

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF TRANSHUMANCE PASTORALISM IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Abuja, Nigeria
November 20-24, 2006

Theme

The pastoral food and product chain: Strategies, dynamics, conflicts and interventions

Sub-themes:

Modes, strategies and dynamics of pastoral production
Resource use, conflicts and conflict mediation/management
Policy and development intervention pathways
Markets and marketing opportunities
Country case study reports

Organizers of the Conference:

Projects Coordinating Unit (PCU)
National Special Program on Food Security (NSPFS)
National Fadama Development Project (NFDP)
National Animal Production Research Institute (NAPRI)
Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD)

Support and Participation from:

Department for International Development (DFID, Nigeria)
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Background

Africa's agricultural production output per unit is low. Crop and animal yield per unit of production is constrained by a variety of factors. About one third of the continent's 2.9 billion hectares is too dry for rain-fed agriculture. Of the remaining rain-fed land with potential for cultivation, half is of marginal quality and vulnerable to degradation unless appropriate management techniques are applied. The fast encroaching Sahara desert in the Sudano-Sahelian countries of West Africa has constantly posed serious threat to land productivity including the carrying capacity of rangelands with profound effects on livelihood activities. Another factor is inappropriate and sometimes counter-productive land legislation and policies. Land use regulations and laws are often enacted with little or no consideration for the prevailing and dynamic production environment of rural producers. Whenever land reforms are introduced, it is the rural poor that are often at the receiving end, especially pastoralists who depend on the natural range for ruminant livestock production. Furthermore, desertification occasioned by a variety of human (deforestation) and natural causes has also contributed to dwindling rangeland resources. The production, transportation and consumption of energy, which often constitute some form of livelihood supporting activity, has had considerable environmental consequences ranging from deforestation, land degradation, air and water pollution, and loss of bio-diversity.

For pastoral producers who depend entirely on rangeland resources, this situation has led to severe shortage of grazing land, a situation that has often led to intense conflict of resource use between and within communities. All these impact negatively on rural livelihoods and food security with attendant environmental distortion and socio-political security problems. At the producer level, indications are that producing families are progressively being impoverished as a result of factors that have led them to either de-stock or abandon livestock production entirely (Gefu, 1992). This is evident by the low livestock off-take rate especially in years that follow natural and man-made disasters such as droughts, floods, civil conflicts, etc.

Pastoral production environment

Apart from being exposed to the vagaries of unpredictable environmental dictates, pastoralists have continued to be victims of inappropriate state policies and project interventions. Indeed, they are probably the most marginalized producing group in the region in terms of properly focused policy attention beyond the rhetoric of failed livestock (pastoral?) development projects. They are constantly experiencing varying degrees of social, economic, ecological and political transformation to which they adopt different coping strategies, including transhumance. The subsequent disruption in the livelihoods of large numbers of households has grave micro and macro consequences on the pastoral and regional economies. Indeed, it can be argued that every displaced or 'de-stocked' pastoralist is a potential security risk as he joins the reserve army of the jobless, ready to take to illegal and criminal activities as means of alternative livelihood. Some violent criminal activities have been traced to displaced pastoralists operating on highways in some countries of the Sudano-sahel region (PARE, 2003). There is no gainsaying the fact that bringing brighter economic prospects to pastoral producers while ensuring food security, promoting/generating employment, reducing crime and social upheaval caused by lack of opportunity for the active population will lead to political stability which will in turn stimulate local and foreign investment in the livestock industry. It remains, however, for a concise articulation of the pastoral problematic to be more sharply captured in the various policy positions of national (and regional?) governments in their drive towards promoting sustainable livelihoods and tackling poverty and hunger (especially among rural households) and the attainment of the MDGs.

The problems and rationale

Livestock rearing constitutes a key livelihoods activity especially for rural households. Livestock production supports food security and the provision of employment, income, food, fuel, farm power, and a variety of merchandise goods. The bulk of animal-source food available to households in the West Africa sub-region is derived from ruminant livestock, which is predominantly produced by pastoralists. A significant proportion of these pastoralists employ (opportunistic) migratory production strategies.

