



## Performance of the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF) : 2013-2019

### Introduction

To facilitate the operationalisation of the Regional Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP), the ECOWAS Heads of State Conference created in August 2011 the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF). Officially launched on 27th September 2013 in Lomé, Togo, the Agency is given the mandate "to ensure technical implementation of regional investment programs and plans aimed at the operationalisation of the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy, with the support of regional institutions, bodies and actors endowed with proven expertise".

RAAF specific missions:

- to strengthen the ECOWAS Commission technical intervention and action capacities in the implementation of investment programs,
- to coordinate, from a rationalization point of view, the activities and the intervention areas of specialized technical institutions in agricultural and agri-food (agriculture, livestock farming, fisheries, forestry) sectors,
- to contribute to regional actors' capacity building in the areas of projects preparation, activities implementation and monitoring.

To carry out its mandate, the Agency is structured into three divisions as follows:

- the Administration-Finance Division provides administrative, accounting and financial services,
- the Technical Operations Division ensures coordination, monitoring-evaluation, communication/visibility, results capitalization and projects and programs achievements,
- the Regional Food Security Reserve Division manages the Regional Food Security Instrument established in 2013 and provides support to the Regional Food Security Storage System.

In addition, RAAF cooperates with EBID in the framework of the Regional Fund for Agriculture and Food (RFAF) operationalization.

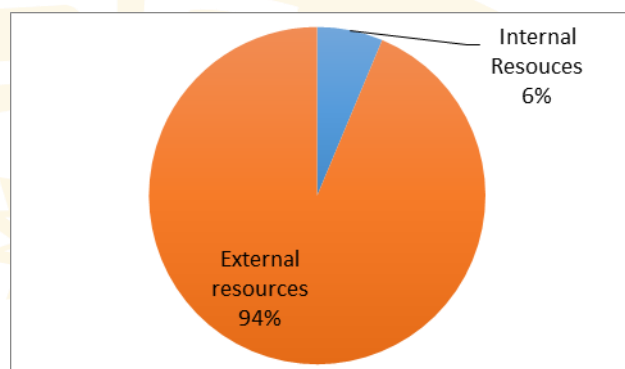
RAAF plays mainly a role of coordination, supervision, facilitation, and networking.

The lines below present a summary of the performance recorded since the launch of the Agency in 2013 to December 2019.

#### a. A Rapidly Growing Project Portfolio

An efficient management of funds has enabled the Agency to experience a rapid growth in its project portfolio from 7 projects in 2015 to 14 projects in 2019 for a total amount of over \$150 million.

FTPs' grants account for nearly 94% of the overall cost of projects and programmes.



The 14 projects and programmes coordinated by RAAF or under the financial management of the Agency are as follows:

1. Social Safety Nets Support Project (ECOWAP/CADP, AECID),
2. Support Project for the Regional Fruit Fly Management and Control Plan in West Africa (PLMF, EU, AFD, ECOWAS),
3. Support Project for Food Security Storage in West Africa (EU),
4. Regional Support Project for Professional Farmers' Agricultural Organizations (PRAOP/ECOWAP, Swiss Cooperation),
5. Support Program for Agro-ecological Transition in West Africa (PATAE, AFD),
6. Socio-economic Development Program for Cross-border Zones liberated from Onchocerciasis (ECOWAS),
7. Capacity Building Project for the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (TCP-FAO),

8. Support Program for Livestock Marketing in West Africa (PACBAO, Swiss Cooperation),
9. Project for the Promotion of Clean and Efficient Vehicles in West Africa/Sustainable Land and Water Resources Management in West Africa (UNEP/NEPAD),
10. Integrated and Secure Livestock and Pastoralism in West Africa Program (PEPISAO, AFD),
11. Support Program for Improved Governance for Resilience and Food and Nutrition Security (PAGR-SANAD, EU),
12. Global Climate Change Alliance Plus Support Project in West Africa (GCCA+, EU),
13. Ruminants and River Valley Fever Diseases Control and Eradication Support Project in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (PPR, Swiss Cooperation),
14. Support Project to the Dissemination and Implementation of Good Practices for Sustainable Agricultural Intensification (EU).

### b. A Regularly Certified Project and Program Management

RAAF's accounts made up with internal and external resources, have been thoroughly certified by the firm PWC (Price Waterhouse Coopers).

Likewise, all specific audits of projects and programmes managed by RAAF as well as the "Forensic" audits have certified that expenditures and procedures meet all requirements of both financing agreements signed between ECOWAS and its partners and procedures in force within ECOWAS.

In addition, two external evaluations conducted by USAID and the Swiss Cooperation approved the operational capacity (technical, administrative, accounting and financial) for fund management of projects and programs. In February 2020, USAID granted RAAF the status of "Public International Organization for USAID grant-making purpose pursuant to ADS 308.3.1.1".

This recognition now allows the Agency to receive and manage USAID resources in support to the regional agricultural Policy. With these achievements, the RAAF Steering Committee recommended to the ECOWAS Commission to begin the Agency's ISO 9001 version 2015 certification process. The certification process has already begun and an introductory training course on ISO standards and the ISO certification process has already been conducted in Paris with AFNOR experts. Once obtained, the RAAF Certification will serve as a model for other ECOWAS agencies and institutions.

