



No. 5.3 Livestock Programmes: De-stocking

What is de-stocking?

De-stocking (also known as **emergency slaughter** or **off-take**) involves the reduction of a herd size through the sale or exchange (for either food or animal feed) of livestock.

Its primary objective is to provide rapid assistance to crisis-affected communities. It also helps to protect key livestock assets, as it gives remaining livestock a better chance of survival.

Animals are either sold to traders or immediately slaughtered, with the dry or fresh meat distributed to drought-affected households as part of a food ration.

Cash received from de-stocking is often partly reinvested in animal health care, water and grazing provision to support the remaining stock.

Cash also helps households meet their basic needs and essential resources (e.g., cash, feed or food).

Table 1 lists some advantages and disadvantages or challenges presented by de-stocking.



Fig. 1: Skeletons of animals from a de-stocking programme in Niger (Credit: Glenn Edwards/OXFAM)

When is it appropriate to do de-stocking programmes?

De-stocking is most commonly used in response to *slow-onset emergencies rather than in rapid-onset disasters* when it is generally too late to do any type of de-stocking. It is appropriate to de-stock when:

Box 1: Tips for a successful de-stocking programme

- ✓ Favour cash payment if the project targets nomadic or transhumant communities
- ✓ De-stock only unproductive animals (keep young and females for future recovery)
- ✓ Favour drying meat with easy recipes if the project is at a large scale
- ✓ Liaise with logistics re: purchase, transport and stocking, meat preservation and distribution
- ✓ Link de-stocking programme to cash or food for work activity
- ✓ Involve local vet services, traders, butchers and beneficiary groups

- There is a high risk of animal mortality and/or drop in prices and sale of animals;
- There is no risk to the remaining herd's reproductive capacity (except if the entire herd is likely to die);
- It is culturally acceptable by communities to slaughter large number of animals locally;
- It is cost-effective and viable compared to feed and water provision;
- Indigenous, local markets can be used to sell animals;
- There is support from local veterinary services (for essential legal- and health-related aspects); and,
- There are no food safety issues (e.g., animal diseases) involved with meat distribution.

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages or challenges of implementing de-stocking programmes

Advantages	Disadvantages/challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives some value to an animal that would otherwise die or be sold cheaply • Cash derived can cover immediate household needs • Provides a food supplement (meat) of local origin to vulnerable communities • Can stabilise market prices due to off-take • Maintains degree of pride and dignity for recipients • Reduces pressure on resources for breeding animals and levels of overgrazing • If followed by re-stocking, can strengthen stock quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is often followed by a costly re-stocking project • Slaughtering for human consumption brings additional logistical complications (to ensure food safety, etc.) • Pastoral communities are often reluctant to de-stock, waiting until animal health and value is much reduced • Difficult to implement at a very large scale and thus the impact can be fairly limited and localised • Can have negative cultural and psychological aspects with pastoralists • Large-scale sale can affect market prices

What are the procedures and resources that need to be considered when de-stocking?

In addition to the usual programme management standards, the following criteria must be present for a de-stocking programme to be viable:

- Risk assessment for herd (e.g., water and pasture availability) and market (e.g., price changes, trends);
- Cost-efficiency calculation of size of herd viability—based on prices, animal numbers etc.;
- Liaison with veterinary services for the control of animals, carcasses and meat after slaughter and before human consumption;
- Local capacities/ritual for slaughtering (local butcher, local or mobile abattoirs) and for the sale of the animals (using local traders if possible);
- Hygiene protocols, including destruction of wastes and the hygiene of people involved in slaughter;
- Meat preservation protocol to add value to a large quantity of meat; and,
- Monitoring of animal prices in local markets and animal purchases/exchange and meat processing.

Are there any programmes examples using de-stocking?

De-stocking has featured in numerous Oxfam GB emergency interventions. For instance, as part of a drought response project in the Tanzanian district of Ngorongoro, a de-stocking by slaughter project was undertaken in late 2009. This involved providing monetary compensation to 3000 households for their animals, with any meat from the slaughter deemed fit for human consumption distributed to vulnerable households in the district.

There have been other, innovative approaches to de-stocking, including the use of private traders and vouchers (Box 2).

Box 2: Case studies of successful de-stocking programmes

De-stocking activities are one of the most widely used livestock-based interventions, and they have been done in a variety of ways, including use of private traders, contract purchase and voucher schemes. For instance:

- During the 2006 Horn of Africa drought, the Ethiopian Department of Fisheries and Livestock Marketing and SC-US implemented an accelerated, large-scale off-take intervention in Moyale Woreda. To facilitate the programme, pastoralists were linked to two private livestock traders who were provided with loans from SC-US. The intervention led to the purchase of an estimated 20,000 cattle valued at \$1.01 million.

Source: Disasters, 32 (2):167–86.

- When implementing a de-stocking operation in Northern Kenya in 2000, a local NGO—Arid Lands Development Focus (ALDEF)—asked community members to identify trustworthy contractors from among themselves to supply livestock to the programme, which ALDEF bought at a fixed price. Contractors supplied a total of 950 cattle and camels and 7,500 sheep and goats to the programme. Women's micro-credit groups in peri-urban areas supplied the bulk of sheep and goats to the contractors.
- In 2000, CARE paid beneficiaries using vouchers in its de-stocking project in highly-insecure parts of the Garissa District of Kenya. Vouchers were put into the name of a trusted community member to redeem for cash at CARE's Garissa office. Other vouchers were given collectively to one person to collect the cash, or were exchanged for cash with traders, who redeemed the vouchers with CARE.

Source: Akililu, Y. and M. Wekesa (2002), Drought, Livestock and Livelihoods: Lessons from the 1999–2001 Emergency Response in the Pastoral Sector in Kenya, HPN Paper 40, ODI, London.

Where can I find further reading and more detailed information?

Oxfam EFSL Rough Guides on Livestock Programmes: – 5.1 Livestock Systems – 5.2 Vaccination and 5.4 Re-stocking	Information on livestock health: – The World Organisation for Animal Health www.oie.int – Vet Aid www.vetaid.org
Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS): www.livestock-emergency.net	CIRAD – Agricultural research for developing countries: http://epitrop.cirad.fr

Who can I contact for more information and guidance?

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