THE CHALLENGE OF STOCK THEFT: A CASE OF FARMLAND VERSUS PASTORALISTS IN KENYA

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Majority of Kenyans engage in agricultural activities as the means of their livelihood that make agricultural sector as the mainstay of the Kenya economy. Activities such as crop production and livestock rearing in which communities engages for both commercial and consumption purposes is however dictated by the climatic condition of the region and cultural practices. Communities in Kenya are therefore clustered into two groups: farmland communities (majorly practicing crop production) and pastoral communities (majorly practicing livestock rearing).

More than 80% of the total land area in Kenya consists of arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), where constraining rainfall and temperature conditions provide limited options for sustainable land use, other than mobile livestock rearing. Kenya's ASALs support more than 30% (approximately 12 million) people, 50% cattle, 70% sheep and goats, and the entire camel population. It is estimated that the livestock sector provides almost 90% of employment and more than 95% of family incomes in Kenya's ASALs (George et al, 2011).

Cattle rustling is a threat to national security as it leads to displacements of families and can also lead to other fatalities, for instance data from the National Police Service annual report shows that twenty-eight (28) people were killed while fifty (58) others injured from actions of cattle rustling which was an increase from 2017 that saw 20 people killed and 17 people injured. "To some communities cattle's rustling is viewed as a cultural practice used as a passage to manhood. The other aspect of culture has been the belief by some communities that they were given livestock by God and other communities should therefore not possess cattle"(NPS, 2016, 2018). Several factors can explain why cattle rustling continue to thrive and especially in the arid and semi-arid areas. The annual crime report pointed out that scarce resource such as livestock grazing field, water and land as main factors. Others contributing factors include boundary disputes, political interference and struggle for supremacy. (NPS, 2014)

The National crime research Centre undertook a national crime mapping survey in 2018 in order to establish the prevalence of crimes in the country. Data from the study showed the most prevalent crimes in the country were burglary and breakings at 42.0%, stealing at 40.4% and stock theft at 31.4%. Further, results from the study showed the prevalence of stock theft across the counties with the highest prevalence being experienced in arid and semi-arid counties such as Turkana, Samburu, and Marsabit at 91.8%, 90.8% and 79.6% respectively. This pointed out the burden of crime of stock theft to pastoralist community – that suffers adversely either to feed the demand of beef in non-pastoralists community or demands elsewhere. The New Humanitarian formerly (IRIN news) observed that cattle rustling has much more to do with organized crime meeting a rising demand for meat and political violence resulting from a new devolutionary constitution other than just a cultural practices, or a result of climate change and scarce resources. Cattle-rustling is not entirely to replenish herd stock but driven by the desire by those communities to get money to buy arms and by business people who want to cash in on a growing urban population in need of meat(New Humanitatian,2014).

Map of Kenya showing the percentage distribution of stock theft in arid, semi-arid and farmland counties according to 2018 NCRC crime mapping.
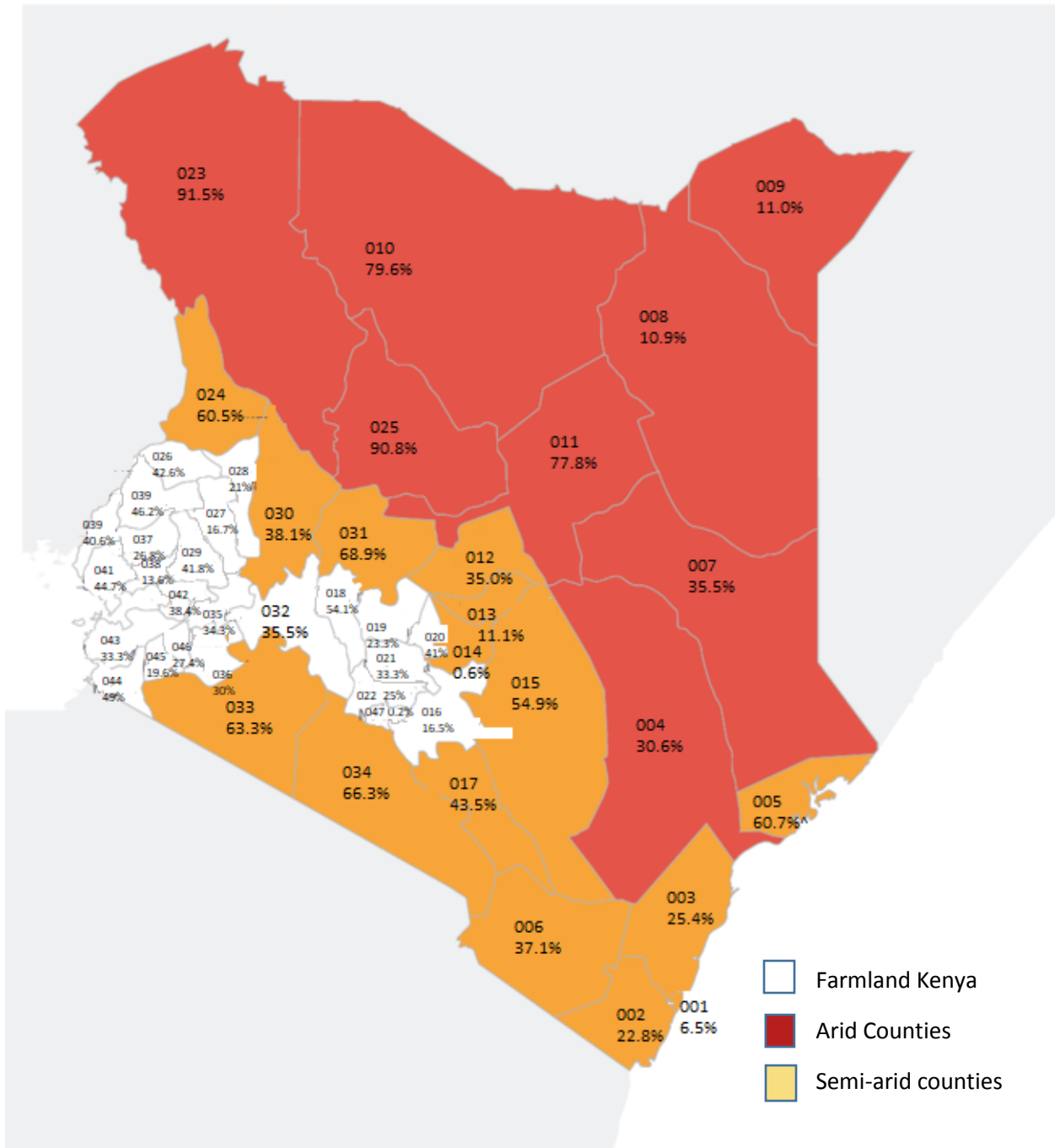
Source: *Crime Mapping Report (NCRC), 2018*

