



The agroecology newsletter

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Realising the ambition of an agroecological West Africa!



THREE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES have just been held: COP 15 on desertification, COP 27 on climate and COP 15 on biodiversity. All three are central to the very future of our region. Although it is difficult to reach ambitious global consensus, with nearly 200 countries around the table, West Africa cannot ignore it. It has invested heavily in it.

Beyond environmental issues alone, what is at stake is the very future of our societies, our ecosystems and our food security.

West Africa is experiencing climate change for which it is not entirely responsible. And yet, in our own interest, we can be at the forefront of CO2 capture, methane emission reduction, climate change adaptation and protection of the diversity of our ecosystems.

Since its adoption in 2005, the ECOWAS agricultural policy has made food sovereignty and sustainable development the major objectives assigned to the transformation of our agri-cultures. Its revision to adapt it to the challenges to be met by 2025 has placed adaptation to climate variability and change at the heart of its issues.

The successive global crises with their considerable impact on the prices of energy, fertilisers and food products would be enough to illustrate the correctness of the orientations of our Heads of State. The agro-ecological transition is thus at the heart of West Africa's adaptation to the rapid changes in the regional and international context.

West Africa has no choice but to think about the future of its production systems with agro-ecology by holding in the same hand all the challenges it has to face: food, nutritional and health security, employment and income, protection of soils and biodiversity, increasing production volumes and yields, etc. It must adapt to climate change on the basis of efficient and sustainable production systems that are inexpensive and not dependent on imported chemical agricultural inputs. It must adapt to climate change on the basis of efficient and sustainable production systems that are inexpensive and less dependent on imported chemical agricultural inputs. Finally, it must do so to increase its resilience to external shocks and its sovereignty.

The international resources exist, as do the agro-ecological references and know-how. The challenge now is to mobilise funds and collective intelligence to make our region a successful agroecological model. It is in the interest of all of us, and especially that of future generations.

I wish everyone a happy and successful 2023.

Salifou Ousseini

Executive Director of the RAAF

The number...

15

The number of training centres identified and selected (1 per ECOWAS country) to be supported by the EAP in order to promote agroecology in the training curricula

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The achievements and lessons of the Agroecology Programme

Focusing on the transition to agro-sylvo-pastoral systems based on ecological, intensive and sustainable techniques and practices, the EAP aims to increase the resilience of populations to food insecurity and climate change. This issue of the Agroecology Newsletter is an opportunity to take stock of the programme's achievements and lessons learned.

How are you organised to capitalise on agroecological experiences and practices?

Borgui Yérîma, EAP Coordinator

The capitalisation of the EAP's achievements is carried out in two stages and at two levels. Firstly, the innovations developed by the field projects supported by the EAP are capitalised in the form of "good practice sheets" which will be grouped together in a guide that will be made available to training centres and professional agricultural organisa-

tions (PAOs). This is the "technical capitalisation" aspect. This process is already underway.

In a second phase, more cross-cutting aspects, such as the issues of financing the agro-ecological transition or integrating agro-ecology into sectoral policies, for example, will be addressed in notes to decision-makers. The capitalisation data will come from studies carried out at regional level and from discussions within the national and regional consultation frameworks.

Agroecology requires a good level of technical skills from producers. Are agricultural training centres equipped to provide such training?

Sena Adessou, Secretary General of INADES Formation and Kado Alphonse Simba, in charge of training and advisory support within the EAP

First of all, it should be pointed out that training in agroecology requires not only pure technical skills, but also training and pedagogical engineering skills. This is not obvious at all levels of training, given the complexity of this field, which is difficult to tackle in agricultural training centres. Thus, not all agricultural vocational training centres are yet up to standard in terms of equipment, infrastructure, qualification of trainers, etc., as the study on agricultural training centres has shown (see box).

In the sub-region, apart from certain centres such as CIDAP (International Centre for Agropastoral Development) in Togo and Songhai in Benin, it can be noted that agricultural training centres are not yet sufficiently equipped for agroecological training. It is for this reason that the EAP wants to support these centres to improve their agro-ecological training offer. It should be mentioned, however, that the CIDAP and Songhai centres will also need support and sessions to strengthen their teams of trainers.

What are the key measures that states should deploy to accelerate the adoption of agroecology?