### c. A Satisfactory Coordination of Projects/Programs

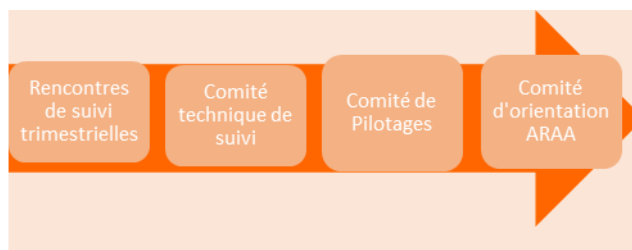
Several cascading coordination bodies have ensured the successful implementation of projects and programmes.

This includes:

- RAAF Steering Committee,
- Projects and programs steering committees,
- Technical Committee for Projects and Programs Monitoring,

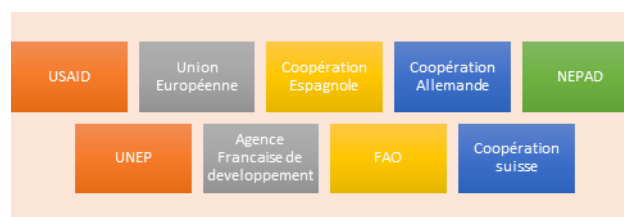
- Quarterly coordination and monitoring meetings for projects and programs,

In addition to approving reports, programmes of activities and budgets, these bodies formulate and follow up on recommendations.



### d. A Diversity of Partnerships

Several technical and financial partners contributed to the funding of projects and programs and the institutional and organisational capacity building of the Agency.



RAAF has also developed fruitful partnerships with producer and civil society organizations, considering gender and the different agro-forestry-pastoral and fisheries sub-sectors (crop production, livestock, and fisheries).

Concerning intergovernmental organizations or technical cooperation partners (UEMOA, CILSS, and CORAF), strong cooperation has also been established for the implementation of projects and programs for the benefit of States.

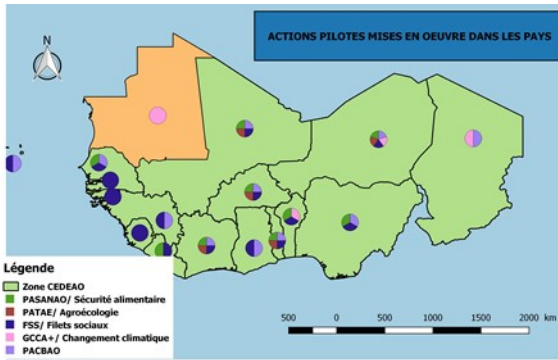
### e. A Strong Capacity in the Management of Calls for Project Proposals

RAAF has successfully conducted 8 calls for project proposals which resulted in the selection of more than 88 pilot projects spread across the 15 Member States of ECOWAS. With the projects it coordinates and with the support of financial partners, RAAF directly finances, through calls for proposals, field projects carried out by public and private sectors, NGOs and farmers' associations/organizations in the region.

This process has helped the Agency to acquire proven skills in the selection methods, monitoring-evaluation, training and support of initiative and project leaders and the capitalization of achievements and lessons learnt for scaling up.

The themes covered are as follows:

- Sustainable transformation of production systems,
- Strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations to different shocks,
- Food and nutritional security,
- Sectors and markets structuring.



### f. Main Achievements in Terms of Project and Program Performance

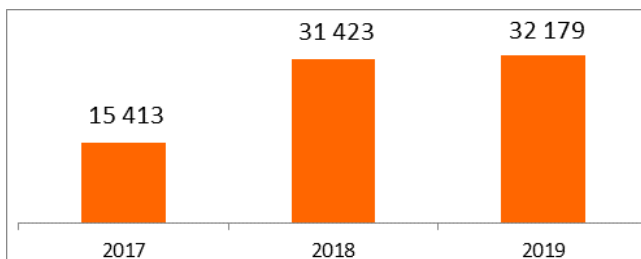
Among other achievements, the following can be noted:

#### *Support to the regional storage system*

#### **An operational Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR):**

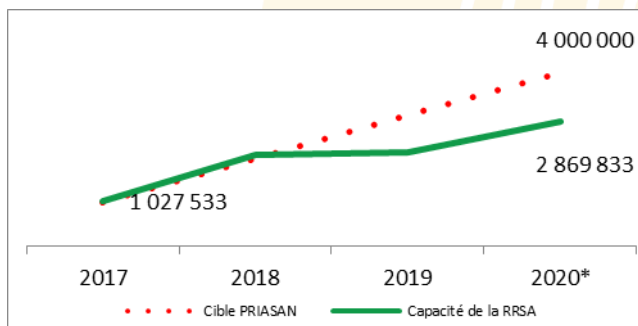
In 2013, the Heads of State and Government created the Regional Food Security Reserve, whose technical management has been integrated into RAAF as a Division.

