



Research Paper

The Reach of the Conflicts between Breeders and Farmers in the Township of Banikoara

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ABSTRACT: *Breeding is the second economic activity after agriculture in Benin, especially in the Borgou and Alibori departments. But unfortunately there are frequent clashes between the main actors of the sector of activities. The research carried out in the township of Banikoara aims at identifying the reach of the conflicts that emerge between farmers and breeders in the study area. The methodology used includes collecting information from books, investigating on the field, and data processing through the SWOT analysis model. This research has revealed that unfair use of natural resources by farmers and breeders is the source of the conflicts that oppose those two groups of people. In recent years, these conflicts have worsened in the Banikoara township. Indeed, two hundred and eighty (280) conflict cases have been recorded by UCOPER in the year 2015, two of those cases being deadly, and ninety-seven (97) wounded. These have had serious impacts on the socio-economic life of those people.*

Keywords: *Banikoara, Conflicts, transhumance, range, breeders.*

I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Raving of animals and transhumance are frequent phenomena both in rural and urban areas. These cause damages on farms and as such are sources of permanent and, sometimes, bloody conflicts between farmers and breeders. Inclusive diagnoses, meetings of surrounding townships, regions and countries have revealed this represents a serious concern in the regions where livestock is important and cattle on permanent move, and where grazing is difficult. Police stations and town-offices are regularly needed to settle conflicts between farmers and breeders (Gnanglé, 2000).

The population of Banikoara is highly growing and in a worsening context of poverty, people mainly meet their daily needs with cotton farming. Indeed, the township of Banikoara has recently known a demographic boom regime. At the same time, these populations have to face the imposed situation from the National W Park. "This ecological process is based on a three biophysical datum : the many needs of man, the shortage of the natural estate to meet those needs directly, the necessity to transform the nature's elements into useful 'estates' for meeting those needs" (Bancal, 1974 quoted by Affo and al., 2011).

In this township, and mainly in the district Founougo, despite delimitation of the W park and of the plug zone, there remain conflicts between farmers and breeders. To put it clearly, delimitation will reduce conflicts, but it won't put an end to them. This is the case with Founougo area, in Banikoara where officials of the conflict management committee have decided on punishing all people trying to farm inside the grazing areas, and those who cause damages onto the corridor. (Aklamavo; 2009).

Facing these conflicting situations between farmers and breeders, three questions cross the mind.

- ✓ What are the causes and types of conflicts between farmers and breeders of the township of Banikoara?
- ✓ How do these conflicts happen in Banikoara?
- ✓ What is the conflict management mode with those two social groups?

Answering those questions will account for the choice of the present research topic entitled: "The reach of the conflicts between breeders and farmers in the township of Banikoara"

II. THE GEOGRAPHIC FRAMEWORK

2.1. The Geographic Setting of the Study Area

The Banikoara township is situated in the North-West of the Alibori department, between North latitude 10°50' and 11°45'; and East longitude 2°0 and 2°55' (figure 1). It is bounded to the South by the Karimama township, to the East by the Gogounou township, to the North by the townships of Kerou (Atacora Department), and the nearby Burkina Faso Republic (figure 1).

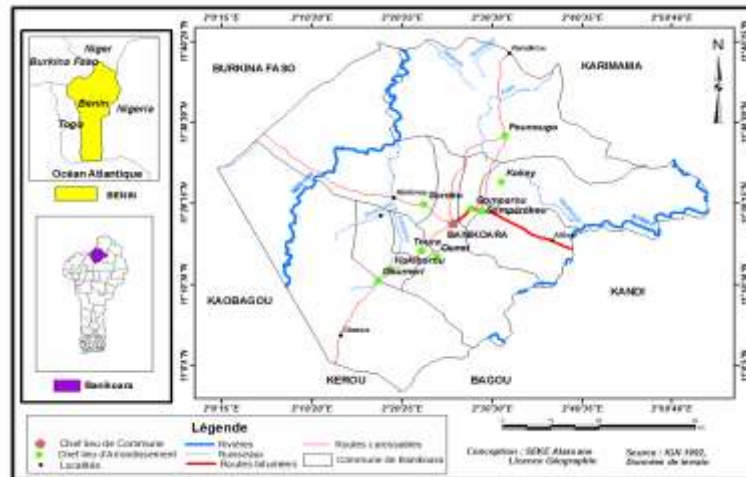


Figure1: Geographic situation of the Banikoara township.

