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## The Role of State in the Management of Farmer-Herder Conflicts in South West Burkina Faso

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### Abstract

In the South West of Burkina Faso conflicts between farmers and herders are frequent and sometimes violent. For efficient conflict management, the state has to contribute structurally as a legislator and personally as an alternative mediator, if conflicts between farmers and herders escalate. This paper explores the current role of the state, its potential and weakness. From October 2001 to June 2003 a study on conflict management was undertaken in the Poni and Nounbiel Provinces. 124 households and the local authorities in six villages participated in semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. Also representatives of the regional (administration, projects) and national (government, NGOs, etc.) meso- and macro level were interviewed to identify their involvement in and perception of conflict management.

Conflict management between farmers and herders at the local level (between the concerned or by local mediators) was preferred by all parties. However, departmental or regional state authorities (Prefect, Technical Service, Justice) were involved if management at local level failed. But this immediate role of the state in the arena of conflict management was viewed skeptically. Due to obscurities in compensation measures and the perturbation of social ties, if the conflict goes beyond village borders, actors disgraced the state. The legislative role of the state to define framework conditions was also seen critically. Land tenure right and decentralisation were mentioned frequently as conditions with a potential impact in conflict management at local level. But, as many informants remarked, contradictions between different elements in and between the actual bills for decentralisation and land tenure reform still exist and a marginalisation of rural areas, particularly of pastoralists, is feared.

It seems, that the state is too weak to fulfil his immediate responsibility as an alternative mediator. For formal (financial and technical) and informal (distrust) reasons the state has low creditability. Thus, the challenge is to support and strengthen local institutions for conflict management by the development of efficient framework conditions.

**Keywords:** Burkina Faso, conflict management, pastoralists, state