

**SELF MANAGED LIVESTOCK MARKET: THE BENINESE EXAMPLE¹
- BREEDERS FROM UDOPER² -**

Country: Benin

Institutions involved: The major participants included the French Cooperation (project PPAB), a French NGO called AFDI (Agriculteurs Français et Développement International), and the EU.

Brief summary:

In north Benin, the breeders from an organization called UDOPER significantly increased cattle sales, and through this, their own incomes and local development thanks to the changes and services that they introduced into the livestock market and the breeders' organisation itself.

The self-managed markets they introduced are authentic instruments for the professional development of breeders that illustrate a win-win strategy between producers and traders/intermediaries is possible. For producers, “to sell better” does not necessarily mean, “to get rid of traders and intermediaries.”

Some of the benefits of these self-managed markets have included: increasing the producers' income while safeguarding the interests of other key actors, facilitating the balance between supply and demand, bringing more transparency to transactions and provision of livestock-related services. They have also contributed to improved market access to products and could serve as an inspiration for other development actors.

Factors contributing to the success of this project included a strong local dynamic, external supports, and the step-by-step development of the market in parallel with the step-by-step development of the breeders' organisation.

Question 1: What are the general settings and arrangements for MOAAS?

This project was organized around the objectives of the French Cooperation agency, the PPAB (Projet de professionnalisation de l'agriculture au Bénin) Project, and most specifically, the UDOPER breeders' association.

The objectives of the French Cooperation with respect to agricultural advisory services are:

- To reinforce farmers' capacities to act in a professional way
- To improve farmers' production, productivity and competitiveness
- To increase farmers' incomes, especially incomes of family farmers
- To improve the management of natural resources

¹ Self-managed livestock markets: the Beninese example. – SOS Faim, Framing dynamics n°10, July 2006. - 8 p. http://www.sosfaim.org/pdf/fr/dp/Dynam10_FR_03.pdf

² Union départementale des organisations professionnelles d'éleveurs de ruminants du Borgou et de l'Alibori : Cattle breeders organisation at departmental level.

These objectives are to be achieved through the following methods:

- Supporting farmers' organisations
- Supporting public services
- Supporting private sector service providers (NGOs, consultancies, private veterinaries, input providers and advisory services in technical and economic management).

The PPAB Project's objective is to strengthen farmers' capacities and the links between farmers' organisations (FOs) and the other existing services and structures. This has been achieved by facilitating FOs to define and achieve their objectives.

The Project PPAB/AFDI Project in Benin offered several services dedicated to supporting and facilitating farmers in their own efforts. Cattle breeders in Northern Benin were amongst those receiving support from the Project. These breeders were especially targeted by the project because cattle production had always received less support than agriculture, and those in the North of Benin are relatively isolated and enjoy little in the way of government support or subsidy.

Cattle breeders in Northern Benin face challenges related to the inefficiency of traditional livestock markets. Namely, such markets lack transparency. Middlemen between sellers and buyers are therefore able to decide the prices, to the disadvantage of both breeders and buyers. Few transactions take place, and there are many conflicts and problems of theft.

In Benin, there are now numerous actors providing agricultural advisory services, although all face limitations:

- **The public system** is much weakened in the wake of the structural adjustment, which took place in the 1980s. There are few public extension systems in place. Some regional services³ for animal husbandry and sanitation stopped in 2005.
- **Private providers** include veterinary services, cattle food and medicine sellers.
- **Projects and NGOs:** These are numerous but are short-term interventions without global coherence.
- **The PPAB/AFDI Project has created cattle breeders' organisations**, but because they were created to implement project activities, they lack a permanent structure.

As a breeders' organisation supported by the PPAB Project, UDOPER's objective has evolved over time. Initially, its objective was to increase cattle breeders' incomes by selling cattle more easily. Later, the objective was reframed to "Bettering the general condition of life for the community (especially women and youth)." Finally, the objective became more political: that breeders are able to write proposals, to participate in policy construction, and to promote cattle breeders' interests at the national level.

³ CARDER - Centre d'appui régionaux au développement rural.

Question 2: Who are the clients of MOAAS?

Cattle rearing is the main livelihood activity in this remote dry area of Northern Benin. Some cattle breeders are sedentary and some are semi-nomadic. Most cattle breeders in the North of Benin are now members of the UDOPER structure at departmental level (created in 2001). Breeders are organised at several levels: the UDOPER organisation at departmental level and UCOPER at communal level. At the local level, there are 650 local groups and 227 women's groups. Breeders are also organised at the level of the self-managed livestock: they have strong relationships with traders and butchers. Because they have these organizations, they are able to collectively think of the services they need and to demand for and access such services.

UDOPER provides a means for cattle breeders to achieve several goals of interest to them:

- To get better selling prices for their cattle;
- To get better access to services;
- To achieve better life in community and improved local development;
- To reduce their marginalization compared to other farmers.

Before UDOPER, middlemen used to come to villages to buy animals from individual cattle breeders. Now, the cattle breeders come to sell their animals on the local market.

Leaders of cattle breeders' groups developed the livestock market organisation on their own initiative, and requested the PPAB for support in formalizing the organisation, especially the infrastructure and management. Although other services already existed, breeders did not use them. . Because breeders themselves were improving the UDOPER organisation, they were able to negotiate and access previously existing public and privately supplied local services (e.g. links with research to improve the pasture system). Because of better organisation amongst themselves, they were able to build demand for both new and existing services.

