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Livelihood Strategies and Resource Availability of Agro-pastoralists in Mopti Region, Mali

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Abstract

Climate data show, that the Sahel region and its neighbouring regions are exposed to a continuous reduction of precipitation and an increase of climate variability that might result from climate change. In the Mopti region, former pastoralists of the Peulh ethnic group have settled after the severe droughts in the 80th of last century. Besides livestock keeping, they increasingly depend on crop production. Being part of the BMZ funded project “Supporting the vulnerable: Increasing the adaptive capacity of agro-pastoralists to climatic change in West and Southern Africa using a transdisciplinary research approach”, the study examines the relationship between resource availability and the livelihood strategies of Peulh agro-pastoralists. Four villages in two different ecological zones (Seno and Niger delta) were chosen. Data collection had a focus on qualitative methods, including communication tools and different forms of interviews and participatory observations. The research team lived for two weeks in each of the villages and conducted among other methods, village maps, livelihood analyses and seasonal calendars. The results show a high variety in livelihood strategies followed by different people. Although in all villages the same livelihood strategies were used, the importance of the strategies varied between the villages. The agro-pastoralists manage their livelihoods based on the resources they can access. This resource accessibility is highly variable in terms of inter-annual variation and intra-annual variation. The comparison between the four different villages shows how the agro-pastoralists adapt their livelihoods according to the resources availability. For instance in the Niger delta they have access to bourgou plants even in the dry season so they keep more milk cows in the village to sell the milk all year round, whereas in the Seno the main outcome of livestock keeping is meat, milk is for self consumption and for selling in the rainy season only, because they cannot supply enough fodder for milk cows in the village during the dry season. The results also point to factors that either constraint or promote sustainability of the livelihood system at the local and regional level.

Keywords: Agro-pastoralists, climate variability, livelihood strategies, Mali, participatory methods