Pastoralism and Alliance Farming: Case study North West Region of Cameroon by MBOSCUDA

Context/introduction:

- The Mbororo Social & Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) created in 1992 is a national association with semi autonomous regional chapters.
- Its vision is to empower the Mbororo-Fulani pastoralists to achieve sustainable and equitable development and to secure their Human, Social, Cultural and Economic Rights as valued active citizens of Republic of Cameroon.
- The population in Cameroon is estimated to be about 2.8 million Mbororo pastoralists by MINREX and MINAS ministries.
- The Mbororo-Fulani are the main producers and suppliers of beef and fresh milk in Cameroon.
- Pastoral livestock accounts for 95% of cattle, goat and sheep production in Cameroon.
- Cameroon has 10 administrative regions and pastoralism is practiced in 6 regions.
- The North West Region ranks third among the 10 regions in cattle production in the country.
- In the North West Region, the cattle are reared under natural conditions with very little effort to improve on the pastures.
- Pasture improvement efforts have been stimulated by MBOSCUDA and its partners and is being adopted by some of the pastoralists.
- The pastoralists also feed their animals with some salt on regular basis.
- The pastoralists of the North West Region practice a semi-nomadic lifestyle by moving their animals down the valleys during the dry season in search of fresh pasture, crop residues and water, and go back to the plateau during the rainy season where they live with their families.
- The situation in the other regions (the 3 Northern Regions and the East Region) of Cameroon is slightly different as the majority of the pastoralists still practice a full nomadic lifestyle.
- Majority (about 75%) of animal health problems are treated or prevented using ethno-veterinary medicines and other indigenous practices.
- Even though the Country is endowed with natural resources, poverty is still rife.
- 33% of Cameroonians lives on less than $1.25 per day.
- The situation is even worst in the North West where 51% live below this level.
- Majority of the North West population are pastoralists and subsistent crop farmers.
- In recent decades, pastoralists have faced a number of challenges:
  - Frequent conflicts with subsistence crop farmers due to increasing competition over land and water.
  - Environmental degradation, climate change (prolonged dry season and uncertain rainfall patterns) and a fast growing population reducing viable pastoral lands and cattle movements.
  - Land degradation leading to poor pasture and consequently low cattle productivity and production.
  - Limited support and protection of pastoralism.
  - Threats to pastoralist livelihoods.

Food system: Alliance Farming and pastoralism in North West Cameroon.

- Alliance farming is a farming partnership between a pastoralist and a subsistent crop farmer on shared use of resources (land, water, pasture).
- They agree to use the same land and related resources in an alternating manner to grow crops and graze cattle (outside the crop growing season).
Alliance farming is a model that was developed out of community-based farmer-herder dialogue towards conflict resolution and peace building that was stimulated by a group of NGOs including MBOSCU DA.

The dialogue process led to the creation of village dialogue platforms composed of herd ers and croppers.

There are presently 65 platforms in the conflict hotspots of the region which are leading in conflict mediation between cattle herd ers and crop farmers using the Alternative Conflict Management (ACM) approach to amicably resolve the very severe herd ers-croppers conflicts as a result of competition over access and control of agro-pastoral resources.

Alliance farming is an advanced outcome of the conflict mediation process whereby cattle are allowed to graze on crop lands after harvest.

They consume crop residue and weeds (fresh grass).

When the land is used to paddock cattle, their manure and urine fertilize the soil making it more productive when the crop farmers return to cultivate their crops.

Crops are planted on this piece of land once the cattle are taken away.

**Alliance farming: an integrated system**
The benefits of alliance farming

**Pastoralists**
- Cattle that graze on crop residues and richer pasture in fallowed farms are healthier, produce calves earlier and yield more milk.
- Alliance Farming facilitates shared access to land for herders.
- Reduction of conflicts between grazers and crop farmers by at least 60%.
- The accompanied trainings organized by the NGOs that are promoting this approach improve on skills in sustainable animal husbandry practices.
- Alliance farming increases production thereby increasing household income.
- Improved social relationships with farmers which reduces incidence of conflicts.
- Reduced cattle morbidity and mortality.
- The seasonal movement (transhumance) of the cattle especially during the dry season give the cattle the opportunity to access abundant pasture and water but also provide more opportunities to practice Alliance Farming.

**Crop farmers**
- Alliance Farming facilitates shared access to land for croppers and thus reduction of conflicts with herders.
- Increased crop production by up to 3 times for farmers involved.
- Increased household income because of increased crops yield and no more spending on chemical fertilizer.
- Stronger social relationships between farmers and pastoralists.
- Today farmers are seeking for pastoralists to come closer for Alliance Farming while in the past, farmers send pastoralists away.

**Environment**
- Reduced or stoppage of the use of chemical fertilizers which is healthy for the environment.
- Increased soil fertility and carbon sequestration through use of organic manure.
- Alliance farming practice enhances agro-biodiversity management.
- There is greater cooperation between crop farmers and cattle herders resulting to increased awareness of the need for environmental protection.
- Better use of available agro-pastoral resources avoids further expansion into new lands and also land degradation.
- The seasonal movement (transhumance) of the cattle especially during the dry season gives the pasturelands opportunity to rest and regenerate.

Sali Django,
MBOSCUDA,
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