Property Rights, Risk, and Livestock Development in Africa

EDITED BY NANCY MCCARTHY, BRENT SWALLOW, MICHAEL KIRK, AND PETER HAZELL

International Food Policy Research Institute
Washington, D.C.

International Livestock Research Institute
Nairobi, Kenya
January 2000
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Preface

In 1996, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and the Institute for Rural Development at the University of Goettingen began a research project aimed at providing information to improve the efficiency, equity, and environmental sustainability of livestock production and land use in Sub-Saharan Africa. The project focused on semi-arid areas where mobile livestock-production and mixed crop–livestock production are competing land uses. It is estimated that a population of 87 million live in these areas, and these people are among the poorest in the world. Not only are average incomes low, but their livelihoods are also subject to a great deal of risk—environmental, tenurial, social, and political.

Furthermore, in much of Sub-Saharan Africa, grazing lands are primarily governed by common-property regimes, which enable people to pool and reduce the risks associated with variable forage production. The ability of the land to sustain increasing numbers of livestock owners without damaging the environment will be determined, in part, by the way the users themselves can govern access and use of this vital resource. Population growth, expansion of cultivated lands, new risk-management strategies, and market integration are just some of the many factors that will affect traditional management regimes.

It is within this context that the project proposal was developed. The goals of the project were to study the interaction between property rights and risk, and the impacts that changes in the external environment have on these systems. To this end, an extensive annotated bibliography was prepared, conceptual and analytical frameworks were developed to analyze the systems, and fieldwork was undertaken in 40 communities in both southwestern Niger and southern Ethiopia.

The International Symposium on Property Rights, Risk, and Livestock Development was held in Feldafing, Germany, in September 1998. The specific objectives of the symposium were to review the work undertaken in the course of the project and consider the implications for policy and program design.

This volume contains project research findings, invited papers from external experts, and results from discussions from roundtables and working-group sessions held during the symposium.

Per Pinstrup-Anderson  
Director General, IFPRI

Hank Fitzhugh  
Director General, ILRI
Acknowledgments

The project was primarily funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, through the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, and project members gratefully acknowledge this support. Financial support was also received from the United States Agency for International Development, through a Linkage grant supporting collaboration between the International Livestock Research Institute and the University of California, Davis, and the University of California, Berkeley. We would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture in Ethiopia for approving the fieldwork, and both the Southern Rangelands Development Unit, Yabello, Ethiopia, and CARE International, Yabello, Ethiopia, for providing invaluable support for the fieldwork teams. In Niger, we thank the Ministere de l’Agriculture et de l’Elevage, and the Programme de Gestion des Ressources Naturel (PGRN) for supporting fieldwork there. Thanks are especially due to the doctoral students, Jean-Paul Vanderlinden and Abdul Kamara, as well as all of the community members who spent long hours with our researchers. Winnie Luseno, the project’s research assistant, was an invaluable resource for many aspects of the project.

Members of the German Foundation for International Development were instrumental in ensuring a very successful symposium at their facilities in Feldafing, Germany. We also thank all symposium participants for their contributions to the project through symposium papers, by providing insightful, critical commentary on this project, and by providing guidelines for future research in this area. Invited-paper presenters included Bruno Barbier, Ben Cousins, Salvador Fernández-Rivera, Rachael Goodhue, Pierre Hiernaux, Timm Hoffman, Maryam Niamir-Fuller, Rick Rohde, Pasquale Scandizzo, and Tim Williams. Discussants included Regina Birner, Jean-Paul Chavas, Nick Chisholm, Jetani Dembella, Simeon Ehui, Boubacar Hassan, Pierre Hiernaux, W. Kisamba-Mugerwe, Arie Kuyvenhoven, Steven Lawry, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Keijiro Otsuka, Stephen Sandford, and Ian Scoones. Ben Cousins, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, and Maryam Niamir-Fuller served as facilitators for the working groups. Finally, we would like to thank Beverly Abreu and Pam Owen for their editorial assistance in preparing the proceedings.