

BURKINA FASO - Cross-border land conflict risks

OUAGADOUGOU, 20 April 2010 (IRIN) - Conflicts in Burkina Faso between herders and farmers threaten to spill into neighbouring countries as herders seek grazing pastures, according to the government.



Photo: [Anne Isabelle Leclercq/IRIN](#) 

Of food and fodder- herders seek greener pastures

"Competition for shrinking land will spur migration of herders and their cattle to neighbouring countries, which increases the risk for cross-border conflicts," Tanga Guissou, the director of pastoralism in the Ministry of Livestock, told IRIN.

Sixty percent of herders from Burkina Faso's central-south region now live in Ghana, according to Hassan Barry, the president of a livestock association in the province of Zoumwéogo.

"The problem has become serious," director of agriculture Salam Kaboré from the southern province of Nahouri told IRIN. "In the past, there was the land for farmers and herders to carry out their activities side by side. Now, there is not enough space and [farmers from other regions] are on

livestock grazing areas," Kaboré said.

There were 29 cases of land damages caused by animals in 2009 in Nahouri. Despite authorities' efforts to encourage farmers and herders to work together peacefully, there are still outbreaks of conflicts "here and there" said Kaboré.

In the south, 18 deaths have been recorded and an unknown number wounded in farmer-herder conflicts since 2007 in the provinces of Gogo, Perkoura, Zounwéogo and Poni.

The risk of conflict will increase in Burkina Faso and nearby countries with expected declines in agricultural production and animal fodder, according to the Livestock Ministry's Guissou.

Burkina Faso and neighbouring desert countries had erratic 2009 rains that reduced their harvests by up to 30 percent.

Irrigation projects and land degradation that has scattered farmers in search of cultivable land have reduced pastoral land by three percent a year, according to the Livestock Ministry.

No land rights

Communities - mostly in the south - with no formal land rights have been pushed out by [hydro-agricultural irrigation projects](#) and migrants from other parts of the country that have formed sedentary farming communities, Guissou told IRIN. "Indigenous groups are often left to their own resources in this [development] process and there has been no systematic effort to involve them, which frustrates them and leads to conflicts."

Pastoralists pushed off the land are forced to travel farther across borders to find suitable pastures, Guissou added. "What were yesterday's pastures have become hydro-agriculture projects in the south, which are not taking into consideration pastoralists," the Ministry of Livestock director told IRIN.

There are eight million cows and 19 million other smaller cattle nationwide. Following the droughts of the 1970s, the government designated 185 pastoral zones covering two million hectares - which is

more than one million hectares short of what is needed now, Guissou told IRIN.

He added: "Our herding and farming methods are still traditional and take up a lot of land. Since the 1970s drought, and [ongoing] climate change, there has been an increase of humans and animals on limited space with limited resources."

To minimize the risk of conflicts between farmers and herders, the Ministry of Livestock has outlined a land clearing plan that takes into account herders' migration patterns and animals' water needs, but only a fraction of the millions of dollars needed to finance the plan has been raised by the government, said Guissou.