

The monitoring system set up by ACF and RBM to measure the economic impacts of COVID-19 on pastoral communities is based on the optimisation of existing systems, in particular the pastoral monitoring systems established by the two organisations. This specific monitoring system has been designed to provide information, every week, on the pastoral situation at the era of COVID, through a public analysis platform. This document, which is the second issue of the monitoring report, provides a comparative analysis of the data collected in May and June 2020.

KEY WARNING MESSAGES

A challenging pastoral lean season

The rainy season hasn't really started yet in the Sahel. Animals returning from transhumance are in areas of high concentrations where they are short of feed as a result of insufficient grazing and feed shortage. Moreover, support to the pastoral sector remains largely insufficient to cover needs and meet demand.

Despite the arrival of the first rains, the pastoral lean season continues. It has even just entered a critical phase because new areas in critical situation have been added to those which already existed.

The northern strip of Niger, from the Tahoua regions to those of Zinder and Agadez, is in a critical situation. Difficulties are particularly acute in the area of Gadabédji, in the Fako ranch in the Maradi region, and in the *département* of Tilia where large numbers of animals are concentrated, despite the shortage of water;

In Chad, in the Kanem region, the alarming level of deterioration of the body condition of livestock due to the scarcity of pastoral resources (pasture and water) requires urgent intervention from the technical and financial partners;

The situation is critical in the Liptako-Gourma basin, particularly in the Deou, Oursi and Markoye areas where there is serious shortage of feed. The same is true in the Mali/Burkina Faso border area, particularly in the Tessit and Intillit sectors.



Maradi Region, in Niger, 29 June 2020

Project coverage area

The project coverage area includes ACF and RBM intervention areas. These are pastoral sub-areas in a dozen of countries. Information is gathered and disseminated in each of these sub-areas by RBM member organisations, namely: TASSAGHT, in Mali; AREN, in Niger; CRUS and RECOA, in Burkina Faso; ADENA in Senegal; GNAP, in Mauritania; PAT-Togo, in Togo; ANOPER, in Benin; BILPAN, in Nigeria; OPEF, in Côte d'Ivoire; COPAFIB, in Chad. This work is supported by the decentralised technical services of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Increased health risks with the spread of the virus in pastoral areas

The health issue is likely to take on a new dimension, with the pandemic spreading from the urban centres to the rural areas. This raises difficulties that are all the more worrying as they highlight the discrepancy that exists between urban and rural areas in terms of screening and management of confirmed cases. In addition, there is a risk that the advocacy efforts of pastoralists' organisations may not significantly impact on public health policies.

Tensions due to the return of transhumant herders to their home lands

In the coastal countries, the problem of border crossings by transhumant herders wishing to return to their home lands is acute, following the onset of the rainy season and the start of agricultural activities. Competition between users of rural areas could lead to increased tensions.

Emergency and survival destocking of animals on the rise

Smoked meat production workshops are gradually being set up on the outskirts of the animal concentration areas. Because it is increasingly difficult for pastoralist families to access cereals, emergency and survival destocking tends to become a common practice.

Unhealthy animals sold off

The data collected show a general trend of stable or even increasing market prices for animals. It should be pointed out that the statistical data only concern small ruminants. In the Maradi region of Niger and the Kanem region of Chad, herders are forced to sell off their cattle in poor body condition. These sales do not provide sufficient income to feed their families.

Sahelian transhumant herders stranded in northern Togo

RECOPA has counted nearly 150 transhumant herders currently trapped in northern Togo, with nearly ten thousand large and small ruminants. The count is continuing, in order to relay the concerns of these families whose living conditions are becoming increasingly difficult, with the start of farming activities.

The combination of all these factors allows to assess the overall body condition of the animals, which deteriorated throughout the month of June. Indeed, 42% of the relays indicate that the body condition of the animals is fair, 31% poor and only 20% describe it as good.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW AND COUNTRY SPECIFICS

The reduction in animal movements continues and is being reinforced...

Overall, there has been a slight improvement in the evolution of border closures and the reduction of internal and cross-border movements of livestock. The Relays reporting these phenomena increased from 60% to 58% between May and June 2020. This trend is recorded in a context that is characterised by the onset of the rainy season, with a variable geometry configuration.

