

TZH 14 - Agricultural heritage and the Modern Maasai

[Sandra] Hello and welcome to Target: Zero Hunger – a podcast that explores the food challenges and solutions of our time, brought to you by the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization.

[CLIP: Engaresaro Welcom IN]

I'm your host, Sandra Ferrari.

[CLIP – Arpakwa, Massai focal point] The chairman has sent me to say, this is just your welcoming ceremony. So just to welcome you to feel this authentic culture and thanks very much for coming. And on behalf of this community, you are welcome in Engarasero.

[Clapping OUT]

[Cattle sounds IN]

[Sandra] In this podcast we are visiting the community of Engarasero, near the border of Kenya and Tanzania. Under the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro, where a rare type of flamingo breeds. And where cattle is at the heart of life. Near here as well there is a treasure so remarkable, that people from all over the world come here to see it. But more on that later.

[Sandra] According to Maasai oral history, for centuries, these semi-nomadic Maasai tribes of East Africa have migrated and herded their cattle through the majestic lands of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania.

On the northern Tanzanian side, which we will focus on in this podcast, are millions of miles of Maasai-frequented territory.

You can find natural wonders there such as Lake Natron, as well as the vast Serengeti lands where herds of local wildlife like deer, lions, and wildebeests are known to thunder across the lands as they migrate in search of food.

The Maasai have shared the territories in this region alongside the native wildlife for thousands and thousands of years, sustaining themselves mainly off the cattle they rear.

Cattle are at the core of Maasai cuisine, culture, lifestyle and their relationship with the environment.

[Cowbell OUT/ Cross fade Theme IN]

[Sandra] As Maasai tribes have evolved, along with the landscape of the region, Maasai traditions continue to be anchored in agro-pastoralism, which has been reinforced by their ability to cultivate within these difficult, arid drylands.

But with Tanzania’s growing population, economic expansion, restructured land use and pressures of climate change on natural resources, modernity and the country's growth have presented challenges for the Maasai people. Growth that threatens their ability to sustain themselves.

[Theme fade out]

Five years ago, the Engarasero Maasai village was designated a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage site for this reason.

The goal was to develop sustainable initiatives to support the local community, under this new designation.

Now that the development phase of these initiatives has ended, FAO officers and delegates from 20 countries around the world recently visited the Kisongo clan of the Maasai communities in Engaresero to see the results.

FAO officers Maria Clelia Puzzo, Xiaoxiao Wang and Aurelie Fernandez took some recorders with them to walk us through some of what they learned from the Kisongo clan and the tribes project partners.

[CLIP – Welcome Dance and singing IN]

[Sandra] The area of Engarasero covers just over 100 000km². This “GIAHS” or “GS site” - as you will hear it being referred to - is home to some 5000 people.

The concept of a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System is distinct from and more complex than a conventional heritage site or protected landscape. A GIAHS site is a living, evolving system of people and communities who have an intricate relationship with their lands. In the sites that have been designated. They're home to people who – through their activities – have continually adapted to the potential and constraints of the environment.

Naturally, these symbiotic relationships between people and their environment means that there has been an accumulation of experience over generations.

GIAHS designation is part of a programme that brings communities together, with their governments and other stakeholders, to agree on promoting and conserving the area while, at the same time, allowing it to evolve.

Engarasero matched the criteria and so was designated a globally important site. But, while these important attributes have been identified, a number of evolving policies still marginalize of these benefits and their practices.

[CLIP – Welcome Dance and singing OUT]

[Sandra] With the GS project, examples of initiatives include: seedlings distributed to boost crop growth; building a dam to collect rain water; reinforce traditional drainage systems; develop aquaculture systems. The GS site also integrates tourism in a way that helps the Maasai to generate income. And helps them manage foreign visits to their lands in a way that protects their culture, as well as their ecosystems.

Community based organizations were also established, through GS. They're called CBO's for short. And these CBO's are at the core of all activities and create a structure for things like protecting or managing resources. Some other activities include contributing to the improvement of the health system in the village and a milk production house run by Massai women, which was also partially funded by the CBO.

The chairman of the village Yohana Laizer and Maasai focal point Arpakwa Sikorei.

