



SUCCESS STORY

Traders make millions supplying sheep for the *Eid-al-Kabir* Festival in Cote d'Ivoire



Photo: patsoll.org/atspeaknew/goats.jpg

Trader in West African marketplace watches over his sheep.

On January 10, 2006, *Eid-al-Kabir* or *Tabaski*, the most important Muslim holiday of the year, was celebrated with an abundance of sheep and other livestock for consumers in Cote d'Ivoire. Traders at Abidjan's Terminal Market sold over \$17 million of sheep and at least \$500 thousand worth of cattle. This accomplishment was in sharp contrast to last year's *Tabaski* celebration where there existed a scarcity of sheep in the Ivorian market.

Since 2000, there has been difficulty getting sheep to Abidjan's Terminal Market. This situation has been attributed to the on-going conflict in Cote d'Ivoire, which prompted closures and indefinite interruptions of most traditional livestock trade routes from other countries into Abidjan. However, the success of this year's market supply for the festival was not by chance. It was the result of careful coordination and strategizing by trader and producer organizations.

On November 14-20, 2005, The President of CONFENAB-VI (National Federation of Cattle Traders Association in West Africa) convened a preparatory meeting for the upcoming *Tabaski* holiday. Among the stakeholders were Ibrahima Cisse, the Cote d'Ivoire National Vice President of ROESAO (Network of Economic Operators in the Food Industry), as well as Ibrahim Toure of Mali and Sami Traore of Burkina Faso, both MISTOWA staff members. Based on the previous year's experience, the leadership surmised that without any outside intervention, the supply of livestock would again not be able to satisfy the demand of consumers in Cote d'Ivoire.

The participants then assessed the number of sheep and other livestock that could be supplied in time for the festival. Their goals were to strategize on how they would address the various impediments they were facing and, also, to establish mechanisms that would facilitate the movement of sheep and other livestock between borders. Transportation issues were tackled. In order to protect traders during their return home, convoys were organized, and other rail and road travel concerns were addressed. To implement these plans, follow-up meetings were arranged with the appropriate stakeholders.

In an interview of Cisse Ibrahima by the Ivorian newspaper, '*Le Front*,' Mr. Ibrahima recognized that both the traders and the consumers benefited from this planning. In compliance with the traditional celebration of *Tabaski*, he stated that, "lower prices meant that the average Ivorian could offer a sheep."