Recommendations of the 3AO (Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa) Forum participants

In December 2022, state representatives were invited to a regional forum organised by the 3AO platform. At the end of the three days of exchanges and discussions, the participants formulated and adopted five strong recommendations to the States:

1. Improve the legal protection of FOs, especially women and youth, in accessing basic resources: farmers' seeds, water, land;
2. Strengthen farmer seed systems to facilitate access to agricultural bio-inputs (farmer seeds, biopesticides, biofertilisers) through (i) the creation of a register to characterise farmer systems; (ii) the development of mechanisms to protect farmer systems; (iii) the definition of a

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- set of criteria defining the quality of farmer systems; (iv) participation in the implementation of a continental campaign to promote and support farmer seed systems;
3. Putting farmers' training systems at the centre of public agro-ecology training policies;
 4. Financing agricultural advice, action research and measuring the impacts of agroecology;
 5. Strengthen collaboration between farmers' organisations, research centres and private entrepreneurs and/or young people in particular, for the manufacture of bio-inputs and the preservation of farmers' seeds: register products to allow and secure their marketing, tax the import of phytosanitary products.

What are the main achievements of the programme at regional level?

Borgui Yérîma, EAP Coordinator

The main achievements of the EAP at present include:

1. The consolidation of the 3AO with which a digital platform for information, knowledge sharing and even learning and dissemination of technological innovations in agroecology is being built. Two major forums have been co-organised with this alliance: (i) a regional forum that took stock and identified the challenges of agroecology for sustainable food systems in the ECOWAS region, and an international forum on agricultural and rural training with the International Network for Agricultural and Rural Training (INAR);
2. Training of national and regional stakeholders on the FAO Agroecology Performance Assessment Tool, and support and sharing of EAP experiences with other regional initiatives on sustainable agricultural intensification, climate-smart agriculture and regional climate strategy. These include the EOA projects (Ecological Organic Agriculture), AIC (Climate Smart Agriculture) and GCCA+AO

(Global Climate Change Alliance in West Africa);

3. The setting up (in progress) via consortia of West African universities, of a MOOC (Massive open online course) in Agroecology adapted to the West African context with the support of the Agro Institute in France which has already developed this type of training in South America.

What are the challenges and lessons learned for the future?

Borgui Yérîma, EAP Coordinator

Difficulties are inherent in the realisation of any human work. What is important is to see them as challenges, face them and move on. Therefore, I will focus on the main lessons learned in the implementation of the EAP and refer to the following four lessons: (1) in a multi-actor action, flexibility, humility and constant consultations between stakeholders are fundamental to foster full participation; (2) the culture of anticipation with regard to compliance with procedures is crucial to achieving the targeted objectives within the time-frame; (3) institutional arrangements for implementing an action, co-constructed with national stakeholders and sufficiently incentive-based, can create the conditions for their full commitment; (4) proximity monitoring entrusted to third parties by the RAAA contributes to increasing the success of field projects.

What seems absolutely fundamental to me is to work simultaneously on the production of technical and economic references in the field, with producers and stakeholders, to capitalise on and disseminate these references, to work on the reform of public policies (agriculture, finance, trade, health, etc.) and on the adaptation of research, advisory support and training systems. It is the coherence of this ensemble that can enable a change of scale and place agroecology at the centre of the sustainable and efficient transformation of agriculture in West Africa.

Integrate experimentation and knowledge production on agroecological technologies and practices into agricultural research

The integration of agro-ecology into research protocols is taken into account in different ways in the sub-region.

In some countries, especially English-speaking ones, studies conducted within the framework of the Agroecology Programme (EAP) have shown that agroecology is not yet a major concern in agricultural research.

In French-speaking countries, where agro-ecology seems to be given greater prominence, research is often associated with the implementation of activities via field projects.

This is the case, for example, in countries such as Senegal, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin and Togo. Most of the time, this involves participatory research with farmers around field schools or experimental sites.

It should be noted that in the past, agricultural research had already worked on certain agroecological technologies that had not been adopted by farmers. These are the technologies that are being taken up for testing in the field with farmers.

The EAP in 2022: summary of the activity report

The Agroecology Programme (EAP) is implemented through five components, including four operational components and a coordination component:

Under the component “Support to agro-ecological transition for local actors”, 10 of the 15 projects supported by the EAP have been completed. These projects made it possible to support and train more than 20,000 producers in agro-ecological techniques in 5 ECOWAS countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and Togo). A final evaluation and capitalisation of all the projects is currently being conducted.

Under the “Training and capacity building for agro-ecological intensification and sustainable agriculture” component, following an identification study conducted in 2022, 15 training centres (1 per country) were selected to be supported by the EAP in order to promote agro-ecology in the training curricula. In addition, a diagnostic study of agronomy colleges and TVETs (Technical vocational education and training) has been conducted. Similarly, work has begun on adapting the MOOC agroecology, in collaboration with the Institut Agro de Montpellier.

Under the component “Advisory support and extension of technological innovations for sustainable agricultural inten-

sification adapted to the production methods of small-scale farmers”, the study launched to identify partnerships between Professional Agricultural Organisations and Research and/or Training Centres to be supported by the EAP could not be completed in 2022. The identification activities will therefore be continued at the beginning of 2023 and directly carried out by the Regional Coordination Unit in partnership with the National Correspondents in each country.

