



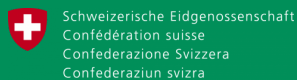
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Capitalisation note

Strengthening livestock feed for quality fattening:
Experience in local fodder and feed production in
the Sikasso–Korhogo–Bobo-Dioulasso area



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Project : Local Forage and Feed for the Intensification of Fattening and Quality Meat Production in West Africa (FAPROVIAQ)

Countries : Mali, Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso

Implementing institutions : Sikasso Regional Chamber of Agriculture (CRA), Sikasso Regional Union of the Livestock and Meat Sector (URFBV); Sikasso Regional Centre for Agricultural Research (CRRRA); Poro Region Livestock Breeders’ Cooperative Society (SCOOPERPO; Korhogo); SONG-TAABA Men’s Group of Livestock Traders, Bobo-Dioulasso; Association of Fresh Grass Sellers for Livestock in Bobo-Dioulasso (AVHF/B); International Centre for Research and Development on Livestock in Sub-humid Areas (CIRDES)

Executive summary

The FAPROVIAQ project was implemented in response to the degradation of pastures and the low availability of quality feed for livestock in the Sikasso–Korhogo–Bobo-Dioulasso area. It supported the establishment of fodder banks on 118 hectares, the dissemination of improved fodder species, the training of 296 livestock farmers in animal production techniques, and the creation of a regional digital networking platform.

The results show a significant improvement in fodder productivity (3 to 7 UBT/ha over 3 months) and economic profitability with gross margins reaching 690,000 CFA francs per hectare. The gradual adoption of innovations and the mobilisation of research actors facilitated the technical anchoring of the project in the field.

One of the main lessons learned from the experience is that the limited duration of the project and delays in disbursement hampered the consolidation of achievements. To ensure sustainability and scaling up, it is recommended to strengthen medium-term technical support, streamline financial procedures and further integrate local actors into coordination mechanisms.

Key messages

- The scarcity of natural pastures, exacerbated by conflicts of use and climate change, severely limits quality animal production in the Sikasso–Korhogo–Bobo-Dioulasso area. The Local Forage and Feed for Intensified Fattening and Quality Meat Production in West Africa (FAPROVIAQ) project was designed to sustainably strengthen livestock feeding through the promotion of forage and concentrated feed from local resources.
- To address these challenges, the project supported the establishment of fodder banks, assisted in the dissemination of species with high nutritional value, trained nearly 300 livestock farmers in fodder and animal production techniques, and promoted the structuring of stakeholders via a regional digital platform.
- The intervention enabled the planting of 118 hectares of fodder crops with yields sufficient to feed 3 to 7 UBT per hectare for three months, and demonstrated profitability, with gross margins of up to 690,000 CFA francs per hectare.
- The mobilisation of research institutions and field partners and the establishment of control plots facilitated the gradual adoption of innovations by producers and strengthened the links between research, advice and livestock farming practices.
- Experience shows that the limited duration of the project and the slow pace of disbursements can hinder the adoption of innovations; it is therefore essential to provide medium-term support and simplify procedures in order to sustain the gains and extend the results on a larger scale.

Challenge

A context of pasture degradation and pressure on food resources for livestock

In the special economic zone covering Sikasso (Mali), Korhogo (Côte d'Ivoire) and Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso), extensive livestock farming systems predominate and face increasing constraints related to access to pastoral resources. Demographic pressure, worsening land use conflicts and the effects of climate change are leading to the continued degradation of natural pastures. This situation affects the quality of animal feed, particularly during the lean season, and compromises livestock productivity and the meat quality of animals sold in livestock markets.

In this context, some livestock farmers have begun to take an interest in producing fodder and concentrated feed from local resources as an alternative solution to secure feed for their livestock. However, these initiatives remained marginal and faced numerous constraints: lack of secure access to land, low availability of quality fodder seeds, insufficient technical knowledge of suitable crop rotation practices, and weak connections to supply and marketing markets.

In addition, cross-border transhumance, which is widely practised in the area, regularly causes tensions between pastoral communities and other land users. These conflicts are exacerbated by the lack of coordinated resource management mechanisms and the poor enforcement of Community regulations governing livestock mobility within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Problems related to insufficient fodder, lack of knowledge of fattening techniques and limited access to inputs

Faced with the degradation of natural fodder resources and the poor integration of sustainable intensification approaches into livestock farming practices, livestock farmers in the region lack the means to meet the growing demand for quality meat. Poor technical mastery of fattening practices, combined with limited access to quality feed and production inputs, hinders the improvement of zootechnical performance. Livestock-meat value chains also suffer from poor coordination between stakeholders and a lack of reliable information, particularly for isolated rural producers.

