

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Livestock marketing: Local belief and clan conflicts in focus

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The major objective of this research was to unveil the challenges of domestic livestock marketing in the pastoralist area of Awash Fentale wereda in due emphasis of local beliefs and clan conflicts. To address this issue, qualitative research approach was employed. In order to secure dependable and reliable data, interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory observation were conducted. The study depicted that livestock marketing was profoundly affected by the local beliefs/culture of the pastoralist that is, holding large number of live animals as a status of symbol. Donkey was not considered as valuable assets. Offering this live animal to the market is also considered as shameful practice. Connected with culture, young men were getting involved in the raiding of live animals of other clan so as to get social recognition or for the sake of revenging their counter parts. The occurrence of clan conflicts affected the movement of pastoralist to the market place as well as in search of water and rangelands, though it was happening infrequently. Finally, the frequently occurring intra clan disputes affected the supply of live animals to the market, the free flow of marketing information between and among the community members, limit the scope of markets, among other things.

**Key words:** Clan Conflict, Local belief, Livestock, Marketing

## INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia ranks first in Africa and tenth in the world with respect to livestock population. It has about 43.1 million heads of cattle, 23.6 million sheep, 18.6 million goats, 0.62 million camels, 34.2 million chicken, 1.7 million

horses, 4.5 million asses, 0.33 million mules and 4.9 million beehives (CSA, 2005). The livestock sector in Ethiopia contributes 12 and 33% of the total and agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in that order.

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Added to this, the sector provides the wide and year round employment opportunity for surplus family labor in rural areas of Ethiopia (MEDac, 1999). Different studies also indicated that the considerable population of livestock is found in pastoralists areas of Ethiopia. For instance, reports of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Ethiopia (MoARD) in 2005 indicated that the Borena Oromo, Somali and Afar took the largest share of pastoralism. Afar is therefore one of the major regions which hold livestock population. The 2007 report of Afar Region Pastoralists, Agriculture, Rural and Development Bureau (ARPARDB) exhibited that the region has 2,051,021 cattle, 2,740,771 heads of sheep, 3,576,230 heads of goats, 687,680 camels and 186,000 donkeys. Though these being the case, pastoralists in the region are not observed when they are beneficiaries from their immense livestock population.

Studies carried out in Sub-Sahara indicated that pastoralists focus on the number of their live animals rather than the benefits that are derived from the selling of their livestock and livestock products; because their social status is measured in the society based on the number of live animals they have (Watson et al., 2008). Furthermore, they believe that having large number of live animals (female) is a means to recover from drought that may a cause to lose significant number of live animals or to reduce their products (e.g. milk). The willingness of pastoralists to offer their live animals to the market is deferring from one type of live animal (cattle, camel, sheep, goat, etc) to the other. This is because each type of live animal has different cultural values as well as purpose in the society. Nevertheless, so far, little is known about the nexus of local beliefs and livestock marketing in the context of Afar region, Ethiopia. Hence, the primary goal of this paper is to investigate the influence of culture and clan conflicts on livestock marketing.

## METHODOLOGY

To address the issue under consideration (i.e. the influence of local beliefs and clan conflicts on livestock marketing), the qualitative research approach was employed. The logic behind is that the very nature of the research problem requires exploration (Yin, 2009). Awash Fentale wereda was chosen as the case. The rationale behind is that this wereda is adjacent to the main terminal markets (e.g. Adama and Addis Ababa) and the wereda stood at the forefront in terms of livestock population; most pastoralists living in Wereda were not actively involved in livestock marketing. To gather the required data, interview, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and Participatory observation were used.

In social science research, interview is identified as an appropriate means of data collection tools to have indepth qualitative analysis (Yin, 2009). Face to face individual interviews are appropriate for exploratory research. The logic behind is that it gives detail discussions with regard to the issue under consideration (Yin, 2009). In similar vein, Dul and Hakn (2008) also argued that conducting interviewees enabled us to get indepth information as

well as immense experiences of those participating in the study. The interviews were selected by using purposive sampling techniques from Deben and Weima clan groups. Accordingly, one clan leader from each clan group, and two sub-clan leader from Deben clan group and four sub-clan leaders from weima clan group were selected. The reason is that the former clan group has two sub-clan groups while the latter has four sub-clan groups. Furthermore, to get additional information three knowledgeable clan elders and 10 local residents from each clan groups were selected.

