

Livestock Auction Market Boosts Local Tourism in Baringo County

By Mary Mwendwa

Streets and roads are dotted with herders slowly leading their cows and goats to a livestock auction market. This is where livestock herders, people in meat business, brokers, breeders and local small enterprises meet. They are all here to make a kill out of the fast growing cattle auction market at Marigat town in Baringo County.

A temporary enclosed area fenced with wood and partly metal with brown dust, cow dung and goat dung smells welcomes one to this market of Marigat Livestock market. A loud handheld sound amplifier which at some point produces a distorted sound fills the ambience. The speaker is talking very fast in the local Tugen dialect. At the entrance mostly men are lining up as they carefully try to contain livestock to move in one direction. A man from the County Government of Baringo Revenue office dishes out receipts after payment of 300 ksh on every person that brings in livestock of sale.

On the other sides of the market, many types of business people have beautifully displayed their goods. There are small hotels serving food under trees, shoes, clothes and transport. People are all set to make their kill for the day. This market takes place twice a month and therefore many who take advantage of it have strategically positioned themselves to get a share of the growing economy in livestock market. People come as far as Nairobi, Narok, Uasin Gishu and other towns.

It is here in this fast growing gold mine that Daniel Chesire has just brought in five cows for sale. Daniel hails from Barwessa village in Kabarnet. He tells me he started his journey very early in the morning to come sell his cows. "I am a father of five and livestock business is what I do for a living, these cows I have brought today I expect to sell them and get many for my children school fees and other needs back at my home. These cows selling price will be between 22, 000 ksh and 40,000ksh."

Daniel confirms that livestock business has become lucrative in the recent past, he says there was a time last year the market was closed due to an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease. "Those days when the livestock market was not in

operation were my worst day. My business stalled, thanks to those who made efforts in massive vaccination exercise that saw the return of business to normal.," a happy Daniel says.

Similarly, Phelemon Kiptoo, a father of two in his early 40s has come to sell three cows. He has been in this business for the last three years. Phelemon confirms that livestock business is lucrative and fetches good money due to challenges like drought and cattle rustling which make the business very low at times. "When there is drought the prices go as low as 3500 ksh because cows are usually very thin and herders are left with no option but to dispose them off or rather leave them die. During cattle rustling when livestock goes people are left with nothing to sell. These are some of the challenges we do face here, however now things are good, I want to sell these cows at 40,000 ksh and lowest will go for 25,000. Bulls that are castrated are the gold mines in this business, they can fetch as much as 80,000 ksh each.

Phelemon challenges the county government of Baringo to make one of the nearby slaughter houses functional. "There is a slaughter house near here which is complete and is just lying idle, if the slaughter house is opened I am optimistic that we shall have more value addition in this livestock business," he explains.

Breeding is a critical area in livestock keeping and in this Marigat market you cannot miss a breeder. Paul Chelimo Bowen has come all the way from Tambach in Elgeyo Marakwet County to look for a bull for breeding purposes. "I specialise in breeding livestock and it fetches me good money. I usually buy local and mixed breeds and go breed up to fourth and fifth generations which in return gives me a very attractive breed which is appealing to buyers. The Boran breed is local here and indigenous and when mixed with other breeds a very nice one comes out. I have already spotted a Boran breed bull which I will buy at 60,000 ksh and go make more breeds out of it. This breeding takes quite some time, it needs patience and I am always determined, I never lose hope because I am keen on it and do what is needed in terms of care of the animals. I engage veterinary people in case of any advice." Paul says that people in livestock markets come with different targets and all benefit from it. "I am a breeder, who is not interested in quick money, I am assured of my huge profits after some time and this has never failed me in the last two years," he affirms.

According to Amos Nyakeyo, Drought Response Officer, National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), Baringo County; the livestock Auction market

has continued to show a significance in the surrounding local economy by attracting other small business enterprises. “This was made possible by Drought Response Livestock Project in 2014 funded by European Union which saw 60,000, animals vaccinated this included 36,000 from Marigat and 24,000 from East Pokot against Foot and Mouth Disease. Initially there was quarantine because of the disease which was reported in neighboring counties of Samburu and Laikipia. Mr Nyakeyo continues to say that the intervention lead to governors of Baringo, Samburu and Laikipia launch the vaccination program as part of efforts towards creating disease free zones. “Currently Marigat, Loruk, Churo and Nginyang areas have now been declared Foot and Mouth Disease free,” he confirms.

Ends.