



# Farming dynamics

## SELF-MANAGED LIVESTOCK MARKETS: THE BENINESE EXAMPLE

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## Introduction

In this issue of FD, we would like to share with you an agricultural innovation developed by the breeders of Gogounou, in the North of Benin, who are members of the regional union of professional organisations of ruminant breeders of Borgou and Alibori (Udoper).

This initiative is, above all, a human adventure, a battle of a handful of breeders who are convinced that their situation could be improved. They have been able to meet, discuss and mobilise an entire community in order to fundamentally change well-established traditional working patterns.

It is impossible to explain in a few pages the adventure of the Beninese breeders. Therefore, we have chosen to focus on a particular aspect: **the creation of livestock markets that are managed by the people who are directly involved.**

These self-managed markets are an authentic instrument at the service of the professional organisation of breeders that foster livestock and local development and show that a win-win strategy between producers and traders/intermediaries is possible and that for producers, "to sell better" does not necessarily mean "to get rid of traders and intermediaries".

Some of the activities being carried out at these markets are: increasing the producers' income while safeguarding the interests of other key actors, facilitating the balance between supply and demand, bringing more transparency to transactions and offering livestock related services. They also contribute to improve market access to products and could serve as an inspiration for other development actors.

## The context of livestock farming in Benin

Benin has more than 6 million inhabitants, two thirds of which live in the rural area. In the northern area, the driest one with 900 to 1 100 mm of rain per year we can find two thirds of the national livestock (1,5 million cattle and 2 million sheep and goats). Almost half of the cattle herds live in the northern regions of Borgou and Alibori, where the self-managed livestock markets were created.

The breeding of big ruminants is mainly done by the Peulh and the Gando, but with the help of animal traction, farmers also became breeders. To this group, we need to add the migrants of Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria that went to Benin following the droughts of the 70's and 80's.

The most common breeding system is semi-sedentary, with a small seasonal migration in the rainy season and a big one in the dry season. These migrations inside the country play an important role and exist due to agricultural, environmental, economic, cultural and land-related reasons. But straying animals remain a source of severe and sometimes lethal conflicts between farmers and breeders.

In the big livestock areas there are local primary markets. They supply livestock for secondary markets that serve as a relay towards the southern regional markets of Benin (Bohicon and Cotonou) and external markets (Lomé in Togo, Ibadan in Nigeria, Accra in Ghana). Lately, massive populations of livestock have been transferred from Burkina Faso towards Nigeria via the Beninese markets (Parakou, Bohicon).

## Traditional livestock markets

Traditionally, livestock sale takes place in the Peulh camps, where the breeder is at the mercy of the buyer and has no information or negotiating power regarding prices. There are also the so-called "traditional" livestock markets, regulated by local authorities and organised by intermediaries or "Dilaali" in the Haoussa language, an authentic institution anchored in the local socio-economic organisation.

In these traditional markets, the Dilaali are in charge of housing breeders and buyers (butchers, traders) and act on their behalf during the transaction: there is no direct relation between the breeder and the buyer. The Dilaali are paid the difference between the purchasing price and the selling price.

The butchers, who used to be of Haoussa and Yoruba origin, are nowadays native. Traders are from Haoussa, Zerma and mostly Peulh and we can differentiate two types: traders-resellers who visit the primary collect markets and supply the grouped secondary markets or specialised traders that buy in large quantities in secondary markets and transfer the livestock towards the markets of Cotonou, Lomé and Nigeria.

In this impenetrable system, the breeder and buyer do not know the real market price and there are frequent conflicts with the intermediaries. At the end, breeders feel ripped off and are reluctant to sell their livestock. In this context they have launched initiatives to sell their animals at better conditions.

## The creation of the first self-managed livestock market in Gogounou

The self-managed livestock markets were created in Gogounou in the 70's, the result of self-determined charismatic leaders and grass-roots actors. They went through different stages supported by several external factors.

### ■ A firm start (1976-80)

A group of breeders and local leaders, particularly Aboubacar Tidjani Demo, rose up against the impenetrable trading system held by the Dilaali in the traditional livestock market: they decided to stop sending animals to the market. There were tensions and threats, some leaders were even imprisoned to force the breeders to put their animals on sale. But the latter defied the pressure and two months later the market of Gogounou collapsed.

