

SUMMARY PAPERS

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These papers summarise the presentations and debates at the study days organised by the French Cooperation "Land Tenure & Development" Technical Committee.

Protecting pastoralism

The challenges of getting pastoral commons recognised in the multidimensional crisis in West Africa

This report summarises the presentations and debates at the regional seminar on local land management in West Africa and Madagascar convened by the "Land Tenure & Development" Technical Committee (CTFD) in Saint-Louis, Senegal, on 6-10 March 2023. The seminar was attended by 70 participants, who included members of civil society and farmer organisations, land administrations, experts and researchers from eight African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, Madagascar, Mali and Niger), members of the CTFD and speakers from AFD.

The seminar was structured around several sessions where participants could share their experiences and break into reflective sub-groups. After an initial introductory speech by Sidy Mohamed Seck (Gaston Berger University) and a round-table discussion with representatives of regional farmer organisations (ROPPA, APESS, RBM), thematic sessions led by Oussouby Touré and Pierre-Aimé Ouedraogo provided an opportunity to share local initiatives and discuss their strengths and limitations. Discussions were structured around four main themes: current approaches to local land management, securing pastoral rights, land observatories, and reducing inequalities in access to land. The workshop ended with a day of collective reflection on the challenges ahead and how the Committee and its partners can address these issues in future work. This paper is based on the presentations and discussions that took place during the thematic session on securing pastoral rights.

Livestock and pastoralism play a key role in rural economies and regional integration in the Sahel and West Africa. The livestock sub-sector contains a substantial number of animals (estimated at over 346 million head; Kagoné, 2019) and is a driver of regional and national wealth creation. Indeed, its estimated contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of ECOWAS countries is in excess of 5%, and varies between 10% and 15% of GDP in several Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad). Livestock also play a crucial role in ensuring the food and nutritional security of the millions of people engaged in production, processing, marketing and service activities related to this sector. Opportunities to add value to livestock products with high economic potential, such as hides and skins, remain largely under-exploited.

Despite their economic importance at local, national and regional levels, pastoral and transhumance systems face numerous challenges from the major socio-economic changes currently occurring in the Sahel and West Africa (climate change, population growth, accelerated urbanisation, changing use of natural lands, increasing conflicts over access to and use of natural resources, growing insecurity, etc.). The fact that livestock numbers increased throughout the Sahel until the recent security crisis, despite the various constraints on access to natural resources, demonstrates the vitality and adaptability of these systems.

In order to understand pastoralists' vulnerability to these multidimensional challenges, this briefing note starts by analysing the different ways in which public policies have increased support for pastoral systems, and considers the benefits and limitations of approaches to secure pastoral land rights in relatively stable contexts. It then reflects on their ability to provide appropriate responses to the

>>> The "Land Tenure and Development" Technical Committee is an informal think tank composed of experts, researchers and senior members of the French Cooperation. It was set up in 1996 to provide strategic support to the French Cooperation and guide land tenure initiatives.

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new challenges facing rural populations the Sahel and West Africa, where multidimensional climate, socio-political, security and humanitarian crises are feeding on and amplifying each other. The final section recommends a shift towards a new political economy that would make land management systems more sensitive to the needs and interests of pastoralism; and summarises key points made during the workshop to identify themes for continued support by the "Land Tenure & Development" Technical Committee (CTFD).¹

> RENEWED PUBLIC POLICY SUPPORT FOR RECOGNITION OF PASTORAL COMMONS AND THE RESILIENCE OF PASTORAL LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS

Post-independence public policies on the livestock sector continued with the approaches previously promoted by colonial administrations, which were dismissive of pastoral traditions. Their main objectives were to sedentarise, modernise and intensify livestock systems in order to increase animal productivity and generate greater added value per hectare. It is also important to consider the socio-political attitudes that informed these policies, which were formulated in a context of written and spoken hostility to mobile pastoral systems, and therefore attempted to impose a particular view of livestock rearing on pastoral societies while addressing certain economic and environmental concerns. Projects that followed these public policy guidelines and promoted so-called "modern" livestock systems (expansion and intensification of ranching, fodder production, feed supplements, experiments with genetic improvements, etc.) effectively absorbed most of the public resources allocated to the livestock sector, but did not produce the expected results. Government interventions in pastoral areas after independence mainly focused on promoting veterinary services and pastoral water supplies. Pastoral livestock systems became associated with desertification following the major droughts of 1972/1973 and 1983/1984;² and it was not until the mid-1990s that governments and certain technical and financial partners decided to reinvest in pastoral water supplies in Sahelian zones, which were in dire need of such amenities by then.

