AFRICAN UNION
INTERAFRICAN BUREAU
FOR ANIMAL RESOURCES

FACT SHEET
SOMALIA

Somalia's Feed and Fodder Sector

Pathways to Resilience and Commercialization

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Overview

Somalia's feed and fodder sector sits at the centre of one of Africa's most livestock-dependent economies. The livestock subsector contributes about 43.4–45% of national GDP, about 80% of agricultural GDP, and historically accounted for roughly 75% of total exports. The country also holds an exceptionally large livestock asset base of about 55.7–56 million animals, including around 6.65 million camels, 30.5 million goats, 13 million sheep, and 5.5 million cattle. Yet despite this scale, feed and fodder remains underdeveloped, weakly organized, and chronically exposed to climate shocks.

Recent targeted national assessments and business-oriented follow-up work have therefore reframed Somalia's feed and fodder sector not only as a drought resilience issue, but also as an economic and commercialization opportunity.

Why it matters

Somalia's feed and fodder sector matters because it underpins:

Livestock survival and productivity: Milk yield, meat output, and herd condition are directly shaped by water availability and the nutritional quality of fodder. The Somalia assessment notes strong demand for high-quality fodder, especially from large dairy farms in urban and peri-urban areas. It also records that high-protein imported alfalfa pellets and sesame cake can raise milk and meat production by **up to 30%**.

Drought resilience: Somalia remains heavily dependent on natural grazing and browsing, which are increasingly unreliable because of recurrent droughts, weak rangeland management, and heavy strain on available land and water. The country's feed system is therefore a frontline resilience issue, not a secondary livestock concern.

Food systems and livelihoods: The livestock and crop subsectors are primary sources of livelihoods, employment, income, and exports. Yet household consumption of animal-sourced foods remains limited by poverty and price sensitivity. Nationally, food accounts for about 55% of household spending, rising to 60% for nomads. This means weak feed systems affect not only livestock producers but also food affordability.

Women-led enterprise: AWARFA-N Somalia demonstrates that women can participate in feed and fodder as producers, preservers, marketers, and managers of commercial enterprises, rather than only as peripheral actors. Its business model is one of the clearest country-specific signals that feed and fodder can support both inclusion and commercialization.

Key facts and figures

The strongest Somalia-specific signals from the project are these:

i) 39% sector score after assessment, meaning Somalia remained classified as Unstructured after the national assessment.
ii) USD 8 billion estimated feed and fodder opportunity, highlighted during Somalia's agri-investment forum.
iii) 2.7 million metric tonnes estimated annual feed demand versus 1.2 million metric tonnes local production, leaving a structural deficit of about 1.5 million metric tonnes.
iv) 50 hectares of leased wetland under the AWARFA-N Somalia model.
v) USD 501,225 projected first-year annual revenue for the AWARFA-N Somalia enterprise.
vi) Imported high-protein pelletized feeds and sesame cake cost USD 450–600 per MT, creating a strong import-substitution opportunity for domestic investors.
vii) The recent prolonged droughts resulting in the loss of about 4 million animals.

The challenge

Somalia's feed and fodder challenge is structural.

Livestock still obtain feed mainly through grazing and browsing on natural pastures, with only limited use of crop residues, cultivated fodder, and concentrated feeds. In drier pastoral areas, forage is severely limited because of recurrent droughts and dependence on rainfall pastures. In mixed farming areas, natural pastures are being converted to cropping, making crop residues more important, but these residues are often wasted or used inefficiently because of limited knowledge and capacity for processing and conservation.

The sector also suffers from:

i) lack of reliable feed producers at scale;
ii) little large-scale commercial fodder production;
iii) weak frameworks, policies, and strategies to guide investment;
iv) insecurity and poor accessibility, especially in high-potential riverine areas;
v) and limited data on feed quantities, feed processing, marketing, and livestock populations needed for informed planning.

The country assessment is explicit that Somalia lacks "systematic and guided plans" for lasting feed and fodder solutions and that a national feed inventory and feed balance is urgently needed.

The opportunity

Despite this fragility, Somalia's opportunity is substantial. The assessment identifies several strong opportunity drivers:

i) excess demand for fodder at seaports and export corridors;
ii) increased investment in large dairy farms in urban centres;
iii) potential for high-yielding pasture varieties such as alfalfa and drought-tolerant Brachiaria;
iv) opportunities in irrigation infrastructure;
v) and significant regional export opportunities, including to Ethiopia and Djibouti.