That was when the process towards a more transparent management of transactions started. The intermediaries were not excluded from the system, since this would have been neither economically nor socially sustainable for them, and would be undermined sooner or later. In fact, they were integrated at the core of the new market, albeit with a new role: the role of witnesses (Seedèbè) between breeders and buyers. Their task was to facilitate the sale of animals registering the transaction and gathering a tax. This tax of 25 Fcfa per sold unit was managed by the village group (VG). One third of it was paid to the witnesses and two thirds to the Old Sages of Gogounou (important people in the ancient system).

### ■ Organisation of a Market Management Committee with multiple actors (1986)

The organisation of the market has evolved towards the installation of a management committee. This committee brought together all parties (breeders and agro-

breeders, butchers, traders, loaders), safeguarding the regular management of the market. Taxes (100 Fcfa/sold unit) were no longer managed by the VG but they were put into an open account at the local Bank of mutual agricultural credit.

In the new market characterised by the conversion of the intermediary Dilaali in paid witnesses, there is:

- direct contact between supply and demand;
- transactions facilitated and certified by the witness;
- better information and transparency regarding prices.

Breeders are satisfied by this system which led to income increases. The former Dilaali are no longer perceived as crooks because they are now paid by breeders at a fixed and pre-determined manner for an efficient service. At the same time, the Old Sages are accommodated by the small amounts that they still receive.

### ■ Creation of the Local Association to manage the market (1995)

In 1995 the market of Gogounou received a more formal and recognised legal framework with the creation of the Local Association to manage the livestock market (ALGMB). The association has statutes, regulations and the following objectives:

- to offer moral and material support to the breeders for the promotion of animal health;
- to try to reduce the commercial intermediaries and facilitate trade between breeders, buyers and consumers ;
- to ensure the regular supply of livestock in the market;
- to promote and manage the market;
- to guarantee the education and associative training of members;
- to facilitate mutual aid and solidarity among members;
- to conduct all kinds of legal activity that can provide moral, social and material support to the members.

### ■ External support (1990-99)

The Gogounou breeders have obtained technical and financial support from structures<sup>(1)</sup> or projects<sup>(2)</sup> of the State. This support has allowed them to improve the functioning of the market mainly through training, mutual visits and advice on financial management, documentation, basic animal welfare and the management and solution of conflicts. This support has also allowed equipping the market with an office, a pharmacy, a boarding platform and a well and has also structured the market space.

In all these actions, the participation and financial engagement of breeders takes a partnership approach, and is not intended as an act of charity.

## Functioning of the self-managed livestock market of Gogounou

### ■ The actors of the market

In its General Assembly, the ALGMB takes into account all actors involved in the livestock sale: breeders, agro-breeders, traders, butchers and female sellers. Women are particularly involved because they breed small ruminants and process breeding products (curd, cheese, milk-enriched gruel ...).

### ■ Market management

The market is defined as «self-managed market» because it is directly managed by the actors involved. The ALGMB has tools for the financial and economic management of the market: the elected management committee and the monitoring committee that ensure the good functioning of the market; deal with management documents and issue tickets.

The administrative and financial management of the market mainly consists of:

- collecting a tax for all transactions, in full transparency, under the control of secretaries and witnesses (1000 Fcfa/cattle unit and 200 Fcfa/small ruminant, paid in equal parts by the breeder and buyer) and account keeping;
- regular ordinary meetings (technical and financial balance sheet, programme of activities) and extraordinary meetings (to solve conflicts, to deal with cases of stolen animals...).

To facilitate its task, the management committee pays the following agents<sup>(3)</sup>:

- witnesses – former Dilaali – they certify transactions and send the taxes received to the secretaries. They are paid about 25% of the taxes
- supervisors, they verify the tickets before departure of the animals (income : 2000 Fcfa/market)
- secretaries, they issue the tickets, collect taxes and send them to the treasurer of the committee of market management (income: 2750 Fcfa/market).
- person in charge of the input market

There are other agents present in the market: salespeople that transport the animals in vehicles (paid by the drivers: 125 Fcfa/cattle head); loaders that board the animals (paid by traders: 150 Fcfa/cattle head); catering ladies paid for by the customers.

### ■ The activities of the ALGMB

Apart from the weekly management of the Gogounou market, the association also finances several activities for its members with its equity capital:

- capacity-building: training the committee members in document management; training of young people in basic animal welfare; promoting literacy of female sellers;

(1) Regional Action Centre for rural development.

(2) Project for the professionalisation of agriculture in Benin (French cooperation); French farmers and international development.

(3) 2004 figures, Gogounou market.

- purchase of equipment and infrastructure for the market;
- supply of basic drugs with a link to private veterinarians;
- establishing contacts with local institutions and support structures;
- organising meetings to raise awareness and exchange views.