The region now has a Regional Reserve with a capital of 32,178.5 tonnes of cereals, capable of providing assistance for one month to more than 2 million vulnerable people.



If this trend continues, by 2020 RFSR's assistance capacity may exceed 2.8 million for a target of 4 million. RFSR is currently funded by the EU for an amount of €56 million through the Food Security Storage Support Project. Internal funds are being mobilised to increase RFSR's intervention capacity.

RFSR's intervention capacity in terms of number of people assisted in one month



In addition, based on requests from countries between 2017 and 2019, ECOWAS provided a total of 22,567 tonnes of cereals to Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria for assistance during situations of food crisis and 2,750 tonnes to Ghana for stock rotation used to supply school canteens.

Last but not least, there is the support provided to national and local storage: the adoption of the mechanism for regional pooling of 5% of national stocks, a commitment made by the countries in the RESOGEST cooperation framework (Network of Public Offices and Services for Security Reserve), the production of regional reference frameworks on local stocks: a local storage handbook, a storekeepers' charter, the establishment of a training course on local storage for the benefit of producers' organisations, support to countries for the definition or revision of national storage policies, etc.

### g. A Functional Surveillance System for Fruit Fly Control

The establishment of the fruit fly surveillance and control system has contributed to a significant reduction in the infestation rate and ban on mango shipments at the European Union borders. The ban rate has decreased from 111 to 48 between 2014 and 2018 and exports have increased by almost 40%.

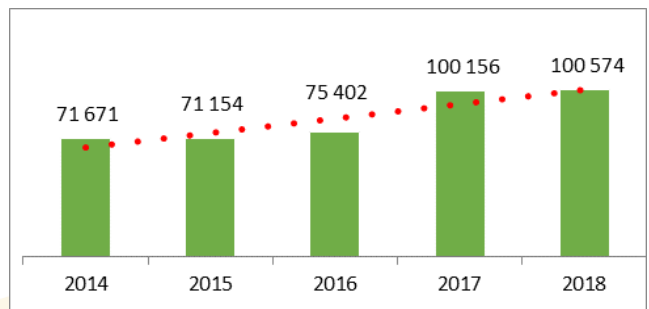


Photo of a fly-catching box in a mango orchard



### h. POs Capacity Building and Program Formulation

The Regional Support Program for Professional Agricultural Organisations within the framework of the West African Agricultural Policy implementation has enabled the strengthening of producer organisations' capacities and the development of an ECOWAS regional strategy for youth employability in the agro-forestry-pastoral and fisheries sectors, backed up by a Priority Investment Program for massive creation of jobs for young people, a priority investment program for the promotion of local milk value chains and 12 mobilising program specific to producer and civil society organisations, the formulation of PRAOP - phase III, the expected results, mainly the reduction of unemployment, underemployment and the massive creation of employment for young people in the sforestrys -agro-pastoral sector.

### i. Development of Village Hydro-agricultural Facilities

Within the framework of the Socio-Economic Development Program for the cross-border zones liberated from Onchocerciasis in Burkina Faso and Ghana, ECOWAS provided 8 cross-border water boreholes (Burkina/Ghana).



These boreholes have a flow rate of more than 4 m<sup>3</sup>/hour and can provide water to 1,200 vulnerable people of 8 villages, drinking source for animals and develop market gardening (0.5 ha developed per person). The 8 sites are: Barré, Feo, Namoo and Narguia, Bingo, Kolinia/Mayoro and Widnabaa.



### j. Main Challenges

Despite the positive achievements recorded during the past 5 years of the Agency existence, RAAF as an institution, still faces the following challenges:

- Understaffing of cross-cutting services (communication/visibility, monitoring-evaluation, procurement, and accounting). Most of these services remain under very high pressure due to limited human resources and the growing number of projects and programs,

- The low-level of internal resources mobilisation to deal effectively with the rural sector development based on the region's priorities under the regional agricultural Policy,
- The difficulty of harmonising intervention methodologies between several countries benefiting from the same project,
- The scaling up of innovative good practices captured in the field at national level.

## Conclusion

RAAF is operational and conducts its mandate with professionalism for the operationalisation of ECOWAP, the regional agricultural Policy. Its performance is proven in projects and programs management/coordination and meets the expectations of both the ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAP's main stakeholders, notably ECOWAP's technical and financial partners.

The tools put in place for projects/programs monitoring and management have shown direct impacts on the 15 ECOWAS Member States populations. Capitalisation and reference production are key elements of each project, with a view to scaling up achievements and lessons learned.

However, ECOWAS and its partners' attention shall be drawn on the required balance to be established between resources allocated to activities and specific human resources working on the projects, resources allocated to cross-cutting services with a view to sustainable institutional strengthening for the Agency. The ECOWAS institutional reform should rapidly address, at least partially, the need to quickly provide the Agency with the necessary human resources.

For further information, please consult all projects and programs on the RAAF Website: [www.araa.org](http://www.araa.org).

For more information, kindly email : [araa@araa.org](mailto:araa@araa.org)

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