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Rivalry for Urban Food Markets Between Farmers and Pastoralists in the Western Highlands of Cameroon

TOBIAS FELDT¹, LEON BESSERT², EVA SCHLECHT¹

¹*University of Kassel / Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Animal Husbandry in the Tropics and Sub-tropics, Germany*

²*Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany*

Abstract

Extensive cattle husbandry has a long tradition in the Northwest Region of Cameroon, in particular amongst its resident Mbororo people. This subgroup of the Fulani ethnicity contributes significantly to the region's supply with beef and, to a smaller extent, dairy products. Many pastoralists still pursue a seasonal grazing strategy by sending their herds from higher-altitude rainy season pastures to lower-lying valleys and transhumance zones during the dry season. Here, however, conflicts with local crop farmers are increasing due to growing human and livestock populations and progressive land-use change from natural and traditional grazing areas to agricultural land. To document these changes and determine the main areas of conflict, six representative Mbororo cattle herds, evenly distributed around the urban centre of Bamenda, were equipped with GPS collars during the dry seasons 2016/17 and 2017/18 and the animals' grazing ranges both in their transhumance and home grazing pastures were delineated. Maximum distances of both zones to the city were taken to define a 70 × 70 km investigation area from where cattle herds directly supply the peri-/urban markets. Within this range, 166 randomly sampled Mbororo cattle keepers were interviewed on subjects such as land ownership, access to grazing and water resources, stocking densities, major challenges in general and farmer-grazer conflicts in particular. Furthermore, interviewees were asked to describe the location of their herds' current and past transhumance zones and corridors. Information were directly registered in digital form to provide a basis for further GIS-based historical land-use change analyses. One third (32.5 %) of the herd owners indicated incidents directly related to farmer-grazer conflicts and farm encroachment a major problem during times of transhumance, and still 23.5 % of respondents mentioned it for their rainy season home grazing areas. At the same time, the pastoralists appeared unprepared for land disputes as none of the respondents owned an official land title for the dry season grazing land, and only 5.0 % held a title for the home grazing area. However, 9.0 % and 19.2 % of the respondents claimed ownership of dry season and rainy season pastures, respectively, by fencing them. Land tenure issues will thus become increasingly important in the future.

Keywords: Alliance farming, land tenure, Mbororo Fulani, participatory mapping