

ACTING FOR LIFE

This note has been translated from the original version in French

Technical Note

Cédric TOUQUET,
Programme Manager, Africa
- Acting For Life

Thinking about the stomach!

Elements of reflection on the elaboration and dissemination in Togo of a training module on the challenges of livestock trade in West Africa

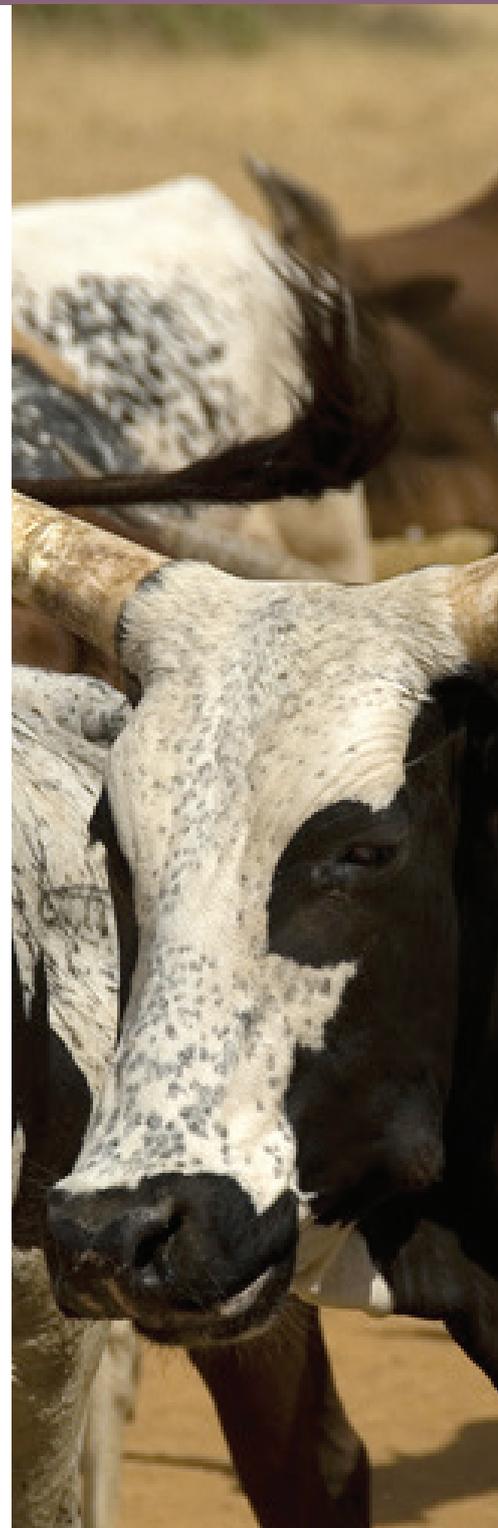
Introduction

Since 2012, in the implementation of agropastoral projects in West Africa, Acting For Life (AFL) has supported "a moderation and training module on the issues of livestock trade in West Africa". Drafted by Christian Corniaux from the Agricultural Research Center for International Development (CIRAD) and Brigitte Thébaud from the Nordic Consulting Group (NCG) and formatted by Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED), a Senegalese NGO specializing in moderation, this module is more of a tool to help in decision-making than a guide to dictate behavior. To a certain extent, it is a preliminary activity for other actions, such as the drafting of action plans and the construction of infrastructures. To assess the impact of this module, since 2012, impact evaluation forms have been implemented, allowing for the assessment of changes in perceptions and portrayals as a result of the module over the medium term. From these, the initial analyses after three years of implementation highlight that, beyond a better understanding of the operation of the sector, the main discovery of participants in the module, regardless of their profile, is connected to the need for coarse fodder in the diet of ruminants.

This recurrence may seem surprising as the requirement for fodder is an essential zootechnical fact, rooted in the multiple stomachs of ruminants. Therefore, in fact, it is implemented by everyone breeding ruminants.

In the face of this concern, two questions arise: How can participants discover a characteristic they put into practice on a daily basis? And why did the designers of this module deem it necessary to state the obvious?

