



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

Somalia Camel Leasing to Impact Resilience Activity

CAMEL LEASING EXPERIENCES

The Feed the Future Somalia Camel Leasing to Impact Resilience Activity was a multi-year mixed methods research study funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by RTI International. Part of Feed the Future, the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, the study looked at the potential impacts of camel leasing on the resilience and well-being of Somali camel-herding pastoralists, pastoralist communities, and camel milk dairies.

This series of case studies highlights the experiences of several pastoralists and dairies engaged in camel leasing. These individuals' experiences illustrate some of the outcomes of camel leasing arrangements – the full study findings, which include data collected on both risks and benefits, can be found at rti.org/impact/camel-leasing.



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ABDI HAARUUN GUURE

PASTORALIST
PREVIOUSLY LEASING

Personality Profile

Mr. Abdi Haaruun Guure and his family live near Salahlay, about 90 km from Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland and the biggest city in the region. He owns and operates a small family farm and tends a herd of 40 camels with the support of his wife, seven children, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren. It is a second-generation farm established by his father, though the land and the lineage of his camel herd go back generations.

Background

Mr. Guure shared that tending camels is a difficult way to make a living. “You don’t see your home for 12 months,” with periods of time in which no one is buying milk and there are no financial benefits. One year during a drought, Mr. Guure’s camels were not able to produce enough milk to feed their own calves. He and his family had to roam far with their herd in search of water and fodder, taking shelter at night and at times going days without food as he searched for his camels, which had wandered off. Now, even when there is no drought and the situation is better, he still struggles to sell his milk due to competition from large dairies, decreasing milk prices, and challenges getting his milk to market.

Experience

In 2019, Mr. Guure began leasing his camels. He was the first in his community to explore the practice after hearing about it from another pastoralist. When a small dairy opened up on the neighboring farm, he approached the dairy owner and was told, “If your camel yields a lot of milk, then I will lease your camels.” They negotiated a price, reached an

agreement, and began a leasing arrangement. Since it was a neighboring farm, Mr. Guure was able to keep an eye on his camels, making sure they were treated well and not over-milked, which was a major concern of his family. He considered the experience a great success that enabled him to shift from “paying for the costs [of maintaining a camel] to getting a monthly fee and using it to resolve our challenges.” In the end, camel leasing provided him enough money to “dig a well, pay for the children’s education, support the livelihood of the family, and [obtain] other necessities the family needed.”

Challenges

Mr. Guure tried to start his own small dairy by leasing camels from other pastoralists, but found that it was too challenging, particularly the logistics of getting a truck to pick up and deliver the milk. He was also unable to finalize any leasing arrangements with other pastoralists, as they could not agree on the details of the lease, such as appropriate compensation. Even the lease he held with the neighboring dairy came to an end for a similar reason; the dairy owner returned the camel, stating that he could not handle the cost because the lease payment was too high. This is the struggle across his community, he said, with many pastoralists interested in beginning to lease but unable to find dairies that can compensate them at agreeable rates.

Future Plans

Mr. Guure is eager to get back into camel leasing and calls it “a good practice.” He thinks that when “both parties reach an agreement, it will be unstoppable.” In the meantime, Mr. Guure and his family will continue to maintain their farm and herd while focusing on other resilience capacities to protect themselves from future droughts or other unanticipated shocks. They are already using their new well to maintain water, growing and storing fodder for future years, keeping their herd penned in and close to home to focus on the farm, and keeping a traditional diet for the camels to ensure the highest-quality milk that demands the best prices possible.



MUSTAPHA OMER JIBRIL

DAIRY OWNER
PREVIOUSLY LEASING

Personality Profile

Dr. Mustapha Omer Jibril is the owner of Barwaaqo Dairy Farm, located near Salahlay and about 90 km from Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. Dr. Jibril studied veterinary science, disaster risk management, and sustainable development, and has been operating the Barwaaqo Dairy since 2020 with the support of his wife and five children. He currently tends to a herd of 120 camels, including 30 lactating camels, with the help of three employees.

Background

Dr. Jibril shared that operating a dairy farm is “not an easy job.” His business faces challenges including unstable milk prices and periods of drought. During droughts it becomes “very difficult to effectively operate the dairy farm due to high costs,” which include extra water, medicine, and supplements for the camels. The camels also produce less milk and “[the milk] loses quality, which results in a loss in the market.” As a result, the business is unable to profit. When it rains, the business is able to recover, but the rainy seasons bring additional challenges due to volatile milk prices and difficulties in transporting the milk to market.

