



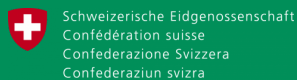
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Capitalisation note

Structuring cross-border livestock trade between Sahelian and coastal countries: a cooperation experience between Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal



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Project : Marketing, securing and facilitating livestock transport between coastal and Sahelian countries

Countries : Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali and Sénégal

Implementing institution : The simplified cooperative society of meat and livestock merchants and exporters of Kadiago «SCOOP/SONGTAABA»

Executive summary

The cross-border livestock trade project between Burkina Faso, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal has put in place a series of initiatives aimed at structuring regional trade, improving transport conditions and enhancing the profitability of commercial operations. Key activities include contractual agreements between umbrella cooperatives, the organisation of targeted sales operations (particularly during Tabaski), and the implementation of logistical measures such as the supply of livestock feed at reduced prices and the creation of an integrated unloading area.

The results achieved are convincing: more than 200 sheep sold to Côte d'Ivoire, 40 cattle transported to Senegal, 15 direct jobs created for young people and transporters, and 94 tonnes of livestock feed distributed. These actions have strengthened the CNMDE's capacities, professionalised sales channels, facilitated access to inputs, and promoted the involvement of women in related activities.

The main lesson from this experience is that secure and profitable regional trade relies on strong inter-state alliances, appropriate logistics, and planning based on periods of high demand.

To consolidate and expand these gains, it is recommended that the model be replicated in other regional corridors, that appropriate financing for transit infrastructure be strengthened, and that the inclusion of young people and women in key links of the livestock-meat value chain be systematised.

Key messages

- The cross-border livestock trade project between Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal addressed a twofold challenge: structuring trade between Sahelian and coastal countries to stimulate regional economic integration, while improving transport conditions, sales and the profitability of commercial operations in the livestock and meat sector.
- The intervention was based on a multi-stakeholder partnership approach, including contractual agreements between cooperatives, the professionalisation of sales channels during key events (such as Tabaski), and the implementation of logistical measures to improve access to inputs (particularly livestock feed).
- The project has led to the creation of new regional trade links, the professionalisation of local structures such as the CNMDE and the SONGTAABA cooperative, and the successful marketing of several hundred head of cattle on the Ivorian and Senegalese markets.
- The intervention also had a significant social impact, notably through the creation of jobs for young transporters and traders, the development of related economic activities for women, and improved access for livestock farmers to high-quality feed at reduced prices.
- Experience shows that the success of secure regional trade depends on strong alliances between umbrella organisations, appropriate logistics (livestock trucks, supply chains), and better coordination between implementation schedules, financing and periods of high demand.

- Replicating this approach in other ECOWAS corridors would benefit from flexible financing mechanisms, greater mobilisation of control authorities (customs, law enforcement) and the systematic integration of young people and women into the livestock-meat value chain..

Challenge

A strategic but still unstructured trade

In the ECOWAS region, cross-border livestock trade is a vital economic activity, particularly for Sahelian countries such as Burkina Faso and Mali, which have large livestock populations. These countries traditionally export live cattle to coastal countries such as Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, where demand for meat is constantly increasing. This dynamic is based on long-standing economic relations, but it continues to face many challenges, including informal distribution channels, logistical inefficiencies, health constraints and abusive practices at checkpoints.

The central issue that the project sought to address is the lack of structure in livestock trade between inland and coastal countries. Livestock transport remains severely hampered by recurring road harassment, inadequate logistics, frequent animal losses during transit, and limited market access for small-scale livestock farmers. Added to this is the low profitability of commercial operations and the low integration of young people and women into the livestock-meat value chain. In a context where livestock farming is a major source of income for a large part of the rural population, these limitations hinder not only local economic development but also regional integration.

Under-exploited potential for regional integration

Meat, classified in the fifth tariff band of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET), benefits from a high protection rate (35%), making it a strategic product for the region's agricultural and trade policies. The development of structured livestock trade between Member States is therefore a priority. The capitalised project was part of this approach, responding to the challenge of strengthening business links between economic actors in the Sahel and coastal countries, while improving the sanitary, logistical and institutional conditions for live cattle trade.

The approach adopted was based on a unique partnership between two professional organisations from different countries: one based in Senegal and the other in Burkina Faso. The aim was to promote direct cooperation between actors in the field, develop contractual supply mechanisms and reduce the transaction costs associated with livestock trade. The project thus aimed to lay the foundations for a replicable model of secure, profitable and socially inclusive regional livestock trade.

Needs identified at several levels

Several needs were identified during the design of the project. In terms of logistics, the trucks used to transport livestock were often unsuitable, causing injury, animal stress and even death during transport. It was therefore essential to provide compliant livestock trucks and improve transport conditions. Institutionally, the lack of awareness of ECOWAS directives among law enforcement and customs services encouraged abuses at borders, creating a need for advocacy and targeted training. Economically, producers and traders suffered from limited access to lucrative markets and affordable livestock feed supply chains.

