

Grazing lands are often seen as empty spaces to be exploited, but conservationists are warning they are key to development

by Florence Gichoya
@PeopleDailyKE

Drought, sub-division, and skyrocketing demand for land is threatening Kenya's rangelands. This was raised during a two-day Rangelands Communities Exchange Conference held in Nairobi.

The meeting was convened by Rangelands Association of Kenya in collaboration with African Conservation Centre and The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). The theme of the conference was, Examining the interface between community resource management practices and governance frameworks in Kenyan rangelands.

Chairman of African Conservation Centre (ACC), Dr David Western said: "Mobility is the basis of productivity in Kenya's rangelands where livestock and wildlife co-exist. You can't have a herd without grassland".

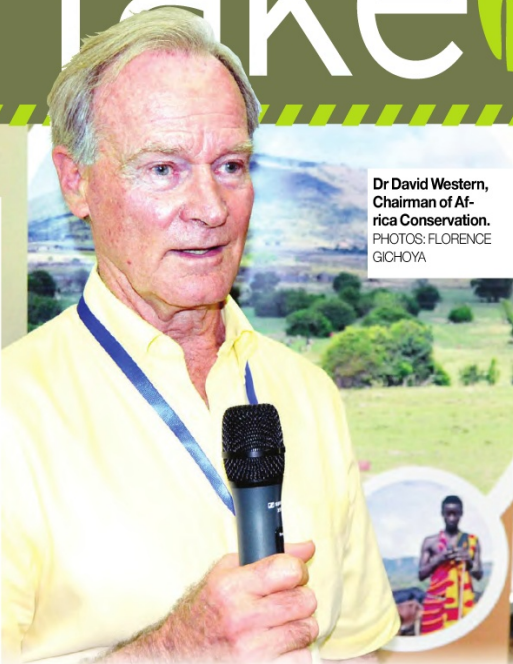
Expansion of land for agriculture since the 1970s has locked out much of the rangeland from pastoralists. Western said: "Grassland in Amboseli has degraded so much that today, there is 30 per cent less grass produced for the same amount of rainfall than it was in the 1960s. In northern Kenya, the amount of pasture produced today is 40 to 50 per cent less than the same amount of rainfall in the 1960s."

Rangelands ecosystems consist of livestock, wildlife and pastoralists communities.

Their survival and livelihoods are now at risk because of degradation of the rangelands.

Rangeland makes up 80 per cent of Kenya's land surface.

It supports 60 per cent of livestock production and more wildlife population than the national parks. Climate change and erratic weather patterns have negatively affected the population of livestock and wildlife in the rangelands.



Dr David Western,
Chairman of Africa Conservation.
PHOTOS: FLORENCE GICHOYA

Degradation a threat to Kenya's rangelands



Lucy Waruingi, Director African Conservation Centre says government agenda depends on protection of rangelands.

"Drought is becoming more frequent and longer, not because of the rainfall, but because of grazing pressure. The 2009 drought had adverse effect in Amboseli ecosystem that resulted in the loss of 75 per cent cattle, 60 per cent of sheep and goats, and 90 per cent of wildebeest," Dr Western said.

ACC Director, Lucy Waruingi said rangelands are not merely empty space, but they are the next frontier of development and as such, the government's big four key pillars for economic development are all dependent on availability of land space.

"Rangelands, therefore, play a key role in the realisation of food security, affordable housing, manufacturing and

HISTORY OF KENYA'S GRASSLANDS

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Representative Act and Trust Land Act guaranteed communal ownership of land. Community land was held as trust land and group ranches and pastoralists were at liberty to move their livestock to other areas where there was available pasture.

However, since the 1990s land privatisation and sub-division to individual owners caused the shrinking of grassland's total surface area in the country. This has compromised livestock productivity, wildlife mobility and lowered the quality of pasture. Human encroachment of rangeland has also increased cases of human wildlife conflict especially during periods of drought.

Rangeland management is expensive and different communities apply different methods of managing their resources. John Kamanga, the director of South Rift Association of Land Owners (Soralo) shared on the success of Maasai's Eramatare system. This is a traditional conservation framework that incorporates people, livestock and wildlife in rangelands conservation. "The Maasai people conserved their rangelands collectively and shared a brotherhood concept in building a system based on respect for people, animals and the land," he said.

health care system," she said.

The government's key agenda in the next five years will be anchored on the big four pillars of improving food security, growing the manufacturing sector, and providing inexpensive healthcare and housing.

The successful implementation of the four pillars will be pegged on availability of land.

DIY: CASH IN TRASH

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Rustic inspiration for your living room décor

Are you interested in, or even a tiny bit obsessed, with all things rustic? I know I am. However, rustic can be one of the trickiest styles to integrate into your house. Mostly when you see and think of rustic décor, you think of whites and a pop of dreary rusty-brown right? Well, you can brighten up your home with some beautifully designed rustic décor. Here are a few ideas and tips.

Rustic décor with lighting

Dramatic chandeliers and gothic style lighting are wonderful compliments to any rustic living room. Shaped iron, glass to recycled wood are ideas for lighting with rustic inspiration. If you are worried about the budget there are some wonderful faux-chandeliers on the market these days that can really lighten up the rustic in your living room.

Rustic inspiration

Rustic with modern day rustic inspiration means merging traditional rustic style with modern interior design. There are many ways to do this while maintaining the modern mood of your home and the rustic inspiration of your living room. If wooden beams aren't a possibility for your living room there are many other ways that you can integrate wood to provide a rustic mood. Chunky wooden tables are a beautiful way to add natural wood into your living room. They are usually a central part in this space so you can definitely afford to go big and bold in this area.

News brief

Trump's fear of sharks leads to surge in charity donations

Donald Trump's reported fear of sharks appears to have led to a flood of donations to animal welfare charities.

Trump revealed his dislike of sharks on Twitter in 2013, saying they were "last on my list - other than perhaps the losers and haters of the world!"

The matter came back into public focus after an interview with the porno-

graphic film actor Stormy Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford. Clifford told the magazine Trump had been glued to shark programmes on the Discovery Channel. "He is obsessed with sharks" she said. "Terrified of sharks."

Cynthia Wigren, the chief executive officer and co-founder of Atlantic White Shark Conservancy, told the *MarketWatch*

website: "We have been receiving donations in Trump's name since the story was published." The boost is welcome, Wigren said, as "it can certainly be a challenge to raise money for a species that most people fear".

A person has also adopted a 13ft-long great white shark in Trump's name. Princeton's Shark Research Institute allows

people to adopt sharks that have been spotted and tagged in the wild by its researchers. Its executive director, Marie Levine, told reporters: "I think it was a jab at President Trump."

Trump was criticised for reportedly eating shark fin soup at a state dinner in Vietnam last year. The practice of shark finning is outlawed in many countries,

including the US, and the industry is estimated to be responsible for a large proportion of the 100 million sharks killed each year.

Clifford claimed Trump said to her: "I donate to all these charities and I would never donate to any charity that helps sharks."

-The Guardian