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Issue 4

What does sex-disaggregated data say about livestock and gender in Niger?

Gender issues should be considered in the planning of livestock development programs. Unfortunately, rarely is the data available to show the diverse yet often complementary roles and responsibilities in livestock production and gender differences in terms of access and control of livestock.

This challenges policy makers and donors in developing gender friendly policies and identifying investments in the sector that fosters asset build up and income generation for women through the livestock sector.

- Do male head of households have larger livestock holdings?
- How does livestock ownership affect net household income by male versus female head of households
- Where are the data gaps?

Niger: the Census of Agriculture and Livestock

The General Census of Agriculture and Livestock in Niger, undertaken in 2005/07, the first since 1980, provides the most updated comprehensive overview of livestock numbers in the three major production systems in the country: crop-livestock, transhumance and pastoralist systems. The survey, however, targets only sedentary livestock and does not allow insights into the role of gender in the pastoral economy.

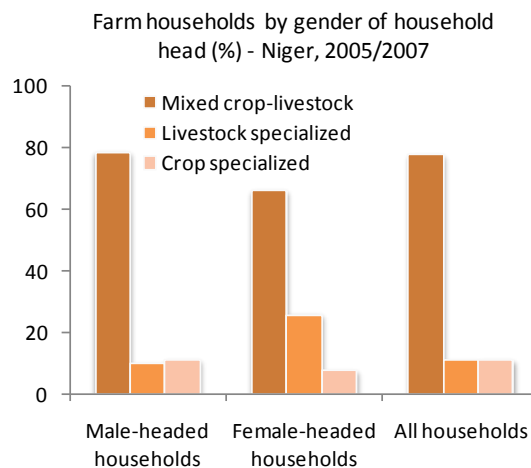
The Census has three major objectives:

- To collect and disseminate data that facilitates 'quantifying constraint and targeting interventions'.
- To help policy makers quantify and measure the impact of interventions on the ground.
- To help monitor progress in the implementation of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Rural Development Strategy.

The Niger Census is available on the website of HarvestChoice (www.harvestchoice.org), an IFPRI initiative delivering a series of databases, tools, analyses and syntheses to improve agricultural investment and policy decisions for poverty reduction.

Livestock ownership

This Niger General Census of Agriculture and Livestock initiated the first generation of sex-disaggregated data on looking at the gender dimension in the livestock sub-sector. Nationally, 93 percent of farm households are headed by a man and about 7 percent are headed by a woman. However, while about 10 percent of male-headed households are specialized livestock farmers, almost 26 percent of female-headed households result specialized in livestock production.



Despite men heading 94 percent of farm households, they are documented to keep about three quarters of sedentary cattle farming (78%), with women keeping the rest. Sedentary cattle farming, therefore, can no longer be considered a unique activity of men.

Women-headed households have an even higher role in the whole ruminant sector with nearly 40 percent of the national herd in possession of a woman and the remaining 60 percent owned by male-headed households. This is even surpassed by women's ownership of goats at national level.

Poultry raising in Niger is not an activity only for women at national level, as men own 46 percent of chickens, 68 percent of guinea fowl and 57 percent of ducks, against respectively 32, 14 and 22 percent for women. Children are very involved in the rearing of poultry: they have 22, 18 and 21 percent respectively of chickens, guinea fowl and ducks.

Husbandry practices

A review of husbandry practices indicates that there are no substantial differences between the two heads of households nationally.

About two thirds of households feed their animals using troughs, supported by grazing for cattle, sheep and goats. Almost half of both male and female heads of household use supplemental products as feed supplements and salts.

Female heads of household vaccinate their cattle less than male-headed households, as 56 percent do not vaccinate compared to 46 percent of male heads of household. This disparity exceeds that of the vaccination of sheep and goats which are quite similar at about 30 and 25 percent for all households.

Woman-headed households tend to engage less in cattle fattening (34 percent of women compared to 46 percent of male-headed households) while the difference between male and female headed households is negligible for fattening sheep and goats.

Development implications and data issues

Ownership of assets in general, and livestock in particular, can translate into positive development outcomes and sex-disaggregated data is the first step towards understanding how to harness opportunities for identifying a livestock development ladder for women.

It seems clear in the case of Niger that investments in the small ruminant sector could potentially have more of a gender impact than other investments, and that women recognize the value of good husbandry practices no less than men.

However, explorative data analysis of differences in ownership and husbandry practices between male and female-headed households is a necessary but not sufficient step towards understanding the potential of livestock development to women empowerment and gender equity. In this analysis, for instance, the data may compare a widow-headed household with a male-headed household, comprising husband, wife and children, which makes little sense.

The ultimate relationship between livestock and gender could be only understood in the context of a more comprehensive set of data, such as household and community surveys which include information on a variety of household-related characteristics - e.g. household size, education of head of household, access to public and private services, distance to markets, etc. It is only when accounting for key household characteristics that one can arrive at determine some causality between growth of livestock and women empowerment.

For further information please visit:

www.africalivestock.data.org

Or contact:

Nancy Morgan, FAO-World Bank

nmorgan@worldbank.org

Ugo Pica-Ciamarra, Livestock Economist, FAO

ugo.picaciamarra@fao.org