Finally, the project also had to address a need for inclusion: strengthening the participation of young people and women in activities related to the livestock and meat sector through the creation of direct jobs and the emergence of related activities (catering, security, transport). In this sense, the aim was to initiate a sustainable transformation of the value chain, making it more equitable and better integrated at the regional level.



In practice

Activities carried out

To modernise the livestock trade between Sahelian and coastal countries, the project implemented several actions aimed at structuring trade, strengthening regional commercial relations, and improving access to inputs and markets for livestock farmers and traders. Two main areas guided this modernisation: the marketing of high value-added livestock and the distribution of competitively priced livestock feed.

On the commercial front, a structuring partnership was developed between Senegal's National Council of Livestock Breeders (CNMDE) and Burkina Faso's SONGTAABA cooperative (a simplified cooperative society of meat and livestock merchants and exporters in Kadiago). This cooperation took the form of supplying livestock to the Senegalese market during Tabaski. The 2021 operation, considered a pilot project, was conducted on a contractual basis with 70% payment in advance, secure transport to the SEWEKHAY market, and the remaining 30% paid on delivery. Distribution and sales were then handled by the project's sales team. In 2022, the experiment was repeated with young Senegalese traders, which helped to strengthen business ties and further professionalise distribution channels.

At the same time, another component of the project focused on animal feed, a key factor in the profitability of livestock farming. The CNMDE signed partnership agreements with Senegalese manufacturers

(Grands Moulins de Dakar, Nouvelle Minoterie Africaine, Syndicat National des Entreprises de Services et Distribution du Machinisme Agricole) to procure concentrated animal feed at prices below those on the local market. Between August and September 2022, 94 tonnes were distributed in the markets of Touba and Bambey via a logistics chain directly controlled by the project. This approach made it possible to limit speculation by resellers and ensure better availability of inputs for livestock farmers.

In financial terms, the investments were significant. Livestock marketing mobilised 36 million CFA francs in the first year and 8 million in the second, while livestock feed marketing required 2.7 million in the first year and 16 million in the second. These funds were used to support logistics operations, purchases, partnership agreements and distribution.

Results achieved

All of these activities generated significant economic, social and institutional results. Four commercial operations by the SONGTAABA cooperative to Côte d'Ivoire resulted in the sale of 207 sheep, and 40 head of cattle were transported to Senegal. The Tabaski operation strengthened the CNMDE's commercial capacity and professionalised its practices, while promoting the creation of new partnerships with young Senegalese entrepreneurs. This dynamic helped to make Tabaski sheep available at more affordable prices for consumers.

The social impact is also significant. Operation Tabaski 2022 created 15 direct jobs, mainly filled by young people from the Maisons des Éleveurs (Livestock Breeders' Houses) and the (Livestock Breeders' Associations) in Burkina Faso. Related activities have also benefited women, particularly in the catering and animal feed sectors. In addition, contracting initiatives have strengthened interstate trade between traders, producers and transporters.

With regard to the marketing of animal feed, the establishment of a low-cost supply chain has facilitated access to quality inputs for small-scale livestock farmers. This system has not only improved the profitability of their activities, but also contributed to price stabilisation in certain target markets.

Challenges encountered

Despite these encouraging results, the project faced several constraints. On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of borders, particularly between Senegal and Mali, severely disrupted commercial operations. These events limited the volume of livestock transported, making it difficult to achieve the objectives set at the start of the project. As a result, of the 13,000 head of livestock planned, only 1,800 were actually sold.

On the other hand, the trucks used did not always meet safety standards, causing animal losses during transport. During the final phase of the project, five cattle died due to transport conditions. In response, the CNMDE took steps to acquire livestock trucks, with the support of the Senegalese Ministry of Livestock, which committed to providing two suitable vehicles.

Finally, implementation was slowed down by the administrative procurement procedures imposed by the ARAA, which lengthened the time it took for funds to become available and hampered the synchronisation of commercial operations with periods of high demand, such as religious festivals. Despite these constraints, the project demonstrated the feasibility of structured regional livestock trade, while identifying the adjustments needed to consolidate the gains.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- ⊙ **The establishment of a multi-stakeholder, multi-country partnership is a strategic lever for modernising regional livestock trade.** The project has demonstrated the relevance of an approach based on direct cooperation between umbrella organisations in different countries, in this case the CNMDE in Senegal and the SONGTAABA cooperative in Burkina Faso. This configuration has fostered the emergence of sustainable business relationships, facilitated inter-state transactions and strengthened trust between stakeholders. The establishment of contractual mechanisms for livestock supply, the sharing of logistical responsibilities and the formalisation of payments have made it possible to structure a regional trade circuit, while reducing risks and costs for stakeholders.

To capitalise on this momentum, it is recommended that this partnership model be replicated in other trade corridors, by providing technical support to professional organisations to help them structure their contractual arrangements and by supporting the creation of regional platforms for dialogue between cooperatives and public institutions.

