



SNV

Soudou Kossam: creating wealth from local milk



Background

Agriculture and livestock farming are key activities in Burkina Faso. With almost 9 million heads in 2017, Burkina Faso boasts the largest cattle population after Mali in the WAEMU region. More than 80% of the active population engages in livestock farming and the sector accounts for almost 26% of export revenues of the country.

Yet the dairy sector is struggling to really take off in Burkina Faso. The country produces less than 5% of its potential milk production, which is estimated at 250 million litres per year. 90% of dairy products that are consumed in the country come from powder milk imports, costing between EUR 9 million and 15 million in total.

Given these challenges for the dairy sector, SNV in Burkina Faso committed itself to supporting the mini-dairy plant Soudou Kossam between 2012 and 2015. The plant had been created through the initiative of the regional union of livestock farmers of the Boucle du Mouhoun, UREB.

The Boucle du Mouhoun region is among the top four regions in terms of cattle population. Located in the north-west of Burkina Faso, the region enjoys relatively good climatic conditions, enabling it to be the "breadbasket of Burkina". Annual rainfall in the region is between 500 and 1400 mm.

In the region, livestock farming is of agro-pastoral and pastoral nature with seasonal transhumance. The Fulani

community are very active in the sector, which is based on an extensive system of family production.



The challenges

Weak stakeholder organization

The regional livestock union UREB was created in 2005 and at the time of the project it had 1200 members, of which 200 women. The current coordinator, Bierra Diallo, explains the motivation of the livestock farmers: "We realized that we lacked organization. We were unknown to the public services and we were operating at a loss. So, in 2005, we wanted to get organized to put our efforts together to develop the cattle sector."

Bierra Diallo, UREB Coordinator, interviewed on 22 March at the dairy plant.

Milk belongs to the woman

Traditionally, collecting and selling milk are activities mainly carried out by Fulani women and young girls, Sanata Derra, the processing manager of Soudou Kossam explains: "Milk belongs to the woman. Seeing as Fulani women do not farm, milk is their main source of income."

Selling milk, a precarious trade

It is mostly during the rainy season that women sell milk. During this period of the year, the cows are more productive thanks to the availability of pasture land. The milk is stored in calabashes that the women carry on their heads, covering long distances looking for potential clients. For several hours they walk through villages and neighbourhoods on the outskirts of urban towns in this way. Given the risks for milk from exposure to heat, the women have to find clients quickly before the milk goes bad; thus often selling their milk at low prices. This method of milk-selling is not very profitable. Without a system for conserving the milk, losses are significant, and yet women have to spend their whole day selling, with little time to take care of other activities in their homes.

"The Fulani women used to go from house to house to sell their milk, facing all kinds of risks. They would leave their homes in the mornings and not come back until around 4 pm. They did not have time to take care of their house and their children. Generally, it is women who take care of the domestic animals. If they are going out at the same time as the husband, it's complicated."
Bierra Diallo, UREB Coordinator

Seasonality and lack of milk

Livestock farming, in the way that it is done is not well suited to commercial production of milk. During the dry season, almost no milk can be sold due to poor feeding of cattle. The dry season is the period for transhumance, an activity carried out by young men.

As the cattle move away, women are deprived of their source of daily income. As the owners of this production system, heads of families often resort to selling some animals in order to be able to buy fodder.



The history of the mini-dairy plant

The mini-dairy plant was created in 2011 on the initiative of UREB and for the benefit of women with funding from the Austrian Development Agency. The trading name of the mini-dairy plant is "Soudou Kossam" which in the Fulani language means "milk from the country". The mini-dairy plant today employs nine women and one man who is in charge of deliveries to local businesses.

Strategies used by SNV

Support for operations

The goal of the SNV project in Burkina Faso was to ensure the launch and operation of the Soudou Kossam mini-dairy plant and to provide advisory support to the plant. For this, a strategy based on building local capacities, facilitating business relationships and logistical support was deployed. UREB was the entry point for SNV support.

Improving milk quality

The employees of the dairy plant were trained on milk collection and processing techniques, hygiene measures as well as quality management. The training on hygiene during milking, and on packing and transporting milk

Sanata Derra was recruited as a processor when the mini-dairy plant opened in 2012. At the age of 29 years, she became the manager of the processing unit that same year. Sanata explains how the training received allowed them to reduce losses as well as to diversify dairy by-products: "At the beginning, if milk went for more than 14 hours without being pasteurized, we would throw it out. It was after training that we learned that we could make this milk into dulce de leche."

