

SUMMARY NOTE

Agriculture and pastoralism:

Complementarities, tensions and alliances to be forged

Thematic session, Inter-réseaux General Assembly 2026

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June 2026, hybrid format



1. Background

The thematic session on 17 June 2026 forms part of the International Year of Transhumance and Pastoralists (IYRP), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly. It represents one of Inter-réseaux's concrete commitments during this dedicated year: in addition to the co-publication of a position paper with AFD and CIRAD, preparations are underway for a special issue of **Le Grain de sel**, due to be published in October 2026, as well as efforts to organise regional and international events throughout the year.

The session was open to all Inter-réseaux members and partners, not just pastoralism specialists, as the issues addressed (territorial governance, land tenure, natural resources, cooperation between stakeholders) relate to many of the network's areas of intervention. It was organised around a central question: how can farmers and herders continue to work together in areas under significant pressure?

The session was divided into three parts: (1) understanding the current structural challenges; (2) sharing practical solutions tested in the field; (3) considering which actions to prioritise for the future.

2. Key messages from speakers

Serge Aubague — *independent expert, representing Blamah Jalloh, the Billital Maroobé Network (RBM)*

Serge Aubague is an expert in rural development and pastoralism in Africa who has been working for over 25 years on projects relating to access to water, land and resources for pastoralists in Africa (notably Niger, Mali and Tchad). Serge Aubague, who is not a member of the RBM, *presented the RBM's contribution at the request of Blamah Jalloh, who was unable to attend.*

The RBM's analysis is based on a 2026 study involving 900 pastoralists across 16 border regions in nine countries (areas where the Sahel meets coastal countries). It yields three key insights.

First lesson — From a resource driver to a risk driver: transhumance has always been guided by the availability of resources (water, pasture). Now, however, it is risk, insecurity, conflicts and, above all, administrative bans on crossing borders that are driving herders' decisions. The ban on transhumance is described as a 'completely new phenomenon' by Blamah Jalloh and Serge Aubague. Mobility remains possible, but it has become more costly, more time-consuming and more uncertain.

Second lesson — Conflicts between farmers and herders mask deeper issues: The paradigm pitting farmers against herders is sometimes misleading; farmers rear livestock, whilst herders cultivate crops. Behind the visible tensions lie structural problems relating to land governance, access to resources, border management and land-use planning.

Third lesson — Negotiation as a foundation and the seven strategic alliances: Coexistence remains possible when it is organised and negotiated. The RBM identifies seven alliances: three at the local level (livestock keepers ↔ **host communities**; **farmers** ↔ **livestock keepers**; **traditional authorities** ↔ **public institutions**) and four systemic ones (cross-border territories; Sahel-coast economy; Regional Pastoral Organisations (OPRs) ↔ regional institutions; data ↔ governance ↔ decision-making). These alliances are not merely a complement to public action; they are now a prerequisite for it.

Regarding the utilisation of data, Blamah and Aubague highlight a strategic limitation: the data collected by the RBM (pastoral monitoring, Transhumance Tracking Tool, territorial observatories) remains underutilised by governments, researchers and technical and financial partners. He calls for long-term institutional support for the OPRs, for at least 10 to 15 years, noting that only the 'Peaceful Cross-Border Pastoral Mobility and Social Stability in the Sahel' (MOPSS, SNV) project has explicitly taken the OPRs as its entry point. Such a commitment is all too rare.

Nana Boukary — *Technical Manager, APESS*

APESS, founded in 1989, has developed a 'social engineering' approach to peace-building with the communities and agro-pastoralists benefiting from its interventions. The approach unfolds in five stages: participatory assessment of tensions, mapping of legitimate stakeholders (including young people and women), facilitated negotiation of rules of use, local formalization (charter, communal plan, decree), and monitoring by joint committees.

The local land charter of Bodadiougou (Burkina Faso, 2020) is a good example of this; drawn up over 19 months at the request of the villagers themselves following recurring conflicts, it establishes 50-metre-wide

corridors and grazing schedules after the harvest. It was approved at a village assembly and signed by the Mayor of Banfora. Results: according to testimonies gathered, conflicts have decreased by 80 to 90 per cent, and the area has supported more than 7,000 head of cattle over five years. This charter has become a regional benchmark.

