



Managing the 'commons'

Morocco: Livestock and Pasture Development Project in the Eastern Region

To strengthen herders' livelihoods and protect the fragile ecosystem of Morocco's Eastern Region, the project set out to involve herders, through the formation of cooperatives, in improving livestock healthcare, creating more watering points for their animals and boosting income levels and standard of living especially for small herders and women. With 3 million hectares of common property, a million sheep and goats belonging to nearly 8 500 herders, the objectives were a major challenge. Equally, finding a balance between alleviating rural poverty and achieving sustainable management and conservation of natural resources on the one hand and intensifying livestock production to meet Morocco's demand for red meat production on the other, would not be easy.

Key recommendations arising from the evaluation include:

- **Herders' cooperatives** are stronger than they were ten years ago but training and capacity building are still needed. An assessment would identify the weakest cooperatives and could feed into an action plan for their improvement.
- **Finding long-term equilibrium** between available resources and the grazing requirements of animals is essential. Conservation should form an integral part of rural poverty alleviation.
- **Studies and simulations of drought risk** and 'community mapping' exercises, to identify the main geographical, resource and social features of the project sites, are crucial and are now feeding into the design of the project's second phase. Equally important is the need for a better understanding of herders' own strategies for coping with drought.
- **Continued policy dialogue** between IFAD and the Moroccan government would help phase out measures which hinder conservation efforts and harm herders' livelihoods in the long term.

Project data

Total cost	USD 47.7 million
IFAD loan	USD 14 million
Government contribution	USD 8.9 million
Co-financiers	USD 24.8 million (African Development Bank, African Development Fund)
Executing agency	Livestock Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Forests
Main partners	Figuig and Oujda Provincial Directorates for Agriculture
Project dates	May 1991 to December 2001
Evaluation fieldwork	October 2001

Main results

In spite of five years of drought between 1997 and 2001, over 460 000 hectares of pastureland were rehabilitated and the average time taken to reach water points was reduced by 48 percent between 1989 and 1999. Over 60 watering points were fixed or installed. With better veterinary services reaching over 800 000 sheep and goats a year, ovine mortality decreased from six to two percent. The organisation of herders into 44 cooperatives was a major achievement. The project introduced improvements to local herding practices including range control and respect for rights to use rangeland. The project represents an important step in increasing the awareness of herders and farmers of the need to use pastoral resources rationally and adopt conservation practices. In spite of these achievements, small herders are still more vulnerable to drought than larger ones and a second project phase needs to give more attention to the diversification of their resource base, particularly that of women herders.



► Strengthening social capital

Semi-desert rangelands in the Eastern Region of Morocco present typical problems of 'common access' to natural resources. When access cannot be limited through price mechanisms or exclusion enforced only at prohibitive costs, natural resources are at risk of over-exploitation, often due to the diminishing role of traditional practices that have regulated access and prevented depletion for generations. The project set out to strengthen and revitalise local social capital, by helping organise kinship groups into cooperatives responsible for the regulation of grazing on rangelands. Pastoral society in the highlands is no longer entirely nomadic. Cooperatives are replacing traditional tribal ways as a new focus of identity and a way to deal with individual herding interests which can clash with the sustainable management of resources. Cooperatives have adopted a modern legal framework and a more participatory style of management, although owners of larger herds still benefit more from common land than do those with smaller herds. Through the cooperatives, the project has created awareness of the need to take collective action in the battle against dwindling natural resources. Major weaknesses still persist however: the financial sustainability of cooperatives has yet to be confirmed, for example, due to inadequate income diversification and burgeoning administrative costs.

Defining grazing rights

Resting land through rotational practices was a key positive outcome of establishing herders' cooperatives. It was clear to herders that it led directly to increased fodder production, allowing better use of pastoral resources. Field tests show that the practice leads to higher yields even during drought periods. Defining users' rights of access to land to ensure sustainability of resources is crucial. Current definitions are complex and enforcing restricted access to collectively-owned land in the process of being rehabilitated, remains a challenge. Restricting access proved difficult in certain areas where traditionally, more than one kinship group can claim the right to graze livestock on the same pastures.

For long term environmental protection to benefit herders, a strategic framework for the sustainable development of the Eastern Region is essential. Detailed socio-territorial maps (a Geographical Information System, as recommended by the evaluation, has been established) will help define areas to be used for pastoralism, agriculture and environmental protection purposes. Measures should also be taken to prevent unauthorised tilling. Clarifying the obligations of the Directorate for Water and Forests, the Provincial Directorates for Agriculture, local authorities, cooperatives and herders is equally crucial. So too is determining the boundaries between rural communes and drawing up contracts between the cooperatives, the ministry in charge of common lands and the technical services to ensure that grazing areas are rested. With this goal in mind, the second phase of the project has built the promotion of partnerships into its design.



IFAD photo by Alberto Conti

Overgrazing has led to soil erosion and the numbers of livestock in the project area far outstrip the carrying capacity of the land. Herders, through the establishment of cooperatives, now realise the need to organise themselves better and to take responsibility for managing and preserving common natural resources.

Coping with drought

During the drought, larger herders maintained or increased their stocks and gross margins, whilst medium-sized and smaller herders lost many animals. Subsidies enable larger herders to sustain or increase stock even during a drought, whilst smaller herders face tighter liquidity constraints and are forced to reduce stocks which is likely to put them out of business. Overall however, the number of animals is now higher. Although the Moroccan government has phased out subsidies for supplementary feed, reduced taxes on feed are likely to have equivalent effects. Better consultation and policy dialogue with local and national authorities is imperative, an issue now being addressed in the design of the second phase of the project.

Alternative livelihoods?

The pastoral economy needs to be better integrated into the market economy and alternative economic sectors encouraged to ease the pressure on natural resources. This would include, for example, intensifying meat production (through increased livestock rearing) to reduce the pressure on pastures. For women and jobless young people in particular, promotion of small-scale businesses, such as craft work and small animal husbandry coupled among better access to microfinance services is needed. Research to help herders exploit local products - truffles, artemisia, rosemary, and medicinal and aromatic plants for example - would also help promote alternative sources of income ■

Further information

Royaume du Maroc: Projet de développement des parcours et de l'élevage dans l'Oriental (PDPEO), Report N° 1304-MA, May 2002, available from: Office of Evaluation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Via del Serafico 107, 00142 Rome, Italy. The full report – including the Executive Summary and Agreement at Completion point in English – and the Profile are online at www.ifad.org/evaluation; email m.keating@ifad.org or telephone +39 06 5459 2048.