Public policy paradigms that are unfavourable to pastoralism persist to this day, even though research has shown that mobile livestock systems are useful, adaptable and help maintain ecological balances (recycling organic matter, regenerating rangelands in dry areas, etc.).³ The significant ben-

efits generated by transhumance through multifaceted exchanges between regions, territories and stakeholders are also often ignored.

The prejudicial and simplistic representations of pastoral systems belie the fact that they are remarkably resilient. Local adaptation strategies not only enabled them to recover from repeated drought crises with virtually no help from the public authorities (1972/1973, 1984/1985, 2004/2005, 2009/2010), but also cope with the pressures caused by climate variability and the expansion of agricultural activities in rural areas. For example, Niger saw a 43% increase in the amount of land under cultivation between 1975 and 2000, mainly at the expense of pastoral areas⁴.

Observers also note that the interactions and complementarities between pastoral and agricultural production systems are such that they need to coexist in order to function effectively. In several regions of West Africa, social, technical and institutional innovations have strengthened synergies between agriculture and livestock rearing in family production units and on a wider scale,⁵ and encouraged the development of agro-ecological practices that are adapted to specific types of natural environments and livestock systems.

The lessons learned from these developments created a conducive environment for more favourable public policies and legal frameworks for pastoralism, such as community regulations on pastoralism in the ECOWAS region, and the adoption of pasto-

1. CTFD: Regional seminar on local land management. Saint Louis, 6 to 10 March 2023.

2. The public authorities believed that the rising number of livestock were a major factor in overgrazing and over-intensive use of natural resources, and contributed to further desertification. In their view, the strategy of accumulating livestock may be logical in an environment where natural resources are not limited, but is irrational in a context of scarce resources and reduced pastoral spaces.

3. Livestock mobility is still highly controversial, and "livestock grazing, particularly by transhumant herds, (...) is often described as overgrazing, and accused of degrading the ecosystem by reducing plant cover, exporting mineral elements and modifying the flora in favour of invasive plants." Such criticisms are questionable, given that several scientific studies have downplayed the role that pastoral activity plays in environmental degradation (Hiernaux, P. et al., 2018: "Au Sahel, maintenir l'élevage pastoral pour s'adapter au changement climatique". In *Le Monde*, 26 November 2018). It should be added that pastoralism has a balanced carbon footprint in semi-arid livestock farming areas (Assouma, M. H. et al., 2019: "Territoires d'élevage pastoral au Sahel : un bilan carbone avec un potentiel inattendu d'atténuation du changement climatique". In *Perspectives* n° 52. CIRAD policy brief).

4. Land Cover Applications and Global Change, USGS, 2000. West Africa Land Use and Land Cover Trends Project. http://lca.usgs.gov/lca/africalulc/results.php#niger_lulc.

5. ECOWAS, 2018: *Innovative multi-stakeholder projects for potential scaling up of agroecological practices* (Title of Call for Project Proposals).

Key findings on the economic impacts of cross-border transhumance

For a long time, the difficulty of accurately assessing the economic impacts of transhumance made it hard to build a solid case for the usefulness and economic importance of this practice. However, things started to change with Thébaud's pioneering study (2017)⁵ on the economics of transhumance in five (5) Sahelian countries (Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger). Surveys of sample herder families conducted during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 seasons made it possible to measure the direct economic impacts of transhumance, particularly expenditure on key items. *"The total declared expenditure for the 386 families surveyed was close to half a billion francs CFA (474.4 million), from an average budget of around 1,230,000 francs CFA per family. However, this is a conservative calculation as it does not include the monetary value of animals that were used as payments in kind [...] when analysing the difficulties of transhu-*

mance. Not all families spend the same amount. Food, veterinary products, livestock feed and phone calls are irreducible expenses. The biggest expenses are animal feed (44%) and food (22%), compared with 6.5% for veterinary products, 4.3% for mobile phones and 4.2% for watering costs. A small number of families spend money on other items, such as fodder or bicycles."