[CLIP – Milk value chain IN]

[Yohana] (Local language)

[Arpakwa] So, the chairman explaining that, we know that the CBO has objectives but when they collected some funds, they extended their arms – their power – to help different sustainable

projects in the village **[clapping]**

[Arpakwa] So the chairman is going to welcome the secretary of women, to give a little bit of word to explain to you what is really happening. Sophia...

[Sophia] (local language)

[Arpakwa] So, she's called Sophia Ndakar and she is the secretary of the women's milk chain.

[Sophia] (local language)

[Arpakwa] This milk chain they started in 2005.

[Sophia] (local language)

[Arpakwa] The village government, they give them 2 million Tanzanian money just to start.

[Sophia] (local language)

[Arpakwa] That money helped do some administrative things, including opening the bank account.

[Sophia] (local language)

[Arpakwa] She say that, you cannot now find milk but the intention is for milk processing.... So! We will go to see something around the house.

[Sophia] (local language)

[Arpakwa] So the Engarasero CBO, the community based organization, they also support by giving two million to help the women milk chain to operate. They have some milk and then they have some other things. So we can just go around and see. **[Clapping -Chatter]**

[Fade Clip]

[Sandra] The secretary of the milk chain goes on to explain some of the activities that they have. Essentially, they buy milk from the livestock keeps and bring it here for processing. They have 30 employees for these dairy projects. And once they can start processing more milk, they'll be able to employ more local women.

[Clip – Inside milk processing room IN]

[Arpakwa] Ok – you know – they take milk from different women group in the village.

[Delegate] Do they sell it?

[Arpakwa] So they sell around the small town of Engarasero, let's say two dollars.

[Delegate] Ah, ok. **[Chatter]**

[Clip – Inside milk processing room OUT]

[Sandra] Next stop for the delegates was to learn more about the areas ecosystem.

[Clip – Lake Natron IN]

[Joseph Meng'oru, Guide] This is another place. This is Lake Natron. You can see the mountain far away there. It is the border of Tanzania and Kenya. This side is in Tanzania and the other side is in Kenya, which is called Shambolic Mountain. This Lake has very global significance. Very famous lake, as a breeding site for flamingo. So, the flamingo in East Africa region they migrate and come to breed here in Lake Natron. They come from Lake Naku in Kenya, Lake Manyara in Tanzania, and

elsewhere and they come to breed in this Lake Natron. It is very successful for the following factors: the lake is very shallow, so it allows the flamingo to feed freely and also there is the availability of food which is a microscopic blue green algae. But also this lake is free from predators so this why they breed successfully. So, only important for pastoralism and livestock, it's important for ecotourism. So, as I said, Engarasero is not only important in livestock and pastoralism, but also it is important in ecotourism. So the village, as I said will always see the visitors, because they are interested to come and see these famous lake and also the active mountain, you can see there. So, it's very significant also in ecotourism. The place where we was passing, when we was coming is a place for grazing pasture. It is the whole place for the village, it goes near to the mountain. It is a whole entire grazing season. But I'll welcome Marco [Arpakwa] to speak, about pastoralism and a bit about the grazing pasture.

[Arpakwa] I will say for you briefly, just for you practically to understand, look at this village. You see this escarpment. And then you see this plain from the lake all the way to the mountain. This is the lower land of the village. Up escarpment, like that mountain, ok? There is another big, nice plateau, ok? So, the system works like this for pastoralism: Normally when it rains the cattle come down the slope in many other areas but in Engarasero it's the inverse. So that question, if the pasture is enough during the drought and the wet season, is that what you are asking?

[Yohana] (Local language)

[Arpakwa] So, for them, for the current population, the way that they manage it. It's enough.

[Yohana] (Local language)

[Arpakwa] But there's a lot of climate change these days.

[Yohana] (Local language)

[Arpakwa] Like this here is really a drought. It was supposed to, this area, to be really pure green.

[Yohana] (Local language)

[Arpakwa] So they receive some people from other villages. Because here is even better and there is some water.

[Yohana] (Local language)

[Arpakwa] So there is people from the other village, called Malambo from Massai people. There is a village from Sonjo. Sonjo is another ethnic tribe just next to Malambo. But all they come to this village because of water and some grasses at the escarpment. But up this escarpment where there is some grasses for cattle, there's no water. That is the challenge. So, you have water here, but you don't have enough grass. Especially when it is drought, all livestock come around the lake and around this area. Ya, I know you have a question...

[Delegate] Why you don't plant the fruit trees which prefer the dry areas?