After a brief review of the history, the content and the applications of the module in the different programs implemented by AFL, we will show, drawing from impact follow-up sheets, that the introduction of the multiple-stomach dimension of animals in the module fully reveals the appropriateness of the scientific approach of the designers in the sense of opening up, without judging, to other social perceptions, even if these could question the obvious. We will also see that participants' discovery of the need for fodder is everything but anecdotal and entails changes in an entire chain of social perceptions



Historical context of the module and its application in AFL programs

Between January 2010 and October 2011, Acting For Life coordinated the Support Project for Livestock Farming Productivity (PAPE) in Mali, Burkina Faso and northern Benin. This project, which lasted 22 months, had a budget of 3.8 million euros, 90%-funded by the European Union, and involved 7 other partners. It is within the context of result 4 of this program, "A strategic and prospective reflection on the issues of livestock trade is facilitated at the regional, national and international levels, among key actors in the sector, with the help of adapted tools" that the moderation and training module on the issues of livestock trade in West Africa was developed².

The module is divided into three booklets. The first one clarifies the conditions under which animals are produced and exploited in West Africa. The second one analyzes the operation of the sector through the marketing of three heads of cattle that will follow different paths. Finally, the third one, based on this reflection, encourages participants to tackle, through case studies, several critical issues for the future, in the face of the growing demand for meat in the subregion.

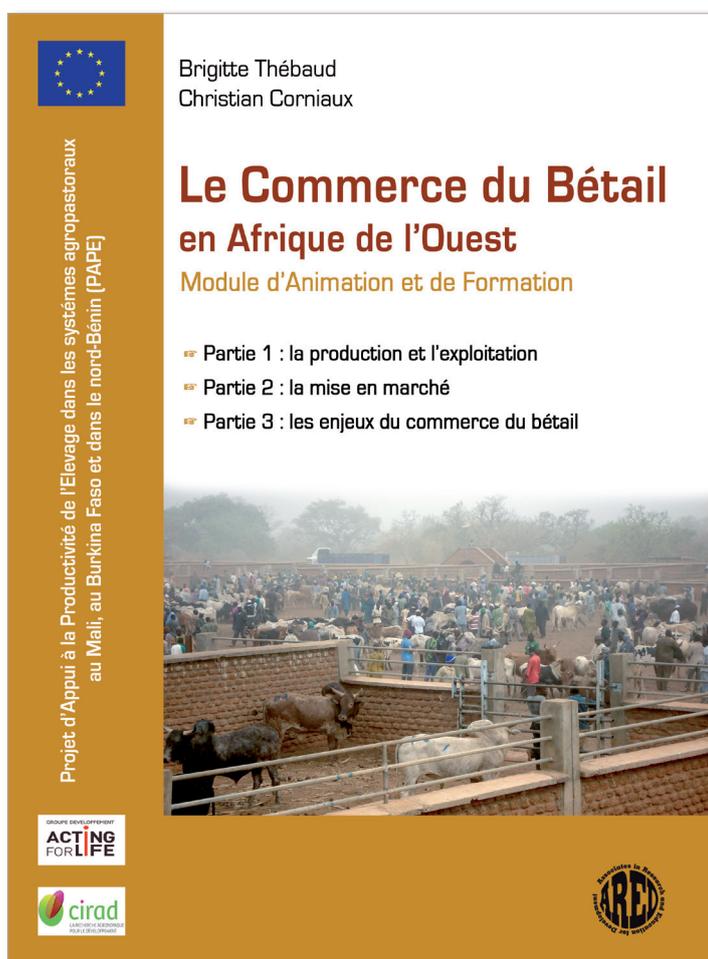
The module lasts 5 days and is intended for a wide audience, ranging from producers to private operators (traders, carriers, butchers), also includes decentralized communities, NGOs, the devolved services of the State and decision-makers.

Since 2011, the ARED, through projects coordinated by AFL3 and mainly funded by the European Union and the French Development Agency, have trained, in Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin and Chad, 108 facilitators to moderate the module on livestock trade in West Africa.

To date, this module on livestock trade, in the 5 countries mentioned above, has been used to support the moderation of over 30 informed debates organized at the local, regional and national levels. On average, each debate involved 25 participants. 750 people of different social status thus participated in this module exposing the main issues connected to livestock trade in west Africa.

² This module is the result of the moderation and training module on pastoralism in the Sahel, designed by the ARED and experts on the subject, such as Brigitte Thébaud, in 2004, in partnership with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED - London), with funds from Scandinavian cooperation (ASDI and DANIDA).