For most African pastoralists, mobility is still a key element of production strategy. Pastoralism as a livelihood activity is practiced in a variety of ways as a response to the dictates of the immediate environment and available resources. A greater proportion of the total ruminant population of the region is produced under this system. There is, however, an increasing incidence of spontaneous sedentarization of these mobile groups¹. As graziers are continually rendered landless and pushed off their traditional grazing grounds, social and environmental problems associated with resource use are being contended with. Animals are grazed over varying distances depending on availability of fodder, water, etc. Transhumance may be between or within ecological zones. Where dry season grazing grounds are readily available, short distance transhumance is practiced. Otherwise, pastoralists embark upon long distance transhumance. This may involve transversing several ecological zones in search for fodder, water and shelter.

Resource-use conflicts between different producing groups, which precipitate resource management crisis, are becoming a common occurrence. Experiences gained from Nigeria and elsewhere around the continent indicate that policies aimed at ensuring easy mobility of the herds as well as protecting the bio-genetic resources are of great importance for the sustainable production and utilization of the ecosystem. The recently launched ECOWAS Transhumance Certificate is a case in point.

Pastoralists have over the years developed coping mechanisms in response to the vagaries of weather and socio-political environment that constituted threat to the pursuit of their livestock livelihoods. Mobility

¹As a result of population and market driven forces, available crop lands are being more intensely cultivated. Virgin lands including marginal lands utilized by pastoralists are opened to cope with the increased crop farming needs. Traditional grazing resources often used during the wet season are fast disappearing. So also are dry season grazing resources provided by wetlands being increasingly utilized for dry season farming of vegetables for urban and peri-urban markets. This shrinking of pastoral resources is generating serious conflict (often resulting in fatality) between crop and livestock producers. Pastoralists are settling where the social environment is conducive.

(of herds and households), for instance, is one such strategy for optimising the utilization of the natural resource base as well as a mechanism to respond to emergencies such as disease outbreak, flood, drought, civil unrest, etc. During such emergencies, the livelihood base of pastoral households is under great threats. Such conditions could result in the loss of large number of animals including the highly valued pool of animal genetic resources that constitute the nucleus of a productive herd of the region's livestock wealth.

It has been remarked (Roe, *et al.*, *n.d.*) that the ability to actively and reliably manage to reduce the chances of hazardous mistakes occurring, rather than avoid the hazards, has been the distinguishing hallmark of much of pastoralism. For us, it is not risk aversion only or even primarily, but rather high reliability that explains the pastoralist's "uncanny ability to survive and sometimes prosper under considerable adversity" (World Bank, 1987). Many observations have been made regarding the resilience and resourcefulness of pastoral producers in managing resources and coping with the vagaries of the production environment. "The pastoralists' flexible responses to the spatially and temporally distributed pasture and water have enabled them to exploit an environment which would have been impossible to exploit under other forms of land use systems" (Oba, 1985). Or, "such periods of stress are met by migrating to other areas, ie. expanding the spatial scale of exploitation" (Manger, 1994). Or, "in the arid context, it is precisely the two factors of space and time, rather than number of animals, that determine sustainable carrying capacity and have been used efficiently by traditional pastoral managers of extensive rangelands" (UNDP, 1994).

In fact, the herder's production technology is very complex. It includes the spatial and temporal variation and interrelated dynamics of water, vegetation and other key resources all too often lumped misleadingly together as "the external environment" as well as the links between this variation and dynamics and the livestock behavioral and physical characteristics. Coping with this complexity necessitates specialization across communities and within the herder household and the herds themselves (Bonte, 1981). Different household members or communities specialize in different aspects of livestock and environmental management, for example. At the same time, the composition of the herds are often specialized at the household level.

