



Policy brief 27th September 2024

Forecasts for pastoralists: increasing demand for weather forecasts to support adaptation in northern Kenya

Advances in forecasting, observation networks and collaboration mean better weather forecasts, so why do pastoralists show little demand for them, and how can we better reach them?

Publisher SPARC

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This policy brief explores the low demand for formal weather forecasts by pastoralists. Such low demand was seen to result from a mismatch between the information needs and systems of pastoralists and how weather information is translated and transferred to them in northern Kenya.

Particular problems include: how the certainty of forecasts is conveyed to pastoral users; recognising diversity among pastoralists (particularly gender), and how it impacts information needs, channels, dissemination and use; and the potential for forecasts to increase resource competition.

Findings include:

- Formal forecasts should not necessarily supplant the longstanding ways pastoralists predict weather but, rather, be delivered to forums where herd managers can consider all sources of information relevant to their livelihood.
- To make better use of formal weather information, forecasts need to be co-designed with pastoralists to better meet their needs.
- Weather information should be linked to the types of decisions and trade-offs that end users are making, ones that revolve around the expected availability of water, graze and fodder.
- Forecast literacy among potential pastoralist users could be improved; the terms and language used by scientific forecasters may not be readily understandable to them.

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