

# The Contribution of SODEPA to Food Security in Cameroon

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Preamble :

Cameroon is a low-income, food deficit country (LIFDC). It has 16 million inhabitants, with an annual demographic growth rate of 2.8 percent. Cameroon is ranked 144th out of 177 countries in the 2007 Human Development Report. 40.2 percent of its 16 million people live below the poverty line of one US dollar per day of which 52.1 percent are in rural areas.

The northern part of the country which is located in the Sahelian and Sudano-Sahelian agro-ecological zones has suffered from food crises over the last three decades as a result of natural and man-made disasters and the growing impoverishment of the rural population.

A comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis conducted in 2007 found that poor agricultural production, low education and income levels, and inadequate infrastructure are responsible for vulnerability and food insecurity in the northern provinces of Cameroon (WFP),



Many definitions of food security have been developed. However, there are some, which have been widely used than others. This is the case with that developed by the World Bank in 1986. Base on this definition, food Security implies “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (World Bank, 1986 as in Salih, 1995). From the nutrition point of view, Salih, 1986, defines the food security of a country, region or household as its ability to meet up with its “target consumption levels on a yearly basis”.

In 1974, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations held the First World Conference on food security. During this conference it was agreed that everyone has the “inalienable right to be free from

hunger and malnutrition for the development of their physical and mental faculties”. In 1996, another World Food Summit (WFS) of heads of states of FAO member countries was convened in Rome-Italy. The driving forces behind the convening of this conference were, first, to reaffirm their stand on the fact that each citizen has the “inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition” and achieve food security for all. Second, by the fact that the number of hungry and undernourished people across the globe kept on increasing despite the commitments taken by the various heads of states to achieve food security for all (FAO, 1996). The main outcome of this summit was the adoption of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action.

In Cameroon, like in many other countries of the Central Africa Sub-region, food insecurity is caused by natural, economic and socio-cultural factors. These factors are so interlinked and mutually reinforce each other that resolving one does not revert the problem, thus the need for a multidisciplinary approach that will take into consideration all the causal factors.

The Livestock sector in Cameroon accounts for 16% of Agricultural production and is an important means of income for 30% of the rural population. With the declining world market prices of Cameroon’s agricultural export commodities mostly cotton, cocoa, coffee, banana, rubber and palm oil, livestock production continues to offer the most immediate growth opportunities as the necessary local and sub-regional markets offer great potentials.

#### **I) The SODEPA Livestock ACTIVITIES:**

Société de Développement et d'Exploitation des Productions Animales (SODEPA) was created by Presidential Decree n°. 74/182 of 8<sup>th</sup> March 1974 with the objective of development of livestock agriculture in Cameroon. In this vein three cattle ranches; Faro (34 700ha – 20 000 ha exploitable) in Adamawa, Ndokayo (144 800ha – 45 000ha exploitable) in the East, and Dumbo/Jakiri (38 000ha – 20 000ha exploitable) in the Northwest regions were established. Two industrial slaughter houses at Etoudi in Yaoundé and Bonendale in Douala were later on created.

**a) Ranching Units:**

The ranches were established with the dual objectives of facilitating the distribution of improved breeding stock to traditional producers as well as extending improved techniques.

SODEPA owns over 17 000 heads of cattle, constituting about 0.3% the total cattle population of the country.

RANCH	REGION	Superficie (ha)	Superficie Exploitable (ha)	Max Stock Capacity	Current Stock
<b>FARO</b>	Adamaoua	34 700	20 000	13 000	8 200
<b>NDOKAYO</b>	Est	144 800	45 000	18 000	2300
<b>DUMBO</b>	Nord-Ouest	38 000	20 000	14 000	5903
<b>JAKIRI STATION</b>	Nord-Ouest	600	600	600	652
<i>Total</i>	<b>4 units</b>	<b>218100</b>	<b>85600</b>	<b>45600</b>	<b>17055</b>



**Stock Distributed over the recent Seven years per Ranch**

Year	RANCH	Heifers	Breeding Bulls	Finished Bulls
2003	FARO	160	18	606
2004		80	44	345
2005		137	10	618
2006		399	37	1407
2007		144	02	528
2008		210	0	562
2009		76	0	270
2003	ND OK AY C	100	19	170
2004		0	26	0