"Nomadic pastoralism, as practiced in many parts of Africa, presupposes much organizational and spatial flexibility. Not only do households constantly redistribute themselves over the terrain, in response to climatic fluctuations and the needs of herd management, but membership of pastoral households, too, is continually changing as labour is allocated and reallocated between management units" (Dahl and Hjort, 1979). For Spooner (1973) "the seasonal variability...requires a certain amount of fluidity in social organization". "The pastoralist strategies are in harmony with the yearly cycle of rainy and dry seasons and are modified when needed: e.g. by expansion or shifting. In this way menacing situations are controlled" (Reckers, 1994). According to El Wakeel and Abu Sabah (1993), "transhumants roam large areas to look for better and safe grazing areas". Also, "the ungrazed belts between areas effectively used by wildlife and those used by livestock noticed during aerial surveys in Maasailand are not evidence of the abundance of pasture, but are 'safety belts' deliberately created by the pastoralists to protect their herds from infection by wildlife" (UNDP, 1994).

From the perspective of a high reliability institution, herd and herder mobility is important, but only because it is a scale- and phase-specific routine comparable to the standard operating procedures for bringing in airplanes, providing hospital intensive care, or supplying electricity over a power grid. Mobility is not just movement; it is also defining and staking out the operating scales at which high reliability is to be achieved over the critical phases of pastoralist production. To reiterate, risk-averse pastoralism holds that, when pastoralists move from one part of the range to another over the course of the year, they are escaping dry conditions and need a large area to provide such a retreat in order to minimize the effects of or otherwise avoid altogether the hazards they cannot afford to risk. High reliability pastoralism holds that in making such movements, pastoralists are managing the spatial and temporal diversity of their operating scales and enhancing the reliability of high levels of production by using different resources over these scales at different times in response to hazards that must be risked. Mobility is not just about herds moving where; it is also about managing the where so that herds can move (Roe, *et al.*).

Some pastoral communities, for example, are known to consciously select strains of animal breeds for desirable genetic traits such as hardiness (to face the rigour of long treks in difficult terrains), fertility, multiple usage, drought and disease resistance. These practices are geared towards preserving the pastoral genetic resources (animals, fodder, indigenous knowledge and technologies, etc.). The husbandry practices and breeding activities are, therefore, influenced by the dynamism of environmental dictates. Production strategies, such as herd splitting, herd pledging, changes in herd structure and composition are decided in response to specific environmental needs.

Mobility may take various forms and may involve varying distances covered at different times of the year. But for those pastoralists who move their herds, certain motivating factors are involved in such movements. By far, the most important factor here is the availability and distribution of feed and water. Because pastoral production is best carried on in ecological niches devoid of animal disease-carrying vectors such as *tsetse* fly and other environmental hazards to both livestock and the producers, drier regions receiving no more than 900 mm of annual rainfall are usually best suited. In such places, feed and water are in short supplies for considerable period of the year. Since the bulk of the feed is derived from free range, pastoralists are compelled to move their animals to places where fodder and water can be accessed during the dry spell. By adopting transhumance, pastoralists avoid contact with disease vectors. Of importance also is the state of social relations of pastoralists with the rest of the community. Where symbiotic relationship between the pastoralist and the crop farming community is strained, pastoralists are known to adopt mobility as a mechanism to avoid further tension and possible conflict. Conflict situations often arise as a result of crop damage done by animals. This situation by far accounts for conflicts between pastoral and non-pastoral communities.

A third factor responsible for mobility concerns market and marketing of animals, livestock and dairy products. For the pastoralist, the market place is not only a place for the exchange of, but also an information dissemination centre where information on different aspects of their livelihood is exchanged. Such include information on disease outbreaks, conflict areas to be avoided, sources of medicaments and supplementary feeds and minerals, etc. The regular culling of animals especially old or unproductive cows, excess bulls and other undesirable animals are done in open livestock markets. This often serves as a source of draught animals for crop farmers who practice animal traction. For the women, it is important for them to be able to dispose their dairy products especially in the rainy season when production outstrips household needs.