To gather the intended information from the interviewees, interviews had been made with the combination of tape recorder with the informal consent of the interviewee, because from the researcher past experience (as the community member) they appreciate the one who attentively listens to what they are saying rather than the one who interrupts them by taking note. Regarding question, it was semi-structured questions so as to handle issues which will be raised when the interview is conduct. Once the data were collected, they were transcribed and then read to the interviewees to make the data more dependable and reliable (Creswell, 2002).

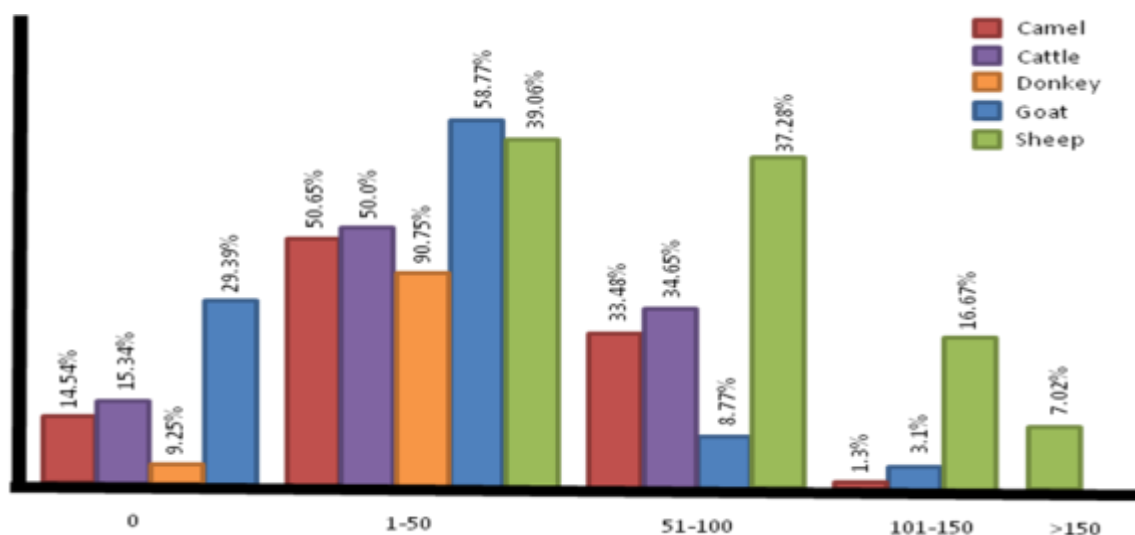
## Focus group discussion

Focus group discussion was conducted with five community elders and four clan leaders with respect to the occurrences and effects of intra-clan disputes on domestic livestock marketing. The primary purpose of the discussions was cross-checking data obtained through other methods as well as to produce complementary information through group interaction. To achieve these objectives the discussions were held separately with the above two social groups. The logic behind is that these two groups are highly diverse in their social power, social authority, and age which have negative repercussions on the outcome of the discussion, by deterring participants when they express their feelings, ideas, and opinions on the issue under investigation. Furthermore, participatory observations were conducted for two weeks at the main local market places namely, 'Fentalle' and 'Sabure'. In doing so, it has been used observation check list. The logic behind is that in order to triangulate the information which has been obtained through interview with community elders regarding the influence of local beliefs on livestock marketing.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Culture and livestock marketing

Studies carried out in some countries of sub-Sahara stated that the culture of the pastoralists affects their livestock marketing practices such as setting selling price and the supply of live animals to the market. In this respect, Watson and Binsbergen, (2008) argued that the primary goal of pastoralists is too hold large size of herd since it determines the social status of the pastoralists in the community. Additionally, it also perceived by the pastoralists as one of the drought coping strategies of the main challenges of the community. Hence, holding considerable number of live animal by the pastoralists is not only the manifestation of cultural elements but also the byproduct of the pressure of the environment (i.e. draught). Related with this fact, the study conducted by



**Figure 1.** Number of live animals (marketable surplus).

Hussein (2010) depicted that from the sample that has been taken, most pastoralists in the study area have reasonable number of live animals (market surplus) (Figure 1).

