems
- Development and modernisation is having an impact on donkeys with the advent of cheap motorcycles (Mostly from China) and farm tractorisation/mechanisation.
- There are serious welfare issues for donkeys

Threats to the donkey/livelihoods

- DHT for gelatin used in Traditional Chinese Medicine(ejiao), has increased greatly over recent years, resulting in high and rapidly increasing donkey prices.
- This has put pressure on donkey populations and led to theft and illegal trade in donkeys.
- Significant welfare violations and risk of disease as a result of transporting these animals
- The most impacted are women, children, and the older people
- Emergence of pests and diseases
- Poor attitudes and welfare by owners, other players

Work with donkeys and livelihoods

- Despite the threats to the existence of the donkey things are slowly changing for the better.
- NGOs are increasing awareness and sensitizing communities, lobbying Governments and providing a voice for the donkey
- In 2016, the FAO Committee on World Food Security formally recognized the role of working livestock in food security, putting equids on par with production animals such as cows and sheep.
- The FAO action was a vital step to enable national governments to include donkeys and other working livestock in their livestock policies and legislation

Send a cow Kenya work with communities

Send a cow Kenya with support from Brooke East Africa is working with donkey owners and users in Western Kenya

- Training and supporting to increase farm production and food security through integration of donkeys into the farm system
- Establishing small farming businesses and generating self-employment and savings
- Training Local Service providers , agrovets, farriers and Peer Farmer Trainers to deliver quality integrated animal healthcare, farrier and agricultural services
- Functional community structures and systems to support and advocate for sustainable welfare of 7,000 donkeys
- Ensuring gender and social inclusion in donkey welfare programmes

Donkeys and covid-19

- The role donkeys play in water availability for hand washing, sanitation and hygiene
- The importance of adequate nutrition to boost immunity
- Cushioning farmers economically in a depressed environment.

Some examples



- In places like Lamu donkey are the main transport means for goods
- They are also important in tourism etc





- Training communities to make padding from local materials to prevent wounds and improve welfare

challenges

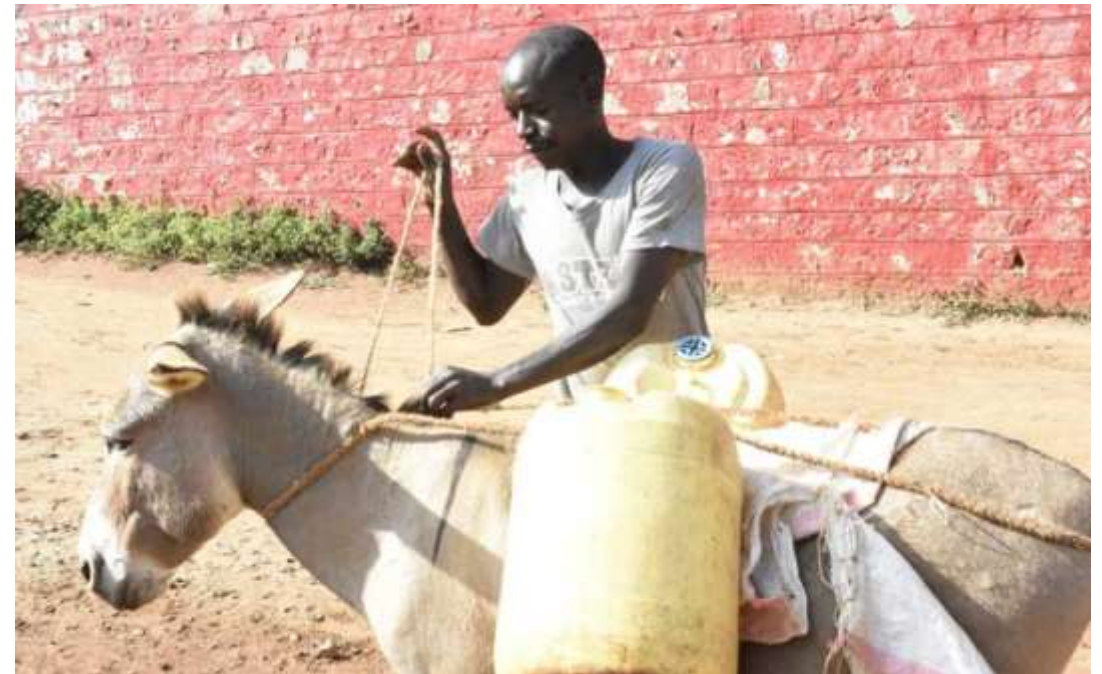


- Pests and diseases sometimes force farmers take desperate measures





- Women and the youth are the most users of donkeys





- Movement of people after eviction from Mau forest





- mt. Elgon subcounty Kenya farm produce



- Guard animals and great companions



- Training programmes and mentoring LSPs



Training communities on padding





- Treatment and donkey clinics





- Help farmers to grow food in some of the tough terrains



- Other animals have better welfare and donkeys are used to support in transporting feed, water and produce to the markets



- Donkeys are easy to handle and friendly