At the inter-municipal level, the municipal natural resource management plans drawn up in three municipalities in Burkina (Dori, Seytenga, Falangountou, on the border with Niger) in 2019 include the rehabilitation of water points, the marking of tracks, communal forage areas and consultation committees. Their estimated cost is 714,910 euros. Cross-border multi-stakeholder platforms have also been established in the SKBo¹ region (Côte-d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali).

Two recurring limitations have been identified: Boukary identifies two factors contributing to failure. Firstly, the top-down approach of projects lacking local roots: when the projects end, there is nothing to build on. Secondly, the lack of legal recognition of charters at national and regional levels. He calls on states to recognise local land charters as pastoral land-use planning documents, and to fund multidisciplinary, multi-stakeholder management committees, not just infrastructure.

Pakodtogo Dieudonné — *Program Officer, ROPPA*

ROPPA starts with the observation that over 80 per cent of farmers in West Africa are also livestock keepers. The distinction between livestock keepers and farmers is no longer as relevant as it once was. Farmers' and livestock keepers' organisations must take this into account in their approaches to the sharing of fodder resources and pastoral mobility.

ROPPA promotes several mechanisms: multi-stakeholder consultation processes that promote endogenous conflict resolution mechanisms, citizen monitoring committees that observe and document obstructions to transhumance corridors and livestock theft, cross-border consultation frameworks (e.g. Burkina Faso-Togo-Ghana), and joint advocacy actions with the RBM and APESS (notably on the ECOWAP in the Gambia). The integration of young people's interests, including through the digitisation of training modules, is also emphasised.

Key concern: His main concern relates to a certain lack of coordination between the producer organisations (OPRs) representing livestock farmers and arable farmers. He calls for a joint roadmap and the systematic consolidation of analyses and best practices within an ad hoc "Inter-OPR Framework".

Malamine Ouattara — *Executive Director, RESCAR-AOC*

RESCAR-AOC (Network of Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services in East and Central Africa) presents the experience of the SustainSahel project (Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal), a research and development project mobilising 18 partners, which demonstrates in practice the synergy between agriculture, livestock farming, forestry and fisheries at a local level.

The figures speak for themselves: mulching with *Gliricidia* increases yields of cotton by 34 per cent, maize by 58 per cent and sorghum by 104 per cent. Fresh *Gliricidia* leaves used as a feed supplement for sheep result in an average daily weight gain of 65 grams over 60 days. Animal manure fertilises fields where chemical fertilisers are unavailable.

The key tool is the agro-pastoral demonstration farm (CEAP), a practical training space that brings together farmers, livestock keepers, foresters and other rural development stakeholders to demonstrate, raise awareness of and experiment with integrated systems. It has enabled the development in Burkina Faso of a national agricultural advisory guide signed by the minister.

A structural limitation highlighted is that the time-limited project approach does not allow for supporting communities in their day-to-day reality. When the project funds meetings and then comes to an end, the innovation platforms cease to function. Ouattara advocates for integrated and holistic agricultural advisory services based on pre-existing community organisational structures.

¹ Generally encompasses Sikasso (Mali) – Korhogo (Côte d'Ivoire) – Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso), a strategic cross-border area in West Africa.

Mamadou Goïta – Executive Director, IRPAD Mali (who delivered the concluding summary)

Goïta puts the issues into a long-term perspective. He recalls that the RBM was established in the early 2000s; he is a founding member, having supported the entire set-up process and facilitated the Constitutive General Assembly in Burkina Faso, specifically in response to the inadequacy of short-term pastoral projects. The minimum requirement identified at the time was a 10-year programmatic commitment to enable the social dynamic to identify, map and integrate the stakeholders and their practices.

A fundamental distinction between two categories of alliances: Bilateral alliances (farmers–livestock farmers, livestock farmers–host communities), which are numerous and well-documented, have often proved their effectiveness. By contrast, multi-stakeholder and multidimensional alliances appear more fragile, particularly because the search for consensus has sometimes taken precedence over addressing substantive issues: land tenure, cultural perceptions and the sharing of resources.