This situation not only limits farmers' production capacity, but also affects their profitability and ability to invest in more efficient systems. Weak processing infrastructure and a lack of effective support services (training, advice, credit) also hinder the large-scale dissemination of innovative practices. Finally, the lack of tools for establishing commercial links reduces the prospects for adding value to high-potential animals.

A need to strengthen animal feed, livestock farmers' capacities and links with markets

The Local Forage and Feed for Intensive Fattening and Quality Meat Production in West Africa (FAPROVIAQ) project was designed to address these multiple needs by focusing its action on four areas of intervention :

- Strengthening local fodder production by promoting fodder banks based on grasses, legumes and woody species adapted to local agroecological contexts.
- Facilitating access to concentrated feed based on local resources by setting up pilot manufacturing units and training livestock farmers in their use.

- Disseminating improved fattening techniques to produce high-quality meat animals that are more valuable on the market.
- Create productive alliances by setting up a digital information and marketing platform to connect producers, processors, traders and other actors in the sector.

These actions aimed not only to improve animal feed, but also to structure value chains in a sustainable manner through better coordination between stakeholders, professionalisation of practices and easier access to productive resources. The project also sought to reduce the vulnerability of livestock farmers during the lean season, improve their incomes and consolidate regional integration efforts in the livestock and meat trade.



In practice

Activities carried out

To address the issue of insufficient quality animal feed, the project focused on promoting fodder banks based on woody species, grasses and legumes, as well as on promoting locally produced concentrated feed. The approach consisted of increasing the availability and accessibility of suitable feed resources, while developing livestock farmers' capacities in fodder and animal production techniques.

Each country involved in the intervention – Mali, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire – was represented in the consortium by at least one operational partner. This territorial structure ensured local support and advice and regular monitoring of beneficiaries. The involvement of research structures, notably the International Centre for Research and Development on Livestock in Sub-humid Areas (CIRDES) in Burkina Faso and the Regional Centre for Agronomic Research (CRRA) in Mali, was essential in promoting the dissemination and adoption of improved fodder seeds. Practical training courses were organised for livestock farmers, covering the cultivation of forage species, the management of fattening units and the rational use of concentrated feed.

In addition, the project supported the establishment of forage demonstration plots to demonstrate the relevance of the innovations promoted. It also mobilised financial resources for the purchase of seeds (approximately two tonnes) and for training producers. The cost of implementing this component is estimated at approximately 3,000,000 CFA francs.

Results achieved

The implementation of the activities made it possible to sow 118 hectares with high-nutritional-value fodder species capable of feeding between 3 and 7 Tropical Livestock Units (TLU) per hectare over a three-month period. The yields observed contributed to a significant improvement in fodder availability during the lean season. The gross profit margin per hectare s between 264,661 and 690,750 CFA francs, demonstrating the economic benefits of fodder production for livestock farmers.

A total of 296 producers were trained in fodder production and animal feeding techniques. The knowledge acquired has led to the gradual adoption of species such as Panicum, Brachiaria and Espoir maize. The introduction of these species, combined with better management of fattening units, has improved the zootechnical performance of livestock farms. Feedback from beneficiaries shows a positive assessment of the seeds received and the usefulness of the fodder produced in livestock farming activities.

In addition, a regional digital platform has been created to promote exchanges and productive alliances between the various actors in the livestock-meat value chain. In particular, it aims to support the dissemination of innovations and strengthen business links through better information flow.

As a testimonial, LY Briky from the village of Koumbia states: *«I am very pleased and happy to be one of the beneficiaries of this intervention. Personally, I received fodder seeds, notably soybeans, which I cultivated. The hay harvested has been a great support for my livestock farming activities. (...)*».

Challenges encountered

The implementation of this theme encountered several constraints. The late disbursement of certain resources, particularly the second tranche of funding, affected the schedule of activities. The training period for stakeholders was considered too short to allow for full mastery of the techniques taught. The available funding did not sufficiently cover all fodder seed needs, which limited the area sown by some beneficiaries.

The project also suffered from a duration that was considered too short, making it impossible to objectively assess the rate of adoption of innovations and the economic impact of new practices. Accessibility constraints related to the security situation in certain areas also hampered the expansion of activities. Finally, difficulties in accessing finance for some livestock farmers limited their ability to purchase fattening animals, thereby reducing the full effect of efforts to improve feed.