<b>2005</b>		0	101	0
<b>2006</b>		0	211	0
<b>2007</b>		7	123	0
<b>2008</b>		0	217	0
<b>2009</b>		0	79	0
<b>2003</b>	<b>DUMBO/JAKIRI</b>	301	35	593
<b>2004</b>		28	20	168
<b>2005</b>		49	20	473
<b>2006</b>		69	37	681
<b>2007</b>		256	50	412
<b>2008</b>		206	69	484
<b>2009</b>		74	57	333
<b>SODEPA - TOTAL</b>		<b>2296</b>	<b>1175</b>	<b>7650</b>

#### **b) Technical Assistance to Cattle Farmers in the Traditional Sector**

Traditional farmers, mostly those to whom we distribute improved breeding stock enjoy a close technical follow-up of their stock.

**c) Accommodation to Transhumant herds:** For a quarter of a year each year, SODEPA hosts refuge cattle from the traditional sector fleeing their various



locations as a result of acute reduction of pasture and drinking water during the months of January to April (dry season). This activity is a necessary evil considering the level of frustration that characterise pastoral activity at this time of the year. Given the relative under utilisation of grazing concession owned by SODEPA about 20 000 heads of cattle find refuge in her structures.

## II) Meat Processing Transformation and Storage

Two Industrial Abattoirs :



- i) **Yaounde/Etoudi (Avril 1984)** Capacity : 200 bovine, 200 ovine et 100 pigs with an annual capacity of 11 430 tons

Year	Bovine	Sheep/Goat	Equine	Porcine
2003	40993	07	0	97
2004	44374	192	0	267
2005	50096	846	0	587
2006	47557	169	0	369

<b>2007</b>	47482	44	0	140
<b>2008</b>	48433	16	0	110
<b>2009</b>	52332	30	0	86
<b>Total</b>	<b>331267</b>	<b>1304</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1656</b>

Production figures 2003- 2009

Abattoir Yaoundé: Slaughter Figures 2003-2009

ii) Douala/Bonendale (October 1985) Capacity

<b>Year</b>	<b>Bovine</b>	<b>Sheep/Goat</b>	<b>Equine</b>	<b>Porcine</b>
<b>2003</b>	42294	0	170	0
<b>2004</b>	45204	0	72	0
<b>2005</b>	52238	0	114	0
<b>2006</b>	49698	0	171	0
<b>2007</b>	48643	0	278	0
<b>2008</b>	48636	0	559	0
<b>2009</b>	47592	0	940	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>334305</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2304</b>	<b>0</b>

Production figures 2003 - 2009



#### Abattoir Douala: Slaughter Figures 2003-2009

- Assistance aux bouchers traditionnels
- Provision of Employment to workers
- Support to Transhumant livestock farmers

### **NEW PERSPECTIVES**

SODEPA is currently striving at improving her strategies for genetic amelioration both in vertically and horizontally dimensions. In partnership with the ANAPRI/UNIUD/MINEPIA a synthetic breed (SIMGOUD); fallout of the EDULINK-LIVE initiative is being engineered. A more realistic development of the dairy industry in Cameroon is one of the primary projections of the

SIMGUOD. SODEPA is equally seeking out on profitable networks to set up more scientific standards for genetic improvement and preservation of the Goudali (Zebu) cattle.

### **Conclusion:**

The mission of SODEPA towards the improvement of food security transcends the national boundaries of Cameroon. The acquisition of breeding stock and finished bulls into neighbouring countries of the CEMAC bloc of countries is eloquent testimony of this assertion. What is even more interesting is the rippling effect of the carefully selected breeding stock of cattle (notably the Goudali) vulgarised in all the different agro-pastoral ecologies of the country. Several rural people have gained employment and household food security by investing into cattle activity. The slaughter facilities at the main urban centres strive towards the continued improvement of meat safety, conservation, processing and distribution. All these actions are geared towards making foods accessible to the population at all seasons of the year.

The challenges bearing on SODEPA's mission are basically limited by her present capacity. From the livestock perspective, there is an urgent need for improvement in animal genetics in order to foster more productive stock in terms of milk and meat. There is also a strong need for the establishment of networks in keeping with benefits envisaged in article VIII of the Millennium Development Goals to which the people and Government of the Republic of Cameroon are steadfast players.