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Capitalisation note

Modernise without delay: Facilitating,
measuring and formalising livestock trade
on the Ouagadougou–Abidjan corridor



With technical and financial support of :



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

September 2025

This capitalisation note was produced as part of Phase 1 of the Livestock Marketing Support Programme in West Africa, implemented from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2023 with technical and financial support from :



To cite this document :

ECOWAS Commission – Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF), Capitalisation Note, 2025: Modernising without delay: Facilitating, measuring and formalising livestock trade on the Ouagadougou–Abidjan corridor.

Project : Modernisation and harmonisation of livestock markets along the Ouagadougou–Abidjan corridor

Countries : Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso

Implementing institution : National Federation of Livestock and Meat Cooperatives of Côte d’Ivoire (FENACOFBVI-CI)

Executive summary

To modernise cross-border livestock trade between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, the project set up an export facilitation office, introduced live livestock weighing at the Pouytenga and Port-Bouët markets, and standardised the commercial documents used by stakeholders. More than 100 traders have adopted the office, reducing export time by one day and saving between 10,000 and 15,000 CFA francs per truck. At the same time, nearly 50% of transactions now include systematic weighing of animals, enhancing transparency. The adoption of standardised documents by around 100 stakeholders is helping to secure and professionalise trade.

One of the key lessons is that simple, co-constructed and locally-led solutions can produce rapid and concrete results, provided they are supported by constant dialogue and effective stakeholder involvement.

To consolidate the gains and ensure the sustainability of the approach, it is recommended to strengthen local governance, continue awareness-raising activities, and support stakeholders in taking ownership of the tools and equipment, in particular through training and ongoing consultation with local authorities and users..

Key messages

- The project was implemented to address the many constraints affecting livestock trade between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, including road harassment, the lack of formalised transactions, the indebtedness of livestock traders and the lack of adequate infrastructure.
- The project centralised pre-export operations through a facilitation office, introduced the weighing of live cattle with scales in markets, developed standardised commercial documents and engaged in multi-stakeholder dialogue to ensure stakeholder buy-in and participation.
- More than 100 traders have adopted the facilitation office, reducing export times by one day, and nearly half of all transactions are now based on the actual weight of the animals thanks to the weighbridges installed in Pouytenga and Port-Bouët. The development and dissemination of standard commercial documents has enabled around 100 actors to secure their trade, initiating a process of professionalisation of the sector despite ongoing support needs.
- Simplicity, local governance and inclusive dialogue are essential levers for success and sustainability. Experience shows that pragmatic, co-constructed solutions such as the facilitation office are more quickly operational than cumbersome institutional reforms, provided they are supported by constant dialogue, a shared management framework and a clear commitment from the authorities.

Challenge

Strategic but hampered sub-regional livestock trade

Livestock trade between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire is a key pillar of regional economic exchange in West Africa. Around 60% of the livestock consumed in Côte d'Ivoire is imported from Burkina Faso, while a significant proportion of Burkinabe goods pass through the autonomous port of Abidjan. This economic interdependence is long-standing and structural, particularly for the region's livestock and meat sectors.

However, despite the importance of these flows, livestock exports from Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire continue to face numerous structural and organisational obstacles that limit their efficiency, transparency and profitability. Unlike general goods, which transit relatively freely from the port of Abidjan to Ouagadougou, the livestock trade remains hampered by multiple difficulties that affect traders, transporters, breeders and end consumers alike.

Multiple obstacles hindering the modernisation of the sector

The major challenges facing the sector are numerous and interconnected. Road harassment persists along transport corridors, leading not only to delays and informal costs, but also to security risks for transporters. Added to this is the lack of modern infrastructure, particularly reliable weighing systems, which makes it difficult to set fair prices in the markets. Furthermore, commercial transactions remain largely informal, which generates frequent disputes, limits the traceability of flows and hinders access to financial services for stakeholders. This situation is aggravated by the structural indebtedness of middlemen, particularly in secondary markets, which weakens the value chain as a whole and reduces farmers' margins. Finally, the lack of involvement of the relevant public institutions – particularly in Côte d'Ivoire – combined with internal tensions between professional actors in the sector, hinders the implementation of concerted and sustainable solutions.

These constraints are compounded by aggravating contextual factors, such as political instability in Burkina Faso, insecurity in certain areas of the corridor, and the low level of education among a large proportion of traders, making it more difficult to adopt new tools or formalised procedures.