Furthermore, the provision of facilities and equipment using renewable energies allowed them to reduce operating costs. Sanata, the processing manager continues to explain: "At the beginning, we would first have to pay the rent and electricity bill before we could take care of our salaries. Now we have our own premises."

was dispensed to 40 people - 25 women and 15 men in charge of milking. 12 young men who were chosen to be milk collecting agents took part in the training as well.

Support to the value chain

The network of 12 collectors collects milk from 40 producers (male and female) across six communes, including Dedougou. The producer groups also received support in the form of insemination of dairy cattle and supply of seeds for growing GRINKAN fodder.

Logistical support

On the logistical level, the plant benefited from new facilities that were outfitted with equipment and systems for clean piped water, fanning and solar energy. The plant also received a pasteurizer with a 200-litre capacity and two solar refrigerators.

The results achieved

The mini-dairy plant in figures

Significant results were achieved during the three-year duration of the project. Soudou Kossam is the only organized and functioning mini-dairy plant in the province. Its turnover has almost tripled growing from a little more than EUR 15,000 in 2012 to almost EUR 41,000 in 2015.

The marketing of milk through the mini-dairy plant has enabled sustainable improvements in the profitability of the value chain. *"Before the establishment of the dairy plant, milk was sold at EUR 0.20 per litre. Now it sells at 0.30 to the collectors who then sell it at EUR 0.50 a litre to the dairy plant."* Bierra Diallo, UREB Coordinator.

The added value that has been created through organizing collection, distribution and processing of milk has been able to fund a network of sustainable and high-quality jobs.

Empowerment through regular income

In addition to structuring the dairy value chain, Soudou Kossam is also an important tool for the inclusion and empowering of women. The jobs created are particularly well adapted to the specific situation of Fulani women. Outside of selling milk, Fulani women have difficulty accessing other sources of income. Moreover, they are able to use their knowledge on milk production as well as stakeholders in the sector.

Lessons learned and the success factors

One merit of the project is that it developed an integrated and targeted strategy for the functioning of the processing plant. Thanks to the capacity building, the stakeholders were empowered. Organizing the value chain guarantees the long-term viability of the dairy plant thanks to profits generated for all actors - male and female - in the value chain.

The benefits of an organized value chain

One of the project's success factors lies in the existence of a federative body for livestock farmers, which benefited from support from the Regional Chamber for Agriculture for establishing Soudou Kossam. By providing support even before the dairy plant opened, SNV was able to put into place useful support actions for the value chain. The goal, which was to launch and render operational the dairy plant, has thus been largely achieved. The turnover of the plant grew from EUR 43,000 at the end of the project in 2015 to almost EUR 61,000 in 2018.

Awa Diallo, 44 years old, was a milk seller who used to be idle once the rainy season finished. She was thus dependent on her husband for a good part of the year. Since 2016, Awa has become the manager of Soudou Kossam. She can now pay for her children's schooling: *"With this work, I have opened a bank account and I pay my children's school fees, buy their uniforms, etc. When their father does not have money, I can cover the full cost of school fees - EUR 76 for the eldest and EUR 4 for the younger one who is still in primary school."*

For increased visibility of local milk

The initial vision of the project was to turn Soudou Kossam into a mini-dairy plant capable of supplying large towns like Ouagadougou or Bobo Dioulasso. However, processed dairy products made from local milk are still a rarity in kiosks and shops in the main towns, whereas yoghurts produced from powder milk abound. This situation could be improved through support for increasing production capacity as well as support for marketing development.



Developing a business plan

The scaling up of the project could consist of support for the cooperative to develop a business plan with a view to self-funding an expansion of the

production capacities of the dairy plant. To ensure that the increased production would find buyers, this activity needs to be accompanied by the facilitation of partnerships with buying centres in the big towns.