The central conclusion of the study emphasises the significant economic impacts of transhumance. *"Whether transhumance is internal or cross-border, all expenditure occurs outside the home territory: in host areas and on the outward and return journeys. From now on, we can say – and provide the figures to back this up – that livestock mobility and transhumance movements are good for business, good for local populations, and good for administrative bodies and representatives of the State."*

6. Thébaud, B., 2017: Pastoral and agropastoral resilience in the Sahel: Portraits of transhumance 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 (Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger). Full document.

ral codes in many countries. These new regulatory frameworks are positive steps in that they generally acknowledge the importance of livestock mobility as a lever for improved performance, particularly in terms of:

- livestock productivity;
- preserving fragile ecosystems; and
- contributing to local, national, cross-border and regional economies. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that policies and legal frameworks for securing pastoral land have followed very different paths.

These variations should be understood in light of:

- the difficulty of determining how much land is used for pastoral systems, which are based on temporary occupation of space and itinerant use of pastoral resources (particularly herbaceous and aerial biomass); and
- the complex land management systems required to manage pastoral infrastructures and facilities (water points, transhumance routes, rest areas, access tracks to saline land, etc.).

Barrière and Bonnet (2022)⁷ argue that *"the integration of pastoralism into the legal and political landscape is turning into a 'land tragedy'. Transhumance routes are not fields, with or without common grazing. In order to understand the political and legal trajectories of land and pastoral law, it is no longer possible to ignore the appropriation of land, which is in complete contradiction with common use. The deadlock in this land tragedy can only be broken by recognising a system of pastoral commons and taking pastoral lands (apart from*

infrastructures) out of appropriable land so that the two regimes (for land and use) can continue to coexist."

Overall, the development of public policies and legal frameworks represents a major step forward in recognising pastoral commons in the Sahel and West Africa. But the progress made should not blind us to the problems caused by the different paths various countries have taken, which are summarised below:

- **Dual regulations for livestock mobility** juxtapose different visions of livestock rearing: one that argues for the need to maintain a mobile system that can continuously adapt to climate change and variability; and another that promotes an intensive sedentary system, which is seen as more viable by the many elites that have invested in livestock or set up ranches (senior military officials, local government officials, wealthy livestock farmers and traders, etc.). Recent forecasts by ECOWAS (2022)⁸ show the need to strengthen the interdependence between Sahelian pastoral systems and peri-urban systems that focus on milk production and finishing lean animals reared by pastoralists. Nigeria's current experience is interesting in this respect.

7. Barrière, O. and Bonnet, B., 2022: *Analyse des trajectoires des politiques et du droit foncier agro-pastoral en Afrique de l'Ouest*. "Land Tenure & Development" Technical Committee, Regards sur le foncier n° 13 - November 2022.

8. ECOWAS, 2022: *Quels scénarii d'évolution pour les systèmes d'élevage mobiles à l'horizon 2040 ?* Summary note on the prospects for livestock rearing in West Africa.

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- **The coexistence of two (2) regulatory models** based on contradictory basic principles: one recognises herders' right to access natural resources in the same way as other rural land users, and affirms the principle of free and unrestricted access to grazing; the other introduces a system that taxes livestock access to pastoral resources – which is increasingly used by local authorities in coastal countries such as Benin and Togo.⁹
- **Growing asymmetry between pastoral land policies in Sahelian countries and those in coastal countries.** Both sets of countries have to contend with increasingly precarious pastoral land tenure, but in different contexts. On the one hand, challenges to pastoral use rights in Sahelian countries are exacerbated by flawed rural land governance systems and a decline in the activities of civil society organisations, which no longer systematically fulfil their role as watchdogs. On the other hand, coastal countries say they want to make livestock farmers more sedentary, and have introduced policies restricting the entry of foreign transhumant

herders, rather than offering them a warm welcome as has long been the practice. The security crisis has fuelled mistrust of transhumance and led to the introduction of a strict regulatory framework for cross-border livestock movements in order to control animal flows (quotas, timetables, routes, staging areas).