³ Support Project for Livestock Farming Productivity (PAPE) in Mali, Burkina Faso and Benin, January 2010-October 2011, budget of 3.8 million euros, jointly funded by the EU and AFL. Regional Support Project for Livestock Farming Productivity (PRAPE) in Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin and Togo, January 2012-February 2015, budget of 2.8 million euros, jointly funded by AFD, the EU, AFL. Support Project for Ecosystem and Biodiversity Preservation through agropastoralism (PAPEBA) in Togo, February 2014-June 2016, budget of 900,000 euros, jointly funded by AFD and the EU. Project to Strengthen the Resilience of the Household Economy through the productivity of animal husbandry in southern and eastern Mauritania (PRREF), March 2014 - February 2017, budget of 1,700,000 euros, jointly funded by the EU and AFL. Support Project for the Livestock Sector in Eastern Chad (PAFBET), January 2014-December 2015, budget of 600,000 euros.



Couverture du module d'animation et de formation

In order to better assess the impact of this tool based on activities often referred to as “soft”, AFL, in consultation with all the partners, has implemented, since 2012, impact follow-up sheets. These sheets are made up of two parts. The first part contained 2 questions⁴ aimed at assessing the main lessons and changes in perception following an informed debate. The second part was an experience report sheet (it could be copied as many times as necessary), which, through 11 questions⁵, would detail the nature of the event and specify in particular how participation in the module had been useful to participants. Implementation partners had to select about ten volunteer participants, willing to get involved in this impact assessment. The goal of this method was to have, beyond instantaneous comments and appraisals immediately after participation in the debate, feedback about experiences over a longer period.

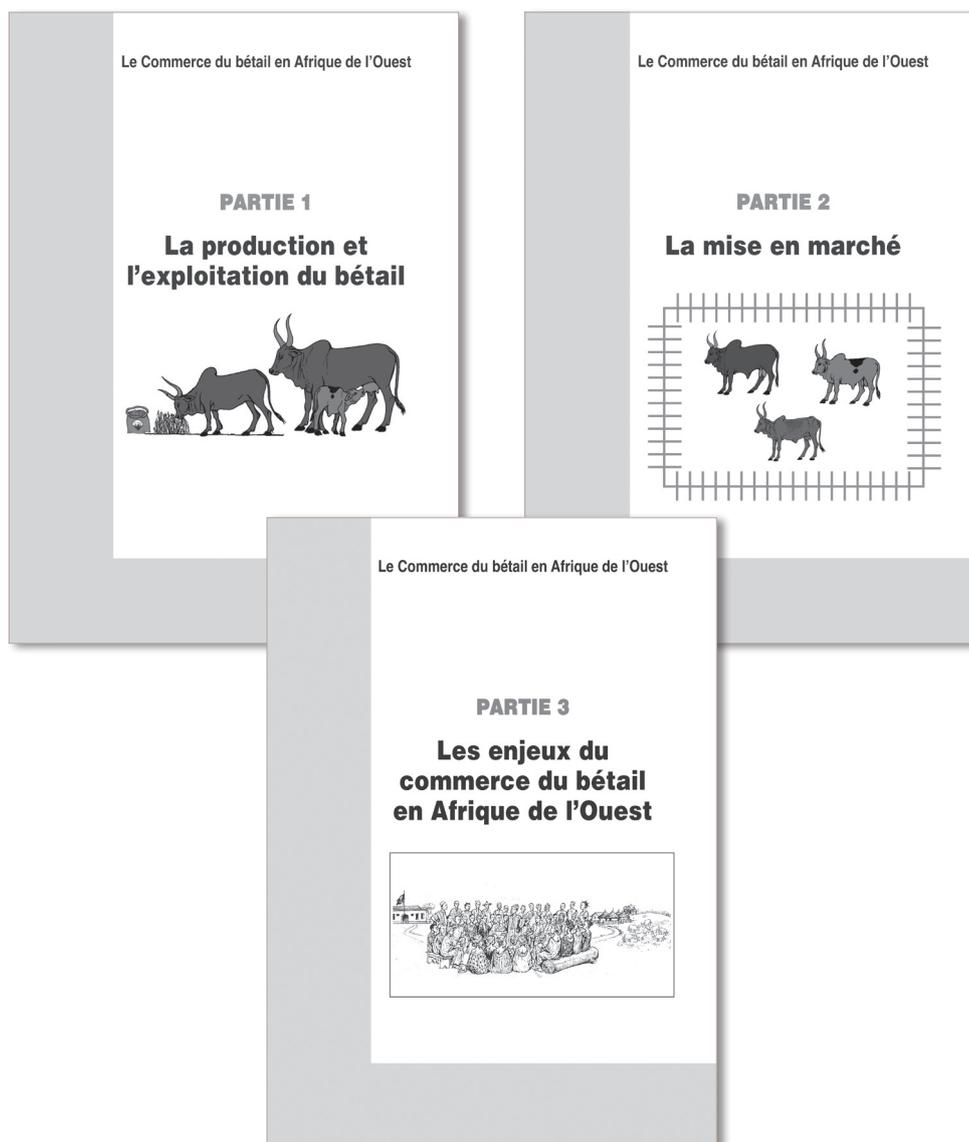
In June 2015, within the more specific context of activities implemented in Togo, 70 sheets were collected⁶. The data to be used may seem limited. However, it should be noted that our partners had to face many problems. Certain volunteers did not return the sheets or had not filled them out. Moreover, this impact-assessment activity was an activity to complement those they needed to implement to achieve the initial 3 main results. However, despite these difficulties and being entirely aware that this was not a scientific method to analyze impact with a dedicated and trained team with its own budget⁷, the analysis of these 46 sheets would quickly become surprising and instructive.