Despite these challenges, the establishment of demonstration plots has facilitated the gradual adoption of fodder cultivation by producers. The links established with research structures and platforms for exchange between stakeholders have helped to lay the foundations for a sustainable dynamic of strengthening quality animal production in the region.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- ⊙ **Operational proximity and the mobilisation of locally based partners facilitated the effective implementation of activities.** The consortium's structure, based on active partners in each country, enabled close support for beneficiaries. This configuration facilitated technical monitoring, regular advice and rapid problem-solving in the field. In addition, the participation of research institutes such as CIRDES and CRRRA enhanced the quality of the technical itineraries disseminated, by supporting the selection and dissemination of suitable fodder species. To reinforce this advantage, it would be useful, from the project design phase onwards, to consolidate this coordination between field operators, research institutions and decentralised technical services, in order to ensure sustainable skills transfer and shared local accountability.
- ⊙ **Slow funding procedures hampered the smooth implementation of the project.** The delay in the disbursement of the second tranche had a knock-on effect on the implementation schedule, the delivery of training and the procurement of inputs. This type of bureaucratic constraint can compromise the impact of well-designed interventions. To prevent this type of bottleneck, it would be appropriate to consider more flexible financial mechanisms that are better adapted to the timeframes on the ground, for example by strengthening decision-making powers at the local level or simplifying administrative approval processes.
- ⊙ **The positive results in terms of yields and profitability show that controlled intensification is economically viable.** The gross profit margin observed per hectare – between 264,000 and 690,000 CFA francs – confirms that intensifying animal feed can generate significant income for livestock farmers, while improving the quality of the animals brought to market. These results were made possible by the quality of the inputs, the technical relevance of the practices promoted and the investment of the beneficiaries. To consolidate this momentum, microfinance institutions should be mobilised around proven economic models, in particular through credit products tailored to livestock farmers and traders, supported by guarantee funds or financial support mechanisms.
- ⊙ **Coordination between the links in the chain remains a challenge, but the digital platform opens up new opportunities.** The regional tool set up to promote exchanges between actors in the livestock-meat chain represents an important step towards better integration of markets and practices. However, its effective uptake still depends on several factors: connectivity, digital skills, clarity of use, and perceived added value. For this tool to fulfil its role, it would be strategic to strengthen user training, ensure regular platform activity, and develop concrete services that meet the needs of different stakeholder profiles.
- ⊙ **Access to finance remains a structural barrier to large-scale dissemination.** Many beneficiaries have been unable to complete the process of fattening or expanding their activities due to a lack of financial resources. Credit constraints, combined with low farm capitalisation, limit the capacity to invest in inputs, equipment or livestock. To overcome this obstacle, it would be appropriate to work with credit unions, microfinance institutions and local authorities to set up innovative mechanisms such as revolving funds, joint

guarantees or low-interest loans specifically dedicated to actors in the sector.

- ⊙ **The link between technical, economic and institutional aspects must be strengthened to ensure the sustainability of achievements.** While the technical results of the project are encouraging, their long-term sustainability also depends on their economic viability, institutional acceptability and integration into existing policy frameworks. Infrastructure maintenance, ongoing training and access to inputs require a long-term commitment from stakeholders. To this end, it would be desirable to strengthen links with public agricultural and pastoral policies by involving sectoral ministries, local elected officials and professional organisations more closely in the joint development of follow-up measures to the innovations tested.

About this capitalisation note

This note is the result of a participatory capitalisation process conducted as part of the Programme to Support Livestock Marketing in West Africa (PACBAO). The aim of capitalisation is to document and promote experiences in the field in order to encourage learning, accountability and the scaling up of promising approaches. The information was gathered through interviews, field visits, document analysis and stakeholder consultations.

About the PACBAO programme

The Regional Programme to Support Livestock Marketing in West Africa (PACBAO) is an ECOWAS initiative with financial support from Swiss Cooperation (SDC). It is part of the implementation of the Regional Agricultural Policy, ECOWAP. It aims to create conditions conducive to increasing livestock farmers' incomes by leveraging the private sector in regional livestock trade and regional public institutions. During its first phase (2018–2023), the programme contributed to strengthening the institutional and operational capacities of ECOWAS and financed 16 pilot projects in 11 countries in West Africa and the Sahel, which generated around ten good practices and innovations. The pilot projects mainly aimed to increase livestock productivity, improve the competitiveness of meat produced in the region in the face of competition from extra-community imports, facilitate and modernise intra-regional livestock trade, and improve relations between value chain actors, facilities and means for processing and transporting red meat.

The second phase of the programme (2024–2028) is in line with this approach and will focus on scaling up existing innovative practices while creating favourable conditions for promoting the livestock and meat sector. Its overall objective is to help meet the red meat and meat product needs of the populations of West Africa and the Sahel through the development of intraregional trade in livestock and meat and the control of extraregional imports of meat products. Specifically, the second phase of the programme aims to increase the supply of livestock and meat in terminal markets by at least 2.6% and reach approximately 500,000 direct beneficiaries, 40% of whom are young people and women.

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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food
4th and 5th floors, CRBC Building
Reconciliation Square, OUA City, Atchanté District
01 BP4817, Lomé 01, Togo
Email : araa@araa.org
Website : www.araa.org