We can see that important milestones have been reached in terms of rehabilitating pastoralism,¹⁰ thanks to the adoption of innovative public policies and progressive national legislation that better formalises herders' rights to access natural resources.

.....
9. As well as questioning the principle of taxing a resource that has not been developed or invested in by the resident community or the decentralised authority in whose territory the area is located, it is also important to consider how abuses can be avoided in a system where the arrival of transhumant herders represents a financial windfall for many actors.

10. The "Njamena Declaration on the contribution of pastoral livestock rearing to the security and development of the Sahara-Sahelian areas" adopted in May 2013 shifted the boundaries and encouraged integration institutions and technical and financial partners to initiate projects to support pastoralism.

Cattle herd watering in a pond in the Goubré lowland, Burkina Faso, 2014 © Ibra Touré



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At the regional level, integration institutions and technical and financial partners' renewed interest in pastoralism is reflected in:

- the implementation between 2014 and 2023 of about 10 regional projects to develop pastoralism and manage cross-border transhumance;¹¹
- the institutionalisation of a high-level framework for dialogue on peaceful transhumance between the Sahel and coastal countries, and broadening the consultation process to include major cross-border transhumance corridors (Central Corridor, Western Corridor and Eastern Corridor).

However, much still needs to be done to consolidate this progress, as national public institutions and regional integration organisations seem incapable of effectively enforcing the pastoral legislation that has been introduced or implementing the innovative public policies that have been adopted. In political terms, pastoral livestock systems are increasingly deprived of their main factors of production, namely space, pastoral resources (grazing and water) and the possibility of moving across complementary territories. This situation is partly due to problematic community regulations and national legislation, and the lack of investment in infrastructure, livestock monitoring systems and training for those concerned. Nor should we underestimate the effects of new factors that are exacerbating pastoral vulnerability following the closure of Benin and Togo's borders and the blocking of transhumant herders' movements.¹²

> **EFFORTS TO SECURE PASTORAL LAND TENURE IN A RELATIVELY STABLE CONTEXT: LESSONS TO BE LEARNED, PROGRESS TO BE MAINTAINED AND CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME**

On a theoretical level, our thinking about approaches to securing pastoral land tenure should reflect the fact that the main cause of conflict in West Africa, where there is strong competition between different rural land users, is not so much the shortage of natural resources to exploit but the inability of institutional mechanisms to provide effective arbitration and thus support equitable access to these resources. It is also important to question the classic analytical approach that focuses on "farmer-herder" conflicts. This reduces security issues to rivalries between two (2) professional/ethnic/religious communities, obscures the diverse and flexible non-conflictual relations between different categories of rural land user (farmers, herd-

ers, fishers, foresters, etc.), and underestimates the extent to which agricultural production systems are shifting towards agropastoralism, which is now asserting itself as the keystone of resilience to climatic hazards.

Efforts to secure pastoral land have not only been based on developing legal and regulatory instruments, but also on implementing joint approaches to planning and managing agro-pastoral areas. Local stakeholders have instigated numerous initiatives of this kind at various levels (local, communal, inter-communal and, more recently, cross-border, etc.). These initiatives are usually based on packages of integrated activities to develop pastoral areas, install water points, delineate and demarcate transhumance corridors, and put in place systems for inclusive and equitable management of pastoral resources. In operational terms, they are based on a process of negotiating/strengthening social agreements between rural actors who share the same territory or live in contiguous areas, and are already involved in more or less longstanding social relationships.

Papers presented at the regional seminar in Saint-Louis in March 2023 and the regional seminar on securing agropastoral land tenure in N'Djamena in November 2021¹³ describe the diverse models that have been tested in the field to secure pastoral land tenure: pastoral development initiatives by the Groupement Intercommunal des Collines in Benin; initiatives to develop and secure pastoral areas in eastern Burkina Faso; Land Use Plans (Schémas d'Aménagement Foncier, SAF) in Niger; and mechanisms to link Land Use Plans and Pastoral Units in Senegal.

