

Pastoral infrastructure in the Donga department

Partnership between farmers' organisations and joint local authority groups for the livestock-meat sector in northern Benin

The work performed by Acting For Life and its partners in West Africa to develop the agropastoral sector at local level involves the structuring of a public-private partnership between local authorities and civil-society organisations (CSO). The mechanism is funded in part through an increase in tax revenue on agropastoral market infrastructure, with the CSO overseeing coordination and monitoring activities.

Livestock farming in West Africa is based on an extensive production system. Mobility is an optimal strategy for gaining access to the water and grazing resources scattered here and there depending on rainfall. It helps ensure herd survival and results in greater productivity. It also plays a central role in commercial channels and brings many economic benefits to the areas through which the herds are moved. A 2014-2015 study of 386 transhumant families, conducted by AFL, showed that those families spent half a billion FCFA in the areas they moved through, and sold an equivalent amount of animals. The purchase and sale of animals at livestock markets can also be an important source of tax revenue for municipalities in the countries through which transhumant families move. The sector also creates many direct and indirect jobs: traders, brokers, herdsmen, butchers, rope-makers, crook-makers, truck-transport assistants, not to mention all the jobs at the livestock markets. The sector also provides access to animal proteins for rural communities and large urban centres. The degradation of the security context has made mobility more challenging, causing the

price of boneless red meat to increase by an average of 500 FCFA throughout the region.

Support from three types of institutional actors

Mobility requires an integrated approach to pastoral investments in the area through which herds move. Marketing infrastructure (livestock markets, loading platforms) and infrastructure needed for production (grazing areas, water points, livestock tracks, vaccination stations, etc.) are totally interdependent. A market must therefore be connected to livestock tracks, including the transhumance tracks used during the return journey to the north. The development of the sector must therefore be considered on a local scale with the participation, in most cases, of several municipalities.

Ensuring the longevity of the different amenities therefore requires collaboration between three groups of actors: local authorities (municipalities), farmers' organisations (FO) and the decentralised technical services of the ministries in charge of livestock farming. The latter ensure the continuity and consistency

of the national policy and share their expertise with the joint local authority group. FOs, for their part, share their knowledge of the practices and strategies of livestock farmers, crop farmers and traders to overcome the challenges faced. They help secure pastoral land (grazing and rest areas) in order to ensure that there are no difficulties accessing water. When FOs intervene to help settle conflicts, whether in relation to market infrastructure or agropastoral amenities, their role needs to be subject to a contract with the joint local authority group. The tax revenue generated by the market infrastructure in the area of the joint local authority group is used to pay the FOs for their monitoring work.

Experience assessment of the livestock-meat sector in northern Benin

In northern Benin in December 2017, the municipal authorities of Matéri, Coby and Tanguieta, which are members of the Pendjari Public Body of Intermunicipal Cooperation (EPCI-Pendjari) signed a one-year test agreement with the Departmental Union of Professional Organisations

for Ruminant Farmers in Atacora/Donga (UDOPER AD), with a financial commitment of 1.8 million FCFA. The EPCI municipalities used that funding to mandate UDOPER AD to coordinate the sector within their territory. The agreement was renewed in 2018 for two years. Each year, UDOPER AD presents an analysis of the sector for the previous year, and makes recommendations to the EPCI members.

A number of lessons can be drawn after nearly two years of this contractual arrangement between a joint local authority group and a FO. The main difficulty is that newly elected officials need to be brought up to speed after each election, which is sometimes a long and tedious process. But despite that difficulty, the arrangement has many positive aspects.

Better monitoring of agropastoral infrastructure

Elected officials say this agreement has improved monitoring and their understanding of the agropastoral dynamic in their territory. UDOPER AD presents its annual report at a workshop which brings together some fifty participants (elected officials, decentralised authorities, traditional authorities, members of civil society). This detailed report gives an overview of the sector as a whole, while noting changes to each market infrastructure.

Increasing tax revenue for certain market infrastructures

Statistical monitoring shows the work UDOPER is doing to coordinate and raise awareness among actors at livestock markets. For the livestock market in Matéri, there has been a significant increase in tax revenue over the past three years, from just over 7 million FCFA in 2017 to 8,601,600 in 2019. The increase in tax revenue for these municipalities allows them to participate financially within the EPCI, and is helping strengthen cohesion between communities. The municipalities are likewise increasing their social and community investments for the benefit of the entire population.

In-depth understanding of the dynamic of the sector

The dynamic of the agropastoral sector cannot be understood by limiting it to just the EPCI Pendjari territory. That dynamic depends largely on the situation in neighbouring countries: upstream in the Sahel

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countries, which supply the livestock markets during transhumance; or downstream in Nigeria, which is the main terminal market for the animals. At the loading area in Tanguiéta, animals are sent mainly to the town of Savé in the Collines department of Benin. The animals are then unloaded in Savé and transported on foot to Nigeria. Since December 2015, devaluation has made the Nigerian market much less attractive. Some of the animals are transported to Ghana via Togo. Things bounced back in 2019.

Fewer conflicts

The lack of delimited pastoral land often leads to tensions between crop and livestock farmers regarding the use of resources. To limit those tensions, the land should be secured, but more importantly there needs to be organisations that can intervene quickly to help find joint solutions to avoid crises.

Of course, the decline in conflicts is not exclusively linked to the work UDOPER is doing

to coordinate the sector. On the one hand other actors and programmes are at work in the area and are helping reduce tensions, and on the other hand the conflict dynamics are often highly complex with multiple causal factors. It is also certain, however, that the existence of functional agropastoral amenities facilitating livestock mobility and the efforts of UDOPER/ANOPER to pacify tensions are helping to significantly reduce conflicts.

Strengthening the FO's positioning and capacities

The data produced by UDOPER are also helping FOs gain greater recognition among elected officials and the general public. They complement the expertise of the technical state services. The FO is using the funding it received from EPCI to improve the services it offers its members.

Rallying around a shared interest

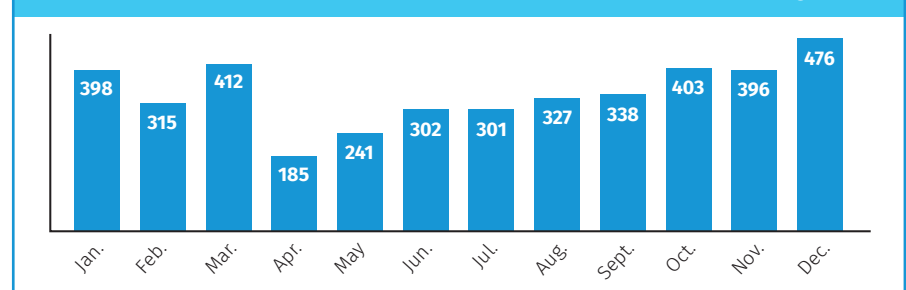
The main objective of this collaboration is to develop the agropastoral sector in a way that is consistent and long-lasting. This is crucial for the socio-economic development of the communities in question. This approach makes it possible to bring together not just elected officials and FOs but a diverse range of actors around a shared interest. This information is available to anyone who attends the annual assessment-workshops, and is also disseminated through radio broadcasts presenting important information about the agropastoral sector. ■

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Animals sold at the Matéri livestock market in 2019



Source: AFL

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Video presenting the local approach that was put in place:
<https://bit.ly/3x1RGEY>

AFL experience-assessment report on livestock mobility:
<https://bit.ly/3oJ8ywL>