



Deutscher Tropentag, October 8-10, 2003, Göttingen

“Technological and Institutional Innovations
for Sustainable Rural Development”

Mobile Pastoralism in the South of Morocco — Present Crisis and Perspectives for the Future

JUTTA WERNER, UWE JENS NAGEL

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Department of Agricultural Economics and Social Sciences, Germany

Abstract

Changes in the socio-economic framework as well as population pressure have caused fundamental upheavals in land-use in the arid South of Morocco, thus provoking a crisis of the traditional mobile pastoral system. Formerly, mobile pastoralism represented an ecologically and economically stable form of land-use on common lands. Due to continuously increasing cropping activities, pastoral areas have become more and more restricted to less fertile lands. This tendency is aggravated by the fact that the nomadic pastoral management tradition has all but disappeared and new pastoral management systems have not yet developed. All these factors have led to an increased pressure on collective land causing degradation of the pastoral land and resulting in serious social conflicts as well as ‘social erosion’ processes.

Governmental policy and subsidies as well as severe droughts have accelerated these developments and further increased the gravity of the situation. It must be noted that pastoralists in Morocco do not have effective leadership and are largely excluded from governmental or donor projects.

Under these conditions, one section of the mobile pastoralists can no longer assure household survival through income from animal production and thus impoverishes rapidly. As a response, this group often settles in peri-urban areas provoking new land-use conflicts. A second group of pastoralists becomes increasingly commercialised. Using collective pastoral lands as livestock ‘parking lots’ they supplement feeds and add concentrates. After rainfall events herds may be transported to regions up to 1000 km away.

The establishment of associations for mobile pastoralists in different communes could be one option for the future. Services like veterinary service, extension or mobile schools could be financed by contributions of members based on the number of livestock kept within the association area. Thus, the risk of over attractiveness of these services for mobile pastoralists and the resulting overgrazing of the communal land could be reduced. With the help of sound extension work awareness of the limitations of pasture resources could be created. Land users may accept the fact that degradation of pastoral lands is related to high external costs.

Keywords: Collective lands, land use conflicts, Morocco, pastoralism