11. These include the Regional Sahel Pastoralism Support Project (PRAPS), the Regional Investment Programme for Livestock Development in Coastal Countries (PRIDEC), the Regional Programme for the Education and Training of Pastoral Populations in Cross-Border Areas (PREPP), the Support Programme for the Resilience of Agropastoral Systems in West Africa (PARSAO), the Project to Strengthen Resilience in the Sahel through Livestock Mobility (BRACED), the Integrated and Sustainable Livestock Farming and Pastoralism in West Africa Project (PEPISAO) and Regional Dialogue and Investment Project for Pastoralism and Transhumance in the Sahel and Coastal Countries of West Africa (PREDIP). It should be noted that PRIDEC was designed by regional pastoral organisations which were concerned that the PRAPS intervention zone did not cover coastal countries, and that the project therefore did not take account of cross-border mobility between the Sahel and coastal areas. PEPISAO and PREDIP are specific components of PRIDEC, but coastal countries have been unable to finance their own country PRIDEC programmes.

12. The joint transhumance monitoring system set up by the Billital Maroobé Network and the International Organisation for Migration identified around 1,000,000 head of cattle blocked on their way back to their homelands in December 2020, and 1.5 million animals in January/February 2021.

13. <https://www.foncier-ndjamena2021.org/>

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The approaches promoted by these initiatives focus on several common concerns:

- protecting and/or rehabilitating pastoral areas;
- securing livestock mobility by delineating and signposting grazing areas, transhumance corridors and livestock routes; and
- establishing systems to regulate access to pastoral resources. The Pastoral Units (PUs) that have been set up in the Ferlo region in Senegal seem to be an effective way of protecting pastoral land from agricultural encroachment, and their impact has been increased by using a cluster approach to cover much of the communal territory.

Initiatives to secure cross-border livestock mobility include introducing a consistent system to demarcate transhumance corridors between departure, transit and reception areas, so that exit posts in Sahelian countries and border crossing posts in coastal countries are marked out in the same way. Some pastoral organisations have also sought to improve mutual understanding between cross-border transhumant herders and host communities, to encourage social agreements that can provide a basis for cooperation on jointly managed common resources.

It should be noted that most of these initiatives have led to interesting innovations. For example, the inter-community approach in eastern Burkina Faso helped pave the way for sustainable funding for pastoral infrastructures by using some of the revenues from livestock markets to invest in the sector and maintain livestock routes and water systems. Stakeholders believe that livestock markets should be taxed in order to fund the management and maintenance of surrounding pastoral infrastructures, especially livestock routes, the water points that line them, and feed banks.¹⁴

In Benin, the Groupement Intercommunal des Colines (GIC) is leading an initiative that helps facilitate interventions in the agro-pastoral sector through an innovative alliance between an agro-pastoralist organisation and an inter-municipal body. The GIC has also set up a mechanism to reimburse members of livestock route management committees for expenses they have incurred, thereby helping create the conditions for sustainable monitoring of pastoral amenities.

However, these achievements should not blind us to the many challenges that still need to be addressed. Experience has shown that none of the pastoral areas in eastern Burkina Faso are truly secure, despite the progress that has been made. The points of contention between different user groups can only be resolved through lengthy negotiation processes, which are needed to reach social

agreements that provide the basis for security in pastoral areas. Social agreements on protected grazing areas or the rehabilitation of degraded land may be challenged at any time as there is no political support strategy, development and/or management plan for the sites, or plans to formalise herders' land rights. And because current national legislation takes little account of local rules negotiated between the actors involved in managing pastoral commons, the tools needed to give it concrete form are not widely used.

Implementation of the Land Use Planning scheme in Niger has helped calm tensions between different rural land users in the Dosso region, and establish socio-land negotiations as a necessary part of land management procedures. However, people seem to have lost sight of the need for anticipatory land use planning, which means that the land use planning system has no real capacity to anticipate risks and conflicts at a time when contextual changes are altering social links within and between communities.

