
DJIBOUTI OPENS ITS DOOR TO KENYAN DAIRY GOATS

Stephen Mukundi Njagi



A pilot project, which has imported 45 improved dairy goats from Kenya to Djibouti, is providing new and lucrative markets to small-scale goat breeders in Kenya. The project partners are also assessing the performance of the adaptability of the Kenyan goats to Djibouti by monitoring their health, milk production, breeding and feeding.

The Kenya Livestock Producers Association (KLPA) is an apex body of livestock producers in Kenya. One of its objectives is strengthening the market linkages of its farmers and other members. This objective became a reality when the Djibouti Agro-Pastoral Association (DAPA) set out to implement a pilot project importing 45 dairy goats bred by Kenyan dairy goat farmers. The project, which was funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and facilitated by the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF), together with other stakeholders, aimed to find out whether these dairy goats could be productive in Djibouti.

Dairy goats in Kenya

The Dairy Goats Association of Kenya (DGAK) is an active member of KLPA. It ensures that its 16,000 members, who rear between 3–50 dairy goats, produce and rear the best dairy goat breeds. According to DGAK, Kenya exported dairy goats worth US\$180,000 (€155,000) in 2014, compared to US\$250,000 (€215,000) in 2013. Despite good sales, there was a drop in prices, with a 4-month-old goat fetching about US\$100 (€85) while older ones were priced at US\$250 (€214) or more.

The main breed of dairy goat in Kenya is the Kenyan Alpine, which originally came from the French Alpine

blood line, but has been bred to local conditions. Seventeen goat breeders across Kenya introduced semen from the French Alpine breed through a project funded by the German development agency, Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). “Pedigree goats are ready for the international market from 10 months of age. About 70% of pedigree dairy goats give birth to twins,” revealed DGAK Chairman Julius Kang’ee.

“The association has been upgrading local breeds with bucks sourced from Germany since 1992,” Kang’ee said. “And because of the mix of indigenous and exotic characteristics, survival and high yields are achievable if farmers practice proper animal husbandry.

The project in Djibouti involved small-scale farmers exporting the goats by air. This was the most preferred mode of transport because a four-year buck can weigh up to 100 kg while a female can reach 70 kg. Kenyan farmers are not interested in keeping the goats because they think dairy cattle provide more returns,” he explained. The export procedure entailed market identification, the mobilisation of farmer groups, securing and procuring dairy goats, moving them from the holding grounds to Jomo Kenyatta airport and then airlifting them to Djibouti. Several key stakeholders were involved in this process.

Cover A proud Peter Maina owner of the goat farm feeding his livestock at his farm in Kirinyaga County

Left One of the pedigree she goats feeds on chopped shrub at the well maintained livestock farm off the Sagana Meru highway in Kirinyaga County



Right Julius Kang'ee Chairman DGAK (left), and Ahmed Daher Okieh DAPA (right) at his farm in Sagana Kirinyaga County



Securing and procuring dairy goats

DAPA officials first visited DGAK, facilitated by KLPa and EAFF, in June 2015. There was a follow up meeting involving FAO delegates in September 2015. These meetings identified the Sagana area of Kirinyaga County in central Kenya as the most appropriate region to provide goats that met the required specification. The region was considered to have similar climatic conditions to some parts of Djibouti, and KLPa and DAPA signed an agreement to start the process.

At least 10 dairy goat farmers groups who were members of DGAK from the proposed Sagana area in Kirinyaga County were identified, and a meeting with group chairpersons was held in January 2015 in Sagana town. The objective of the meeting was to create awareness so that the whole procedure could be understood and relevant information shared between chairpersons. Farmers with the best goat breeds were identified and the process of selection and key logistics were agreed upon.