Data showing comparison of stock theft in farmland and arid and semi-arid counties against a national percentage of 31.4.

Farmland Counties	County (%)	(%) difference	Arid And Semi-Arid Counties	County (%)	% difference
Trans-Nzoia	42.6	11.2	Turkana	91.5	60.1
Bungoma	46.2	14.8	Samburu	90.8	59.4
Uasin Gishu	16.7	-17.7	Isiolo	77.8	45.6
Busia	40.6	9.2	Wajir	10.9	-20.5
Kakamega	26.8	-4.6	Mandera	11.0	-20.4
Siaya	44.7	13.3	Garissa	35.5	4.1
Vihiga	13.6	-17.8	Tana River	30.6	-0.8
Nandi	41.8	10.4	Marsabit	79.6	48.2
Kisumu	38.4	7.0	Lamu	60.7	29.3
Kericho	34.3	2.9	Kilifi	25.4	-6.0
Nakuru	35.3	3.9	Mombasa	6.5	-24.9
Nyamira	27.4	-4.0	Kwale	22.8	-8.9
Bomet	30.0	-1.4	Taita-Taveta	30.6	-0.8
Kisii	19.6	-11.8	Kitui	54.9	23.5
Homa Bay	33.3	1.9	Makueni	43.5	12.1
Migori	41.0	9.6	Kajiado	66.3	34.9
Nyandarua	54.1	22.7	Narok	63.3	31.9
Nyeri	23.3	-8.1	Embu	0.6	-30.8
Kerinyaga	41.0	9.6	Tharaka-Nithi	11.1	-20.3
Muranga	33.3	1.9	Meru	35.0	3.6
Kiambu	25.0	-6.4	Laikipia	68.9	37.5
Nairobi	0.2	-31.2	Baringo	38.1	6.7
Machakos	16.5	-14.9	West Pokot	60.5	29.1
			Elgeyo Marakwet	21.0	-10.4

Source: *Crime Mapping Data (NCRC, 2018)*

Data Implications

The table infers that counties in arid and semi-arid areas are affected more by the crime of stock theft going by the highest prevalence shown above which is beyond the national percentage of 31.4%, with some counties doubling the national percentage. Stock theft is happening across the country as data has shown, thus also inevitably affecting counties in the farmland. Nevertheless, it is clear from this data that if the crime of the stock theft is to meet demand for meat, then it implies an increase in proliferation of small arms to carry out raids. The small and lightweight weapons (SALW) are readily available in the black markets, their

sources being the volatile neighboring countries of Sudan and Somalia (Mbugua, 2007). The estimated population of Kenya according to the 2019 population census stands at 47,564,296 million, with this increase in population, the demand for meat/cattle is also expected to be on the rise. Pastoralist communities are the main suppliers of meat in Kenya (Delgado, 2005). With the growing population and subsequent increase in demand for meat, commercialization is bound to continue fueling cattle rustling among pastoralist communities. Easy access to arms from the volatile northern border will continue to facilitate raids by bandits and rural criminal organizations.

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