P12. Characteristics of milk production in northern Senegal - Development opportunities and economic constraints

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In Senegal, the milk industry is characterised, on one side, by a solid strategy of importing milk powder and, on another side, multiple demands to develop local production. In this context, an industrial dairy was built in 2006 in Richard Toll, in the valley of the Senegal River. Initiator of a “social business” plan, this dairy collects milk from about 600 cowherds. The dairy promotes territorial and production characteristics to justify its local development plan and distinguish its products on the market.

The poster illustrates the challenges that territorial (climate variability, land-use models), production (flexibility, integration of livestock on the market) and social characteristics (social management, values attributed to milk) pose to a logic of industrial development. These characteristics represent strong constraints to standardising and stabilising production. Analysis of six case studies, revealing the opportunistic character of accession strategies of certain cowherds, shows that differing ideas of territory and resources are brought face-to-face in the relation between the dairy and livestock farmers.

The seasonality of production and sales remains a constraining, but deliberate, choice. The use of inputs, the stabilisation of some dairies and the sale of milk in the dry season depends more on other needs (conserving the herd, managing mobility, developing an image of “loyalty”) besides monetary gain.

Considering milk only as a marketable object does not express the diversity of values that cowherds attribute to it and does not take into account the system of opportunities and constraints in which the latter find themselves. Although the requirements of industrial production have difficulty tolerating deviations from the rationales at play, opportunistic strategies represent one way to negotiate compromises and build common objectives.

4 A thesis in socio-anthropology of development is underway (year three, CIRAD, INRA/EHESS) under the supervision of Bernard Hubert (INRA/EHESS) and Véronique Ancey (CIRAD): Local milk in Senegal: intensify to develop? Social dynamics, practices and reasoning of livestock farmers in the relation to change.