Experience

Dr. Jibril began leasing camels when he was first starting Barwaaqo Dairy in early 2020. He had heard about camel leasing from pastoralists in the community. “They told us about this practice where we can get a constant supply of milk and also raise income for the pastoralists,” he said. This idea appealed to Dr. Jibril as he could “double the amount of milk we have,” increase income for his business, and benefit the pastoralists as well. He started by leasing five camels from two pastoralists, basing the leasing agreements on milk yield. By leasing camels instead of buying them, the dairy was able to save money, which Dr. Jibril intends to “reinvest into the dairy farm in hopes of increasing production capacity.”

While Barwaaqo Dairy does not currently have any camels under lease, Dr. Jibril considers camel leasing a “good practice” that “brings the community to work together” by benefiting both the dairy and the pastoralists. “Camels get taken care of and [pastoralists] get compensated,” he said. “That is a good thing, and it brings you

joy to know everyone shares and survives together.” He also feels that his business is better prepared for shocks: “Now that we have experienced and benefited from camel leasing, it will be one of the practices we shall use to resist the impact of droughts.”

Challenges

Dr. Jibril currently sources the dairy’s entire milk supply from his own camels and does not buy milk from any other source. He does not have any other source of income outside of that generated by the dairy farm, and as such, he is highly dependent on the productivity of his camels for his livelihood. While camel leasing has helped reduce the impact of droughts, the dairy still encounters challenges if the lessee is difficult to deal with, if there is low demand for milk, or if the leased camels yield less milk than expected.

Future Plans

Dr. Jibril hopes to resume camel leasing soon at Barwaaqo Dairy Farm and feels he can “only benefit from it.” He feels that camel leasing helps the farm maintain good relations with the community and looks forward to helping the pastoralists by providing high-quality care for their camels, which they may not have the resources to provide themselves. As a veterinarian, he ensures the camels have access to natural and fresh pasture, treatment for disease, and good hygiene practices, which in turn ensures a high quality of milk for his customers. Quality milk “successfully attracts and retains customers,” which is key to the success of any dairy farm. Dr. Jibril says he has “high hopes” for the future of his business.





MUUSE MOHAMED MOHAMOUD

PASTORALIST
CURRENTLY LEASING

Personality Profile

Mr. Muuse Mohamed Mohamoud is a husband, father of nine, community elder, and pastoralist in Somaliland. He has been camel herding since he was eight years old. He currently owns four camels he purchased with money earned from selling a small bull.

Background

Camel herding is a long-standing tradition in Mr. Mohamoud's family. He recalls traveling long distances, even as a child, to herd camels. Because many pastoral children relied on the camels' milk for nourishment, they were often taken along for the journey. As an adult, Mr. Mohamoud traveled far distances to acquire water and feed for his camels, and during times of drought he traveled closer to the capital to access food aid for his family from the United Nations World Food Programme. Mr. Mohamoud

reflected on the hard life of camel herding and the relief he experienced through camel leasing: "Camel herding is something beyond your control; it is basically running with animals," he said. "We used to move a lot for pasture and that was the main challenge for us until camel leasing became a reality, and that is what people prefer now."

Experience

Mr. Mohamoud explained that there are two types of camel leasing: "One [in which] the camel is taken away from you and the other type where you keep and feed it yourself and they just come to collect the milk." Using the second method, he leases his camels to a dairy farm near Salahley for 8-13 months at a time depending on how long they lactate. He prefers leasing to a nearby dairy farm using a verbal agreement because the dairy farm owner is from his community and is well known. "Dairy farm owners bought some land and farms here and they needed constant milk, so they proposed that we lease our camel to them and that is how it all started," he said.

Mr. Mohamoud explains that there is trust between him and the dairy farm owners, and he has not encountered any problems with camel leasing. "The dealings with the dairy farm are very good," he said. "Their money is in cash and it is very reliable as you get paid at the end of every month."

Before he began camel leasing, his main challenge was traveling distances to obtain water and feed for his camels. Camel leasing has provided Mr. Mohamoud an opportunity to feed his camels during droughts, enabling him to access support and aid from local organizations near the capital. Without camel leasing, Mr. Mohamoud finds camel herding exhausting. "I am tired," he said.

Challenges

Mr. Mohamoud cautions that camel care during leasing depends on the farm you lease to. "Some [dairy farms] take good care of the camel – treating it as if it is one of their own," he said. "And then there are some who just milk the camel. Luckily, I personally dealt with a very good farm. There are some [pastoralists] whose calves died or got very ill [while being leased]. They took their camels back from [the dairy farm]."

Future Plans

Mr. Mohamoud plans to have his sons take over camel herding and will encourage them to lease their camels as well. "Camel leasing is a necessity," he said. "I believe we are better prepared for droughts or shock. [Because of camel leasing], if drought occurs, I have savings that can cover our needs, whether it is water or food." Mr. Mohamoud intends to increase his camel herd size and notes that the community is enthusiastic about camel leasing now that they have seen the benefits.