The first rains have settled in the coastal countries and at the same time early rains are being recorded in the southern part of the Sahelian countries.

The arrival of the first rains, combined with the persistence of insecurity in several pastoral areas generally causes a disordered movement of livestock and an influx of herds towards safe and refuge areas: hence the strong pressure on these areas and the increased risk of intercommunity conflicts.

The causes of the reduction of pastoral mobility have shifted from the barrier measures against the pandemic to more "classical" factors. These factors are the combined effects of the pastoral campaign, recurrent insecurity and the lack of real alternatives.

Thus, high animal concentrations result in increased pressure on fodder resources, increased watering needs and the inability of hydraulic infrastructures to meet demand.

In June 2020, 58% of the Relays reported a reduction in livestock movements, compared to 60% in the previous month. The general trend is marked by a slight reduction in livestock movements resulting in a decrease in the number of areas where animals are concentrated in June compared to the previous month (see Figure 1).

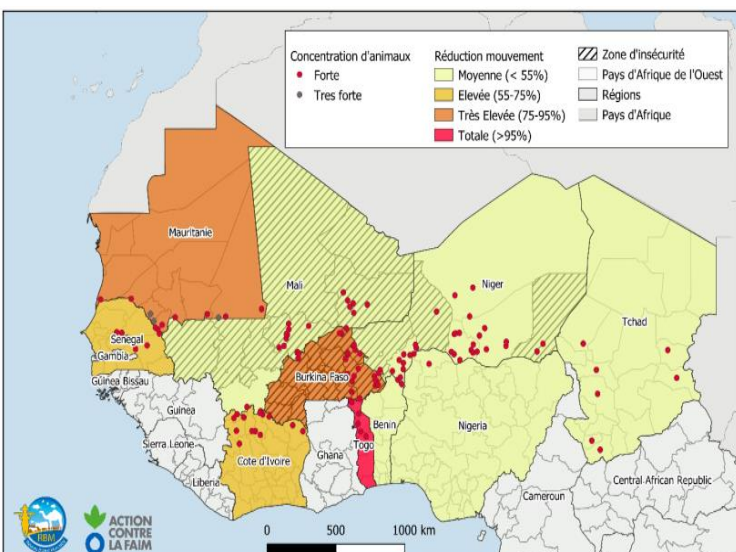
This could be explained by several factors: installation of the rainy season and the start of sowing in the reception areas, the beginning of the return movement of transhumant herders to their home areas, etc.

The increase in the influx of animals to a limited number of sites is accompanied by the threat of degradation of common pastoral resources and increased health risks for the population and livestock, especially at a time when the spread of the virus, which was previously concentrated in urban centres, seems to be increasingly affecting rural areas with the return of transhumant herders to their home areas.

Some transhumants are still stranded in their areas of relocation due to the obstruction of livestock tracks by the fields, border closures or the prevalence of insecurity.

The onset of the rainy season in coastal and Sahelian countries imposes a complex modification of livestock movement routes in order to bypass the fields and avoid the risk of field damage.

This situation mainly concerns animals originating from the eastern region of Burkina Faso which are currently trapped near the border with Togo, in the Kodjoare, Sagbeiebou and Mandouri sectors in the north-eastern part of the country. The Relays have already counted 150 transhumant herders driving nearly 10, 000 cattle.



Mitigation of tensions around pastoral water points, although access to surface water remains problematic



Watering animals at a pastoral well in Sakabal, 28 June 2020

Tensions have decreased around pastoral water points as mentioned by 23% of the Relays in June, against 27% in May. Access to water for livestock continues to be a problem, but in different terms compared to the previous month. In the coastal countries and in the southern part of the Sahelian countries, the first or early rains have begun to fill the ponds, thus increasing the availability of drinking water.

In Côte d'Ivoire, only 9% of the Relays reported tensions related to access to water points in June, compared to 30% in May.

In Togo, disputes between water point users that were reported by 21% of the Relays the previous month were mentioned by 18% of the Relays in June.

In Benin, the proportion fell from 15% to 8%.