2.2. Demographic and Social Characteristics

Basing on demography, Banikoara hold the first rank in the Alibori department. The intercensitary demographic growth rate of the township (3.87%) is quasi similar to the department average (3.88%). Figure 2 shows the population growth in Banikoara from 1979 to 2013.

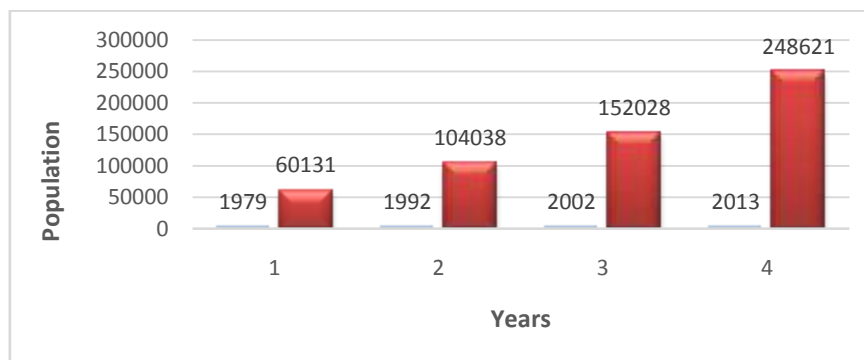


Figure 2: Population growth in the township of Banikoara from 1979 to 2013

Source: INSAE, 1979 - 2013

Analysis of the above figure shows that from 1992 to 2002, the population of Banikoara has known a global variation of 46.13%, going from 104,038 inhabitants to 152,028 inhabitants. This growth does not go along with the forest resources whose anarchical and abusive exploitation has unceasingly damaged the soils. The consequence of this is the fall in the farms yields (INSAE, 2002).

Scrutinizing the structure following age groups according to INSAE (2002) has revealed that the population of Banikoara is highly young, with the youth below 15 representing 52%. This shows that the township of Banikoara disposes of quality human resources for sustainable agriculture and breeding. The most important ethnic groups are the Baatombu (70 %) and the Fulbé (23 %). The Dendi (1, 6 %), the Yoruba (1, 3 %), the Fon (0, 8 %) and others (3, 3 %) represent minority groups in the township (Monsorgui, 2015).

2.3 Economic Activities

Farming and breeding are the main economic activities of people in Banikoara. Agriculture there is of an extensive type. The main cultures are: sorghum, rice, mil, pea-nuts, niébé, yams, market gardening cultures, and mainly cotton (Séko; 2008). Indeed, in the township, they grow an average of 95,701 tones, all speculation

included, over an average area of 155,183 hectares. Cotton represents 43, 277 tones that is 45.22 % of the global production. More than one third of the cotton grown on the national scale comes from Banikoara. This position has allowed Banikoara to be named “capital city of white gold”. Cotton is then the main produce in the township, and it goes along with breeding

Breeding has been practiced by men (bovines, small ruminants, and poultry); by women (small ruminants, and poultry) and children (leading the cattle to the grazing places, and sometimes milking the cows). It is a permanent and the principal activity for the fulbé. This has generally stood for a prestigious saving activity. The animal population census has permitted to record 125,959 bovine in 1999 and 163,746 in 2009. The animal production in the township is then important for meeting the population’s needs of protein, even if the frequent epizooties prevent evolution of livestock in the township; the most frequent of those epizooties are the Pasteurellosis and the Trypanosomiasis. Pasteurellosis cases are due to the fact that animals are not vaccinated, as it is the case in Goumori which caused some animals to die last year. Trypanosomiasis is due to a deficit of regular healthcare to animals. (Monsorgui, 2015).

III. METHODOLOGY

This part of the work has taken into account the research through documents, the sampling and the field investigation on.

3.1. Research through documents

In order to better apprehend the topic, existing global information books, selected information books, reports, thesis and dissertations bond to the topic have been collected and reviewed. This has allowed making a point about the needed information, and defining the topic related concepts. The use of these documents has contributed to the setting the basis for analyzing the obtained results

3.2. sampling

The “reasoned choice” and “snow globe” sampling techniques have been used in the framework of the present research work.

The “reasoned choice” sampling has consisted in providing information related to contest between farmers and breeders in the Banikoara township. The “snow globe” sampling has been used to reach the transhumant breeders, since they are always on the move and as such, hard to be reached. This has consisted in get from a few key-informers information about the transhumant breeders residing in the township, who are either victims or witnesses of such clashes.