Under the “Exchange, capitalisation and contribution to the development of public policies for agro-ecological intensification” component, 2022 was marked by several highlights, including the organisation of a regional conference by the 3AO alliance on the theme “What strategy for scaling up agro-ecology in West Africa”, and the holding of national consultations in almost all ECOWAS Member States.

Finally, **under the Programme’s “Coordination” component,** the year 2022 was marked by the ROM evaluation (Results Oriented Monitoring) launched by the EU at the beginning of the year and the involvement of the Project Management Unit in several key regional meetings (regional training workshop on agro-ecology performance evaluation tools with FAO, ECOWAS Climate Strategy validation workshop, 3AO Forum, etc.).



The 3AO conference: scaling up agroecology

From 10 to 13 December 2022, the Regional Forum on Agroecology in West Africa was held in Bissau, Republic of Guinea Bissau, organised by the Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa (3AO) on the theme “What strategy for the scaling up of agroecology in West Africa?”

The forum, chaired by the President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau, His Excellency Umaru Sissoko Embalo, brought together 180 delegates from 19 countries in Africa, Europe and America, members of farmers’ organisations, civil society, representatives of public services of ECOWAS Member States, and technical and financial partners involved in the agro-ecological transition.

The overall objective of the forum was to share experiences and reflect on the prospects for promoting agroecology in West Africa. Specifically, the forum should allow:

- To show the potential of agroecological practices and their contribution to the management of current crises in West Africa; and
- To make an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of the agro-ecological transition in order to identify the achievements, the issues and the challenges to be met in order to strengthen the resilience of farms.

Training, co-innovation and knowledge exchange, financing, access to markets and advocacy for the integration of agroecology into public policies were among the topics discussed during the forum.

At the end of the 3 days of discussions, the main recommendations concerned:

- The inclusive development of a regional strategy and national strategies on agroecology, with action plans, by 2024;
- Strengthening farmers’ seed systems and standardisation mechanisms to facilitate access to agricultural bio-inputs;
- Strengthening the technical capacities of producers and farmers’ organisations and supporting access to agro-ecology facilities for young people; and
- Facilitating market access for products from agroecological systems.

The members of the forum are also committed to:

- Mobilise alliances with civil society organisations to engage in actions to denounce the monopoly of transnational corporations;
- Strengthen the capacity of farmers’ organisations to master alternative legal tools for the democratisation of the circulation/marketing of and access to natural inputs, including fertilisers, plant protection products and farmers’ seeds;
- Encouraging action research and farmer research on family farms ;
- Develop a digital knowledge-sharing platform to produce and disseminate evidence on agroecology to support “farmer-to-farmer exchanges”.

For more information: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gGf-mOGyDoOqvqPmSK_WcFpklhQP4Nt-



Stakeholders' views

Sharing the Sahelian grove – ONG Terre verte

“With spot weeding, my family’s living conditions have improved”

Kouma Sawadogo from the village of Guiè, Plateau-Central Region, Burkina Faso

In recent years, our crops have suffered from drought and livestock damage. At the end of the season, my agricultural production no longer covered my family’s food needs.

I benefited from the support of the project “Le bocage sahélien en partage” led by the NGOs Terre Verte and AZN and financed by the Programme Agroécologie en Afrique de l’Ouest. Within this framework, I have been allocated 4 de-

veloped plots of 0.64 ha each (i.e. 2.54 ha) surrounded by living hedges and separated by vegetated axes. In these plots, I implement innovative agricultural practices: sorghum-millet-legumes-fallow rotation, zaï across the slope, organic fertiliser, localised weeding at the foot of the crops, etc.

I get a lot of benefit from these practices. The quantities I harvest have doubled. I now have a stock of leftover crops from the past two seasons. My family and I are now self-sufficient and can even sell our surplus crops to pay for health or school fees. In addition, localised weeding has saved me time in my field work and allowed me to better control my agricultural calendar.

The consultation framework in Guinea-Bissau

“Is there a need for a public policy for Agro Ecology in Guinea-Bissau?”

Colido VIERA, National Correspondent

Guinea-Bissau is not a country with a long history of developed agroecology. Apart from a few civil society organisations that are developing the agroecological production approach with some farmers’ associations, especially in horticultural production, there is little experience and innovation.

However, with the support of the EAP, Guinea-Bissau was able to establish its national consultation framework. The methodology was based on a participatory approach through a process of identification and selection of public and civil society actors active in the field of Agroecology. The selection criteria were based on their knowledge of the concept, their

practical experience in the field with communities or research and training, their skills and their involvement in advocacy. This process benefited from the documented experiences of some development actors.