However, these surface waters are generally located in areas that are reserved for agricultural activities. Given the lack of access routes for livestock to several ponds, the risk of tensions and conflicts sometimes remains high between farmers and herders.

Very few tensions have so far been reported by the Relays covering the coastal countries where the rainy season has started.

On the other hand, the existence of modern water points (wells, boreholes, etc.) in pastoral areas is the only possibility for the animals to access water.

Relays report long queues around wells; which further worsens the situation of animals already weakened by long walks, particularly in Niger (Bermo, Tilia) and the Burkina Sahel where several modern water points are currently inaccessible because of insecurity.

In Niger, competition around pastoral water points remains low, although it has increased as a result of the return of transhumant herders to their home areas and a rainy season that is slow to set in. Thus, 15% of the Relays report tensions around the water points in June, compared to 10% in May.

Water points are still under pressure in several large pastoral areas, although some improvement has been noted.

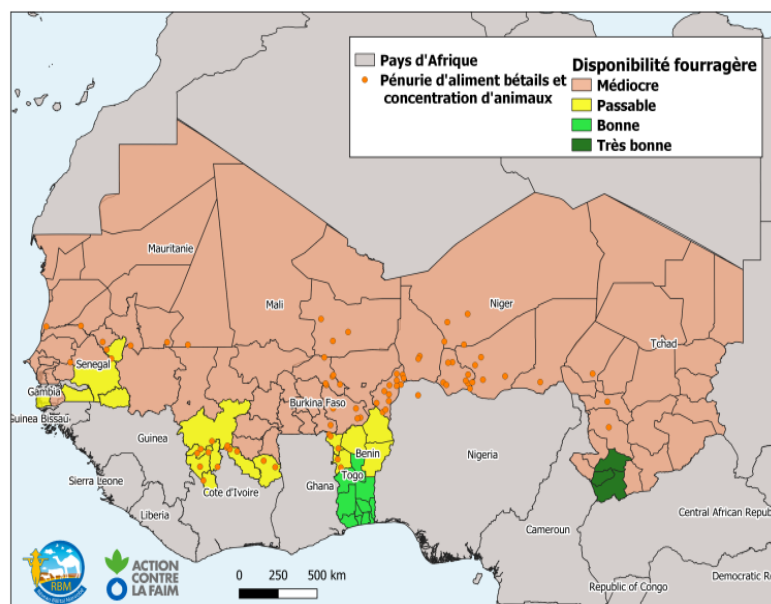
Thus, a 12-point improvement is observed in northern Nigeria (55% in June, against 67% in May). Data collected in Mauritania also show a 12-point improvement (56% compared to 64%).

The situation has generally improved in Mali where only 9% of the Relays reported conflicts around water points in June, compared to 59% in May.

Livestock feed shortages and increased pressure on forage in animal concentration areas

Difficulties in accessing feed inputs are now compounded by the health crisis constraints. Many pastoral areas are experiencing an early shortage of feed, as reported by 44% of the Relays in June, compared to 36% in May.

Unlike the previous month, areas with feed shortages are experiencing high concentrations of animals, while the rainy season has not settled sufficiently to facilitate regeneration of pastures.



The entire observation zone is facing a shortage of livestock feed, the use of which has become vital due to the combined effect of high animal concentrations and the lack of grazing, with the exception of a few sectors, namely the extreme south of Chad, on the border with CAR, the Logone Oriental and Logone Occidental regions and the Tandjilé region, where grazing is abundant; the southern part of Benin, and the southern and central zone of Togo, where fodder availability is considered good.

Severe shortages of feed inputs are thus reported in the Eastern and Sahel Regions of Burkina Faso, in the northern regions of Mali, in Niger as a whole, in the regions of Guidimakha, Gorgol, Assaba, and Hod El Chargui in Mauritania, in central and northern Chad and, to a lesser extent, in northern Côte d'Ivoire (see Figure 2).

A critical pastoral situation in Chad

Since the beginning of June 2020, pastoralists' and agro-pastoralists' livestock in Chad has been experiencing an extremely severe lean season, resulting in significant animal deaths.

This lean season is characterised by a shortage of pasture and water in the provinces of Batha, Bahr-el ghazel, Kanem, Wadi-Fira, Ouaddaï, Hadjer-lamis and Chari Baguirmi.

