

Climate variability and dry season ruminant livestock feeding strategies in Southeastern Kenya

Ndathi, Aphaxard J N; Nyangito., Moses M; Musimba, Nashon K R; Mitaru, Barnabas N
Date: 2011

Abstract

Availability of feeds for livestock production is a major constraint to livestock production in dry lands of Kenya. This study was conducted to generate information on the climate of the semiarid lands of Southeastern Kenya and the livestock keepers' dry seasons feed provision strategies. Information on climate was generated through analysis of long-term and short-term rainfall and temperature data. The dry seasons' livestock feed provision strategies were generated through a household survey using a questionnaire. Livestock keepers have a period of 6 months to grow and harvest feeds to bridge a 5 months feed shortage gap. Long-term rainfall amounts showed irregular peaks and troughs and seem to have a stable mean over the years. However, even with the troughs and peaks, the temperatures seem to be increasing. This means that moisture available for feed production may be decreasing. Buying of feeds and using on-farm conserved feeds were the most commonly used feed provision strategies during the dry seasons. However, these strategies were constrained by lack of money, availability of the feeds to buy, inadequate space for conservation and rotting of the conserved feeds.