4 These two questions were (i) “What are the main lessons (on the content of the module and not on moderation) that you drew from the informed debate? The goal of this question is to list the lessons learned, (ii) “In your opinion, what has your participation in this informed debate done for you? (you can answer this question once you have filled out the “sheets” below). How has your way of thinking changed or evolved? The goal here is to identify a change, an evolution, a before and an after.

5 These eleven questions were (i) “type of event/experience”, (ii) contacts/participants, (ii) What was your role during this event? (iv) Objective and subjects covered?, (v) What was the debate, what was the position of each group of participants? (vi) Specifically, what was your position and what were the arguments you put forward? (vii) Very specifically, how has participating in the informed debate helped you in your arguments? (viii) How have the lessons you have drawn from your participation in the informed debate on livestock trade in West Africa influenced this event? What has this changed? What was different? (ix) What were the consequences of this event? What changes did it contribute? (v) Very specifically, what were the decisions made at the end of this meeting? (ix) What were the points on which you would have liked to have more knowledge/arguments?

6 The implementation partners of the projects in Togo are: The National Federation of Professionals in the Livestock-Meat Sector in Togo (FENAPFIBVTO); Research, Support and Training in Self-Development Initiatives (RAFIA); and Companies, Territories and Development (ETD).

7 No budget and, therefore, no expenses were planned, including the fuel to go meet with the people who accepted to complete the questionnaire was not registered as related to this activity.



Internal cover of the module of parts 1, 2 and 3.

The surprise of the stomach!

To the question of having learned the main lessons following participation in this workshop, many participants highlighted better awareness of the sector.

“By participating in this module, I understood the positive and negative effects of the sector, competition from refrigerated carcasses from outside Africa, the significance of road harassment in the shipment of animals, the complementary nature of countries in the Sahel and the coast”. (Forestry Officer).

“Before, I never thought that we could breed animals in the city. I also didn’t think that livestock trade involved so many actors. Now, I understand that there are many different people who participate in all parts of the sector”. (Development Moderator)

“By participating in this module, I learned a lot about things, in particular that water is key in the access to resources, that mobility is fundamental to exploit the resources, that fodder is essential for good rumination, that the sector is very dynamic and even that West African meat needs to be competitive against meat imports from outside of Africa”. (Economist).

This module led actors to develop a better shared understanding of a sector that is often complex and not always understood in its entirety. This holistic approach, which addressed all aspects of the sector, from production to marketing, covering local issues (sale of animals, role of intermediaries) as well as international ones (opening of world markets, Economic Partnership Agreements), explains why even professionals in the sector expressed interest in having completed this module:

“I learned many things from this workshop, for instance, the fact that access to pastureland and water are the main factors to the high productivity of livestock. I also learned that the opening of the world market leads to increased competition between our meat and meat from outside Africa. I

also saw that the profit margins were not very significant and that the cost of shipping cattle from Sahelian countries to coastal countries was high. (Moderator of the National Federation of Professionals in the Livestock-Meat Sector in Togo (FENAPFIBVTO)).