Regarding local beliefs, the interviewees explained that in Afar society generally selling of live animals is not appreciable, because the social status, social power, and social authority of an individual in the community are measured based on the number of live animals that he/she has. But this does not incorporate the number of donkey that he/she has because donkeys are not considered as the resource by the society. Donkeys are only demanded by the society for the sake of transferring their materials from one place to the other. Added to this, offering this animal to the market is considered as shameful practice. The rationale behind is that the society associate offering this live animals to the market as a good indicator of his/her poverty reaches at worst level. Culturally, using its meat as well as milk is strictly forbidden. One of the interviewee noted this issue as follows.

*I remember that when I was 13, my father had offered donkey to Sabure market, which is closest to the village. Unfortunately, he could not sell it as he intended. Due to this reason, he forced to return to home with his donkeys. When he reached at the village, large number of individuals laughed at him. To this effect, he came up with the bundle of nerve and then his face was flooded by tear. Immediately, I approached and asked him why he sick as a parrot. He told to me that since I am putting the status of myself as well as my family to the ground by showing my deep and dark secrete (poverty) to them (residents of the village). Thus, from this time on wards*

*your mate may call you “unlucky child”, pleas my lovely child do not say ‘yahe’/yes.*

In similar fashion, another interviewee concerning the issue explained as follows:

*I am very surprised when individuals asked me to purchase donkeys at market place since their meats as well as milk are not consumed by our society. Always I am asking myself for what purpose they badly need it. Are they eating their meat and milk? Oh, these guys are crazy; I have to far away from these individuals who are the brother of evil.*

The researcher while visiting Sabure market, had seen and interviewed an individual who offered donkey to the market. He explained that I have only small number of sheep and goats and all of them are found in terrible condition due to health problem. So, in order to purchase drugs to them and food stuffs to my family the only alternative what I have is that selling my donkey. I know it puts my social status to the ground in the society.

It can be understood from the above explanations that pastoralists (pastoralist) were not volunteer to sell their live animal (donkey) whatever the market conditions. Due to this reason it seems that they are missing the market opportunity that should be exploited from this specific live animal.

The interviewees also explained that extremely they do not like to sell their camels as compared to sheep, goat, cattle, and donkey. Their justification is that camels are the only animal that helps them to survive in case of

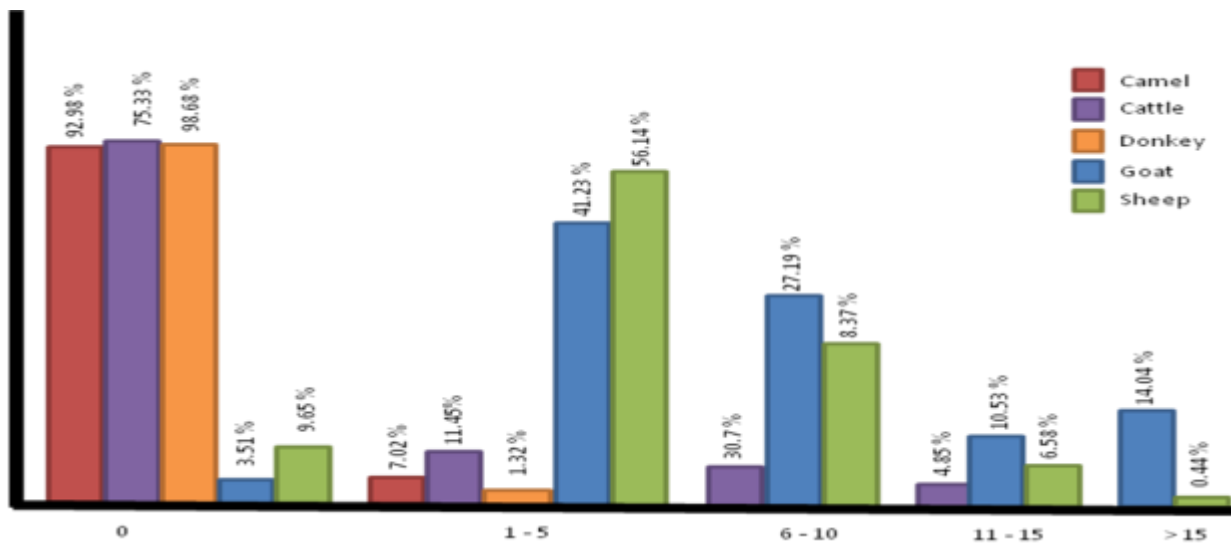


Figure 2. Number of live animals actually offered.

drought (shortage of rangelands, water, etc) by offering milk when others are found under question mark even to survive. Moreover, their numbers is play significant role to enhance the social status of the individual in the community. But when there is bloodshed between individuals who belong to the same clan group or different clan, to settle the case clan elders imposed compensation to the families/relatives of the dying people. This compensation accounts 10-15 camels. This was to make the punishment painful.