Mamadou Goïta emphasises: “Until we tackle the thorny issues, we will continue to face major difficulties.”

A major land alert: responses to land-related challenges cannot rely on tools inherited from a bygone era (colonial instruments used to decolonise land). Citing the example of Niger, he warns against resorting to mechanisms inspired by colonial land division: “We want to use colonial tools to decolonise. That is not possible.” In his view, the search for sustainable solutions requires stronger alliances between states, stakeholder organisations and knowledge producers.

He also points out that the security crises currently rocking the Sahel stem in part from long-standing tensions over access to resources and the erosion of mechanisms for solidarity and dialogue. Hence, he argues about the importance of making better use of existing experiences (both positive and negative), making them accessible to communities and turning them into a lever for collective learning to build more resilient regions.

3. Key cross-cutting lessons

- When 80 per cent of farmers also rear livestock and herders also cultivate crops, the strict separation between agriculture and livestock farming loses its relevance. Policies and interventions must now focus on the collective management of natural resources in areas where land uses are closely intertwined. The farmer/livestock farmer dichotomy is therefore sometimes outdated, but issues relating to pastoral mobility and the sharing of resources between different herding communities remain.
- Administrative bans on crossing borders represent a new development that is profoundly altering pastoral practices. They sever the regional economic chains linking Sahelian production to coastal markets (Accra, Lomé, Cotonou, Lagos) and affect tens of millions of consumers. Transhumance is threatened as much by politics as by the environment.
- Local mechanisms for dialogue (land charters, conciliation committees, intergenerational forums, the ‘palaver tree’, kinship through jest, and village consultation frameworks) exist and can be highly effective. In Bodadiougou, support from APESS has contributed to a reduction of nearly 90 per cent in conflicts over five years. The key to this success lies in the communities’ ownership of these mechanisms, which they continue to uphold long after the projects have ended. Local mechanisms for coexistence exist and work when they are firmly established.
- Speakers unanimously highlighted the limitations of three- to five-year projects. Building trust, dialogue and governance mechanisms requires long-term commitments of at least ten years. The MOPSS programme was cited as an example of an approach that relies on OPRs to ensure the sustainability of action. Duration is an essential prerequisite for impact.
- Organisations often operate in isolation; approaches are not harmonised, and projects are not coordinated at the outset. This fragmentation undermines multi-stakeholder alliances and reduces collective effectiveness. Better alignment of OPRs’ positions is necessary.
- Endogenous conflict resolution mechanisms, best practices in social engineering and the quantified results of innovation platforms must be documented, mapped and translated into tools accessible to grassroots actors, rather than being confined to academic publications. Capitalising on experiences is an imperative that has not yet been sufficiently realised.
- For several speakers, multi-stakeholder alliances reveal their limitations when they sidestep the most sensitive issues. Recent developments observed in certain Sahelian countries underscore the

importance of advocacy based on strong alliances between states, grassroots organisations and research institutions, in order to tackle resource governance challenges head-on. Land-related issues (land-use planning, rural 'urban planning', the demarcation of pastoral commons, corridors and grazing areas, the ownership of land by local authorities and states, the privatisation of commons for agriculture, agroforestry, forestry and settled livestock farming) should be a priority on the agendas of local authorities, states and OPRs.

4. Conclusion of the session

The discussions have brought to light several converging observations:

- The agro-pastoral situation is objectively deteriorating ; 80 per cent of herders surveyed by the RBM believe that conditions for crossing borders have deteriorated significantly, but local mechanisms for coexistence persist and deserve to be supported, formalised and recognised.
- The paradigm that pits farmers against herders must be abandoned in favour of a vision of co-governance of natural resources in multi-use territories.
- The organisations (RBM, APESS, ROPPA, RESCAR-AOC) have tools, methods and compelling results at their disposal, but their impact remains limited by the territorial scale of the initiatives, the fragmentation of funding, the short duration of projects, the lack of inter-organisational coordination and the weakness of collective advocacy.
- Inter-network collaboration is identified as a means of facilitating the sharing of experiences, the circulation of knowledge, the generation of evidence and, ultimately, the formulation of joint position papers, provided that the OPRs are active stakeholders in all these processes from the outset.
- The issue of insecurity in the Sahel, raised by several participants, remains inadequately addressed by existing mechanisms. It constitutes a major blind spot that deserves to be placed on the agenda.

