

Economic aspects of managing fodder resources and risk

Summary of the recommendations of the fourth working group

Regulating interactions between actors that manage fodder resources

In order to regulate such interactions effectively, it will be necessary to:

- Ensure a balanced representation of all those involved in decision-making and conflict-management, such as farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists.
- Decentralise legislative power and other responsibilities, to include representative elected people, but without losing focus. This has already begun in some countries, where an effort should be made to ensure it continues.

These points should be discussed at a local, a regional and a (supra)national level, and strong lobbying¹ is needed to take into account the interests of the pastoralists.

Investing in social capital

Investing in the social capital (e.g. supporting dialogue structures, meeting places, meetings/forums), at both local and regional levels, will encourage dialogue and particularly agreements between the various actors. Such activities are required in order to introduce the decentralisation and interaction-regulation mentioned above, and will release future benefits through social networks, institutions, sharing values and standards.

Many suitable structures and practices already exist, either in the traditional culture or supported by projects. One should not reinvent the wheel, but start from the existing examples, improve them and re-use them. However, all this has a price, and that is why the role of projects and financing organisations is necessary.

Investing in infrastructure

To improve the communication between the various actors, it is necessary to invest in the communication infrastructures such as radio, press, and telephone, to lower costs and improve access.

Efficiently exploiting the pastoral resources, their access and thus their economy also requires certain infrastructures such as access to water, cattle tracking routes and markets. To avoid wasting investments in such infrastructures through lack of maintenance or by bad management, they should be integrated into existing social structures.

¹ The term " lobbying " should be handled with caution. Insofar as regulating the interactions is important and that the current situation is unfavourable to pastoralists, this lobbying must lead to rebalancing the various groups. However, this lobbying must be intelligent and the pastoralists should not be defended in every situation.

Priorities for research

- History of the conflicts;
- Local and regional management of the unstable pastoral resources;
- Functioning of the formal and informal animal production chains and of the marketing;
- Territorial strategies of pastoralists and farmers;
- Methods for “action / research”;
- Climate evolution and its impact on the Sahel;
- Early warning systems and indicators to predict pastoral crises.

This research must be anchored “in the field”, centred on “action / research”, and must develop regular consultations between researchers, development agents and actors (as is the case in this seminar).

Redefining the role of the technical services

The technical services of the Sahelian administrations have major problems fulfilling the services for which they were created. Nevertheless they have a significant number of field agents, and their roles need to be adapted to the current context. This is likely to conflict with their current techniques and/or methods, and so should include performance-related benefits (financial and/or career).

Conclusions

There does not appear to be an external technical approach for managing pastoral resources that is any better than the existing ones. That is why the recommendations given are not directly to do with pastoral management, but are to improve the framework in which the actors can thrive.