During the participatory observation period, opposite to what it has been explained, the researcher had found an individual who offered two female camels at ‘Sabure’ market. He stated the issue as follows:

*.....their mother died while it gave birth (i.e. these two female camels). Due to this incident, the heart of my wife was broken into two unequal parts since it was the first camel provided to us as a gift by her father in our marriage ceremony. Added to this, she believed that it is a source of prosperity and guardian of wealth. As a result, she asked the well known fortune teller in the village why this incident happened. He told her that its offspring is “unlucky”. Further, he recommended that she has to either sell or slaughter its offspring unless the futurity of her family will be painted party color. And then she ordered me to sell at any price.*

Notwithstanding the above fact that, they noted that selling of goat, sheep, and cattle is some how acceptable in the society so long as the individual has interest and willingness to sell his/her live animals. Therefore, it can be deduced that most often pastoralists are offering these

live animals to the market so as to satisfy their financial need. This finding also consists with Hussein’s (2010) finding that is most often pastoralists are offering goat, sheep, and cattle the market rather than camel and donkey (Figure 2).

Regarding the sex of live animals, the interviewees indicated that they like to offer male live animals at premature age rather than female when there is pressing need for cash. Because the society believed that female live animal is the source of milk and milk products as well as a source offspring and upbringing. They believed that it is a source of status. However, most often female live animals are offered to the market when they have health problems, sterility or by very nature they could not produce reasonable amount of milk to them. This also confirmed by observation which conducted for couples of week by found at different market places on market days.

Furthermore, the interviewee disclosed the color of live animals has also impact on our decision to sell. For instance, the cattle which had white color on its forehead and deep dark color on the remaining part of body is considered as sign of bad luck. Hence, such kind of cattle will be provided to the market even at its premature age. But this is not applicable for other live animals which have the aforementioned color. Opposite to this, when the cattle has white color, it is considered as the guardian of prosperity. For this reason, even in the worst situation it is not provided to market. Pastoralists have also willingness to exchange by paying heavy price to have such kind of animal in their folk if they are not luck enough to have it. Add to this, it is also highly preferred when pastoralists are in need of celebrating ceremonies such as when the mother gives birth, and celebrating the

marriage ceremony. Opposite to this, they preferred to slaughter the cattle which has black color when a person is sick and in need of meat as well as when there are conflicts and disputes or to compensate the victim of the dispute. This is because black color is associated with evil social phenomena. Implicitly, this implied that a cattle which has color either white or black rarely provided to the market. Add to this, they have the willingness to exchange by providing two or more cattle. Consistently, in the literature of marketing, the impact of color has profound influence in the consumer market while they are involved in the purchasing decision. This is strongly linked with the symbolic meaning of the color in the society or the reflection of the imagined beliefs.

### **Clan conflict and livestock marketing**

In Afar community, clan-based institutions have a paramount role in their social, economic, and political life. Connected with this, in their mode life, Gerontocracy (the rule of elders) is well established. But the settlement is composed of the mixture of clan even though each locality is identified with major clan and affinity (Kelemework, 2011). Clan is one of the social institutions which bonded a member of the society on the basis of blood relationship (Pastoralist Forum, 2005). In Afar society, there are a number of clans which are governed by the clan leaders. The clan leader has the responsibility of handling the internal and external affair of the clan in the sphere of legal, political, economic, and social. A case in point, when there is clan conflicts the clan leader has the massive responsibility to settle the case by dealing with the counter parts as well as the concerned parties. Studies on peace and security depicted that most of the clan conflicts stemmed from raiding of live animals, revenge and bloodshed. In pastoral areas, as historically documented there is recurrent conflict (Getachew, 2001). Traditionally, conflicts have been endemic to pastoral and agro-pastoral areas of horn Africa. The conflicts have been between different ethnic pastoral groups, as well as within ethnic groups. According to Halderman (2000), the majority of the conflicts (inter and intra ethnic conflict) in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas have been emanated from competition for land, very limited opportunity for young people within and outside of pastoral system, extraordinary increase in the availability of modern firearms, general, pervasive poverty with extremely limited access to education, health services, and safe water supplies, not counting other factors.

