Mali: A Participatory Approach to Livestock Development

Background

The livestock sector in Mali accounts for 43 percent of cattle exports in the Sahel sub-region. However, while the sub-sector accounted for 28.6 percent of agriculture's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), investment in it amounted to only 10.7 percent of the total budget allocation to rural development. The CFA devaluation in January 1994 increased the competitiveness of red meat from Sahelian countries (including Mali) bound for coastal importing countries (Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo). However, well before the devaluation, a major policy shift on the part of the Malian government emphasized the decentralization of political power and investment decisions. As part of this initiative, the government requested the World Bank's support on initiating a participatory process of policy formulation for the red meat sub-sector.

Methodology

A participatory rural appraisal (PRA) technique was used in this ten-village exercise and consisted of initial methodological and training workshops, village-level consultations with beneficiaries, a wrap-up workshop and a retreat to distill recommendations from the data collected. From the outset, the exercise sought to complement the existing quantitative data collected in previous studies with qualitative information.

The sampling framework for the production systems to be covered in the PRA framework was based on a previous classification system which had characterized the Malian livestock sector as being dominated by two major production systems--pastoralist and agro-pastoralist, each of which was then sub-divided into three sub-systems according to the type of agricultural activities they were associated with. Stall fattening was added as a seventh type of production system. This division drove the sample selection.
Lessons learned

Table 1: Issues Identified and Solutions Envisaged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Suggested solution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Institutions</strong></td>
<td>Lack of locally available animal feed concentrate</td>
<td>• liberalization of concentrates industry</td>
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<td><strong>and Policies</strong></td>
<td>Lack of market information</td>
<td>• weekly publication of market prices by radio</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers</td>
<td>• direct negotiation at village level mediated by Natural Resource Management (NRM) projects</td>
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<td><strong>Social and Land Tenure Institutions and Policies</strong></td>
<td>Weaknesses of pastoral organization</td>
<td>• support of grassroots initiatives; inclusion of pastoral representatives in Chambers of Agriculture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poor coverage of veterinary services</td>
<td>• training of village auxiliaries by specialized NGOs; distribution of veterinary medicines by private sector and pastoral organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shortage of animal feed during dry season</td>
<td>• strengthening ongoing research program on inexpensive forage production and storage technologies</td>
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<td><strong>Research and Extension</strong></td>
<td>Shrinking number of qualified herders</td>
<td>• extension program focusing on skills needed by transhumant populations</td>
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Degradation of common rangelands

- expansion of pilot pastoral program in NRM project

**Sectoral strategy**

Building on information from producers’ groups and on lessons learned from previous work, freestanding sub-sectoral projects (livestock, forestry, and commodity-specific) are avoided while actions benefiting each particular sub-sector are consolidated within comprehensive sectoral packages. The advantages of this approach are that it ensures a comprehensive coverage of all the relevant issues within the context of the entire sector, allows a more effective handling of each of the components as they can be prepared and identified by the departments and staff relevant to each case, and results in a more integrated and coordinated planning of activities (extension, finance, taxes) across the different sub-sectors (crops, forestry, livestock, etc.)

**Table 2: Sectoral Approach to Sub-Sectoral Issues**

| Rural Sector Support | • Restructuring of the Ministry of Rural Development and Environment (MDRE) to improve the ministry's capacity to plan, implement and monitor activities  
| | • Policies regarding land tenure, input supply and marketing, compulsory health control and effective taxation  
| | • Extension component to include activities to promote functional literacy among pastoral communities, provide messages to producer groups, and train para-veterinarians  
| | • Support pastoral organizations, including market price broadcasting  
| Rural Infrastructure Operation | • Ensure crucial water supply to herders and their stock  
| | • Marketing facilities, especially in the cities where trade and export take place  
| | • Simple and cheap slaughtering installations in cities willing to share the cost of improving the health of their populations  
| Rural Credit Banking Finance | • Short-term credit for livestock fattening and marketing  
| | • Medium-term credit to traders and processors  
| | • Long-term credit for farm-level investments and industrial equipment |
Agriculture Research

- Cheap and efficient forage production and storage; processing of agricultural and industrial by-products for animal feed; genetic improvement techniques for commercial herds; small-scale processing of livestock commodities as a cottage industry

Natural Resource Management

- Recognition of organized producers’ groups, recognition of the terroir area (area of intervention in a given community); pilot operations for common property (forest, rangeland) management

Problems encountered during the participatory process

Limited involvement of some stakeholders: Several government bodies were fully involved throughout the process - some others were kept on the sidelines. While donors were kept fully informed of the process, NGOs, even specialized ones, were not involved, except for providing some PRA specialists. Some traders were involved in the market data collection and attended the wrap-up meeting. Herders themselves were only involved when they were surveyed in their villages. Future activities should ensure more active involvement of as many local-level stakeholders as possible in the launch, implementation and monitoring activities.

Local facilitators' limited experience of participatory techniques: Local consultants should receive adequate information when recruited and should be trained adequately in participatory techniques. A locally-based program manager and participation supervisor should be appointed for effective trouble-shooting and liaison with the local team. One of the more visible "weak" results was in the documentation of fieldwork data.

Inadequate attention to social issues: This was cited as a constraint in the effective initial sampling of village communities.

Raising expectations in the communities visited: This is a potential problem in any type of local-level consultation. In this case, special care had to be taken to ensure that the villagers were aware of the policy objectives of the work and realized that the consultations were not going to bring immediate benefits.

Representation at wrap-up workshop and follow-up retreat: As the majority were technical staff who felt threatened by the participatory approach, they tended to propose their own "pet" interventions rather than follow the intended procedure of assessing each of the producers' recommendations against a common set of criteria. At the same time, there was a lack of economists and administration specialists who could explain the government's streamlining and decentralization policies. There were no representatives of the agricultural sub-sectors or the social sciences.
Prospects

The participatory approach, when applied to future projects and development initiatives in this sector, will help to address real problems, make these projects and programs more acceptable to producers and help technical staff in charge of their implementation to gain a better insight into the issues at hand. Also, the information collected from the ten villages will serve as a useful benchmark for future evaluation and monitoring of progress. The reports of the technical teams on local participation, economic analysis, environmental sustainability, livestock marketing and export all represent important contributions and new ways of looking at these problems—from a producer's perspective.

Further Reading


N. Menudier, *Facilitation of Producers’ Groups and Establishment of their Goals*, GRID. September 1995,


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