“I was convinced that livestock trade was an easy and profitable activity. But I realized that earnings were not that high and that there were many problems and risks”. (Agropastoralist).

“I am leaving this training course with three main lessons. First of all, more specific knowledge about the varieties of animal husbandry in large production areas (the Sahel, Sudan, the coast, etc.). Then, I discovered the complexity of the livestock trade (multiple actors, constraints, etc.). Finally, I understood the issues of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the potential risks to Sahelian meat”. (Secretary of the Lantaad Laya Association of Livestock Farmers).

Despite the fact that developing more general and more specific knowledge of the livestock-meat sector may seem logical for a module covering the issues of livestock trade in West Africa, another discovery was more surprising. In fact, many participants declared that this module made them realize that fodder was essential to the survival of ruminants.

“Before, I thought that fodder was not the key component in the diet of animals but now I realize that it is an essential component for rumination”. (Forestry Officer, Togo).

“Fodder is essential to proper rumination”. (Economist, environmentalist).

“Before, I thought that we could feed animals using only agro-industrial products. However, I see that feeding livestock always requires fodder”. (Crop farmer).

Once again, these discoveries were not limited to people who were not very knowledgeable about the sector. Professionals in the sector also discovered the vital importance of fodder for ruminants:

“With this training course, I discovered the importance of fodder in feeding livestock” (Agropastoralist, Togo).

“I learned that the animals’ diet must always include fodder”. (Vice-President of FENAPFIBVTO).

“From the informed debate, we drew the following lessons: (i) fodder is essential to the diet [...]”. (Cattle Breeder).

In total, 60% of the interviewees referenced, as one of the main lessons, this discovery of the need for fodder in the diet of ruminants.

Over the course of the module, these remarks referenced step 1 of book 1 of the moderation guide titled “Identify the resources used by livestock and recall the dietary requirements of animals”.

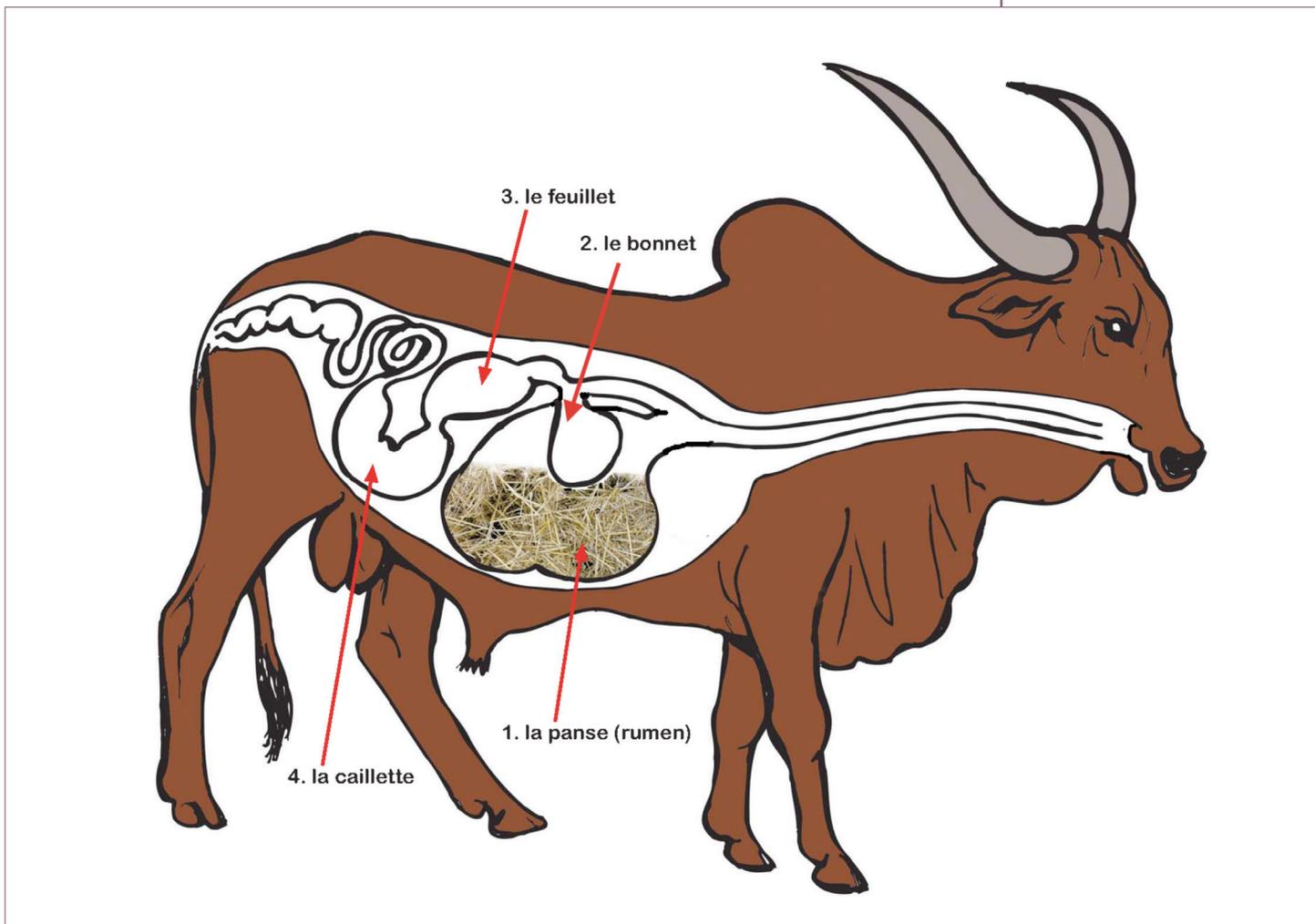
2. Les exigences alimentaires des animaux :