Similarly, the participants of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) explained that starting from the recent past, observing serious disputes between Weima and Debene clans is becoming a common phenomenon in the Wereda. In most cases, these conflicts and/or frictions emanate from raiding of animals, individual conflicts,

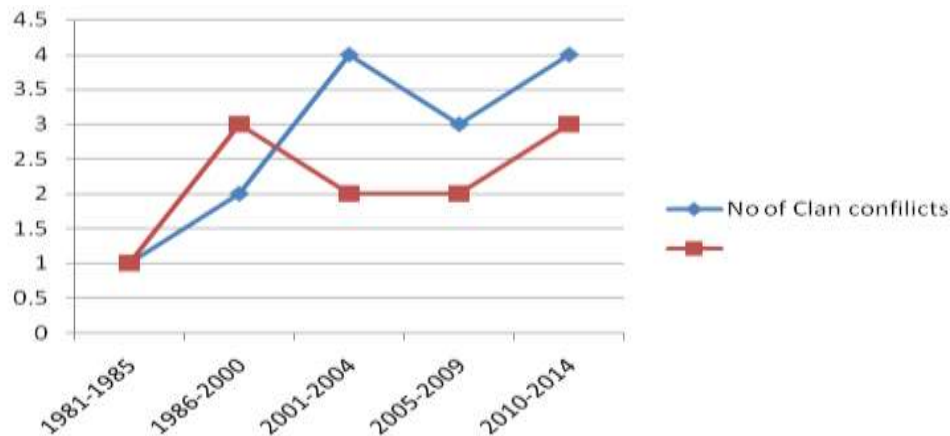
competing for watering and rangelands, and to expand the land so as to lease out to private cultivators. In this respect, the study of Yassin (2004) depicted that in July 2001 clan conflict erupted between Weima and Deben when they compete to expand their lands and ended with the death of eight people and injuries of hundreds of people from both clans. Further, they noted that these conflicts usually occur during dry season since in this period accesses to rangelands and watering are very much limited. However; its occurrence is not resulting in mega death of live animals as well as individuals. The Wereda administrator explained the nature of the conflict as follows:

Clan disputes were observed rarely in the wereda for long period of time since these two clans (Weima and Debene) had been sharing their resources fairly as much as possible. Clan leaders could easily settle the frictions and/disputes from the zero hour without the interference of third party. Nevertheless, at present, the trend is completely changed. The occurrence of clan clashes is increasing at alarming rate in relation to competing for grazing land and watering. For this reason, it holds the attention of concerned parties at regional as well as wereda level (Figure 3).

As one of the members of FGDs raised the issue and agreed by other member, sometimes, the causes for the occurrence of clan disputes are fortune tellers. He clearly explained as follows how witchcrafts push individuals to involve in clan disputes.

Clan disputes are aggravated by witchcrafts that are found in each clan. They inform individuals in their clans as they have luck to raid large number of live animals if they involved in the date which is specified by them. Further they ordered raiders to provide to them one fourth from the total number of raid animals. As a result, considerable number of young male from each clan aggressively involved in this malpractice to increase the status of their families in the society.

As the elders also stated that the clan conflict is not only emanated from socio-economic and geo-political factors but also from the tradition or the culture of the society. Youngster who are in need of celebrity/being famous involve in the raiding of live animals since those who did it is viewed as the hero and respected. Even in some cases they are rewarded by their relatives/people who are living around them. Hence, the social recognition that given by the society encouraged them to involved in the recurrent riding practices. This is also strongly linked with the existing social change, for instance, unlike before pastoralists have the tendency to have modern home appliances and other stuffs. To fulfill this need, pastoralists have started to involve in the riding of live animals and cause the emergence of clan conflicts. Hence, as compared with the clan conflict before 50 years, the existing conflicts differ in their magnitude and style (Pastoralist Forum, 2005). The interviewees as well



**Figure 3.** Number of clan conflicts.

as participants in focus group discussion indicated that there are also sub-clan conflicts within the same clan group. However, it is not resulting major challenges in the process of offering live animals to the market. The reason was that the conflicts settled by sub-clan leaders and elders of the clan group within short period of time. Add to this, sub-clans have strong blood relationship. But both clan and sub-clan conflicts increase year after year.