Indeed, it has been argued that mobility has a number of advantages some of which include the prevention of overgrazing in places that would have otherwise been crowded with animals (high stocking). By moving animals between agro-ecological zones, it has been argued that the grazing resources are better utilised while promoting nutrient cycling through animal droppings. Grazing resources that would have otherwise been left unused are taken up by such animals. It has been postulated that in the course of movement, livestock and animal products are distributed to communities without relying on the movement of livestock on trucks. A good distribution network promotes price uniformity across a large region over which pastoralists transverse. Over the years, however, pastoral mobility has been constrained. This is resulting in increased incidence of conflict on the one hand, and on the other providing an impetus to spontaneously sedentarize. The latter case, however, only occurs where the pastoralist has secured adequate land.

This system of livestock production has often been incriminated as unproductive, destructive of the environment, among other things. On the other hand, however, commentators have observed that mobile livestock production system is responsive to the realities and opportunities available to pastoralists in these communities in both space and time. It is to the realities and needs of the pastoralists that development intervention should be geared towards. This cannot be done properly without grasping the entire circumstance under which pastoral livelihoods take place. This means that the physical environment including animal type and number as well as range resources (especially fodder and water) are as important as the people themselves in terms of their socio-political and economic predisposition. This holistic approach was largely missing in past efforts to develop pastoral communities in Africa.

By the nature of the mode of production, pastoralists contend with a variety of challenges including access to feeds and feedstuffs, water, access to markets, goods, services and information, periodic drought and disease outbreaks and state intervention (policies and programmes). Transhumance pastoralism presents unique challenges to both producing households and the environment (social and physical). The hazards involved in the movement of animals and persons over vast areas in search of pasture and water and the potential or actual conflict with other resource users in a fragile agro-ecological environment are issues to contend with. On the other hand, however, it has been argued that transhumance pastoralism has uniquely converted otherwise unutilised resources into protein. Transhumance pastoralism presents a challenge to sustainable ruminant livestock production, but at the same time it has played a crucial role in supporting the livelihoods of resource-poor producers. Different opportunities and constraints are, therefore, faced in transhumance pastoralism.

Attempts have been made by governmental and non-governmental agencies to improve livestock production, using a variety of approaches and strategies that range between stock improvement programmes through grazing reserve development to price and import control mechanisms. Regrettably, however, emphasis has frequently been placed on development of physical infrastructure at the expense of empowering producers by building on the existing pool of knowledge and technologies geared towards solving specific development needs.

Projects after projects are premised on assumptions and values that are exogenous to the realities and needs of producing families and communities. Little wonder, therefore, that the much-desired improvement in the livelihoods of pastoral and livestock communities has continued to be a mirage. An approach that utilizes the knowledge base of producing communities for the design and execution of community-led development initiatives stands a better chance of impacting positively on the livelihoods and food security status of producers and society at large.

Reorientation of activities and programmes towards enhancing the functioning of the production system as a whole should be the focus. The goal is to build on livestock keepers' strategies, values and knowledge base thereby offering ample opportunity for genuine participation of the livestock keepers, and for supporting them in their own ways of facing the problem. In this way, the criteria of livestock keepers themselves for the success and failure of livestock projects are fully taken into account.

From the foregoing, therefore, it is timely to review the activities (and inactivity?) of national and international agencies in the promotion of pastoral and livestock livelihoods activities with the aim of charting new, relevant and sustainable development options. As a result of the rapidly changing demographic and environmental situation, the structure of pastoral production systems will of necessity adopt more realistic strategies in ensuring the availability of, and access to production resources and markets.

