

EDITORIAL & OPINION

fuelled by increasing human population, urbanisation, and change in people's dietary habits in favour of livestock products.

The issue of commercial orientation is key in harnessing the potential embodied in the livestock sector to combat poverty and hunger among our communities. Market orientation among livestock producers in Kenya varies across sub-sectors, regions and even farmers within the same sub-sector and region. In the dairy sector, surveys by the International Livestock Research Institute and partners show that while there are a significant number of dairy farmers who are very market oriented, others don't even sell most of their milk.

Likewise, among small poultry producers raising commercial eggs or broilers, market orientation is very high - backyard chicken producers on the other hand much less so. The operating environment for livestock producers in Kenya is characterised by high risks associated with issues including lack of access to important support services such as extension, animal health services and market information.

Access

The industry also faces the danger of frequent droughts and livestock disease outbreaks thanks to climate change as well as low access to markets due to lack of infrastructure and insecurity. Changing this scenario requires investment. Besides infrastructure development, support services including extension and animal health services should be improved, especially in the counties.

Counties in arid and semi-arid areas, where livestock is the economic mainstay, budget allocations to the industry are as low as two per cent

Feedback

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Summit should tackle core issues affecting tourism industry

The tourism summit being held at the coastal resort city of Mombasa is quite timely. It is taking place at a time of great challenges for the vital sector. It is also worth noting that the sector is implementing the Tourism Act, which provides the policy framework for transacting tourism activities in the country. Therefore, the meeting will be futile if it fails to address the core issues affecting the sector.

First, regulation of training in the sector is a question which remains unanswered. The sector has experienced increased activities in the training sub sector.

However, the quality of training is wanting. Most emerging hospitality and tourism institutions do not meet the required threshold in all aspects of training.

They lack the necessary physical infrastructure, libraries and application areas.



Tourists at Masai Mara Game Reserve.

GEORGE SAVAGE

Qualifications of the teaching staff are also questionable. The summit should recommend that the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) hastens the process of inspecting and approving hotel schools.

Secondly, product development and diversification is another impor-

tant subject which calls for urgent attention. For a long time, the country has depended on the sun, sand and wildlife. Kenya is a leading Safari destination in Africa.

Changing consumer tastes and preferences are challenging the continued reliance on the traditional tourist product.

Through the summit, the industry players and policy makers have an opportunity to make product diversification a reality. Our country is endowed with immense untapped tourism potential. Attempts to broaden the country's product offering have been largely rhetoric.

Third, marketing of the country as a preferred destination is poor. Budgetary constraints and the target markets are issues the conference will have to tackle.

Domestic tourism, diaspora and intra-African tourism are areas that the markets have ignored. A

fast growing middle class in Africa presents real opportunities for the sector. How is the country preparing to take advantage of the market segments? Our athletes have not been engaged as brand ambassadors to position Kenya in the international market.

Above all, the emergence of conference tourism as an important driver of the sector is worth the attention of the summit. While the country is playing host to major global conferences, the hospitality establishments lack quality or state-of-the-art facilities.

Can the summit look into ways of improving conference facilities in the country? Plans to have conference facilities in each region are yet to take off. There is no better time to deal with matter than at the Mombasa summit.

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via email