Moreover, there are the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic response, as well as the difficulties arising from the shortage of livestock feed. All these factors have caused the death of hundreds of animals (cattle, sheep, goats, camels and horses).

The surviving animals are in poor condition. 33% of the Relays describe the animals' body condition as "critical", 22% describe it as "poor" and 15% as "fair". These averages are the lowest over the entire RBM observation area.

One of the reasons for the low marketing capacity of the animals is their poor body condition, with average data corresponding to the lowest results of the project coverage area.

This situation, combined with insecurity issues, offers little room for manoeuvre to Chadian herders in their internal coping strategy.

Pastoralists are often targeted by non-state armed groups, as well as by the Defence and Security Forces (FDS) in insecure areas in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. The data collected show that transhumant herders returning to their home lands are not spared from attacks and inter-community conflicts.

The May 2020 newsletter had reported a conflict situation in the municipality of Malanville in Benin. The situation has calmed down, thanks to the stabilization actions that have been initiated by the public authorities and civil society organisations (Authorities and ANOPER mainly).

However, breeders continue to express their disapproval through the boycott of the Guéné livestock market, which is located within the municipality.

A similar clash occurred when the Nigerian transhumant herders were returning to their territory. This conflict, which occurred in Boyi near the Benin/Nigeria border, resulted in the deaths of eight herders.

In Côte d'Ivoire, calm has returned after the attack on 22 June 2020, against the military base of Kafolo, which caused about ten deaths in the ranks of the Ivorian army. This security incident resulted in the strengthening of the control system and the stigmatization of livestock farmers.

In Niger, despite the many steps taken by the breeders' organisations, there is still no news about the twenty or so pastoralists who were abducted more than a month ago in the municipality of Banibangou.

Their families and relatives are becoming increasingly worried.

As for external support, the trends observed remain stable. In June, 24% of the Relays reported that support was provided to the families of pastoralists, against 25% the previous month. In general, the testimonies collected highlight the slowness of interventions initiated by the public authorities and cooperation agencies in aid of the pastoral sector.

The assessments of the public action are divergent. Thus, the Relays in Mali, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo do not report any support provided by the State to the pastoral sector. Support in Chad seems very low because it is mentioned by only 4% of the Relays. The same is true in Nigeria and Burkina Faso, with 10% of the Relays reporting support to the pastoral sector.



In the Kanem, Chad, June 2020

Trend towards resumption of economic activities and price developments

The trend is currently towards a resumption of pastoral and agro-pastoral households' economic activities. The cessation of economic activities was mentioned in June by only 30% of the Relays, compared to 46% in May.

With regard to the opening of livestock markets, the same positive development is observed. Thus, 93% of the Relays reported a clear improvement in the opening of markets compared to 86% the previous month.

Specifically in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, 100% of the Relays indicated that the markets are open at 100%, despite the pandemic and insecurity.

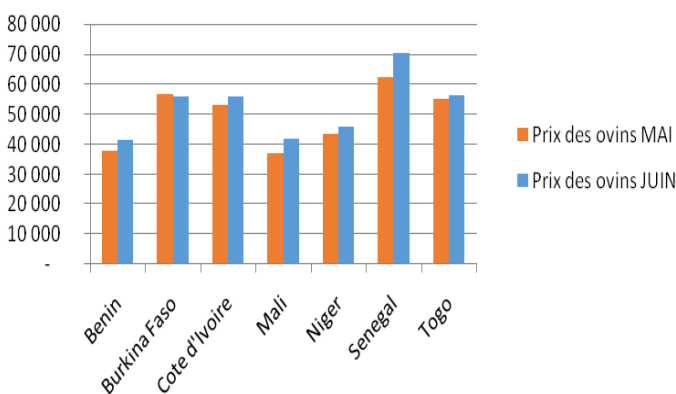
The same applies to Chad and Togo. Economic recovery is also underway in Mauritania (87% of the Relays) and Senegal (50%). The dynamic in progress in these two countries is part of the process of supplying the market with sheep, in preparation for the next Tabaski festival.

This opening of the markets is reflected in the increase in the sale of animals, which is mentioned in June by 57% of the Relays, compared to 43% in May.