MUSTAFA ALI DU'ALLE

DAIRY OWNER
CURRENTLY LEASING



Personality Profile

Mr. Mustafa Ali Du'alle, also known as Mustafa Deek, is the owner and founder of a 400-hectar dairy farm called Ramad and Galool. The farm, where he lives with two wives and 13 children, is located between Salahlay and Qoolcadey, approximately 55 km from Hargeisa.

Background

A college graduate with a medical degree, Mr. Du'alle started a water drilling business before shifting to raising camels in 2010. He began camel leasing around 2014 during a drought. His neighbors owned a camel but were unable to feed it, so he offered to keep it for them and provide it with food, and in exchange he paid them. What started as a gesture of aid became a business proposition that went from two to 12 leased camels over four years. He put it simply: "The benefit we're both getting out of this attracted me to the idea. [People] who couldn't afford managing their camel are benefiting while their camel is kept for them. We benefit business-wise and the camel benefits by getting taken care of and getting grains to eat."

Experience

Mr. Du'alle keeps more than 300 camels, some exclusively for sale and others for milk. He owns most of the camels but leases dozens; he has 45 employees and an annual revenue of \$180,000 to \$200,000. A respected elder in the community, Mr. Du'alle's dairy farm has created many jobs through camel breeding, farming, and water drilling.

Du'alle pays the pastoralists who lease to him \$40-\$50 dollars per month whether the camel is large or small, and whether it produces a lot of milk or not. "I own a lot of camels, but I prefer to lease instead of buy them because when the milk dries up, you can return it and the pastoralist will bring you a new lactating one," he said. He believes camel leasing is very beneficial. "If [pastoralists] have four lactating camels, [their] family can drink milk from two of them and lease the other two," he explained. "The money will cover other needs of the family. It makes me very happy."

Mr. Du'alle says he and the pastoralists he leases from are also better prepared for drought. "We planted enough and have water too, so both the owners of the leased camel and our camel can survive," he said. With camel leasing, Mr. Du'alle is able to reinvest in his dairy farm and buy more land for expansion. He is also able to give back to his community. "I give them water, I lease their camels, I give them fodder, and create jobs for them," he said.

He knows his business will flourish because he ensures the quality of the milk. Mr. Du'alle's staff is trained to understand the importance of milk hygiene, whereas pastoralists who own camels might not be skilled in good hygiene practices.

Challenges

While Mr. Du'alle finds camel leasing to be a worthy investment, there are complaints from camel owners concerning their monthly payments. "They think their camel brings a lot more than what they receive," he said. "However, we solve it the Somali way." The "Somali way" includes bringing the issue up to the community to solve rather than involving a court or other authority. If the owner is still dissatisfied, "there's no contract that prevents a family from taking back their camel if they see fit," he explained.

Maintaining a dairy farm also requires a lot of investment. "You need a lot of grains, water, and medical supplies to tend to the animals," he said. Lack of money to invest in maintaining and expanding the farm can impede Mr. Du'alle's ability to lease camels.

Future Plans

Although he does not publicize his farm through media channels, Mr. Du'alle still receives new customers. "If we did [publicize], plenty of people would have shown up with hundreds of camels," he said. While his farm currently cannot handle hundreds of camels, Mr. Du'alle is preparing for that moment and believes that one day, his farm will be able to lease that amount. In the future, Mr. Du'alle hopes to find an overseas buyer for camel milk to enable him to lease more camels.



AHMED ALI OMAR

PASTORALIST

CURRENTLY LEASING



Personality Profile

Mr. Ahmed Ali Omar, a husband and father of five, is an avid gardener who lives in Hundule, about 40 km away from Hargeisa, with his family. A third-generation pastoralist since the age of 10, Mr. Omar owns four camels that he plans to pass on to his children one day.



Background

Mr. Omar describes pastoralism candidly: “Camel herding is hard, but it does not really matter whether it is hard or easy. Since it’s the profession you chose, you will find a way to work with it.” Mr. Omar believes that camel herding can never be a one-person job. “[It’s] as if the camel was born with that word [with],” he said. “If you are herding the camel you would say ‘herd it *with* me.’ If you are milking, breeding, or watering it you would also ask someone to water it *with* you.” Mr. Omar recalls severe droughts during which his animals died because he had little help and could not travel far distances with his young family.



Experience

In 2017, Mr. Omar heard about camel leasing through word of mouth. He does not know where it started but heard that it worked for others, so he gave it a try. He contacted a local dairy farm and came to a verbal agreement. This was the first of many dairy farms he engaged, and he now works with two other dairy farms concurrently.

