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Local Realities and Global Demands — a Case Study on Conflicts and Natural Resource Management in South West Burkina Faso

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Abstract

In South West Burkina Faso conflicts between farmers and herders are a common phenomenon. These conflicts are influenced by factors which range from ecological and sociological to political causes. Local realities meet global demands (e.g. for political change, increasing agricultural productivity, change of production systems). Sustainable and equitable development is not always the outcome of these induced processes of change.

A six-month case study on conflicts, land use, and the management of natural resources was carried out in two villages in the provinces Nounbiel and Poni. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were held with farmers, herders, local authorities and the formal institutions in the district.

The results show the different situation in the villages: cooperation and rather successful conflict management were predominant in one village. In the other, conflict escalation could be observed and out-migration of herders which were immigrated in the village in the last decade. Reasons can be seen in stronger competition between the user groups in one village, which was enforced by project activities like rice production in an area used as strategic water resource by the herders. Additionally, the integration of the herders (‘latest-comers’) in local decision making processes differed remarkably, as well as the perception by the herders of the bundle of rights they hold. Furthermore, the involvement of local elites varied, which followed a career in the capital. In one village the wish was expressed by them to defend the rights of the ‘autochthonous’, since a change in the current land tenure system and an upcoming land market was expected. In the other, emphasis was put on the opportunity of a win-win situation for both user groups by cooperation.

Induced global processes of change, implemented top-down, can aggravate a segregation in local ‘first and last classes’, and an exclusion of user groups, if different settings of the resource users in access to rights and degree of local citizenship are ignored by policy makers at national and global level.

Keywords: Burkina Faso, farmer-herder conflicts, natural resource management