In addition, the ALGMB is responsible for spreading information and raising awareness of this organisational “model” towards other Beninese markets, and is in charge of the coordination with the self-managed markets network (infra).

## Direct results of the self-managed market of Gogounou

### ■ Increased commercialisation and improvement of breeding conditions

The first immediate effects of the market are better selling prices of livestock for the breeders, easier and faster transactions for the buyers and an increased volume of exchanges: almost 5500 cattle and more than 3000 small ruminants were sold in 2003 (more than 6 million Fcfa).

The increased number of visits to the market also allows for a better health control of the animals and a more efficient fight against animal theft. The market is a meeting and exchanging point that favours the access of breeders to information and strengthens their organisations.

### ■ Promoter of local development and wider recognition

With the Gogounou market, the breeders have been able to finance local initiatives: participation in social works, creation of primary schools in the Peulh camps... We should also highlight the systematic integration of the women of Gogounou – Peulh and Bariba – in the process: training, support of the transformation, promotion of literacy...

As a result of these actions the market gained real credibility for breeders, local partners, breeding services and external projects.

## Spreading the results beyond Gogounou

### ■ The network of self-managed markets

Gogounou was the first self-managed market, followed by two other ones: Ouessè and Paouignan. In 1999, these three markets established a network (the RLMS<sup>(4)</sup> network) in order to exchange their experiences by organising joint information meetings and training sessions. The Gogounou market started receiving many visits both from within Benin and abroad: the managers of traditional markets wanted to establish the system in their markets as well as breeding and local development projects. During the constitutive General Assembly in 2001, the network was granted statutes, regulations and several tools (accession and minute registers of the meetings, cash book, bank registers). At that time, 9 markets were part of the network. In 2005, their number had grown to 23.

### ■ Udoper – the breeders’ organisation

Since the year 2000, and particularly after the meetings and enlarged restitutions promoted by the leader breeder Aboubacar Tidjani Demo as part of the awareness-raising of livestock markets, breeders decided to organise themselves in groups. At the grass-root level, professional groups of ruminant breeders (GPER) meet at a specific place to gather the animals for vaccination. These GPERs are grouped in departmental unions (UAGPER), which are grouped in district unions (Ucoper). The Ucoper meet within the department union Borgou-Alibori (Udoper).

(4) Luumondji Mareefuji Sago Network..

The General Assembly of Udoper that took place in 2004 gathered more than 3000 breeders from the North of Benin but also mayors, administrative officials, project managers and delegations of twin organisations from Mali and Niger. During the GA of September 2005, with a large number of breeders present, a dozen new districts asked for membership in the movement, thus creating a regional union. At that time, Udoper included 6 Ucooper<sup>(5)</sup>, 39 UAGPER, 650 GPER and 227 groups of female breeders affiliated to the network, bringing together a total number of 25 000 breeders.

The links between Udoper and the MBA network are strong because the MBA can contribute to the financing of Udoper activities. Udoper in turn favours the sale of healthy animals and increases the number of livestock in the markets. Both Udoper and the MBA network search for partners jointly.

#### ■ Liaising with the town councils

In Benin, the recent period is characterised by the disengagement of the state and the strengthening of decentralised communities. Although in this framework the law grants the management of trading infrastructures to local authorities, the practice of this prerogative has led to tensions between certain town councils and market management bodies.

In some cases, like in Gogounou, the amount of taxes and market activities have been discussed with the town council: in this way the ALGMB fixed the tax at 1500 Fcfa/cattle unit, 500 F were transferred to the town council and the MBA management was concerted. However, in other districts, the town council has unilaterally imposed the whole tax and taken full control of the market organisation... and breeders have responded with a market boycott.

Udoper has then organised a workshop on the concerted management of livestock

markets with all the actors and the attendance of representatives of 17 town councils. During this occasion, they explained the possibility for town councils to delegate the management of livestock markets. This formula has met the agreement of numerous town councils, not only those who enjoy a self-managed market, but also those with traditional markets.

### Future limitations and challenges

Naturally, self-managed livestock markets do not solve all problems. Numerous obstacles and challenges remain.

With the expansion of the movement, breeders must face the limited resources to meet all the targets (infrastructures, for example) and have competent management and control committees in place. The number of districts and town councils wanting to participate in self-managed markets increases rapidly and there are so many requests of support and collaboration to town councils and breeders' organisations that Udoper will have to find a way to satisfy them.