Interroger le groupe sur la différence entre un poulet et une vache, un mouton ou une chèvre. Une fois le fait établi que ces derniers ont plusieurs estomacs, passer la **photo 5** du fonctionnement de la digestion chez les ruminants, en la commentant. Au besoin, s’appuyer sur la **référence 5** pour fournir des compléments d’information.

Souligner l’importance pour l’animal de consommer du fourrage, et pas seulement des aliments riches comme le tourteau. Faire remarquer que cette exigence s’applique à tous les ruminants, qu’ils soient élevés en zone pastorale ou en zone cotonnière. Ajouter que même les animaux embouchés en milieu urbain doivent avoir leur ration quotidienne de fourrage. En conclusion, souligner que les animaux au Sahel ne pourraient pas être nourris seulement avec des sous-produits agroindustriels, car ils auraient des problèmes de santé et, en plus, ce serait très coûteux pour les producteurs.

En conclusion, montrer et placer **l’image 13** (bovin devant du tourteau et un tas de paille) en face de la ligne des ressources, en ouvrant une colonne intitulée « Stratégies » et en ajoutant sous l’image le texte « la ration alimentaire inclut toujours du fourrage ».

Photo 5, referenced in the moderation guide above, illustrates the mechanics of digestion in ruminants.



In the moderation of the module, this illustration allows for demonstrating that the contribution of coarse fodder is an essential zootechnical fact in the feeding of ruminants. In fact, we are faced with a zootechnical fact vital to the survival of animals. This means that actors observe it every day and those with ruminants even implement it.

The issue of this discovery is thus not in the ways to use it but rather in the ways of thinking about the use of fodder.

It should still be clarified which social perceptions are related to these ways of thinking as well as how the authors of the module were able to notice, contrary to what they could observe in practice, the need to elaborate on this.

Thinking about the stomach: the illustration of a scientific design.

The drafting of the module on livestock trade in West Africa took over one year and took place in several stages:

- Stage 1: Design work of the facilitation tools in terms of content, teaching approach and visual aids
- Stage 2: Overall assessment of the issues raised by the livestock trade based on a general review of the literature and a mission on the ground with surveys carried out with key actors in the sector
- Stage 3: Presentation of the project of issues to be addressed through tools and the structure of the tools to the 7 project partners
- Stage 4: Preliminary module design with the production of a model and visual aids
- Stage 5: Performance of two experiments with the module with about fifteen participants in Natitingou and Bamako, so as to make the necessary corrections
- Stage 6: Completion and publication of the module.

The draft version of the module (stage 4) did not explicitly reference this need for fodder in ruminants' diets. At this stage, the designers certainly deemed it unnecessary to state the obvious.