Somalia's close proximity to Gulf markets and favourable market preferences also give it a comparative advantage in livestock exports and potentially in related feed value chains. High urbanization and growth in meat and dairy demand create a growing domestic market as well. The AWARFA-N Somalia document estimates that the livestock sector is growing by 5–15% annually, strengthening the commercial case for feed and fodder production and distribution.

The country's riverine districts along the Juba and Shabelle rivers are repeatedly identified as high-potential areas for commercial fodder production, especially under irrigation.

What is changing

Recent project work suggests that Somalia is beginning to move from diagnosis toward structured opportunity.

Somalia's MSP facilitated the country's first agri-investment forum under the broader initiative, showcasing the USD 8 billion national opportunity. The event generated plans for a diaspora-focused virtual investor engagement and strong interest from an Islamic Bank in Sharia-compliant fodder financing. The 2024 annual report notes that these processes are already improving investor interest in feedlot-based commercialization, fodder trade formality, and export quality.

At enterprise level, AWARFA-N Somalia has moved beyond general advocacy into a concrete commercial model:

i. 40% of its land is allocated to Sugar Graze Sorghum, 30% to Improved Sweet Potato Vines, and 30% to Improved Napier Grass;
ii. it combines production with silage, fresh fodder, and planting material sales;
iii. and it is developing direct sales and distribution points targeting livestock producers, dairy farmers, and feed suppliers.

This is important because it shows that Somalia's pathway is not only about policy reform; it is also about proving that localized, women-led commercial fodder systems are viable.

Fast facts / signals

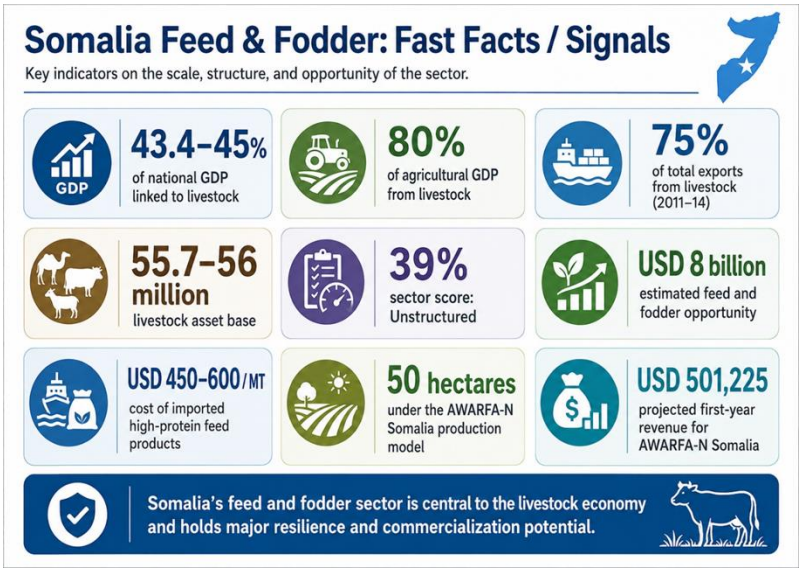


Figure 1: Somalia Feed and Fodder: Fast Facts/Signals

What must happen next

Somalia's next step is to move from scattered opportunity to structured sector development.

The strongest priorities:

1. Recognize feed and fodder as a strategic economic sector, not only a drought-survival issue.
2. Establish a national feed inventory and feed balance so the country can plan using real-time evidence on production, marketing, and livestock demand.
3. Invest in riverine fodder corridors and storage infrastructure, especially in the Juba and Shabelle zones.
4. Scale Sharia-compliant finance and diaspora investment, using instruments such as *Musharaka* and *Murabaha*.

5. Formalize fodder contracting and market linkages, moving from informal, trust-based trade to more structured off-take and distribution.
6. Support women-led enterprises like AWARFA-N Somalia, especially for irrigation, mechanization, preservation, and distribution.
7. Strengthen data, policy, and private-sector coordination, since weak information and institutional fragmentation remain among the biggest bottlenecks.

Key takeaway

Somalia's feed and fodder sector is both a critical resilience issue and a major economic opportunity. The country's livestock economy is too important to remain dependent on weak, rain-fed, poorly organized feed systems. The evidence now available shows that Somalia can move from chronic vulnerability toward a more resilient, commercial, and investable feed and fodder system — one anchored in better data, riverine production, preservation, formalized trade, Sharia-compliant finance, diaspora capital, and women-led enterprise.