These stakeholders were invited to participate in a workshop on 10 and 11 August 2022, during which the main challenges, constraints and opportunities for the development of national policy proposals for the promotion of agro-ecology and sustainable agriculture in Guinea-Bissau were widely discussed. At the end of the discussions, the National Consultation Framework was created. It is composed of all public and civil society actors, including universities. In 2023, an action plan will be drawn up to operationalise this framework and launch the first national advocacy actions in favour of taking agroecology into account in public policies.

Financing agroecology

“What is the place of agro-ecology in AFD’s financing and what are the challenges, particularly in the ECOWAS region?”

Jean-René Cuzon, Project Team Leader, Agriculture, Rural Development and Biodiversity Division, French Development Agency (AFD)

AFD has been financing agro-ecology projects for over 20 years. In 2014, an assessment of this funding was rather mixed. The projects we had financed had a restrictive vision of agroecology, focusing almost exclusively on conservation agriculture and sowing under plant cover.

Since then, AFD has adopted a more global vision of agro-ecology. It has increased its financing in favour of it and its latest strategy makes agroecology one of the priority areas of intervention.

Moreover, agro-ecology is one of the ways to finance adap-

tation to climate change. AFD has made climate change one of its priorities and aims to ensure that all the projects it finances are 100% compatible with the commitments of the Paris Agreement. AFD’s ambition is to align the international climate and biodiversity agendas with projects that contribute to the fight against global warming and the preservation of biodiversity.

Agroecology can increase the resilience of farms to climate change, sequester carbon and preserve biodiversity. Its financing is therefore crucial. For West Africa, scaling up implies mobilising a larger number of actors, notably the World Bank and the Green Climate Fund. Moreover, “agroecology” projects are mainly financed by grants. In order to scale up, it will be necessary to mobilise more loans, as well as the private sector via bank financing, and to strengthen financing at the national level. It is essential to convince ECOWAS states to change their agricultural policies.

Events on the agenda

The Steering Committee of the Agroecology Programme will be held on 23 February 2023 in hybrid mode (face-to-face in Lomé and videoconference). Under the chairmanship of the ECOWAS Commission, it will bring together the programme's

partners and all stakeholders. It will allow for a technical and financial assessment of the 2022 financial year and to guide the programme of activities for 2023.

Publications

EAP publications

Final report of the study on the inventory and characterisation of Agroecology training centres and in-depth analysis of centres to be supported by the EAP:

<https://app.box.com/s/g54fxv1hml97616xhptrq38r75s1s8if>

Final report of the study on the state of the art of agricultural training (technical and vocational secondary education and higher education) related to agroecology and sustainable agriculture in ECOWAS countries:

<https://app.box.com/s/1es1pwe44rmm9knu3wcyf1hlx-n66ls02>

Partners' publications

Farm advisory services and support for agro-ecological transitions: a cross-national analysis of dynamics, challenges and perspectives in five West African countries:

https://www.inter-reseaux.org/wp-content/uploads/Synthese-etudes-exploratoires-ACOTAF-FINALE_rv_14_01_2023-Reduit.pdf

Grain de sel n°82-83: Environment and agriculture, best enemies?:

<https://www.inter-reseaux.org/publication/n82-83-environnement-et-agriculture-meilleurs-ennemis/>

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Climate change: towards a global loss and damage fund

For many states and actors involved in the fight against climate change, the World Climate Conference (COP 27) did not deliver on its promises. According to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) experts and most specialists, the trajectories defined by countries to reduce emissions and increase carbon capture are insufficient to limit global warming to below 2 degrees (Paris Agreement). More ambitious and binding commitments were not made at this Con-

ference of the Parties. However, COP 27 did conclude with a consensus to create a new fund to compensate poor countries for climate damage. It is intended to compensate for the losses and damage in these countries caused by the emissions of developed countries. While the principle of the creation of this new financial mechanism has been accepted, the modalities, functioning and contributions must be defined between now and COP 28, which will be held at the end of 2023 in Dubai.

“AFSA calls on African governments and donors to redirect funding from failed ‘green revolution’ approaches to proven agroecological alternatives”

Extract from the declaration of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) at the end of the Dakar Summit 2 “Feeding Africa: Food Sovereignty and Resilience”

https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/2023/01/27/declaration_feed_africa_-_food_sovereignty_and_resilience-fr.pdf
<https://afsafira.org/declaration-dafsa-sur-le-sommet-alimentaire-dakar-2-de-la-bad/?lang=fr>

The agroecology reduces carbon emissions, protects soils and biodiversity, cares for women, men, ensures their food and provides them with the livelihoods to protect, educate and care for their children, the future generations.



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