In February 2016, the best dairy goat breeds from selected farmers were identified. The criteria used were guided by specifications provided by FAO and the DAPA. Identification and inspection of the holding ground was undertaken at the end of February 2016. This was done by identifying and selecting champion farmer Peter Maina. He had enough space and was also selected to provide the goats. The holding ground was inspected by national and county governments as well as by KLPa and DGAK experts. Selected goats were also inspected by DAPA at the beginning of March 2016.

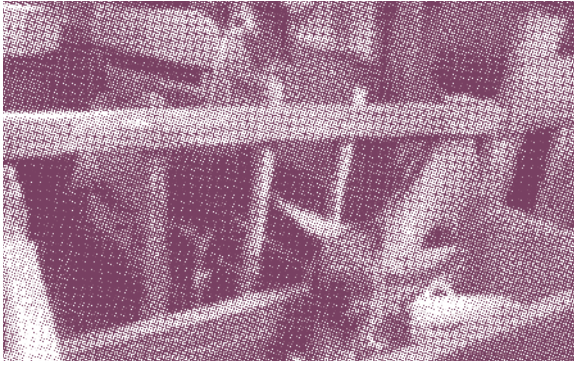
Vaccination, immunisation, tagging, hoofing, securing of permits from the veterinary department, getting blood samples from goats and securing quality feeds, were all some of the activities carried out immediately after this inspection, and were completed by April 2016. These measures were taken to ensure that the goats did not contract diseases during their stay at the holding ground. Tagging was carried out for documentation purposes and to ensure effective traceability.

“The rearing of pedigree goats in this area started on a high note and it goes well with us. We were contracted by KLPa to export hybrid goats and we carried out goat selections,” said Mr. Joseph Gachingiri, Kirinyaga County Director of Agriculture during the inspection process. However, according to Mr. Gachingiri this was not easy. At first they had to take blood samples from all of the goats so they could be tested at the Karatina veterinary lab for five diseases. All the tests done on pedigree goats proved successful.

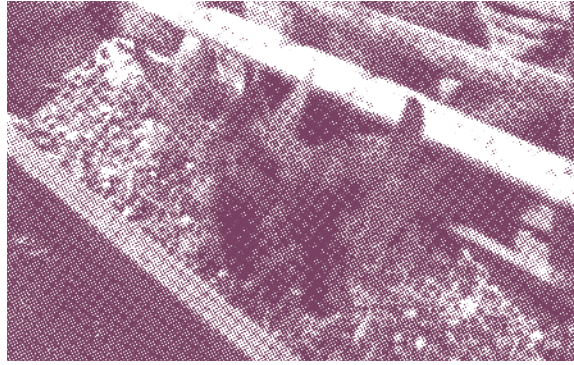
The goats were transported by road from Sagana to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport by a selected transport service provider, and then transported by air to Djibouti. The dairy goats were transported by air because this was the most suitable way of transporting live animals over long distances because the travel time was comparatively short.

An export agent worked closely with relevant authorities to handle the dairy goats' certification and to ensure export value. FAO and DAPA had arranged the flight cargo after the airlifting date was agreed on by all stakeholders and clearance had been given.

After export, DAPA worked closely with the dairy goat farmers in Kenya who helped settle the goats in once they had arrived in Djibouti. The following support services were provided:



Left First generation French Alpine dairy goats



Right Second generation French Alpine dairy goats

- a. Housing:** to ensure that the housing was appropriate and adequate for the goats;
- b. Feeding:** to ensure that feeding regimes were sufficient for the goats;
- c. General management:** to ensure the goats were well-handled once they arrived in Djibouti;
- d. Research:** since this was a pilot project, it was important that there was a system to assess how the goats were performing in Djibouti by monitoring, for example, their health, milk production, breeding and feeding.