Transactions mainly involve small ruminants for which attractive prices are offered by the market as shown in the following graph.

The upward trend in animal sales, which was reported the previous month was clearly confirmed in June in most countries

EVOLUTION DU PRIX DES OVINS



These data point to accelerated destocking of animals at the pastoralist household level, which indicates a difficult situation for some breeders who are faced with the loss of some of their animals. They also mark the start of the smoked meat production chain, which is an early sign of a challenging pastoral lean season.

While it is too early to talk about a pastoral crisis, however, the conditions likely to lead to such a crisis are being gathered. The pastoralist families seem to be shifting, increasingly, from strategic destocking to emergency destocking.



Distribution of Amoulass Bermo cattle feed by AREN in Niger 29 June

Gatherings in public and private places continue

Population gatherings are reported by 49% of the Relays in June, compared to 55% in May. Such a change suggests that the awareness raising actions being carried out with greater involvement of pastoral organisations are beginning to bear fruit.

The effectiveness of these information and awareness-raising campaigns varies from country to country. The lowest rate is observed in Chad, with only 11% of the Relays that rate positively the effectiveness of the awareness-raising effort.

The best results are recorded in Mauritania, Benin and Nigeria (85% of the Relays), as well as in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire (about 80%).

However, the general context in which the restrictions were lifted by the public authorities should lead to less enthusiasm.

Pastoral organisations are on the front line in terms of awareness-raising activities. According to pastoralists, the major information channels on the coronavirus are the radio, the community (family and neighbours), and the leaders of pastoral organisations.

The main information on the coronavirus focuses on the preventive measures, the mode of transmission, and the measures taken by public authorities to limit the spread of the disease.

The main obstacles limiting the application of protective measures amongst pastoralists are the lack of hand-washing facilities and the lack or inadequacy of water for washing hands and watering animals. Another important limitation concerns the cash-flow pressure in this period of scarce resources to acquire protection kits (protective masks).



Training of shepherds in the commune of Konobougou by TASSAGHT, Ségou Mali, June 2020



In the GAO region, June 2020

A close look at the grazing situation in the Maradi region shows that the available low fodder stock is around the Gadabédji wildlife reserve and the Fako ranch.

Crop residues are no longer available in the agro-pastoral and agricultural areas.

Faced with this situation, some herds are seeking to retreat to the pastoral enclaves and classified forests of the region. Woody plants can contribute to the animals' diet. However, in general, animal feed is insufficient on all the region's rangelands, given the large number of animals present, the delay in the rainy season and the fodder deficit of around 60% recorded at the end of the 2019 pastoral season.

As a result of all these factors, herds are moving around in a disorderly manner. Thus, in the pastoral area (*département* of Bermo), there is a massive presence of animals from other regions in Niger, including Tahoua, Zinder and Agadez. These movements are mainly oriented towards strategic pastoral resource sites.

In the agro-pastoral and agricultural zones, the animals have left the villages prematurely with the arrival of the first rains. These departures towards the pastoral zone were caused partly by the permanent insecurity situation that prevails throughout the southern strip of the region. Following the closure of the pastoral enclaves and the start of agricultural activities, areas with strategic pastoral resources are likely to become a trap for too many animals. Finally, the deterioration of the body condition of the animals may further weaken them and cause many deaths amongst them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- States and the humanitarian community must provide immediate emergency livestock feed and cereal assistance to pastoral and agro-pastoral households facing a difficult lean season in Niger, the Kanem region of Chad and northern Mali;
- RBM and its partners must carry out an analysis of national response plans, in order to build a compelling argument for supporting the pastoral sector in the current era of COVID-19;
- Pastoralist organisations must be supported in their dialogue with feed suppliers, so that they can position themselves as key actors in the livestock feed chain and help avoid shortages;
- States and technical and financial partners must mobilise available resources to provide support to areas that are in a critical situation. To this end, a modular approach should be adopted to organise interventions, paying particular attention to the targeting of priority areas and beneficiaries;
- The States must encourage the establishment of health clusters in areas of animal concentrations, by increasing awareness actions in favour of barrier measures, as well as the supply of livestock farmers with the necessary health kits

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