However, and this is represents the asset of their design work, this was only a draft version. Before it become final, authors had taken care to put it before professionals in the sector in two experiments.

During the first experiment, which took place in Natitingou in November 2010, discussions were carried out with the entire group, covering the difference between animal husbandry in West Africa and the West. And then, with just one sentence, one of the participants, a renowned crop and livestock farmer, declared that the problems of moving animals had been solved in the West because the financial resources allowed for feeding animals exclusively with supplements. Discussions around this perception continued during the coffee break and it was quickly found that this perception was widely held. Back in the classroom, designers asked one of the participants, a veterinary doctor, to come up and draw a sketch of the digestive system of ruminants.



Using this sketch, participants were reminded that the digestive system of ruminants requires coarse fodder, regardless of whether they were bred in Africa or the West. Animal husbandry in confinement in the West is made possible by an appropriate supply of fodder. However, the disparity in fodder resources in West Africa did not allow for such a practice. This fact, concealed in the draft version of the module, was thus added to the first booklet concerning production.

According to us, this case study beautifully illustrates the scientific approach of the authors of the module. When referring to a scientific approach, we do not refer to the sole fact of submitting verifiable, proven elements. Especially, and above all, it is about a thorough understanding of the logic of actors and the capacity to understand and integrate their social perceptions. This approach embodies the very competence of field researchers, able "to observe what they are not ready to (when we know how strong is the usual propensity to discover only what we expect is) and to be able to produce data that drive them to change their own hypotheses"⁸. And, in the case at hand, this discovery was even more difficult because it could not be observed, given that all producers used fodder. The difference was in the interpretation of this use on different sides. For the authors of the module, this practice was part of the hypothesis confirmed by the fact that actors put it into practice. However, for the latter, the intention behind their actions was not based on necessity but on frustration, justified by the fact of not having sufficient financial resources to feed livestock with supplements.

The scientific approach of the authors is thus characterized by the fact of having combined several scientific fields, zootechnics, economics and, in particular, sociology. In fact, it was by going beyond their observations to call into question social perceptions that designers were able to think of the stomach. They were able to listen and integrate, into the module, a fact of vital importance in terms of the very significant impact it could have on an entire chain of social representations.

⁸ Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre, La politique de terrain. Sur la production des données en anthropologie, Enquête, 1, Les terrains de l'enquête, 1995, p.5.

From the stomach to mobility

After reading these few pages, a few observers would say “all of that just for this!”. It might seem pointless to take an interest in this discovery, completely trivial and a simple statement of the obvious. However, this extra knowledge is not without consequences on the ground and leads to real changes at the level of the concatenation of certain social perceptions.

Indeed, thinking that ruminants could be fed only with supplements leads to the assumption that transhumance could be avoided. This social representation is even stronger as it is often combined with the representation of transhumants belonging to a single group, “the Fulani”, non-native and holding substantial economic capital.

This concatenation of social perceptions lays the foundation for an entire set of arguments that could be summarized as follows:

“All transhumants are Fulani. They are foreign, rich. Therefore, they could stay home and feed their animals with supplements only. But, because of greed, they would rather come use our pastureland!”

The module on the issues of livestock trade in West Africa deconstructs the interpretation in terms of wealth by highlighting that animals in a single herd often belong to different owners. The argument also deconstructs the ethnic interpretation of the sector by highlighting that, even though herders are often Fulani, they do not systematically own the animals, the owners of which are not always Fulani. Furthermore, and above all, as stated by Brigitte Thébaud, “Over the last 50 years, crop farmers and livestock farmers massively converted to agropastoralism, in the face of growing climate risks. Therefore, there are very few ‘pure’ agricultural producers or herders. Moreover, animal husbandry is not only a fact of a so-called ‘pastoral’ north but now takes a central place in the central and southern regions, in particular in cotton-growing areas.”⁹ This first deconstruction thus leads to a more complex understanding of the actors involved in this sector:

“Before, I thought that animal husbandry was exclusive to the Fulani but I am now convinced that everyone is involved in livestock farming in West Africa”. (Motorcycle taxi driver)

“Before, I thought that animal husbandry was only related to the Fulani. Now, I understand that everyone is involved in livestock farming in West Africa. Before, I thought that transhumance had to be stopped. Now I understand that it is essential and has positive aspects”. (NGO Moderator).