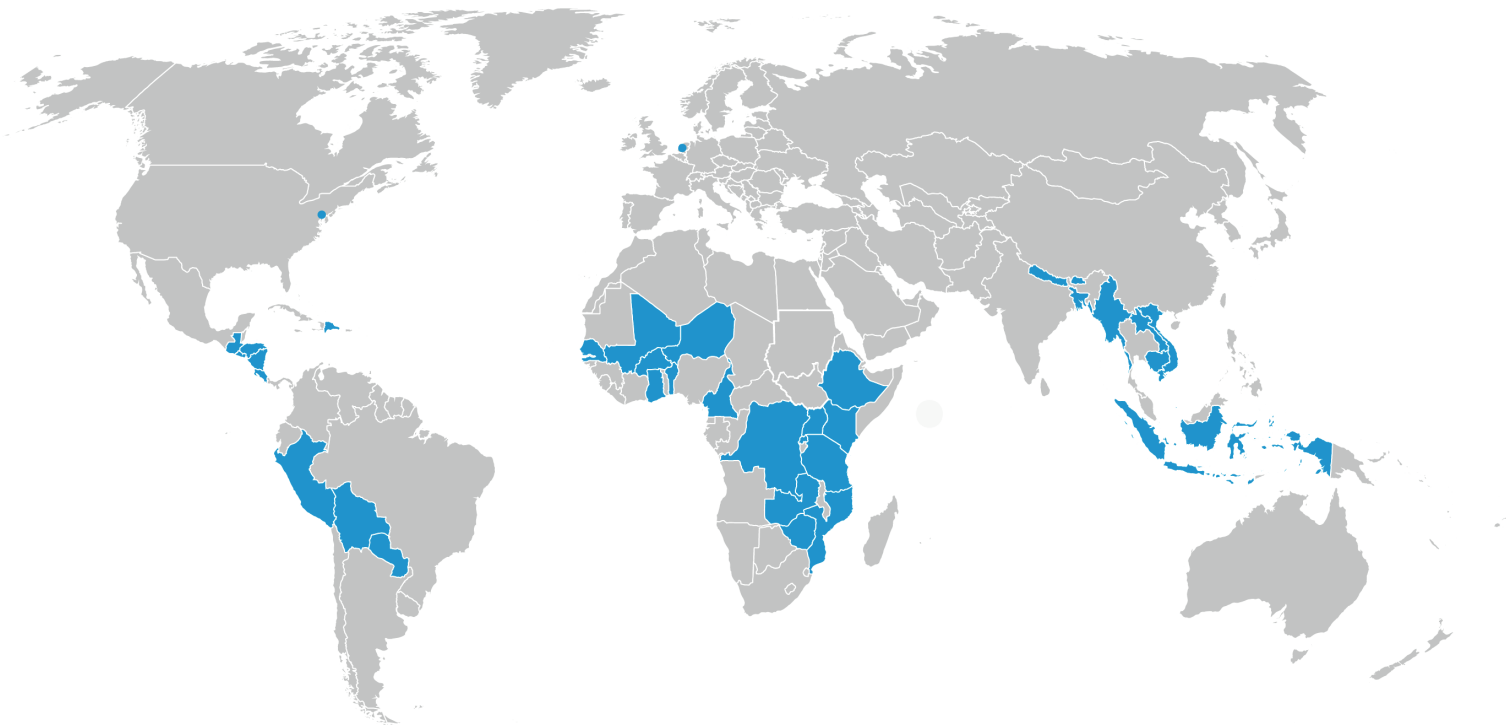
The contribution of gender mapping

Given the specialisation of tasks between men and women in the livestock sector, a gender analysis of operations within the UREB union would highlight the different roles and constraints faced by youth and women within this mixed organisation.

Such an analysis would show, for example, the effects of seasonal transhumance on the participation of young men in capacity building activities. As for young girls or

women, it would be of interest to assess what impact the organization of the value chain has had on the livelihoods of itinerant sellers.

The development of a new professional activity in the form of milk processing and the improved profitability thanks to value adding may lead to a new positioning of men in the value chain to the detriment of women. A gender analysis would clarify such risks so that they can be managed.



SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation that makes a lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty by helping them raise incomes and access basic services. We aim for premium quality and focus on only three sectors: agriculture, energy and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). With a long-term, local presence in over 25 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, we know how governments work and how relationships are built. Implementing our mission exclusively through project financing requires us to work efficiently and invest in operational excellence every day. Our team of more than 1,300 staff is the backbone of SNV.

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