

BVA Overseas Travel Grant Report Summary

'Conflicts between cattle herders and crop farmers in southern Chad:

Suggestions for a more peaceful cohabitation'

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I was given the opportunity to spend some time in Southern Chad following the work of COOPI, through a student competition held by SIVtro Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Italy (Vets without borders, Italy), which gives students the chance to gain experience in international veterinary work.

In southern Chad in particular, COOPI coordinates projects on the management of natural resources to protect the environment and promote the peaceful coexistence of cattle herders and crop farmers. There are many constraints to pastoralism (livestock keeping) in Chad, in particular the reduction in pasture due to the expansion of cultivated land. The situation is also worsened by the eco-climatic and socio-political crisis. These factors cause tensions to arise between the two communities.

In southern Chad, agricultural and pastoral communities must frequent the same area which can be a source of conflict. Both activities are poorly integrated. This distinction is enhanced in areas where agriculture dominates the land and no space is dedicated to pasture for livestock. The agricultural activities include farming of cotton, peanuts (oil production), cereals (millet, sorghum), vegetables (cassava) for self-sufficiency, but also to sell at market. Livestock keeping

in Chad is mostly an extensive pastoral system that relies on the mobility of the herd to find pasture and water. Serious droughts in the 1970s pushed pastoralists from the Sahel to head further south to find more humid areas to graze their cattle or places that are more economically viable (close to town), in the Soudanian savannahs of Chad where they became more and more sedentary. The arrival of pastoral systems in Southern Chad clashed with the native agricultural communities and along with the overexploitation of natural resources, the increasing population (a doubling in the last 25 years), an increase in livestock in the zone (a 9 fold increase), climate changes and socio-economic pressures (religious, sale of land for agricultural firms or petrol) all leads to an imbalance in the natural equilibrium and causes the communities to conflict.

Conflicts are often initiated by straying nomadic cattle feeding on crops, although some farmers own animals which are also contributing to the damage, however pastoralists most often are blamed. These conflicts can become violent and at some time fatal and are aggravated by social, political and religious differences between the communities.

My project's aim was to gather information on the major causes of conflict between herders and crop farmers and analyse whether animal management alterations could have a positive impact on the relationship between these nomadic herders and sedentary crop farmers in the region.

This is a very complex situation, so I decided try and focus veterinary perspective on the causes of conflict and ask these questions: What are the challenges ranchers face in farming livestock in Southern Chad? What are the causes of conflict? And what possible interventions in animal management could prevent this conflict?

To try answer these questions I followed the activities of 2 COOPI projects in Southern Chad that try to alleviate the conflicts. I made a questionnaire and tried to use participatory epidemiology methods to find out more specific information from the herders. The questions were targeted at the challenges ranchers face for livestock keeping and how it exasperates the conflict situation with native farmers?



Photo 1: Talking to herders from Redina, Maro and their veterinary drugs.

The important challenges to pastoralism mentioned were: devastations to field (voluntary or accidental) causing conflict with crop farmers; Cattle straying into crop fields at night (during the dry season there is so little pasture that herders must bring animal to graze at night and it is hard to keep an eye on them); disease: Contagious Bovine pleuropneumonia, Anthrax, Pasteurella, Foot and mouth disease, Black leg (*Clostridium chauveoi*) and parasites; access to water; access to vet products; access to pasture and the lack of pasture; lack of supplementary feed; unreliable or child herders; Excessively large herd size; Bushfires.



Photo 2 : Pastoral well built by COOPI in the fèrik of Mabrouka, Balimba.

Possible interventions in animal management for the prevention of conflict between the two communities identified were: creating water source for herds, creating set pathways for nomadic herds, building animal enclosures, developing the use supplementary animal feeds (molasses, crop residues, cotton seeds, mineral licks), promoting collaboration between the two communities (exchange feed residues for manure, using the ploughing power of male animals).

These were just a few possible interventions – I am sure there are many more, but what we know is that pastoral farming plays an important role in the economy of the Chad. It contributes to food and nutritional security of rural and urban households. Due to its extensive nature, pastoral farming is largely dependent on environmental conditions; changes in the management of the land in the South of Chad are necessary to make space for it and would be beneficial to all, herders and crop farmers alike.

Interventions in animal management practices could help with the reduction of conflict, but making cultural changes is a difficult and long process. It seems, nevertheless, that there is a natural intensification/integration of livestock and crop farming that will hopefully lead toward a more peaceful cohabitation and mixing of these two groups.

Chad is not everyone's first choice destination when visiting Africa, I found it an highly complex and interesting place to do a project and I am incredibly grateful to the BVA Overseas Group, Vetwork, SIVtro Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Italy to have enabled this opportunity. I would like to thanks Massimo Zecchini and Awa Ibrahim for introducing me to the Chadian way of life and world of international cooperation, they have given me confidence to explore this path more in the future.