[Arpakwa] So, they don't have the education about that. They don't know about that, these are pastoralists. They depend of cattle and everything. So they don't know of which kinds of fruits.

[Delegate] Jackfruit is a really good fruit - I think you may know or may not – which prefers the acidic soil and high land; and which does prefer the standing water; and grow very quickly; and is a tree that grows very big fruit, which is our national fruit also in our country. But...

[Yohana] (Local language)

[Arpakwa] So, he's thankful. He says he will get education and think about it and see how we can...

[Chatter continues OUT]

[Sandra] The group goes on to analyse the situation together and talk out solutions they found in their own countries. Next they move on to a site that attracts tourists from around the world.

[Clip – Human track IN]

[Joseph] So inside here is another important attraction in Engaraseero. Inside here you will find Engaraseero human footprint, which is among the oldest human track in the world. And it's assumed to have an age of 120 000 years old. And this footprint was discovered in 2006 by a local Maasai here in Engaraseero. The name of the local Maasai, who discovered this print, is called Congo Sakai. He was a security guard in a camp near there, so while he was herding cattle he discovered the track and reported it to one of the camp owners and you will see inside you will get into there...many tracks of different age sizes. So, the GS project also had inputs on this. They also helped in promoting this footprint, so we'll have a look and see how the tracks look like.

[Ambient chatter and movement of delegates and guides]

[Arpakwa] So the footprint, when it was recognized, the GS did one significant effort. That, the Congo Sakai, who is an indigenous person who recognized this site. He was reported by FAO that he was the person who recognized and not the owner of the camp site. And that was the influence, the Government of Tanzania put effort, came here, and that GS-FAO gave some money, and then we recognized the person, and we try to use this place also to get more funds for tourists and we can take some for community.

[FADE CLIP OUT]

[Sandra] Funding is a challenge and is needed to keep these initiatives running. But funds and developing their local economy are not the only challenges for the Maasai.

[Clip –Arpakwa interview IN]

[Arpakwa] People don't recognize the importance of intangible heritage.

[Sandra] That's Arpakwa Sikorei again. And as mentioned earlier, the focal point for the project in Engaraseero.

[Arpakwa] The current challenge really is, for example, many people - decision makers - don't understand pastoral systems. When pastoral people move from one place to another during a dry season or wet season, the people think this a bare land, that it's an open land. They will give to investors. They will give it to other kind of business' and when the livestock come back, they cannot complete their grazing cycle because the land is gone. You can see in Engaraseero, there are some lodges located in unpractical for of way. So that just put around water sources. They just put around Lake Natron. And they take big size of land. Those are the challenges.

[Sandra] Though some branches of government have been actively supporting the protection of this area as a heritage site for the Maasai, there are competing interests when it comes to economic expansion and this pastoralist system.

Earlier in the podcast we mentioned how organized efforts through CBOs aims to strengthen and empower the community. But they also help community members get support for things like: sponsoring students to go to universities or secondary school or generating funding at the district level to support hiring and training Maasai youth for tourism activities.

Youth employment and youth engagement in their own culture has been a concerning issue for local leaders.

[Sandra] That's Arpakwa Sikorei. He is a Maasai pastoralist and was the focal point for the project in Engarasero.

08:04 Marco: People don't recognize the importance of intangible heritage. In Tanzania and East Africa some people see maybe the Maasai culture as old fashioned. But they don't understand it... After the GS initiated this project, it recognized the value...

[Arpakwa] ...now when the development coming up very quickly there are more challenges and there are the future challenges. For example **12:21** many people, decision makers, don't understand pastoral system. When pastoral people move from one place to another during a dry season or wet season the people think this a bare land, an open land that they can give to investors. They will give it to other kind of business' and when the livestock come back, they cannot complete their grazing cycle because the land gone. You can see in Engarasero, there are some lodgers set up in an unpractical way... And they take big size of land.

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[Arpakwa] There are some education system whereby young generation are told in school that pastoral system is distractive to environment. And that is school system. That is really a challenge which was there, it is there and it will continue to be there. The future challenge is... when the elders now they are passing away, they will die of this knowledge. Who will really transform this knowledge from one generation to another? In Massai we still have a live heritage, storytelling. But in the future I'm scared that if we cannot take reasonable measures as a nation, as a community as international agencies, this amazing heritage of the old it might [be] lost.

