



Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 20th November 2021

Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food

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#Press Release No4#

Strengthening Member States Capacity to Provide better Care for the Most Vulnerable Populations

In West Africa, many households suffer from a double challenge: they are weakened by food and nutrition crises and cannot to recover their livelihoods after the crises. Most countries have difficulties in managing this situation effectively, due to lack of significant experience in caring for vulnerable groups. Though some initiatives exist, they lack coordination and complementarity, which causes poor resilience of vulnerable groups to the various shocks they face.

1. ECOWAS Response and Leadership

To address the issue, the ECOWAS Commission developed, in 2012, the Regional Program to Support National Social Safety Nets in West Africa.

Social safety nets are cash or in-kind social assistance programs that provide free service packages. They contribute to reduce inequalities through the redistribution of wealth to the most vulnerable, targeting specifically marginalized agricultural producers, agro-pastoralists or livestock breeders, whose livestock is at risk, and poor working households, especially children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers.

The objective of the program is to promote, on the one hand, the testing of social safety net instruments as part of national crises prevention and management mechanisms, and to establish, on the other hand, regional standards for the design and implementation of social safety net programs as well as an incentive system for their use.

Besides, the Regional Program to Support National Social Safety Nets builds the capacity of national and regional public institutions to design, coordinate, pilot, implement and evaluate social safety net and social protection policies and programs.

2. Lessons Learned

Over the past six years, the Regional Support Program for National Social Safety Nets in West Africa, implemented by the ECOWAS Commission, with the support of its technical and financial partners. Specifically, the five (5) million Euro grant from the Spanish Cooperation, has made it possible, among other actions, to build the capacities of Member States on the engineering and coordination of social safety net instruments. The five (5) million Euro grant has also allowed the Regional Program to Support National Social Safety Nets in West Africa to fund 19 field pilot projects on various thematic issues across the 15 Member States of ECOWAS.



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3. Way Forward

Going forward, The ECOWAS Commission will further invest in capacity building of stakeholders at national and decentralized levels to facilitate the ownership of the various lessons learned, build solid and sustainable programs, and ensure scaling up of good practices.

In this context, the Spanish cooperation wishes to continue its collaboration with ECOWAS in supporting the most vulnerable households in West Africa. Other technical and financial partners are also called upon.

As a reminder and for information purposes, here is the link to the video on the Regional Program to Support National Social Safety Nets in West Africa: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bF3EevBMpM-Lyyvjs7DHR91LV8hgv-9wB>

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