

Abstract

Livestock management practices in drought prone areas: The case of Bolero EPA, Rumphi district in Malawi

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A study was conducted with the aim of assessing ways of improving community based resilience among livestock farmers in Rumphi for improved food security and climate change adaptation.

Livestock farmers currently manage their animals through some of the practices listed as; tethering (goats and cattle), free range (goats, cattle and chickens), herding and grazing (cattle and goats), partial supplementation system in both chicken and goats. They use cock and bull exchange as breeding system of livestock management. There is widespread use of basket form of khola for chicken made from reeds called Chitete, which is either permanently put outside or is temporary hanged during the day and carried in the house during the night. Apart from the use of veterinary drugs for treatment against diseases and parasites, there is also a widespread use of natural herbs in treating diseased/infected livestock.

Temperature is increasing and rainfall is erratic in and this is negatively affecting breeding, housing, and disease control and feeding of livestock. Climate change has caused water scarcity for livestock, shortage of feed and pasture and high disease incidence of livestock.

The study revealed that cattle numbers have been decreasing while the number of cattle owners has been increasing. This means in the past 30 years, farmers used to keep large herd sizes as compared to now. However, for goats and pigs, it was observed that both number of animals as well as number of goat and pig farmers have been increasing. But for chickens, both the flock size and number of chicken owners has been constant.

Some of the reasons for these changes include population pressure, reduced grazing land through cultivation and high prices paid for cattle. In the past, people could easily obtain cattle through lobola but currently lobola is paid in form of money.

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