[Sandra] Agencies like Oxfam International for instance, have endorsed Maasai practices to promote – what the Maasai also believe – are natural systems of land management that are in harmony with the local wildlife and resources. But elevating the voice of marginal voices, so that can be a part of these conversations at a policy level, can be difficult. Last April, I spoke with Pablo Manzano. At the time he was the Coordinator of the Pastoralist Knowledge Hub, that had just launched at FAO headquarters in Rome. This online platform was launched by FAO and its partners, who aim to grow a network to help support pastoralists at the policy level.

According to FAO, there are several hundred million pastoralists globally who manage the world's

rangelands. But despite their importance to food production and ecosystems, however, the agricultural practices and livelihoods of these often nomadic herders face a number of challenges beyond those specific to the Maasai tribes in East Africa.

[CLIP: Manzano Interview IN]

[Sandra] Mr Manzano, thank you for joining me.

[Pablo] Thank you.

[Sandra] How would you describe the contributions of pastoralists to agriculture, globally?

[Pablo] The contribution of pastoralists to global agriculture is pretty important, especially regarding the marginal lands. Pastoralists occupy the lands that are less protective and usually where co-production is not possible, like drylands, like arid lands, mountains and cold lands. Their strength is that they are able to produce food and high quality food with a lot of protein like milk, like meat, and other products like fibres or like leather in places where you can't actually plant anything because the rains are too unpredictable and the environmental conditions are too harsh. This is thanks to their capacity to be mobile and to chase the productivity peaks that occur in the different areas.

[Sandra] Could you identify a couple of examples in particular countries or regions where they are well known?

[Pablo] Ya, this is a very interesting question, because the stereotype of people towards pastoralists is normally like a Maasai in Kenya, that's the people that have been more in the media, but there are pastoralists everywhere, and even in developed countries. If you have a look at the stereotype of a cowboy in the United States, for example, they may not be calling themselves pastoralists, but they share with Maasai or with Tibetan pastoralist or with a lot of other pastoralists peoples, identity points. They have a degree of mobility in their livelihoods and occupy very often communal lands, and unfortunately they very often are marginalized. They are marginalized socially because they are perceived as a people with no culture or with low culture. Their perceived as people with low education and they are not very influential in policy dialogue.

[Sandra] So there are similarities across the board for different types of pastoralists in different countries?

[Pablo] Yes, there are. I mean, this is why it makes sense to make work particularly with pastoralists and why it's worth developing a working agenda that is specific to this group of producers. Because of these challenges that they share across the board. It's true that they share regional specificities, for example, in many places of the world the lack of services is a major issue. Social services like financial provisions, or education is not adapted to the necessities of mobile people, so that the members of pastoralist communities are faced with the decision of whether they should send children to school or learn pastoralist culture and that is a big challenge. However, in wealthiest countries, the problems tend to be more related to gender balance in pastoralist communities given that they have been marginalized for so long and they have been left behind the development of countries. For example, woman have massively left the pastoralist communities and they have challenges in terms of losing specific products. For example cheese that is very associated with the manufacturing of women. When the women leave these communities, they lose this culture, the communities lose this culture, and they also lose opportunities for further economic improvement. Pastoralists have been largely neglected from policy dialogue even if they are a very important part of agricultural production in the world. And they are also providing very important ecosystem services that matter to the whole society, even for the people living in the cities. So it doesn't make

sense anymore to exclude them from the dialogue. And if we leave them aside, than they will not be with us. And that is something that has to be tackled.

[Theme music IN]

[Sandra] There are core issues that connect the millions of pastoralists worldwide. Issue that need to be heard and incorporated into action at the community level and at the policy level.

When it comes to the Maasai - the intersection of age old traditional customs with the realities of a modernizing world and a changing climate, has presented a number of challenges – as we have heard - for these indigenous tribes as well as the Tanzanian Government.

By allowing their lands to be designated a Globally Important Heritage Site, the Maasai traditional leaders in Engeresaro continue to try to work with their partners and the Tanzanian Government to pursue common interests and hopefully find solutions to these challenges.

[Pause]

Thank you for listening to another episode of TARGET: Zero Hunger. If you have any questions or feedback for us please write to FAO-audio@fao.org. I am Sandra Ferrari.

[Theme music OUT]

For more information about the different GS projects around the world visit www.fao.org/giahs.