



NAVIGATING THE LIVESTOCK SECTOR: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LIVESTOCK POLICY IN BURKINA FASO

The government of Burkina Faso estimates that nearly 85 percent of Burkinabè households rely upon livestock for some portion of their income. Furthermore, livestock accounts for approximately 25 percent of the country's exports. Socially, livestock provides a way for young adults to learn the responsibilities of adulthood, a method for family members to fulfill social obligations, and a means for women to support their families. Considering its social and economic significance, livestock must take center stage in efforts to improve Burkinabè livelihoods.

This brief highlights three potential constraints - weak livestock producer organizations, poor animal health service provision, and commercial weaknesses — on the potential contribution of the livestock sector to improving poor people's livelihoods and recommends strategic actions for overcoming each of them.

● Weak Livestock Producer Organizations

Achieving policy change normally requires strong, organized interest groups to push for change, but Burkina's poor livestock producers lack such groups. In rural areas, livestock associations are not uncommon, but these rural associations have had little influence on local, regional, and particularly, national policies. Rural associations tend to focus their attention on NGO or donor activity with many associations lasting only as long as the local NGO or donor project. Furthermore, rural associations tend to avoid any activity that could be perceived as 'political'. At the national level, it is difficult for all-inclusive organizations to generate a common policy platform from the disparate needs and priorities of livestock producers in Burkina Faso. The existing Fédération des Éleveurs de Burkina Faso (FEB) faces strong criticism for its inability

to address the needs of the livestock producers outside the cattle sub-sector.

Livestock producers in peri-urban professional associations, such as the Maison de l'Aviculture, have been more successful at organizing to provide member services and to influence policy. Actors interested in promoting pro-poor policies can work with and provide assistance to these associations on issues that affect all producers in the poultry, pork and dairy industries. Tariffs and macro-economic policies are one level at which the interests of rural and peri-urban producers may coincide. Furthermore, both groups can profit from basic animal health measures (not advanced veterinary interventions required to raise exotic breeds), like vaccinations against Newcastle disease or efforts to stop the spread of African swine fever. However, peri-urban professional associations already have exceptional organizational advantages vis-à-vis their rural counterparts. Although they can promote common goals and address common needs, they also have very specific concerns which are not related to those of their poor counterparts.

In addition, actors seeking to help livestock producers should work with herders unions at the provincial level. These unions provide important member services to livestock producers, as well as being active in local and provincial politics, particularly in politics surrounding land-use. These unions have been critiqued for their ethnic basis, but it can be argued that this ethnic basis is necessary to the unions' organizational survival. Despite problems of inequality within some herders unions, these unions can provide information, training, and legal assistance to agro-pastoral producers. Particularly as Burkina proceeds with political decentralization, herders unions can help provide agro-pastoralists the



resources needed to make sure they do not lose out as decision-making roles are delegated to local authorities.

Finally, livestock producers need to be able to use the export earnings they generate to influence policy. Interested actors could provide herders unions with research findings on the fiscal importance of livestock exports to the Burkina Faso state. By helping unions develop the 'campaigning' skills needed to educate state officials and politicians on the fiscal importance of livestock exports, donors or other interested organizations could help unions raise the political salience of livestock exports.

• Poor Animal Health Provision

Poor producers' ability to profit from market demand for livestock, particularly for family-raised poultry which is arguably an important source of daily revenue for most poor Burkina Faso families, depends on the accessibility of reasonably priced vaccines and medicines. At present, access is limited by 1) the lack of private veterinarians in rural areas, 2) import companies' inability to supply the domestic market, and 3) what producers' perceive as high costs for medicines and vaccines. Furthermore, the states' basic animal health capacities appear to be eroding so that the state is not prepared to deal with epizootic outbreaks. This brief recommends a threefold approach to addressing the animal health problem.

First, it recommends that an in-depth study of the constraints facing import businesses be conducted in order to generate feasible means for increasing capital and capacity in the import business. Second, to facilitate the privatization of veterinary services while retaining basic national animal health preventative capacities, it recommends that the government contract private paraprofessionals to provide preventative services in specified geographical areas under the supervision of private veterinarians. In exchange for providing preventative services, these para-professionals could be granted the right to sell basic curative medicines to local producers in the area. In exchange for their supervisory role, private veterinarians could receive transportation subsidies

that would allow them to provide curative services at a reduced fee while traveling for supervision purposes. This contract for curative service in a given area would help assure veterinarians a sound financial base for their private practice. Finally, in order to increase the production of village poultry, vaccines and basic medicines must be made available to producers at accessible prices. This brief recommends looking into creating private partnerships with the Programme de Développement des Animaux Villageois as a means of securing these resources at competitive rates.

• Commercial Weaknesses

The small-ruminant and cattle sub-sector provides the most promising source of market growth in the livestock sector. If expanded, it could significantly improve household livelihoods; however, this sub-sector cannot expand until the high transaction and transportation costs of exporting Burkina Faso products to the West African sub-region are addressed. Furthermore, the sub-sector suffers from lack of capital and access to formal credit. Despite strong regional demand for Burkina Faso exports, commercial actors in the sub-sector do not have access to the capital needed to expand exports. Increasing the capacity and reliability of the small-ruminant and cattle commercial system requires that credit be extended to actors at the highest levels of the formal commercial system. Furthermore, interested actors should support efforts such as those undertaken by the West African Monetary Union to reduce unofficial practices, including demands for bribes, that raise the costs of cross-border trade in cattle and small-ruminants.

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