3.3. Field Investigation

The investigation on the field has taken into account the technique, the tools and materials for data collection used during the field research. Direct observation, interview and questionnaire are the techniques used here. As for data collection tools and materials, they are made of inquiry questionnaire addressed to the CARDER and the Banikoara UCOPER employees, the observation grid and a numeric photographic device. Data processing has mainly been concerned with manual examining of the questionnaire and interview grid. The Collective Inquiry method for Identifying Strategic groups and conflicts (ECRIS) has served for collecting and processing the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Sources of the conflicts between farmers and breeders in the township of Banikoara

Conflicts between farmers and breeders are of diverse sources. Destruction of cultures: farms of maize, cotton, sorghum and others are destroyed by the breeders’ cattle during the passage. Clashes have become more violent when the damage is concerned with cotton farms, because farmers get fertilizers and pesticides on credit for growing cotton. Les affrontements deviennent plus violents lorsque c’est un champ de coton qui est détruit car les agriculteurs prennent les intrants (engrais et pesticides) à crédit pour produire le coton. Evidently, when the farm is destroyed, farmers are incapable of paying back the credit. This justifies, among many others, the extent of the clashes in case of cotton farms destruction.

Also, the shortage of natural resources such as farming and grazing lands causes occupation by farmers of the grazing and transhumance corridors, since 20% of the land in Banikoara is a protected zone of the W-park. The bad apprehension by farmers and breeders of natural resources management can also explain the conflicts that oppose those two groups of actors. Farmers think they should own the full of the lands for their farming activities. They see breeders as nomadic strangers, while the latter consider the land as a common heritage, nobody’s property. They also have the right for carrying out their activities freely. These attitudes in

the township lead to the destruction of farms by breeders' animals which invade farms looking graze and a way through. There likewise clashes alongside rivers, which frequently turns into bloody conflicts.

4.1.2. Typology of the conflicts between farmers and breeders

Conflicts between farmers and breeders recorded during the present research work could, basing on the collected information, be classified into three categories. They include cultures destruction related conflicts, water access related conflicts, and land owning related conflicts. Figure 3 shows the extent of those conflicts in the township of Banikoara.

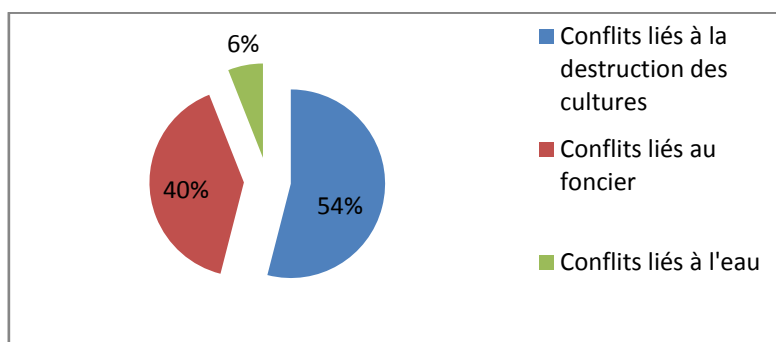


Figure 3: Types of conflicts

Source: Field inquiry, March, 2015

Analysis of the above figure shows that cultures destruction related conflicts are the most important, followed with the one linked to land owning, and lastly comes the water access related conflict.

4.1.2.1. Cultures Destruction Related Conflicts

This type of conflict has been the most important in the township of Banikoara. According to 85% of the investigated farmers, cultures destruction related conflicts are the most frequent ones in the township. Farmers accuse breeders of being responsible of the farms destruction related conflicts, as indicated in the following statement by El-Hadj Rouga BANI SAMBO Djobo: "Breeders accord an important place to their livestock to the detriment of our cultures which, is our only economic source, yet"; on the opposite, breeders who are mainly sedentary and transhumant Fulani, affirm that farmers are the guilty. Farmers disregard them, down looking at their breeding activity as a second class activity. Photographs 1 and 2 show the damages caused by breeders' animals.



Table 1: Maize and cotton farms, destroyed by wandering sheep in Sokoro

Photo by Idrissou, August, 2015

Those facts are sources of bloody and even deadly conflicts. The following words by the head of the Founougo district during an interview are a proof of that: «In the month of November, 2015, a Fulani from Igrigou has stoned a farmer from that same village during a conflict related to farm destruction». He even goes ahead, saying that "the fulbé, during his grazing, has deliberately led his cattle into the farmer's maize field. When the latter blamed him for that, he simply replied with his machete to the head of the farmer, which killed the latter. This provoked a global clash between people of that village and the fulbé"

4.1.2.2. Water Access Related Conflicts

Water access related conflicts come from development of agricultural and market gardening cultures alongside rivers and water provision devices set up for cattle.