Conference Objective

In 1988, a national conference on pastoralism was convened and hosted by the National Animal Production Research Institute, Shika, Zaria, Nigeria to examine some of the major concerns considered to be crucial to the pastoral mode of livestock production. The conference brought together a variety of stakeholders including researchers, policy makers at different levels of government, NGO's and pastoralist organizations from different agro-ecological regions of the country (See Gefu, *et al.*, 1989). Almost two decades later, many of the bottlenecks identified as inhibiting pastoral production at that time have largely lingered on. Some of these include issues of transhumance, resource use patterns, conflict and conflict management mechanisms, policy directions, ecological/environmental concerns, etc. Pastoralists, being 'Producers without frontier', transverse the extensive terrain of the West African sub-region responding rather quickly to environmental and socio-political situations. The movement of pastoralists in the region is essentially trans-national and so are the attendant problems. Transhumance must, therefore, be conceptualised in a wider multi-communal framework of diverse producing groups with common or similar goals.

The main objective of the proposed conference is to provide a forum for discussing the multi-faceted challenges of transhumance pastoralism and associated issues as these affect the economy and society

of pastoral communities in the West Africa sub-region. Through the presentation and analyses of different experiences across the sub-region, common experience will be shared in order to embark on meaningful interventions (harmonised policy on transhumant pastoralism?) that could enhance pastoral livelihoods and promote environmental and social harmony among communities of the sub-region. Options for shared mechanism of trans-border disease control and conflict management and the promotion of healthy trade relations among communities will emerge. The conference will, in essence, strive to accomplish the following:

- share experiences and lessons learnt from policies, research and development programme undertaken conducted on pastoral and livestock development in the sub-region and
- discuss new ideas and innovative approaches in the light of emerging socio-economic and environmental concerns in response to the changing societal realities and needs relevant to the enhancement and sustainability of pastoral livelihoods.

Approach and activities

The Conference will be organized in parallel scientific sessions, following plenary presentations at which commissioned speakers will share their experiences and discuss how such lessons could be usefully applied to pastoral and livestock systems in the sub-region. Each session will focus on two or more components of a sub-theme. Two sessions will be held under each sub-theme. An invited lead paper will open each scientific session to be followed by oral presentations.

Abstracts

Abstracts of original work should not exceed 350 words and must be submitted no later than 20 March 2006. Contributors must clearly indicate name, postal address, institutional affiliation and e-mail address of corresponding and other authors. A panel of international experts will review papers. The decision to accept a paper shall be based on the opinion of the panel of referees. Notification of acceptance will be sent at the end of March 2006. Authors of accepted papers must submit the full paper (electronic) before the end of April 2006.

Outputs and impacts

The outputs emerging from conference deliberations will have considerable impact on redirecting/refocusing research and development programmes and government policies relevant to efficient resource use in the promotion of sustainable pastoral livelihoods. The conference will provide an opportunity to undertake an indebt assessment of the pastoralist problematic. Options in which national and international organizations can effectively participate in and contribute to sustainable pastoral and livestock livelihoods would be proffered. This will also be an opportunity for pursuing options for a common regional policy on pastoralism.

Venue and date of the Conference

Abuja, Nigeria 20-24 November 2006

Conference language

The Conference will adopt English and French as official languages. Facilities for simultaneous translation will be provided.

Who is to participate?

Policy Makers (at regional, national, state and local government levels)
International Development Agencies
Community-Based Organisations
Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs)
Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development
Project Implementation Units
Practitioners (Pastoralists)
Training, Research and Development Institutes scientists and management staff
Companies active in the delivery of livestock services

Conference deadlines

Submission of abstracts 20 March 2006
Notification of acceptance 31 March 2006
Submission of full papers 28 April 2006

Conference fees

US\$ 250 payable on arrival at registration desk.

Social activities

A variety night will feature a film documentary on aspects of pastoral livelihood activities, economy and society. Also, drama and cultural troupe entertainment will be presented to participants. (*The ABU Drama & Cultural group*).

Mid-Conference tour

Participants will visit pastoral communities around the Kachia grazing reserve, Kaduna State. This will afford participants the opportunity to get acquainted with various livestock production systems.

For more information about the conference, please contact:

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