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Silvopastoral strategy and sustainable management of forests in Morocco

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Abstract

In Morocco, forests act as a grazing reserve all year long and in a normal year produce 1.5 billion feed units, i.e. 17 % of the national forage assessment. The pastoral question is one of the factors involved in the desertification of forested areas against a bioclimatic background where more than 93% of the national territory is arid. In 2016, the Water and Forestry Department in cooperation with its partners, devised a nation-wide sylvo-pastoral strategy. The approach adopted consists in sustainably managing sylvo-pastoral resources over the long term based on good governance of all goods and services offered by forested areas. This sylvo-pastoral strategy deals with questions relating to the restoration of natural ecosystems, governance and access to resources, the revival of pastoral practices and capacity-building at the local level.

Key Words : Forestry, sylvo-pastoral strategy, Morocco

Introduction

Morocco has a very rich plant and animal heritage thanks to the great diversity that characterizes pastoral and silvopastoral ecosystems. In addition to their potential in terms of breeding, the so-called pastoral and silvopastoral zones conceal wealth which can help the populations diversify their income.

The silvopastoral sector benefits from the existence of a legal arsenal and regulatory framework which is constantly evolving, but also from a set of appreciable experiences in the management of development projects in the forestry field through policies and programs aimed at pastoral improvement within the framework of integrated development projects.

A national consensus on the problems and constraints to the development of the silvopastoral sector is reflected by the actions of the Department of Water and Forests, which has always maintained collaborative and concerted relations with its partners in the development of pastoral breeding, in particular the Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, the Ministry of the Interior and user population organizations.

Issue

Given the scale of population growth in forest areas, the sedentarization of pastoralists, the growth of the market economy and the recurrence of droughts, the modes and practices of using forest resources have undergone profound changes leading to major imbalances between pastoral supply and demand in forest areas.

The main elements of this issue are summarized as follows:

- Irregular and threatened silvopastoral resources;
- A fodder deficit linked to excessive withdrawals of pastoral resources;
- Conflicts of use in silvopastoral areas amplifying the degradation of resources;
- Poor knowledge of silvopastoral systems and insufficient valuation of experiences;

- A multi-actor issue (multidimensional) and a lack of a common vision.

To be able to deal with these issues, this research work started from the following question: which approach to consider to build a sustainable silvopastoral strategy.

Methodology and strategy development process

The development of the silvopastoral strategy in Morocco required the use of a highly participatory approach. Indeed, stakeholders, partners and several stakeholders in the sector were involved on its design and mode of implementation, either through interviews, workshops, meetings or committee.

The work approach was carried out in several phases described as follows:

- ✓ Development of a precise sylvopastoral diagnosis in order to better explain the related issues;
- ✓ Capacity building in strategic planning to ensure a solid anchoring within the humane resources of the Department of Water and Forests;
- ✓ Organization of interactive workshops for strategy formulation;
- ✓ Forwarding workshop results to strategic managers for a uniform understanding of the orientations of the new strategy;
- ✓ Formulation of the strategy in a simplified, well-structured language ensuring visibility and readability of its content;
- ✓ Restitution of the new strategy to institutional partners and to civil society.

Main axes of the strategy

The main strategic axes are presented below:

First Strategic Axis. Reconstruction of ecosystems as sylvo-pastoral resources

This involves supporting restoration programs aimed at improving the forage supply in the forest and limiting pastoral pressure on forest stands. The main activities retained consist of: (i) strengthening sylvo-pastoral improvement programs by giving priority to fodder shrubs and native perennial species which makes it possible to provide fodder reserves that can be mobilized in times of drought, (ii) initiation and popularization of good pastoral practices, (iii) the development of management plans and concerted exploitation of silvopastoral improvement perimeters.

2nd strategic axis. Improvement of the organization of users of silvopastoral resources

The success of measures and practices for the rational management of sylvo-pastoral ecosystems remains conditional on the organization of users in associations or cooperatives. The main activities consist of: (i) the mapping of the beneficiaries of the users of silvopastoral spaces, (ii) the support and accompaniment of the creation of local user organizations in associations or pastoral cooperatives, (iii) the rehabilitation of good management practices of sylvo-pastoral resources, (iv) contractualization of commitments with pastoral organizations for the exploitation of sylvopastoral resources by territorial units.

3rd Strategic Axis. Support for the socio-economic development of forest areas.

The main activities retained relate to: (i) improving the management of livestock systems, (ii) enhancing the value of livestock sectors (wool, goat cheese, etc.), (iii) developing generating activities income through the identification of the main wood and non-wood forest products to be developed, and (iv) the strengthening of users' skills in terms of sustainable development of the products.

4th Strategic Axis. Improving the governance of sylvo-pastoral resources

This is to improve the operational coordination of actors so that it is more effective and aligned with the needs of sustainable management of sylvo-pastoral resources. The main activities retained consist of: (i) the development of a common vision between the various actors concerned, (ii) the generalization of pastoral and sylvo-pastoral development plans by integrating the concerns of the various institutional actors and by specifying their commitments and their contribution to the implementation of the said master plans.

5th Strategic Axis. Holistic and dynamic research and development

This is to strengthen research and development enabling it to collect, analyze and disseminate the information necessary for sustainable management. The main activities consist of: (i) the constitution of repositories of sustainable agro-sylvo-pastoral systems, adapted and applicable to the various pastoral species, (ii) the appropriation of the research results available from the various actors, (iii) the creation of interactive databases between researchers and managers, and (iv) developing socio-economic management models specific to the different sylvo-pastoral areas.

Conclusion

The silvopastoral issues needs to be approached from the perspective of rural development and following a participatory approach for sustainable development. The efforts made for the development of the silvopastoral sector deserve to be consolidated, strengthened and improved through institutional and partnership mechanisms and tools likely to promote synergies between the various stakeholders.

The construction of this national silvopastoral strategy integrated the visions of the various institutional partners. Such integration can only be effective within a unifying framework within which each stakeholder will act according to its missions, resources and responsibilities by converging towards a single and harmonized objective.

In order to combine the interventions of the various institutional partners as well as civil society and community and pastoral organizations, the sylvo-pastoral strategy constitutes an adequate framework for bringing together said partners in a logic of complementarity and in a manner adapted to each silvopastoral context.

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