Economic and social benefits

Despite their small size, goats are very productive. For instance, a farmer can comfortably raise six dairy goats in a space that would normally be needed for one dairy cow. The National Farmers Information Service says that it is easier to feed goats than cows. Goats consume a wide variety of grasses, weeds and small

bush and tree branches. They also ‘scavenge’ on discarded leaves, fruit and root peelings as well as the roots of vegetables, maize husks and other waste plant materials. This adaptability enables them to survive in urban and rural areas as well as in feed-scarce times. They are resistant to tick-borne diseases such as *anaplasmosis* and *babesiosis*, and they are not affected by the deadly East Coast Fever. This means farmers have fewer expenses as far as drugs are concerned than they would have had if they kept cattle.

A dairy cow produces far more milk than a goat. A goat yields between 1.7 l and 7 l per milking. One liter of goat milk retails at between Ksh 100 (€0.8) and Ksh 120 (€1) in local markets, while cow’s milk only fetches Ksh 50 (€0.4) per liter. Going by the price the upgraded goats fetched in Djibouti, six goats can comfortably fetch between US\$1,500–2,000 (€1,290–1,700), which is the same price as a dairy cow. Goats can also produce twins and this can give a farmer greater returns per year given that a goat’s gestation period is 3 months while a cow’s is 9 months.

“A good choice”

A few kilometers off the Sagana-Meru highway in Rukanga Sub-location, Kirinyaga County, a model farmer has benefitted financially from his 24 pedigree goats.



Peter Maina’s farm is well maintained, and he keeps to the very high health standards required by the authorities for those keen to export dairy goats. The small farm compound is enclosed by a wooden structure designed to ensure the safety and good health of the pedigree goats that are in high demand, both locally and internationally. According to Maina, his farm is a temporary home for the healthy exotic goats waiting to be exported to Djibouti, where they will fetch a good price.

“It is a year ago that I started rearing upgraded goats and now I count myself lucky because my goats have been approved for export,” Maina says proudly. His farm was selected as one of the holding grounds for upgraded goats in Kirinyaga County.

A herder at Maina’s farm, Joseph Machira, says that the move to rear upgraded goats is paying dividends and is a model for livestock farmers in the county and beyond. He says: “I also have my own goats on this farm and I can say my life has changed. I started with two goats, then advanced to 10 upgraded goats, and so far I have sold seven of them.”

According to Maina, rearing pedigree goats was a good choice because of the good income he has been able to get since he started the business. The only major challenge is the inconsistent insurance services for goats in the region.

Peter Maina

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“The export opportunity arose due to the demand in Djibouti at a time when the Horn of Africa decided to stimulate dairy goat farming among small-scale farmers,” said EAFF’s chief executive officer Stephen Muchiri. He is convinced that this will increase revenue and alleviate the poverty experienced by small-scale farmers. “This will ensure that small-scale farmers connect with regional traders to commercialise their farming. With the dairy sector under constant threat from climate change, this initiative could not have come at a better time and offers support to farmers in the region who must abandon pastoralism,” added EAFF’s president Philip Kiriro.

More than economic significance

Kenya is known as a country that exports tea, coffee and horticultural products. However, it will now begin to ship livestock, and goats in particular, following the collaboration between KLPA and DDAK who have come together to boost the livestock sector. Thierry Ntambwiriza, an FAO official, lauded the Kenya-Djibouti trade partnership. “The export of dairy goats to Djibouti is not only economically significant, but it will boost people’s health,” he says. “Dairy goats have the capacity to produce enough milk for domestic consumption and sale, and help in combating food

insecurity.” Ntambwiriza also believes that the export of upgraded dairy goats will motivate smallholder farmers and address issues of climate change.

According to Ntambwiriza, Kenya has become the choice country to export upgraded goats due to its verified improved breeds. He commended Kenya for the goat management efforts that have created demand and the transfer of technology. Patrick Kimani, KLPA’s chief executive officer, also acknowledged that there is a considerable demand for pedigree goats due to farmers’ innovations. He urged local farmers to become involved in this type of agricultural commercialisation because he believes that Kenya’s small-scale farmers have the ability to exploit international markets.



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