

LAIKIPIA FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Laikipia farmers support effective security operations, reject claims of interference

Rumuruti, March 27, 2017 (Laikipia Farmers' Association) – The Laikipia Farmers Association supports police and security agencies for operations carried out to restore the rule of law and order in parts of Laikipia county where herders have driven tens of thousands of cattle onto private and communal land illegally.

The LFA however rejects claims circulating on social media that some commercial ranches and conservancies are interfering with Government security operations in the north and west of the county, including by encouraging the shooting dead of cattle.

Martin Evans, chairman of the LFA, said: *"The LFA supports the Government's decision to effect police and KDF operations to restore law and order in areas that have fallen victim to the violent actions of illegally-armed individuals among pastoralists who have moved their livestock to Laikipia.*

"The relevant command hierarchies of these security agencies direct the actions of all of their officers who take part in these operations. The LFA and its members rightly have absolutely no influence or voice in their planning or execution, and anyone suggesting differently is spreading falsehoods we believe for their own propagandist aims.

"No matter the violence that some of our members have endured as this illegal grazing crisis has continued, no-one in the LFA would condone the type of action we are being accused of. Along with Laikipia's resident pastoralists, its smallholder farmers, its wildlife, and its business community, our members are the victims of this crisis, not its instigators."

Already, more than 30 people have been killed and hundreds more suffered losses to their livelihoods since the crisis began. Herders from outside Laikipia have driven more than 200,000 cattle, sheep, and goats into the county looking for pasture as overgrazing and now drought bites further north.

They have violently invaded land, destroyed property, stolen livestock as well as pasture, slaughtered and poached wildlife indiscriminately, and retaliated with armed force when approached.

Effective disarmament is the most urgent goal, followed by peaceful dialogue between all affected parties including the owners of the herds illegally grazing private and communal land in Laikipia, in order to find a permanent solution acceptable to all sides, the LFA said.

Evans continued: *"We are ready to help the Government in any way that they see fit, to re-establish law and order, to seize illegal firearms, to implement cattle movement regulations, and to start discussions so that issues of access to resources never again leads to such violence, in Laikipia or anywhere else in Kenya."*

The LFA represents private investors, community group ranches, land owners, property managers, and businesses operating 58 enterprises in Laikipia. Together, they employ close to 4,000 people, drive

a four-billion-shilling-a-year economy, pay 500 million shillings into social development projects annually, and draw significant foreign direct investment.

These incidents have been clustered in the north and west of Laikipia. Areas to the east that are most visited by tourists remain largely unaffected.

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For more details, including interviews with the LFA chair or specific members, please email **laikipiafarmersassociation@gmail.com**

The Laikipia Farmers' Association is authorised to talk on behalf of all of its members and can quickly find information for reporters directly from the parties concerned. We encourage journalists to approach us with any requests for information they may have, rather than trying to contact our members individually.