A need for reform driven by actors in the field

Faced with this situation, FENACOFBVI-CI – the national umbrella organisation for the livestock and meat sector in Côte d'Ivoire – took the initiative, with the support of the Programme d'Appui à la Commercialisation du Bétail en Afrique de l'Ouest (PACBAO), to propose a pilot project to modernise and harmonise livestock markets along the Ouagadougou-Abidjan corridor. The fundamental objective was to test concrete solutions to improve the fluidity, transparency and profitability of the livestock trade, based on the needs expressed by the actors themselves.

The project aimed to address the main obstacles identified upstream of livestock exports through several targeted actions. First, it sought to centralise pre-export operations by creating a dedicated facilitation office, which would be more flexible and quicker to set up than a single institutional counter, in order to streamline procedures for stakeholders in the sector. It also provided for the introduction of a purchasing and sales system based on live weight, made possible by the installation of weighbridges in primary and terminal markets, to promote greater fairness in price setting. In addition, the project sought to strengthen the formalisation of commercial transactions by developing simple contractual

documents, adapted to the realities on the ground and easily usable by traders. Finally, it aimed to set up an automatic levy mechanism on transactions to feed into a guarantee fund for professional organisations, in order to secure trade and strengthen the credibility of the sector.

This project was part of a broader effort to structurally transform regional livestock trade through better organisation of trade, increased value of animal production, and support for capacity building among sector stakeholders. By improving marketing conditions, the project aimed not only to optimise operators' incomes but also to contribute to food security, regional economic integration and market stabilisation in West Africa.



In practice

Activities carried out

To address the challenges associated with the inefficiency and poor structuring of livestock trade in the Ouagadougou-Abidjan corridor, several initiatives were implemented as part of the project. The first action was to set up an office to facilitate export operations in Pouytenga, Burkina Faso. This office was designed as a pragmatic alternative to the establishment of a national one-stop shop, which was considered too complex. Premises were built and fitted out to house the team responsible for centralising operations, which is run by the Pouytenga Traders' Association. This approach made it possible to directly involve local actors in the management of trade flows.

At the same time, the project conducted a series of awareness-raising campaigns among traders to promote the adoption of the facilitation office. These efforts were complemented by advocacy meetings with the administrative and technical authorities of Burkina Faso (the Ministries of Trade and Livestock, as well as the ECOWAS representation) in order to obtain institutional support for the proposed mechanism.

Another key activity in the modernisation strategy was the introduction of live cattle weighing. Two weighbridges were purchased for the Pouytenga and Port-Bouët markets. The choice of installation sites was made in consultation with local professional organisations. Work was undertaken to set up the weighing stations. All stakeholders, representing more than a thousand professionals in the sector, were trained in the use of the weighbridges, and a weighing protocol was developed to regulate operations.

Finally, with a view to formalising commercial transactions, the project recruited a lawyer to draw up standard commercial documents such as purchase orders, delivery notes and letters of acknowledgment of debt. These documents were validated at a workshop attended by stakeholders in the sector. An initial series of fifty copies of each document was printed for distribution to the organisations concerned, accompanied by an information campaign on their use.

These various actions led to concrete changes, which are analysed below.

Results achieved

The activities carried out have produced concrete results in the field, reflecting a real improvement in commercial practices. In Pouytenga, the facilitation office has enabled more than 100 traders to centralise their export operations. This mechanism reduced the export time by one day and generated direct savings estimated at between 10,000 and 15,000 CFA francs per truck. It also helped to ease road traffic by reducing red tape along the corridor, reducing the time taken to transport livestock from three to two days.

The introduction of live cattle weighing has changed trading practices. Now, nearly half of traders require animals to be weighed before setting the purchase price, which enhances transparency and fairness in trade. This new practice has also generated growing interest among consumers, who see it as a guarantee of fair value. The two weighbridges installed are now expected and valued by stakeholders in both markets.

With regard to the formalisation of transactions, around 100 traders have adopted the new commercial documents produced by the project. This change marks a significant step towards better traceability of trade, more secure commercial relations and potential access to financial services. The use of standardised documents contributes to the professionalisation of practices within the sector.

Challenges encountered

The implementation of this component of the project encountered several constraints. Initially, the project aimed to create a one-stop shop for exports. However, the institutional complexity of such a system, which falls within the remit of the States, forced the promoters to scale back their ambitions and opt for a more easily achievable intermediate solution: the facilitation office. This change required organisational adjustments but made it possible to maintain the operational objectives.

The installation of the weighbridges, scheduled for January 2022, could not take place until March-April 2023. This delay was due to two main factors. On the one hand, there was difficulty in identifying suppliers interested in the project tender, which was considered unattractive. Secondly, there were internal blockages in the Port-Bouët market, where stakeholders took a long time to agree on how the equipment should be managed. This dispute led to a temporary interruption of the work and required numerous consultations to reach a consensus.

