

## **PREFACE**

This workshop on ‘pasture management’ grew from the realisation that the many pastoral resource development projects operating in the Sahel were not being gathered or analysed. Most of these projects work at village-territory-level to improve the local ecology; specifically to reverse or slow desertification and help the populations to try to “turn the Sahel green”. This is technically feasible on many sites by introducing measures to conserve water and soil, planting trees, and seeding herbaceous species. However the projects rarely consider the subsequent management, and so the benefits are often lost, depriving the local people of their long term benefits. In certain cases the populations who participated in the physical work acquired exclusive rights to the reclaimed resources.

To begin with, the workshop’s objective was limited to gathering and analysing the management experiences of sites restored by these projects. As well as project representatives, we wished to include scientists who could contribute to both the technical aspects of pasture management and institutional development. It also appeared necessary to include representatives of professional pastoral organisations, which are the partners of development projects, as well as representatives of the organisations funding these projects. Therefore we made contact with development agents, researchers and representatives of pastoral organisations and held an exploratory meeting in Niamey, from which emerged the organising committee of this workshop. Very rapidly the workshop’s objectives grew beyond the management of reclaimed lands, to tackle the management of all pastoral resources and the governing institutions such as access rights, utilisation rights, land tenure rights and pastoral organisations. It emerged that extending cropland, other losses of pastoral resources, and policies discriminating against pastoral livestock husbandry, all contribute to reducing regional livestock mobility and eroding pastoral institutions.

More than 150 people participated in the workshop. Twenty-eight papers were presented and actively discussed in both plenary sessions and working groups. The presentations focused on the seven following subjects that were discussed in four working groups:

- 1) *Grazing control at village territory level.* The objective was to identify, among the many experiences of those assembled (in the domain of development as well as of science), the advantages and constraints of alternative rangeland management practices at the village territory level, and particularly their impact on the communities.
- 2) *Regional livestock mobility.* Acknowledged as one of the principal practices of pastoral management in the Sahel, regional livestock mobility is increasingly constrained by changes in land-use and eroding communal institutions. However,

mobile livestock are crucial to balancing the nutritional needs of livestock against the forage available at any given time and place, and preserving rangeland against overgrazing. The debate focused on the future trends of regional livestock mobility, and identifying alternative practices.

- 3) *Conflicts and synergism between agriculture and livestock husbandry.* Given the increasing integration of agricultural and pastoral practices, especially at the level of rural households, the aim was to identify the causes for and mechanisms of this integration, and the hindrances and conflicts it could produce.
- 4) *Institutions governing access rights to natural resources.* After investigating some of the Sahelian states, the objective was to discuss institutional options for communal resource management and to regulate usage conflicts, including rights and rules of land tenure applicable to pastoral resources.
- 5) *Professional association of pastoralists.* The main objective was to list progress and failure in pastoralist organisations, by analysing their role in managing natural resources at the level of territories and regions.
- 6) *Economic evaluation of the utilisation of forage resources.* The objective was to propose methods to estimate the economic value of forage resources. These would take into account the way they are exploited and include the many products and services of livestock husbandry as well as opportunity costs for alternative uses.
- 7) *Risk management.* Acknowledging unforeseeable variations in primary resources, and fluctuations in the economic, social and political environment, the debate focused on policies suited to respond to such crisis, whether natural catastrophe or social insecurity. Policies could include de-stocking herds, re-capitalisation, credits and insurance.

Most presentations acknowledged the economic, social or ecological impact of livestock husbandry, but often only to emphasize its degraded state and the constraints to its development. All the working groups, irrespective of the subject discussed, recommended increasing the intervention of socio-professional organisations of pastoralists. This is seen as a condition for not only increasing and regulating pastoral productivity, but also improving the integration of livestock husbandry with other agricultural activities. And finally it is seen as a means to promote the relatively positive ecological impact of well managed mobile pastoralism, which favours organic matter and nutrient recycling, and avoids devastating vegetation cover or eroding soil.

The working groups also recommended political and social recognition of the benefits of using communal natural resources through livestock husbandry, especially mobile pastoralism. This would improve the standing of such practices with institutions charged with managing natural resources, especially with respect to land tenure and other legal and administrative arrangements.

It was recognised that the impact of the recommendations will depend on their execution. Joint exchange structures should be implemented at all levels, from the rural community up to governments. An appropriate approach would be the participatory evaluation of livestock husbandry practices at all management levels.

However, certain themes have not been covered sufficiently in this workshop and would merit further study. For example, land tenure rights in each of the states should be

analysed to identify legislation objectives that are compatible with the decentralisation objectives already going on in most Sahelian states. Another example would be to identify economic incentives to improve access to resources and their management, and the required changes to national policies of agricultural development and environmental improvement.

By publishing, in this volume, most of the presentations and the summaries of the four working groups, as well as the various recommendations, I hope that these proceedings have helped to collect and evaluate the experiences of each and everyone and will bring forth the initiatives required to improve the livelihoods and security of pastoralists.

The "Community-Based Natural Resource Management Network" (CBNRM Net) has kindly made available summaries of the articles (in French and English) and results of the working groups (in French, abstracts in English) on its portal web page [http://www.cbnrm.org/resources/events/niger\\_001.html](http://www.cbnrm.org/resources/events/niger_001.html).

Finally, I would like to thank all the people that, in one way or another, have contributed to the success of this workshop, and all the institutions that, with their financial support, have allowed its realisation.

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