Breeders who have to provide water for their livestock at water points meet difficulties for acceding the places, because of the agricultural practices that take place around the water places. Yet, access to pools and underwater is essential in the annual grazing setting, mainly for the use of surface water and the dry season forage store. The valuing of these strategic grazing spaces through seasonal cultures and the hydro-agricultural management are carried out to the detriment of key resources necessary for the survival of the livestock, mainly during the dry season. The claim by breeders of their rights to have access to those resources has often led to hard conflicts between those actors.

Also, certain populations from the Batran villages in the central district of Banikoara, in Ounet have continued using dam water for household needs (bathing, washing clothes and dishes). Yet, the arrival of cattle at those water points has damaged the quality of the water and destroyed the market gardening cultures set up around that dam.

4.1.2.3. Land owning related conflicts

Land owning related conflicts are essentially due to demographic factors that highly grow in the township of Banikoara.

Indeed, the population of the township has grown along with the farmers' number, while natural resources (farming lands and cattle food) remain stable. The farmers' population, in order to better practice their activity, have invaded the grazing corridor formerly made for the cattle (photo 3).



Photo 3: Cotton farm set through the grazing corridor in Goumori village

Photo by Idrissou, August, 2015

According to the farmers, breeders are like nomadic people, and as such they are strangers wherever they are. They have no right to land owning, no matter its nature. According to the head of the Ounet Fulani village, such apprehension from farmers makes the breeders to often contend with the loaf of land let to them by farmers for grazing their cows. Since this is very short land, they have difficulties managing their cows which finally invade the farms. This is how land owning related conflicts come out.

4.1.3. Frequency and Consequences of Conflicts between Farmers and Breeders in the Banikoara Township

In the township of Banikoara, conflicts between farmers and breeders have become more and more frequent. According to data got from the head of Banikoara police station during the present investigation, apart from conflicts bond to delinquency (theft, armed robbery, etc...), and the land owning related conflicts (illegal possessing land, or selling the same land to many and different people, etc...), conflicts between farmers and breeders are the most important cases the police have to settle. UCOPER alone has recorded 280 cases of such conflicts during the year 2015, two of which cases are deadly ones, and 97 with wounds. Figure 4 shows the progress of conflicts between farmers and breeders from the year 2005 to 2015 in that township

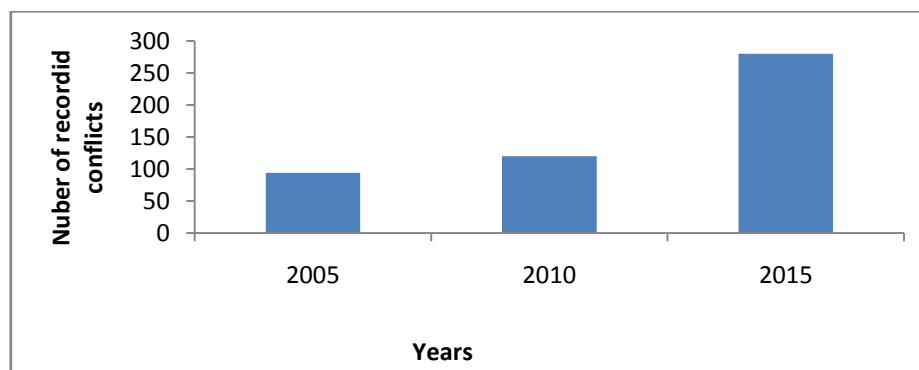


Figure 4: Progress of conflicts between farmers and breeders in Banikoara, from 2005 to 2015

Source: Field inquiry, March, 2016

Those conflicts have hard impacts on the socio-economic life of those groups of people. Poverty caused by destruction of cultures and the killing of animals during conflicts, human killing, degradation of the social life and imprisonment are among many others, the consequences from those conflicts.

4.1.3. Actors and Mechanisms for Controlling the Conflictual Relations

4.1.3.1. Actors Concerned With the Management of Conflicts between Farmers and Breeders

Many actors are concerned with the management of conflicts in Banikoara. They include: farmers, breeders, town officials, the UCODER, the CARDER, the Mayor and judiciary institutions (the police, and the court).

4.1.3.2. Mechanisms for Dealing with Conflicts between Farmers and Breeders

Conflicts between farmers and breeders are settled in different way. Indeed, in the township of Banikoara, considering 92 conflict cases between farmers and breeders, 20 cases are marked with “auto retaliation” , that is, the one who feels offended will directly attack the supposed guilty violently. The feeling of injustice, inequity in the settling of the conflict cases by officials is often at the source of the emergence of such private justice, since according to 62% of the investigated people, officials are corrupted; they claim money from both parties and the one who gives more wins the case.