Finally, internal tensions within the sector, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire, slowed down the initial support of some stakeholders. The contested leadership of FENACOFBVI-CI, the project leader, aroused reluctance, particularly among Port-Bouët traders who did not identify with this structure. The fact that the project focuses solely on the Ouagadougou-Abidjan corridor was also perceived as a form of exclusion by Malian traders. This resistance highlighted the importance of inclusive dialogue and constant communication to ensure that all stakeholders take ownership of the actions.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- ⊙ **Setting up a local facilitation office is a pragmatic, effective and faster alternative to a single institutional window.** The project experience has shown that creating a single window for export operations, although ideal on paper, faces major institutional and political obstacles, particularly in a cross-border context. The establishment of a facilitation office in Pouytenga, managed by the stakeholders themselves, has proved to be a realistic and functional solution. This system, which is more flexible and quickly operational, has made it possible to centralise operations, reduce red tape, save a day on logistics delays and generate savings for traders. It has also promoted better coordination between local stakeholders.

In similar contexts, it is therefore advisable to favour decentralised facilitation mechanisms, managed locally, while ensuring their recognition by the competent authorities in order to guarantee their legitimacy and effectiveness.

- ⊙ **The introduction of systematic livestock weighing responds to a strong demand for transparency and contributes to a transformation of commercial practices.** The installation of weighbridges and awareness-raising among stakeholders have led to a change in buying and selling habits. Now, a significant proportion of traders require weighing before any transaction, ensuring a more objective assessment of the animals. This technical innovation has also increased trust between sellers and buyers and has gained the support of end consumers. However, acceptance was not immediate and required upstream information work, as well as the resolution of governance conflicts around equipment management.

In this type of initiative, it appears essential to combine the introduction of technical equipment with structured awareness-raising activities and a shared governance framework in order to ensure sustainable ownership by the actors in the sector.

- ⊙ **The formalisation of commercial transactions is an essential lever for structuring the sector and professionalising trade, but it must be adapted to the level of education of users.** The production and distribution of commercial documents (purchase orders, letters of acknowledgement of debt, etc.) have been well received by the majority of traders. Nevertheless, difficulties have arisen in their effective use, due to the low level of education of some actors and the lack of ongoing support. The development of these documents with a legal expert has strengthened their credibility, but their adoption remains dependent on appropriate educational efforts.

To improve the impact of such initiatives, it is recommended that simple outreach tools be developed, practical training sessions be offered, and community leaders be identified who can support the gradual adoption of the new tools.

- ⊙ **The success of a project depends heavily on the quality of dialogue between stakeholders and the ability to manage internal tensions.** The project faced obstacles due to internal disagreements between actors in the sector, particularly in Port-Bouët. Some traders felt excluded or did not identify with the project's supporting structure, which delayed the installation of equipment. It was through consultation meetings and patient mediation that dialogue was restored. This experience highlights the importance of inclusivity and transparency from the design phase onwards. It is therefore important to incorporate structured and representative dialogue mechanisms into the project governance at a very early stage in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the process and avoid resistance that could compromise implementation.
- ⊙ **The technical and economic sustainability of the innovations introduced depends on local governance and shared financing mechanisms.** The use of weighbridges and the management of the facilitation office raise the question of their long-term sustainability. The project has provided for an automatic collection system to maintain the equipment and feed a guarantee fund. However, negotiations between the organisations have been long and tense, slowing down the effective implementation of the system. The lack of a clear framework for the distribution of responsibilities has also slowed things down. To ensure the sustainability of these achievements, it is essential to define from the outset a technical and financial management protocol () approved by the stakeholders and to establish fair and consensual governance rules.
- ⊙ **The security and institutional environment of the country of intervention has a strong influence on implementation capacity and adherence to the timetable.** Insecurity in Burkina Faso and political instability have had a direct impact on the project, to the extent that relocation of the facilitation office has been considered. In addition, administrative bottlenecks due to the lack of involvement of the Ivorian authorities also contributed to the delays. This shows how much the success of a cross-border project depends on exogenous factors that are sometimes difficult to control. It is therefore recommended to always include an in-depth contextual analysis upstream and to anticipate flexible adaptation mechanisms capable of dealing with unforeseen security or institutional issues.

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.

Acknowledgements

We express our sincere gratitude to all the individuals and institutions that contributed to the production of this capitalisation document. Your support, commitment and participation were essential to the success of this process.







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