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Abstract

Production and sale of livestock in Kenya has been changing in terms of quantity over time. If there is increased demand for meat in urban areas of Kenya as population increases and incomes improve, it is important to know if the rural livestock keepers in the arid and semi arid lands (ASALS) would respond by selling more animals. This study assessed factors that influence the decisions by livestock keepers in the ASALs of Kenya to sell small ruminants and those that determine the number of animals sold. The study was implemented in Isiolo and Marsabit Districts from where small ruminants destined for Nairobi markets are sourced. Data were drawn from a sample of 250 livestock keepers through administration of structured questionnaires in July 2010. These were supplemented with secondary data from government offices and other relevant institutions. The results show that prices for small ruminants, group membership, food relief, cash relief, credit facilities and the herd size significantly influence the decisions of livestock keepers to sell small ruminants while food relief, cash relief, credit facilities and the herd size significantly influence the number of small ruminants sold. The findings show that pastoralists can benefit if there is an increase in demand for small ruminants and that for them to be commercially oriented, focus should be aimed at investments in the diversification of activities, small ruminant production and ownership, and improvement of rural infrastructure especially roads to enhance market participation by the livestock keepers.

Key words: small ruminants, ASALs, market participation