At the local level the dialogue initiated by Udoper following the tensions between some town councils and market management entities must continue in order to reach solutions.

At the national level, with the land pressure, migration becomes more difficult and there are still many and frequent conflicts between breeders and farmers.

Finally, at the sub-regional level the free circulation of animals and migrant breeders poses a problem in the regional framework of Cedeao<sup>(6)</sup>.

(5) Gogounou, Kalalé, Nikki, Banikoara, Sinendé and Bembéréké.

(6) Economic Community of West African States.

## Lessons

### ■ Basic Principles

According to the leaders, clear conclusions and assumptions can be drawn from the success of Udoper and the self-managed livestock markets:

- the necessary democratic and transparent management of the resources and markets;
- the bottom-up solidarity of the organisation (and its accompanying support)
- the indispensable involvement and respect of all the actors concerned
- the involvement of governmental services, district authorities, NGOs and private companies with a partnership spirit.

This will be a long-term experience (it started in the 70's), since it is based on a willingness to learn, to get organised and to train new leaders among the breeders.

### ■ Different ways to improve market access

Striking a balance between supply and demand, making transactions more transparent and offering market services are some of the activities carried out in self-managed markets that improve the flow of products and remuneration of producers, increasing the physical and financial volume of commercial activities and fostering local development.

### ■ A win-win situation is possible

To conclude, the key to success lies in improving the breeders' income while safeguarding the interests of other actors in the sector.

The breeders' strategy has involved all relevant actors, leading to a relatively fast success. It changed well-established economic and social operating patterns that were commonly accepted.

## References

■ Power-point presentation by Djegga Demmon, vice-president Udoper, at: « Consultation d'experts sur les systèmes d'information de marché et les bourses d'échanges agricoles: renforcer les signaux et les institutions de marché », organised in Amsterdam, The Netherlands by CTA, November 2005.

■ Power-point presentation by Aboubacar Tidjani, President of Udoper, at « Capitalisation sur l'appui aux Organisations de producteurs par la coopération française », organised in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso by CTA, MAE, Inter-réseaux, June 2004.

■ Self-managed livestock markets in the North of Benin: articulation with local development / Paul Onibon. – Ouagadougou : MAE, CTA, Inter-réseaux, 2004.- 49 p.

# REFERENCES

### Information Relay

■ The well documented and updated Sedelan site [www.abcburkina.net](http://www.abcburkina.net) offers a great deal of information. In particular, the dossier about milk in Africa receives regularly new contributions.

■ On June 22, the ACDIC, a Cameroon-based citizens' association that defends collective interests launched its new campaign on food sovereignty: « Aidons-les à nourrir ». Based on several

analysis and ministerial management of dossiers, it highlights the need to support farmers in their food function. ACDIC wishes to change the behaviour in Cameroon and introduce the concept of "food sovereignty" in international negotiations. [www.acdic.net](http://www.acdic.net). This campaign is also presented in Europe by SOS Faim: [www.sosfaim.org](http://www.sosfaim.org)



**SOS Faim and farmers organisations**

Since 1964, SOS Faim Belgium and, since 1993, SOS Faim Luxembourg support farmers and agrarian producers organisations in some 15 countries in Africa and Latin America.

Their actions are built around three working themes: the support of institutional and organisation development, the support of economic activities and the defence of the interests of the Southern producers in Belgium, Luxembourg and Europe. In this framework, SOS Faim Belgium and Luxembourg have created "Farming Dynamics", a quarterly bulletin issued in French, Spanish and English.

The objectives of Farming Dynamics are the following:

- To make known these farmers' and producers' organizations on the largest scale possible: their actions, their experiences. Their problems, their solutions. Their positions and proposals on matters of their concern.
- Organize debates, exchange of experiences and ideas on subjects like their own development, or the future of agriculture, of the rural world;
- Inform politicians who have an influence on these organizations activities in the South.

**If you would like to react about the themes dealt with in this issue of Farming Dynamics, or if you would like to give us your opinion or contribute some information please contact us at: [info@sosfaim.be](mailto:info@sosfaim.be)**

This bulletin is based on documents written or presented by Udoper representatives (Aboubacar Tidjani Demo –President– and Djegga Demmon) in the framework of the joint work of the Centre technique de coopération agricole et rurale (CTA), the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) and Inter-réseaux. These documents have been summarised by Inter-réseaux Rural Development (Anne Lothoré and Patrick Delmas: [inter-réseaux@inter-reseaux.org](mailto:inter-réseaux@inter-reseaux.org))

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