Question 3: What approaches and methods are used for agricultural advisory services?

In this case, the PPAB project provides support for UDOPER, which provides both an organizing platform for cattle breeders to develop and voice their demands, and a conduit for service delivery.

Specifically, the role of the PPAB project is:

- To facilitate farmers' initiatives and build farmer demand;
- To look for and give information, advise FOs, provide FOs with access to expertise and analysis (some from cattle breeders themselves);
- To facilitate breeders' meetings and travel, both nationally and abroad. This travel and exchange allows cattle breeders to see and analyse different local and foreign situations (market, buyers, trading systems from local market to national main markets);
- To help FOs get funds from diversified sources;

- To help FOs to work in network with different local and external resources/services (research, extension, NGO, universities, ministries, cooperatives etc.).

The role of UDOPER is:

- To organise market information and ensure transparency in market transactions;
- To facilitate breeders' access to inputs;
- To facilitate breeders' access to veterinary treatments;
- To link cattle breeders with different stakeholders, especially advisory service providers.

UDOPER is also the site of training for service providers. It acts as a link between advisory service providers and their clients, the breeders, especially as it has become better organized and most cattle breeders have joined.

The finance mechanisms depend upon the sector and activity:

- The market is self-financed (except infrastructure, which is financed by external funds);
- UDOPER is funded through member contributions;
- Most inputs, medicines and treatments are paid for by the receiving farmer;
- Most training is externally funded.

The innovations of UDOPER are being upscaled by networking and by sharing them, especially the successes, systematically, step-by-step, with other actors, such as politicians, technical staff, NGOs, and traditional authorities, who can in turn provide their support and help to spread the emerging ideas.

Three insights from the UDOPER experience are:

1. Processes such as the development of UDOPER take time;
2. There is a need to take local dynamics into account and to make use of and reinforce the different services already available at local level;
3. Farmers must participate in analysis.

Question 4: What are the outcomes and impacts of agricultural advisory services?

The establishment of the new market system permits cattle breeders to obtain a direct relationship with their sellers, a new market organisation with new functions for different actors, which has gained respect and legitimacy in the eyes of local administration and traditional authorities (although not without struggle, since at the beginning, some of the cattle breeders leaders were sent to jail for a short time).

Some of the outcomes and broader impacts associated with the strengthening of UDOPER and the self-managed markets they established include:

- Increased cattle commercialisation, increased market transparency, faster transactions, and an increase in cattle breeders' income;
- Reduced theft and less conflict between farmers and cattle breeders;
- Better animal hygiene;
- Centralization of information;

- Collective capacity, through UDOPER, to test innovation;
- Job creation;
- Supply of veterinary products;
- Integration of women to the economic process, through training, provision of credits and women's groups.

The project has also had some beneficial impacts that were not foreseen at the outset: these include the founding of a cattle breeders' organisation at the regional level. At the community level, unforeseen benefits include increased literacy, more women's activities, the creation of community infrastructures, and greater availability of credit services.

According to the leaders, clear principles for practice can be drawn from the success of UDOPER and the self-managed livestock markets:

- Management of resources and markets must be democratic and transparent;
- Success comes from the bottom-up solidarity of the organisation (and its accompanying support);
- The involvement and respect of all the actors concerned is indispensable;
- Governmental services, district authorities, NGOs and private companies also need to be engaged in a spirit of partnership;
- Such a process should be expected to be long-term, since it is based on a willingness to learn, get organized and train new leaders among the breeders (This project began in the 1970s).

Different ways to improve market access

Striking a balance between supply and demand, making transactions more transparent and offering market services are some of the activities carried out in self-managed markets that improve the flow of products and remuneration of producers, increasing the physical and financial volume of commercial activities and fostering local development.

A win-win situation is possible

To conclude, the key to success lies in improving the breeders' income while safeguarding the interests of other actors in the sector. The breeders' strategy has involved all relevant actors, leading to success quite quickly. It changed well-established economic and social operating patterns that were commonly accepted.

Question 5: What is the role of development cooperation and other key stakeholders?

In this intervention, the role of the development agency, and specifically, the PPAB project, has to facilitate and reinforce the local initiative of cattle breeders.

The role of the government in the project has been mixed. Local breeders were initially in conflict with the government administration, but later the administration supported the self-managed market. Over the course of the project, UDOPER developed an improved relationship with the public technical service, and government officials came to recognise the members of the breeders' association as stakeholders in their own work – as in the example of a vaccination campaign which was designed by government technicians in collaboration with UDOPER. The

government also plays a valuable role in providing research services and contributing financially to local infrastructure development such as dams and water holes.

This experience has resulted in improved relations with many projects and other actors:

- Projet d'Appui au Développement de l'Élevage Bovin (PADEB) ;
- Projet d'Appui à la Diversification des Systèmes d'Exploitation (PADSE) ;
- Programme de Professionnalisation de l'Agriculture du Bénin / MAE-AFDI ;
- Others, including GTZ, Danida, SNV

The following relations between UDOPER, other producers' organizations and private actors have developed:

- Communal decisions on land use (amongst farmers/ breeders);
- Regular exchanges of information;
- Contracts with Société des Huileries du Bénin, a private society, for purchase of animal feeds;
- Collaboration with Phanavet, a private society.

Based on the experiences of this intervention, we would advise that stakeholders consider existing local organisations when planning new interventions.