Negotiation between the two parties is the second means for settling those conflicts. On both sides, a consensual common ground is then looked for. The guilty will confess his guilt and accept to pay a fine to the victim. In that case, the matter is settled friendly. With 280 conflict case reported to the UCOPER, 61 were settled friendly, which represents 22%. But when the two parties cannot come to any common ground, the case is reported to the head of the village. The latter will summon the breeder and then evaluate the extent of the damage. When the final decision by the head of the village is rejected by either of the parties, the case will now be reported to the township police.

According to the head of the Banikoara police, out of ten complaint cases, two are concerned with conflict between farmers and breeders. This frequently comes from the districts of Founougo, Goumori, Ounet, Sompérékou and Soroko.

4.2. DISCUSSION

Conflicts between farmers and breeders in the township of Banikoara frequently come from the invasion of farms by the breeders’ cattle. The scarcity of natural resources in the township is at the origin of growing conflicts between those two social groups.

Indeed, the spontaneous human settlements, going along with various farming activities have mainly contributed to disappearance of forest and savannah islands, clearly visible after a year satellite image observation, from 1999 to 2000 (Orékan, 2006).

This action necessarily has consequences on the breeders’ protection mode, since forests are their refuge area when forage resources get rare, mainly during the dry season. As such, breeders choose to lead their cattle into farms for grazing.

Then, for some years now, conflictual relations have emerged, which is indicative of deterioration of relations between farmers and breeders (Sounon and al, 2008).

The raving of animals and transhumance are frequent phenomena in the rural and even urban areas. They cause damages onto cultures, and are then source of regular and sometime bloody conflicts between farmers and breeders. Participative diagnoses and meetings of nearby townships, regions and countries have shown that these are serious issues in the areas where livestock number is relatively high, with insufficient grazing resource and important cattle movements. Clearing the land for farms, leading then to the shortage of grazing surfaces has also caused those (Gnanglé et al, 2003).

Those conflicts generally end in humans’ killing, imprisonments, reduction of people’s economic power, and degradation of social relations. Farmers seeing their farms being destroyed would directly retaliate by attacking the breeders. This generates bloody and sometimes deadly conflicts. In the mean context, conflicts between farmers and breeders have had damaging impacts over the development; appreciation of this will be made at three levels: environmental, social and economic.

At the environmental level, it has been proved that through the pastoralism movement, natural resources are better used, since the moving of the cattle from one place to another help regenerate the vegetal surface land of the departure place, and its fertilization through cattle wastes, even if some researchers have talked about destruction of the vegetal surface land (Akpaki, 2002)

At the social level, conflicts have caused so many victims on the side of breeders. They end with orphans, widows and widowers. All these people will become a social concern with nobody to care about them. Only a few parents and friends will care about them. This sets up an atmosphere of distrust and insecurity.

At the economic level, the balance is worse. During conflicts, thousands of cows are killed. Indeed, more than one hundred cows of the transhumant Fulani are killed by the sedentary populations after violent collective conflicts. If the average price of a cow at that mean period of the year is 400,000 fcfa, the economic loss could then reach four million fcfa. This represents an enormous loss for breeders.

In the management of those conflicts, people who feel offended would decide to refer to auto justice, attacking then the supposed guilty person directly. Negotiation between the two parties is the second means for settling those conflicts. When these actions fail all, it is now up to official jurisdictions to act.

As such, conflicts based on transhumance remain an important concern for all those actors, that is, breeders, farmers, policemen, the forest officials, the army, the local officials, and the central administration. This concern has come to the public official since the year 1990, marked with the setting up of the local and national transhumance management committees (committees of villages districts, townships and departments), and with sensitizing actions, shaping transhumance corridors and grazing areas (SNV, quoted by Bagri, 2013).

Theoretically, technical officials in charge of the breeding and agriculture sector have to play an important part in the cases of damages to farms. The procedure says that they should be included into the damage reporting team. But in practice, this procedure is unfortunately not followed. In most cases, no technician is referred to, and most damage reports are carried out secretly (Bagri, 2013). The bad management of those conflicts by officials at different levels leads to vengeful and retaliating actions within the population. In Burkina Faso, for instance, farmers do not sense “insufficient compensation” in terms of money; they rather apprehend this through verbal expressions such as: “they have means to pay more” (Brockhaus *and al*, 2003 quoted by Adamou, 2012).

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