



Farmer-herder conflicts in the Sahel: causes, consequences and starting points for conciliation

Farmer-herder relationships in the Sahelian countries of West Africa used to be based on complementarities and cooperation. Arrangements based on mutual trust, for instance manuring and entrustment contracts, were replaced by potentially more confrontational ones, such as wage and tenancy contracts.

This shift from a complementary use of land and water resources to an increasingly competitive one, has become more apparent since the 1970s and 80s droughts in the Sahelian zone. Causes are the:

- rapid increase in population pressure,
- encroachment of cropland onto pastures,
- privatisation of common pool resources,
- political strategies of stakeholders.



Two regional workshops, held in 2000 and 2004, discussed the use of agricultural and pastoral resources in this region. They revealed that the main bottlenecks for dealing with the changed relationships between the different stakeholders are the lack of legal and administrative “frameworks” and an arbitrary application of existing regulations as far as management of common pool resources is involved. As (mobile) pastoral systems are legally not recognised as a production system, pastoralists have a weaker negotiation position than the agriculturalists/agro-pastoralists. Against this background, development projects and local organisations in particular are focusing on conflict mediation between farmers and herders. Some starting points for mediation at different intervention levels are:

Level	Starting point	Expected outcome
(Inter-) National	Recognition of pastoralism by administrative institutions as an economically sound and an ecologically adapted production system	Equal access and utilisation rights for all users to common pool resources; regulation of land tenure rights; assurance of livestock mobility (even cross-border)
Regional	Strengthening the interventions of socio-professional organisations	Improvement of the integration of livestock husbandry with other agricultural activities; enhancement of farmer-herder cooperation
Local	Investing in social capital and infrastructure (e.g. dialogue structures, meeting places, forums)	Encouraging dialogue between stakeholders and elaboration of agreements on adapted and harmonised use of common pool resources