



Navigating the Livestock Sector: The Political Economy of Livestock Policy in Burkina Faso

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The livestock sector has a key role to play in improving the livelihoods of Burkina Faso's 5.5 million poor, but livestock's potential contribution is limited by existing political and economic dynamics. Implementing successful pro-poor livestock policies requires an understanding of these political and economic dynamics. This paper provides an analysis of the current political forces that limit livestock's potential contributions to fighting poverty and sheds light on political and economic forces that can assist in generating pro-poor livestock policies.

Organizational context

The first section of this paper addresses the organizational landscape of Burkina Faso's livestock sector. It emphasizes the existing discrepancy in the organizational resources and cohesion of the various sub-sectors of the livestock sector.

- 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. Many associations have been created to work with donor-sponsored projects and have fallen apart after the projects' end. Furthermore, rural associations tend to avoid any activity that could be perceived as "political".
- At the national level, all-inclusive livestock producer associations have not proven politically or economically effective. 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. It is difficult for any all-inclusive agency to generate a common policy platform from the disparate needs and priorities of livestock producers in Burkina Faso.

As neither existing rural organizations nor all-inclusive national associations appear to possess the organizational cohesion and strength needed to influence policy makers and to provide real services to their members, this paper recommends that interested actors focus on two more viable types of livestock organizations.

- Exclusive, regionally-concentrated associations have become an important, lasting part of the livestock sector's organizational landscape. At the provincial level, herders unions (*syndicats des éleveurs*) have gathered significant followings and established themselves as important actors in provincial politics.
- In urban and peri-urban areas, producers associations have also emerged in recent years but tend to incorporate only relatively well-off producers. These small, exclusive organizations have achieved significant levels of cohesion and accumulated resources, and as a result, have had some influence in policy-making circles.

While these organizations can provide important allies in the fight against poverty, they also present unique challenges. Herders unions tend to be ethnically based, which can provide an important source of cohesion but can also be a source of criticism. Furthermore, they tend to replicate existing inequalities within the Fulani culture. Membership in peri-urban producers associations has been limited to specific sub-sets of the livestock producer population. Consequently, while they can help to produce policy change in the livestock sector, these associations will not necessarily use their influence to promote pro-poor policies. This paper acknowledges the important contributions to be made by these two types of organizations and sees them as the most viable partners in any pro-poor efforts but also cautions that there are potential inequalities inherent in these organizations and their relationship to livestock producers.

State interventions, animal health and livestock market conditions

The second section of this paper addresses current livestock market conditions and considers the state of animal health in Burkina Faso as it relates to the potential development of pro-poor livestock policies.

- This paper contends that one of the best ways to help poor producers is to target the traditional, family-based poultry sector. Traditional, family-raised poultry, which accounts for approximately 70 percent of all poultry production in Burkina Faso, provides an important means for poor families to improve their livelihoods. Demand for traditionally raised poultry is very high in Burkina Faso and has not been displaced by demand for semi-industrial poultry or frozen imports, but producers are not able to meet this demand, in large part because of disease-related animal losses. This paper therefore proposes interventions to facilitate poor producers' access to vaccines as a key step to improving poor producers' livelihoods.
- This paper emphasizes that the small ruminant and cattle sectors offer an important means for improving producer livelihoods, but that they cannot develop until the transaction costs involved in exporting cattle and small ruminants to the West African sub-region are reduced. Furthermore, these sectors require capital infusion and expanded access to credit. Therefore this paper encourages interested actors to explore innovative means of providing credit to those butchers and exporters at the higher levels of the cattle and small ruminant sector.
- Finally, this section advocates an informed re-examination of the role of the state in providing animal health care. It argues that the state has withdrawn from many of the basic animal health services it ought to provide, including the prevention of epizootics, but has not withdrawn from those areas where the private sector could feasibly take over animal health care provision. This paper therefore recommends that some human resources be redirected toward prevention of epizootics. It recommends that other financial and human resources be used to produce a new system of paraprofessional veterinary service provision under the supervision of contracted private veterinarians.

Power in Burkinabè politics

Finally, the third section of this paper addresses the larger political dynamics in which livestock policy decisions are made. It emphasizes that the points at which political pressure may be applied in Burkinabè politics are highly limited—the president, the governing party, and influential individuals with close contacts to the president or his entourage. While Burkina Faso is moving toward democracy and decentralizing political power, this paper argues that the normal channels of democratic politics are not yet the most effective means of enacting policy change in Burkina Faso. Instead, it points to four potential ways of influencing livestock policy.

- Because Burkina Faso's government has adopted the formal practice of democratic elections, there is an emerging opportunity to build coalitions among politicians seeking popular support and livestock producers. Particularly in areas with a high concentration of livestock producers, politicians may find it in their interest to champion pro-poor livestock policies in parliament and with the government.
- Furthermore, the government of Burkina Faso has begun a decentralization program which may yield significant changes in local politics. This provides an opportunity for rural reform but also poses a significant challenge as many livestock producers have been marginalized from local

politics. It is important, at this point in time, to provide livestock producers with the training and knowledge needed to make the most of decentralization.

- The Ministry of Livestock is a politically marginal ministry. Unfortunately this has meant little funding or support for the ministry; however, it has also given the ministry important leeway in dealing with the livestock sector. Its political marginality has insulated the ministry somewhat from the political maneuverings that undermine so many other ministries in Burkina Faso. This political insulation and room for experimentation makes the ministry a valuable partner in pursuing pro-poor policies, as does the general pro-poor outlook of many civil servants in the ministry.
- Finally, this section emphasizes the dismal financial resources of the Burkinabè state and the Ministry of Livestock, and their dependence on foreign assistance to fund policy implementation. While this situation of dependence has negative consequences so numerous as to warrant a separate study, this paper also points out that from dependence grows a willingness to adopt pro-poor policies when these policies are funded. Related, but far more positive, this paper highlights the fiscal importance of livestock revenue to the state and argues that producers could gain political weight if they were able to demonstrate to politicians precisely how much their sector contributes to the state's fiscal survival.