The interviewees also explained that intra-clan conflicts groups created stumbling blocks on livestock marketing by restricting the free flow of live animals from point of production to the intended point of sales. It forces livestock producers to sell their live animals at dumping prices or herders prefer selling their livestock at disadvantageous prices rather than risk to losing them in raids. However, it creates a golden opportunity for traders to get huge profit at the expense of producers. Nyukuri (1997) reports that during the clashes that arose around the 1992 elections in West Pokot, the price of a mature bull dropped by 60 percent or more. However, meat prices dropped in the areas affected by clashes or heavy raiding, but not in distant markets. Unruh (2005) noted that herders sales of their livestock in response to threats of raids are very convenient for livestock traders who may take advantage of distress sales in conflict areas and make huge profits by taking the animals to distant markets where prices are higher.

The participants in FGDs also pointed out that when there is a serious clan dispute between Weima and Debene, the member of each clan aggressively get involved in raiding of live animals. As a result of this, the main market places namely 'Fentale' and 'Sabure' are encircled by one of the conflicting clan because it is considered as a strategic place to raid large number of live animals from individuals who are returning from the market place to their home. Also raiders from each clan are moving to their common rangelands to take

reasonable number of live animals from the herders who have not an idea about the occurrence conflicts at all.

As it has been explained by the members of FGDs, when there is/are serious clan dispute/s, offering of live animals to the main market places in the Wereda (Fentale and Sabure) is unthinkable due to the following two major reasons. Firstly, all routes that connect agro-pastoralists to the aforementioned market places are full of raiders who belong to Weima and Debene clans. Secondly, clan leaders order their member not to move from one place to the other until they are told to do so. Nevertheless, some individuals, who are found highly in need of cash to purchase food stuffs to their family, try to offer very much limited number of live animals to the main market places in the Wereda or neighbouring market (Argoba Market) by taking the risk. If they have luck, they will reach the market places and sell their live animals at dumping price since it is difficult to get buyers and the probability of losing their live animals by raiders is very high at market places. Added to this, they noted that the impact of clan disputes on livestock marketing reach its climax when it occurs during drought season. The logic behind is that during this season most live animals are losing their weight and have no access to rangelands and watering.

With respect to the above issues, the wereda security official stated that the occurrences of clan disputes create stumbling block not only to live animals marketing but also the welfare of the society. For instance, in last year we could not provide vaccine for significant number of live animals even through there is epidemic disease which is a major cause for the dying of live animals. For this reason, large numbers of households are losing their live animals and expose for the shortage of food. From this explanation, it is equally natural to say that clan disputes accelerated losing of significant number of live animals coupled with drought.

According to the information which had been obtained from the FGDs, in most cases, clan leaders and community elders are playing a lot in the process of clan disputes settlement. This is because they are well respected and accepted by the society. Added to this, each individual belonging to the clan has the responsibility to be governed by the order of his clan leader. But in some cases settling of disputes is beyond the capacity of clan leaders and community elders especially when there is bloodshed between the conflicting clans. At this instance, Wereda administrator and Wereda Security Official play considerable role to settle the disputes. Further, participants in FGDs noted that even after the case/clan disputes is/are settled by the clan leaders along with concerned parties, the number of individuals offering their animals to the market for two or three couples of week is very small. Sharing of marketing information between these two conflicting clans is completely seized. The rationale behind is that both clans are not trusting each other. From this explanation, it can be deduced that the overall impacts of clan disputes on livestock marketing is continue even post –conflicts.

The local beliefs of pastoralists were a straight jacket that hinders agro-pastoralists from enjoying the suit fruits of their abundant resource. There are: offering donkeys to the market considered as shameful practice, the symbolic value of having large number of live animals in the society, deep rooted beliefs with respect to type and sex of their live animals, long standing cultural inertia against offering camels for market, and offering male live animals at per mature stage. Add to this the occurrence of clan disputes hinder pastoralists from offering more number of live animals from their surplus; restrict the free flow of marketing information among the different clan group members, and significantly reduce their bargaining power. Nevertheless, the high value attached to female live animals among the society members not only accelerates production but also a good strategy to recover from frequent drought common in the Wereda. In the final analysis, their local values and beliefs have mixed blessing effect on their livestock marketing practices.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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