The Pastoral Units (PUs) that were set up in Senegal highlight the need for sustainable post-project funding mechanisms for consultation and regulating access to natural resources. Since 2015, PUs have been created and supported through a resource management model based on the links between Communes, Pastoral Units and borehole users' associations (ASUFOR). Some of the livestock watering tax collected by ASUFORs is supposed to be transferred to PUs,¹⁵ but their long-term funding is threatened by the lack of transparency and poor governance of many ASUFORs, poorly maintained infrastructures, and the Office des Forages Ruraux recent reform of the water sector, which delegated services to private operators.

> THREATS CAUSED BY THE SCRAMBLE FOR PASTORAL LAND

The rapid spread of commercial land transactions in many rural areas of West Africa is causing concern because the new dynamics that are developing, particularly around pastoral land, are pitting herders against actors from very different worlds (extractive industries, property development), who can use the balance of power they create when they take over community pastoral lands to further their own interests.

14. This would reverse the situation in some pastoral areas, where none of the many (legal and 'informal') taxes raised at livestock markets are used to invest in the livestock sector or support the pastoralists who generate much of its wealth.

15. AVSF, 2015. Gestion pastorale au Sénégal. Des UP au Sénégal pour un accès durable et équitable aux ressources naturelles. Les expériences innovantes d'AVSF. Lyon - AVSF.

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Multinational companies eager to exploit the rich natural resources available in pastoral areas across the Sahel (uranium, oil, gas, gold, etc.) have obtained mining and oil titles on some or all of the land where pastoralists have priority use rights.¹⁶

Pastoral communities in these areas are rarely involved in consultation processes or environmental and social impact studies, but are the first to suffer the many negative impacts of newly established extractive industries, which include:

- adverse effects on human and animal health;
- loss of grazing land;
- over-exploitation and pollution of water points; and
- declining animal productivity.

Pastoral land is also threatened by peri-urban housing developments on pastoral land owned by the State or local authorities. The emergence of

an urban middle class seeking access to housing (particularly detached houses) is fuelling the rapid expansion of urbanisation and land speculation, prompting property developers to buy up pastoral land near certain large towns (such as Tillabéry and Niamey in Niger, and Dakar in Senegal) and convert it into more profitable housing lots.

> PASTORALISM IN INSURGENT AREAS

In addition to the upheavals caused by encroachments into peri-urban agro-pastoral lands, we need to consider the security crisis that has affected the Sahelian zone since 2012. This should be seen as the consequence of a wider deep-rooted crisis in Sahelian and West African societies, whose structural causes are mainly due to the failure of governance systems, increasing lack of trust between citizens and the State, the geopolitics of natural resources, and the perverse effects of foreign aid.

The growing number of areas plagued by persistent insecurity (attacks perpetrated by jihadist groups, violence committed by self-defence militias, and abuses attributed to the defence and security forces) has transformed many pastoral areas into lawless spaces where the State is notable only by its absence.

16. In the specific case of Niger, pastoral legislation states that when mining and oil titles cover part or all of the areas where pastoralists have priority use rights, the land required for mining and oil activities can only be occupied after fair and prior compensation has been paid. In reality, the absence of implementing legislation for compensation in the specific field of extractive industries means that these provisions are not enforced.

Market day in Eggo, Bermo department, Niger © Oussouby Touré



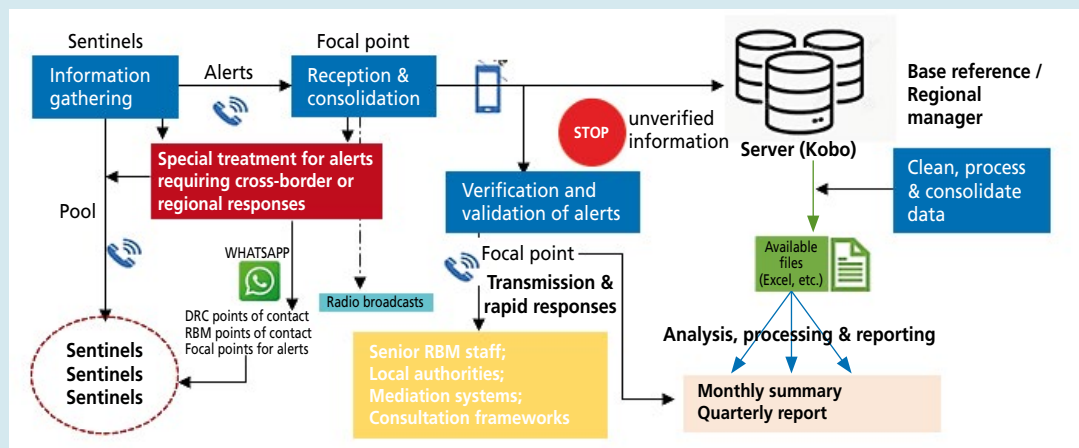
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Monitoring and early warning system for conflicts over agro-pastoral resources developed by the Billital Maroobé Network (RBM)