He leases three camels for 8-10 months at a turn. So far, he describes camel leasing as elevating his living standard. “I have lost nothing; I only gain,” he said. With camel

leasing, Mr. Omar has been able to buy three more camels and pay off family expenses, most notably his children’s school fees. Since he began camel leasing, Omar says he is better prepared to handle droughts and is resilient during hard times.

According to Mr. Omar, life is better since he began camel leasing. The most beneficial thing is “having the milk be sold while you can still consume some of the milk, because before, you could only use it and not be able to sell it in the towns, so this opportunity [camel leasing] made it easy,” he said.



Challenges

Mr. Omar did not note any challenges with camel leasing. Needing help to herd camels was his biggest challenge prior to camel leasing. Now that Mr. Omar leases his camels, the burden of camel herding has been lessened, making what is usually at least a two-person job very conquerable.



Future Plans

With camel leasing, Mr. Omar has increased his overall income, food supply, and has fostered new community linkages. “At the moment, until I find something better, at least, camel leasing has made my life better,” he said.

Looking forward, “I plan to improve everything I have now,” he said. He plans to purchase more camels, increase his wealth, and engage more community dairy farms nearby. “Most of the community is convinced it is good and people are joining in,” he said. “That makes me happy.” In the future, Mr. Omar hopes to stop herding and pass his inheritance along to his family.



MOHAMED JAMA IRIIR

DAIRY OWNER
CURRENTLY LEASING

Personality Profile

Mr. Mohamed Jama Iriir is the owner of the Iriir Dairy Farm, a small camel dairy located near Salahlay about 90 km from Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. After receiving his Master of Business Administration from Abaarso University, he bought one square kilometer of land and established the farm in 2017. Mr. Iriir is married, has 18 children, and currently tends to a herd of 23 camels on his farm with the help of three employees.

Background

Mr. Iriir relies on the success of his dairy farm for his livelihood. Dairy farming is a rain-dependent business, as a sufficient water supply is necessary to support the camels and their milk production. In times of drought, the milk supply is reduced, and it becomes difficult to produce enough to meet demand, resulting in financial loss. “The financial challenge is one of the biggest challenges faced by any dairy farm in Somaliland,” he said. “We are constantly praying to God for rain, since we depend on it.” COVID-19 also had a negative effect on business, as milk sales declined due to social distancing and lost consumer income from business closures. Despite these difficulties, Iriir Dairy works to ensure that the milk meets high quality standards through good hygiene practices, sufficient grass and fodder, and regular veterinary care visits to maintain the health of the camels.

Experience

Mr. Iriir began leasing camels in 2018, when the farm was struggling to produce enough to meet high demand in the milk market. Camel leasing appealed to him as a cheaper and easier alternative to buying additional camels in order to increase production. He began by leasing six camels, and he usually holds one or two different leases at a given time. He only leases from two pastoralists he knows and trusts, who either lease him their own camels or those of other pastoralists.

Mr. Iriir expressed that he feels “really happy to have started leasing camels, because both parties benefit from it.” The dairy has gained a consistent supply of milk and increased income, which makes the farm “better prepared to handle unexpected shocks.” During periods of drought when the milk supply is low, leasing camels has helped him generate income to better care for both the leased camels and his own. He feels that camel leasing has “also benefited the community by raising the economy,” as well as the pastoralists as “they are getting paid, and their children are getting educated.” Overall, Mr. Iriir views camel leasing as a mutually beneficial practice for all parties. “It makes me proud to help the pastoralists and the community, and also benefit from it myself,” he said.

Challenges

Mr. Iriir has encountered challenges in trying to grow his business. He expressed that currently “the limited market capacity is holding us back,” along with an excess supply of milk in the market, which surpasses demand, thus lowering the price. Furthermore, the current state of road infrastructure in Somaliland impedes his ability to get milk to market before it spoils. The dirt roads are often not well-maintained, and become muddy when it rains, which delays vehicles and risks milk going sour. Another challenge lies in maintaining relationships between the dairy and the community. Mr. Iriir has encountered leasing disputes with some pastoralists, such as disagreement on the leasing price. “If you are not on good terms with the community, that is a big challenge,” he explained.

Future Plans

Mr. Iriir plans to continue leasing camels and feels that the practice has benefited his business overall. So far, the increase in income has helped cover the cost of milk production, and he hopes to be able to start investing in other assets soon. He shared that camel leasing has also changed the way he thinks about his business, with the idea that “you can lease camels instead of buying them and use that money to invest in other assets, other small businesses, or you invest back into your business.” The Iriir Dairy currently owns a milk stand in Hargeisa and aims to export camel milk internationally in the future.





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