

Abdoulaye Kane: The Situation in Senegal

Dr. Kane began his presentation by discussing the importance of the pastoral sector in the Senegalese economy. The livestock sector is very important in Senegal, both economically and socially. It contributes approximately USD 145 billion to the national economy each year, accounting for around 24.5% of the value added in the agricultural sector. Livestock supports the livelihoods of millions of families throughout the country and serves as a means of saving, accumulating assets, achieving social prestige, and maintaining cultural significance. Several systems exist within the livestock sector, with pastoralism being particularly prominent due to the large number of people who practice it, mainly from the Fulani ethnic group but also from others. Despite its economic, social, and cultural relevance, however, the pastoral sector receives limited attention from policymakers. This has manifested as disinvestment in the sector, characterized by low financial and institutional support, as well as biased policies derived from deep misconceptions about the logic of pastoralist systems. These misconceptions are rooted in prejudices against the Fulani and similar populations dating back to colonial administrations and continuing to the present day. The Senegal River Valley is an example of this misunderstanding.

Along the river, the French colonial administration aimed to establish rice cultivation. Starting in the early 1900s, they began appropriating the land and building infrastructure, including irrigation systems, under the assumption that the land belonged to no one. The Senegalese state pursued the same policies after independence. The Senegal River Delta's designation as rice production land after the construction of the Diama dam, which prevents seawater from invading the area when the river recedes, is the best example of such state policies. Previously, the delta, between Saint-Louis and Richard Toll, was almost exclusively used by Fulani pastoralists for grazing during the dry season. The Fulani nomads' campsites were the only inhabited places in the area between Ross Bethio and Richard Toll. After the construction of the Diama dam, the needs and land claims of the Fulani were ignored. The Fulani had used the land as pasture and a transhumance corridor since time immemorial. The state brought in farmers from farming communities around Saint-Louis and Dagana, who are mostly ethnic Wolof. Two villages, Kassak and Mboundoum, were established to host the newcomers. As the land was appropriated and grazing pastures were converted into crop fields, conflict soon erupted between the Wolof farmers and the Fulani pastoralists. The general sentiment was to blame the Fulani for the conflict even though they had been using the land first. Thanks to Djibo Leyti Ka, the Fulani minister of the interior appointed in the mid-1990s, the deadly conflict between the two communities was managed more effectively, reducing the number of victims of violence on both sides. He encouraged the Fulani pastoralists to participate in local politics so they could influence decisions regarding land allocation and the establishment of corridors to provide cattle access to the river.

Compared to the wider region, the Senegalese case is interesting because it offers innovative solutions for resolving conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. Dr. Kane mentioned the arrangements in the Senegal Middle Valley, where there are established ways to deal with cattle straying onto farms. Cattle caught on farms are brought to a fenced perimeter. The owners must pay a fee and compensate the farmer for any damage to the field to retrieve their cattle. Farmers are also required to build sturdy fences if they want to be compensated for cattle that wander onto their farms. This arrangement has worked very well in this area and could be adopted elsewhere as a model for resolving conflicts.

Another telling example concerns access to markets. The Fulani, like many other pastoralists in the region, have limited access to markets, which negatively affects their economic opportunities and

livelihoods. Some believe that the Fulani have a sentimental view of life and are not interested in making a profit. Instead, they say, the Fulani only want to contemplate their cattle. These widely held opinions have led to a failure to invest in rural infrastructure where pastoralists live. However, the Fulani are economic actors who engage with markets and provide much of the meat for urban centers. Increasing the number and quality of slaughterhouses and transport routes could boost meat production. Another problem is the asymmetrical market power between livestock farmers and traders, with the latter traditionally having greater bargaining power.

A missed policy opportunity in Senegal's livestock sector is the dairy industry. It has enormous potential, but it requires investment in a cold chain and coordination of milk transport and processing. Without an enabling policy environment that would allow a domestic dairy industry to flourish, the country continues to import vast quantities of powdered milk, which harms its domestic producers and consumers.

These issues could be addressed if pastoralists had a stronger voice in policymaking. One weakness of the pastoral sector is its lack of control over land and natural resources, as well as its low awareness of the legal processes that could grant them access to land. Most pastoralists are poorly educated, lack the right institutional connections, and have a limited understanding of legal and policy frameworks.

Ultimately, more ambitious policies are needed for the livestock sector to fulfill its potential and contribute more to the country's economy and social fabric. Cross-border cooperation between Senegal and neighboring countries is required to address border crossing and long transhumance issues.