In a context of chronic and shifting insecurity, the RBM realised the strategic importance of collecting and disseminating information, and set up a monitoring and early warning system to collect data on mass/early livestock movements and their associated risks, and disseminate information and

alerts that can help prevent or mitigate conflicts. The monitoring and early warning system works by mobilising an endogenous network of relays and sentinels from RBM's member organisations, who are responsible for collecting and disseminating information and alerts.¹⁷

Diagram of the monitoring and early warning system¹⁸



The conflict alert system is part of an overall approach to monitoring transhumance based on:

- mapping transhumance corridors and areas where transhumant herds are concentrated; and
- counting animals on the move at key crossing points along transhumance corridors (by animal species).

These monitoring/alert tools have yielded significant results, including:

- updated maps of transhumance flows and stocks;
- alerts issued to local decision-makers, transhumant herders and host communities;
- using the collected and processed data to develop responses to the challenges identified;

- developing advocacy and lobbying actions that target political decision-makers in regional and national bodies (Food Crisis Prevention Network, Prevention and Management of Food Crises in the Sahel and West Africa, Harmonised Framework Technical Committee, etc.).

17. Two (02) types of alert are broadcast: (i) "prevention" alerts, which relate to unexpected animal movements (early, late, massive) that are likely to cause difficulties; and (ii) "event" alerts, which are triggered by agro-pastoral conflicts or natural shocks, and aim to provide information to prompt or guide appropriate responses to these events. Alerts are disseminated through short reports, community radio stations and messages in WhatsApp groups.

18. Réseau Billital Maroobé, 2021: *Pilotage du système de suivi et d'alerte précoce des conflits sur les ressources agropastorales*. Note technique et méthodologique.

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This is having a huge impact on pastoral societies, in various ways:

- interrupted public services, particularly education, health, communications, energy and security;
- cattle raids and skirmishes between jihadist groups and defence and security forces have left many pastoralists in an extremely precarious situation;
- the spread of violence and implementation of counter-terrorism policies (border closures, creation of “zones of military interest”, etc.) have disrupted mobile livestock systems (restricted mobility, changes to livestock routes, etc.) and paralysed the pastoral economy (due to the closure of livestock markets and semi-legitimation of trade in stolen animals);
- pastoralists’ exposure to various forms of predation (cattle rustling, racketeering, forced tax collection, kidnapping, etc.) is amplifying the effects of livestock decapitalisation;
- natural resource governance systems are changing, and the perpetrators of violence are becoming the new masters of the “bush”;
- the large number of herds moving through safer but very restricted areas is increasing inter-community tensions over access to and use of pastoral resources.

Shepherd herding cattle in Ferlo, northern Senegal © Ibra Touré



> THE NEED FOR A LAND GOVERNANCE SYSTEM WHOSE POLITICAL ECONOMY CONSIDERS THE INTERESTS OF PASTORALISM

Human pressure on land in the Sahel and West Africa is increasing, as is competition for access to land and natural resources. The roots of old conflicts over competing uses of common resources linger on in most pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, fuelling tensions between farmers and herders, and between resident and transhumant herders.

Rights to use natural resources in rural areas have been disrupted by growing insecurity and population displacements that often involve entire communities (data published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in March 2023 put the number of displaced persons at 3,154,396 people¹⁹). Huge flows of internally displaced people have also led to increased conflicts with host communities over access to natural resources (cultivable land, water points, grazing areas, forest resources, etc.). The communities that stay behind generally benefit from these mass departures.

