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Cattle breeding beyond average. The intelligent animal production amongst dryland pastoralists

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Abstract

Despite important advances following the challenge to equilibrium-based models in range ecology, pastoralism is still largely seen as a coping strategy that allows herders to get along with an ‘inadequate’ resource base. This stance can be traced to a long-established approach in the disciplines that inform pastoral development planning (natural resource management, range ecology, animal science) to rely on analytical tools based on standard statistics and average values. However, pastoralism is better understood as a *sui generis* production system, that deliberately exploits the transient concentrations of nutrients that represent the most reliable feature of dryland environments; a system geared at maximising the production of economic value while stabilising its performance in environments where ‘uncertainty’ is harnessed for production. Since average values and standard statistics fail to capture non-uniform distribution (relied upon for production in dryland pastoralism) they should not uniquely or uncritically inform pastoral development planning.

This presentation is based on: Krätli S. and Schareika N. 2010, Living Off Uncertainty, EJDR forthcoming'