



Camels Take Center Stage in Samburu's Climate Adaptation Drive

A Resilient Shift Toward Sustainable Livestock

In the arid stretches of Samburu County, a subtle yet powerful transformation is unfolding, one where camels are steadily replacing cattle as the cornerstone of pastoral life. Faced with increasingly harsh droughts and shrinking traditional herds, Samburu County Government launched an innovative program that positions Somali camels as a solution to both environmental pressures and nutritional challenges.



Picture 1: Residents of Lkisin gather around a distribution event taking place by the Lkisin River.

Over the past 2 years (since 2023) Samburu County Government has introduced more than 2,000 Somali camels to pastoral families through an initiative focused on climate resilience. Renowned for their generous milk output, nearly three liters per each milking session, four times daily, these camels are now vital sources of nourishment for lowlands communities battling food insecurity.

Unlike cattle, camels are browsers and thrive on hardy plants such as acacia, which survive long dry seasons. This adaptive feeding behavior makes camels especially suited for Samburu's demanding terrain, a perspective echoed by climate researchers who emphasize the importance of drought-tolerant vegetation in livestock planning.

Samburu stands alone in Kenya with this camel-centric approach, drawing praise from climate adaptation experts globally. The initiative aligns with recommendations made during the Twelfth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA-XII) and reflects the



spirit of the Africa Climate Summit held in Nairobi, where emphasis was placed on grassroots solutions to climate challenges.



Picture 1 2 His Excellency Lati Lelelit is distributing Somali camels to Swari herders in Samburu East sub-county.

As a result of the intervention, many households are turning surplus camel milk into income by selling it in local markets, reducing their reliance on humanitarian aid. The growing demand for climate-conscious strategies has shifted global climate discourse toward local innovation. Programs like Samburu's are increasingly cited as examples for equitable climate finance, particularly at

major forums like COP28 and the upcoming COP30.

For residents like Jane Lelemusi in Samburu North, the program's benefits are deeply personal. "Before the camels, the dry season was a nightmare. Now I have fresh milk daily, and I can cover school costs for my children," she shared.

As climate threats escalate, Samburu's pivot to camels offers a powerful example of locally grounded adaptation; a testament to cultural resilience and the enduring practicality of nature's most desert-savvy companion.

By Japhason Lekupe

Samburu County