Yet the picture of polarised communities spread by social media only partially reflects the reality on the ground. A study by the RBM (2021²⁰) shows that while pre-existing prejudices may persist due to ethnic and identity-related tensions, people often try to escape the control of armed groups and build lasting local peace between different communities.

Discussions between participants at the Saint-Louis workshop highlighted the urgent need for action to enable rural West African communities to engage in initiatives to promote social cohesion, improve rural land governance, and help deploy more tools to defend agropastoral and livestock trade rights in order to limit abuses of local governance, which often lead to conflicts.

To this end, attention should focus on:

- promoting a new political economy for the land governance system that will enable actors to move away from logics that focus on accumulated injustices and iniquities, which can lead to violent resistance and revolt;
- developing approaches that promote a pastoral commons regime that is recognised, formalised and used to secure herders’ land rights;

19. These data cover countries in the central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), plus Mauritania and Chad.

20. Réseau Billital Maroobé, 2021: *Se mobiliser contre la communautarisation, facteur d’exacerbation des crises pastorales et sécuritaires dans l’espace sahélien*. Note politique n° 1.

- focusing on the economic, social, environmental and technical components of associated agriculture and livestock rearing in order to develop agro-pastoral systems. This will entail thinking on a larger scale than production units, and considering social and territorial organisation, market trends and constraints to collective resource management (availability of farmland and pastures).

> CONCLUSION

The approaches to securing pastoral land that have been implemented over the last two (2) decades have contributed to progress on some fronts. However, they also carry considerable risks as the options for securing land tenure have been considered on a local scale, even though pastoral livestock systems are based on strategic mobility (access to overlapping and ecologically complementary areas) that enables them to adapt to hazards and climate variability. Micro-local interventions are particularly limited in what they can achieve, because decentralisation policies have reinforced territorial discontinuities and weakened the capacity of mobile livestock systems to spread over vast areas that extend beyond the boundaries of individual communes.

Another major risk is the increasing privatisation of common resources, which is due to two main factors:

- **the emergence of new actors who have invested in livestock production and created ranches** (which specialise in meat production, farrowing and rearing) by taking over, privatising and enclosing large swathes of land to which they have exclusive private rights;
- **the territorialisation of pastoral areas along socio-ethnic lines.** This is due to moves to settle herder families in pastoral areas in a context of growing awareness of the importance of territoriality and related power issues on the one hand, and increasing pressure on land and pastoral areas and assertion of their status as common land on the other. These factors tend to encourage exclusionary and private access to pastoral resources.

All these phenomena raise questions about the effectiveness of approaches that use amenities and administrative measures to recognise pastoral commons, and the procedures that have been recommended to enable herders to access fodder resources in areas that are recognised as pastoral land. Various public authorities and cooperation agencies are encouraging individual producers to grow irrigated fodder crops,²¹ but it is hard to see how this will work – not only because of the priority given to collective management of grazing by pastoral communities, but also because there is no reliable information on the potential profitability and sustainability of this practice (provisional operating accounts showing investment, depreciation and cost of irrigation).

Finally, it should be emphasised that efforts to secure the future of pastoralism in the region should take account of the great diversity and complementarity between herbivorous livestock systems and the scales at which they operate. They should also promote coherent, coordinated interventions at different scales while trying to limit the continued expansion of cultivated areas. Progress on this front will require a clear vision for pastoralism in 2050, with options to help achieve the desired scenario. ECOWAS has embarked upon this process, and is mobilising professional leaders, actors from the ministries in charge of livestock and NGOs to prepare a regional strategy to develop livestock rearing and secure pastoral systems in West Africa. This strategy focuses on the medium-term outlook (2040), and aims to support the changes needed to address land issues and strengthen complementarities between systems. It will also need to ensure that civil society organisations have the capacity for permanent strategic monitoring needed to anticipate future land management dynamics. ●

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21. Participants in trials conducted in the Ferlo region of Senegal grow fodder on small individual areas, then harvest, store and use it as supplementary feed for the family herd.