5. Recommendations made and relevant stakeholders

Recommendations	Stakeholders
Support multi-stakeholder alliances in the long term: fund OPRs (ROPPA, APESS, RBM) for a minimum of 10 years as an institutional entry point. MOPSS (SNV) is the only existing example ; it should serve as a model.	Technical and financial partners (AFD, SNV, EU, IFAD, etc.)
Recognise local land charters as pastoral land-use planning documents: grant them legal status at national and regional levels, and fund multidisciplinary management committees, not just infrastructure.	Governments, local authorities, ECOWAS, UEMOA
Strengthen and operationalise the inter-OPR framework (ROPPA-APESS-RBM): establish clear responsibilities by theme, plan contributions in advance of events and publish joint positions.	ROPPA, APESS, RBM, Inter-networks
Capitalise on and disseminate best practices: map endogenous mechanisms that work, document them and translate them into tools accessible to grassroots actors, not just academic publications.	Inter-networks, APESS, RESCAR-AOC, researchers (CIRAD, IRPAD)
Making the most of transhumance data: promoting RBM data (TTT, observatories) to governments, researchers and PTFs to ensure decisions are evidence-based. Generating our own evidence from the field.	RBM, ROPPA, governments, research institutions
Promote integrated (non-sectoral) agricultural advisory services: train advisers on the integration of agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries; extend the Burkinabe national guide to agricultural advisory services to other countries.	RESCAR-AOC, national agricultural advisory services, governments
Adapt approaches to suit new generations: digitise training modules, engage young livestock farmers via social media, explore opportunities for carbon credits linked to pastoral activities (taking into account the IYRP26	ROPPA, RBM, APESS, RESCAR-AOC, youth organisations

working group's note on the overhaul of financing mechanisms for emission rights).	
Place the issue of insecurity on the agenda of dialogue mechanisms: the security crisis thrives on unresolved land disputes. It must be addressed explicitly, not sidestepped.	All OPRs, States, donors

6. Proposed courses of action

In the short term

- Publication of the special issue of **Le Grain de sel** 90/91 dedicated to the International Year of Pastoral Landscapes and Herders, highlighting contributions from the session, scheduled for October 2026.
- Initiate discussions with La Laiterie du Berger regarding their experience with digital milk collection, in order to draw lessons on the interplay between technical innovations and endogenous mechanisms.
- Publication of a joint article by PNOPPA Benin and APESS in **Grain de sel**, continuing the discussions on the complementarities between agriculture and livestock farming.
- Continue to mobilise Inter-réseaux and its members around regional and international events for the IYRP 2026.

In the medium term

- Launch of a multi-stakeholder platform on the involvement of young people in pastoral livestock farming, jointly led by ROPPA, APESS and RBM.
- Extension of the national guide to agro-pastoral agricultural advice (drawn up in Burkina Faso and signed by the minister) to other countries, with the support of RESCAR-AOC.
- Exploration of carbon credit schemes linked to pastoral livestock farming activities (pastures store 30 per cent of the world's organic carbon).
- Consideration of a long-term institutional support programme for OPRs (10 years), building on the lessons learnt from MOPSS (SNV) and the PRODIATA, PRADEP and PRAPS projects.

Unresolved issues

- How can operational alliances be forged with Sahelian states that rely on land tenure instruments inherited from the colonial era in the name of sovereignty?
- How can we measure and document the evolution of agro-pastoral conflicts in a context of widespread insecurity where informal resolution mechanisms are invisible to monitoring systems?
- How can Inter-réseaux play an active role in inter-OPR dialogue in the Sahel, beyond the dissemination of information?
- How can technical innovations (digitalisation – such as the digital data collection initiatives currently underway at La Laiterie du Berger – and carbon credit-linked financing mechanisms) and support schemes such as agro-pastoral demonstration fields be integrated with endogenous mechanisms without undermining them?