- ⊙ **Securing livestock transport requires targeted investments in appropriate logistics and awareness-raising among corridor stakeholders.** The use of non-compliant trucks has resulted in animal losses, avoidable suffering for livestock, and reduced profitability for transporters and breeders. At the same time, the persistence of road harassment, despite the affixing of ECOWAS logos on trucks, highlights the limitations of non-systemic advocacy. The lack of awareness-raising workshops for law enforcement agencies at national and regional level has been a major obstacle to the effectiveness of facilitation mechanisms.

It is essential to provide umbrella organisations with appropriate material resources, in particular standardised livestock trucks, and to implement institutional commitments in this regard, such as the provision of specialised lorries by the Senegalese government. At the same time, a structured awareness-raising strategy involving the security forces, customs and local authorities should be integrated into project design from the outset in order to ensure that obstacles along the corridors are effectively removed.

- ⊙ **The promotion of major commercial events, such as Tabaski, provides an opportunity to make trade profitable and test replicable models.** The operations carried out during the Tabaski festival have created economic synergies between Burkinabe and Senegalese actors, streamlined livestock flows and generated income for a variety of actors, including young people and women. Advance planning, clear contractual arrangements and supervised distribution were key factors in the success of these operations. However, delays in mobilising funds limited the scope of the operations, reducing the ability to anticipate peaks in demand.

It is recommended that this type of operation be institutionalised in future projects, incorporating financial planning synchronised with religious and commercial calendars. The development of business plans specific to these events, backed by flexible and responsive financing mechanisms, would strengthen their impact and sustainability.

The economic inclusion of young people and women is promoted by the emergence of related high value-added activities. Beyond those directly involved in the livestock trade, the project has enabled young people to become involved in commercial operations (sales, transport) and women in catering and logistical support services. This dynamic has contributed to the project's local anchoring and social recognition. The distribution of opportunities has promoted a form of equity in access to the benefits of regional trade.

To reinforce this effect, similar projects should systematically identify and support related activities around livestock markets. Microfinance or start-up capital mechanisms for young and women entrepreneurs could be integrated into project design to increase their participation.

- ⊙ **Technical and institutional sustainability depends on local ownership and the structuring of mechanisms.** One of the major achievements of the project is the gradual professionalisation of the organisations involved. The SONGTAABA cooperative, for example, has capitalised on this experience to consolidate its commercial presence in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. The creation of the Société Coopérative des Éleveurs du Sénégal (Senegalese Livestock Farmers' Cooperative), inspired by the Burkinabe model, is evidence of this capacity for endogenous replication.

To ensure continuity after external funding ends, it is necessary to anchor the mechanisms in the real economic logic of the partner organisations. The development of sustainability funds, fed by the income generated by trade, and the networking of cooperative structures at the regional level are avenues to be explored in order to consolidate the progress made.

- ⊙ **Achieving quantitative results requires alignment between technical planning, logistical mechanisms and contextual realities.** Despite the efforts made, the project has not achieved its initial targets in terms of livestock sold or trucks mobilised. The discrepancies can be explained by a combination of factors: unstable security conditions in certain areas, complex procurement procedures, and late availability of infrastructure or funds. However, the qualitative results (strengthened cooperation, structuring of actors, change in practices) are significant and will have an impact in the medium term.

In the future, greater flexibility in implementation methods, particularly through the simplification of certain procedures for small structures, could improve the alignment between ambition and implementation. In addition, the capitalisation of field experiences, such as this one, should be systematically integrated as a steering and learning tool in project cycles.

About this capitalisation note

This note is the result of a participatory capitalisation process conducted as part of the Programme to Support Livestock Marketing in West Africa (PACBAO). The aim of capitalisation is to document and promote experiences in the field in order to encourage learning, accountability and the scaling up of promising approaches. The information was gathered through interviews, field visits, document analysis and stakeholder consultations.

About the PACBAO programme

The Regional Programme to Support Livestock Marketing in West Africa (PACBAO) is an ECOWAS initiative with financial support from Swiss Cooperation (SDC). It is part of the implementation of the Regional Agricultural Policy, ECOWAP. It aims to create conditions conducive to increasing livestock farmers' incomes by leveraging the private sector in regional livestock trade and regional public institutions. During its first phase (2018–2023), the programme contributed to strengthening the institutional and operational capacities of ECOWAS and financed 16 pilot projects in 11 countries in West Africa and the Sahel, which generated around ten good practices and innovations. The pilot projects mainly aimed to increase livestock productivity, improve the competitiveness of meat produced in the region in the face of competition from extra-community imports, facilitate and modernise intra-regional livestock trade, and improve relations between value chain actors, facilities and means for processing and transporting red meat.

The second phase of the programme (2024–2028) is in line with this approach and will focus on scaling up existing innovative practices while creating favourable conditions for promoting the livestock and meat sector. Its overall objective is to help meet the red meat and meat product needs of the populations of West Africa and the Sahel through the development of intraregional trade in livestock and meat and the control of extraregional imports of meat products. Specifically, the second phase of the programme aims to increase the supply of livestock and meat in terminal markets by at least 2.6% and reach approximately 500,000 direct beneficiaries, 40% of whom are young people and women.

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