Finally, and above all, in addition to the initial work of deconstruction, the fact of reminding people of animals’ need for fodder transforms transhumants’ perceived intentions:

“Before the training course, I thought that transhumance was just a stroll for the Fulani but, after this course, we saw that transhumance was necessary”. (Transhumance guide).

“Before, I thought that Sahelian transhumants traveled for pleasure. I am now convinced that it is because of a lack of pastureland and water”. (Agropastoralist)

Thus, Sahelian transhumants do not go for “a simple stroll”, “travel for pleasure” or attempt to save on the price of food:

“I now understand the importance of leaving the Sahel to come look for fodder. However, before, I thought that they could remain there and feed their animals with agro-industrial products alone”. (Trader).

⁹ THEBAUD Brigitte, Les dangers d’une ethnicisation des conflits agriculture-élevage, Note technique AFL, 2014.

The need for fodder to keep the animals alive means being mobile to access pastoral resources and what could be perceived as a choice until that moment becomes a shared understanding of the need:

“Before, I thought that we could return transhumants permanently so they would never come back to our country. But, today, I realize that they need to come look for food resources”. (Canton Secretary General).

Far from being anecdotal, this shift from choice to necessity leads to changes in the measures that should be taken to support this mobility:

“Before the workshop, I supported closing our borders to animals from the Sahel so as to develop local livestock farming. After the end of the workshop, I realize that opening our borders is a necessity”. (Agropastoralist).

“I now know the advantages and disadvantages of the agropastoralist sector and I now say that I am ready to handle conflicts well as head of the canton. I know why livestock farmers are demanding, why the brutal backlash is not normal. To prevent further conflict, we ask for this sector to be organized through the creation of passage corridors and watering places where there are none. With this training course, I will go back to the village to work in raising awareness among livestock farmers and crop farmers”. (Head of Canton).

And, like the interview above, supported by actors with a social status allowing them to put their words into action, these changes in perception can give rise to truly endogenous dynamics:

“The necessity to access pastureland and water through mobility is vital to livestock farmers and I now understand why transhumants need to travel to us. Today, I am ready to release part of my land to be used as a passage corridor”. (Head of Canton).

In Togo, the changes in perception connected to the module on livestock trade have allowed, beyond the changes implemented by each person in their daily lives, to delimit over 150 kilometers of livestock corridors in a consensual manner.

Conclusion

Thus, the rift regarding the need for fodder could be overcome through the design mechanism of the module, by implementing, in particular, validation workshops with professionals in the sector and the technical teams of partners¹⁰.

This process has made it easier to implement the principle of iteration, consisting in back-and-forth movements between the production of data and the design of the module. The entire relevance of the approach also consisted in crossing disciplinary fields or, more specifically, combining expertise and the analysis of economic and zootechnical data with a socio-anthropological methodology.

The latter approach is essential and a reminder that the apparent objectivity of certain scientific data, such as ruminants' need for fodder, can be displaced by social perceptions.

Applied in many development programs, the module has been proven in terms of its ability to support a change in often persistent social perceptions regarding a sector that, however, is strategic and efficient.

Certainly, it would be misleading to say that the module itself has made intractable changes possible but it is no less a powerful tool that allows for reaching a shared understanding of the issues surrounding the sector and, above all, improve the often conflicting relationships related to livestock mobility.

¹⁰ The implementation partners of the PAPE were the Agropastoralism Communication Network (RECOPA), the AFDI (French Farmers and International Development) and the SNV (Netherlands Development Organization), the National Association of Organisations of Professionals in Ruminant Husbandry (ANOPER) along with its Departmental and Community Unions (UDOPER-UCOPER), the CRUS (Regional Committee of Production Units of the Sahel), the Regional Union of Cooperatives of the Livestock-Meat Sector (URFBV), ADISSAH (Association for Integrated Development in the Savannah and the Sahel) and AFAD (Association for Training and Support for Development).

ACTING FOR LIFE

40 avenue de l'Europe
93352 Le Bourget
France

Acting for Life is an association recognized to be of public benefit
(status granted by the decree of March 11, 2002)

Tel : (+33) (0)1 49 34 83 13 - **Fax :** (+33) (0)1 49 34 83 10
E-mail : contact@dacting-for-life.org - **Website :** www.acting-for-life.com