



FINAL REPORT

Bissau, from 10 to 13 December 2022



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I. Introduction

The regional forum on agroecology was held from December 10 to 13, 2022 in Bissau in the Republic of Guinea Bissau under the theme: “What strategy for the promotion of agroecology in West Africa?” under the chairmanship of the President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau, current President of ECOWAS, His Excellency Mr. Umaru Sissoko Embalo. The forum was organized in a context of crises (food, climate, socio-economic, etc.) due in particular to the armed conflicts in the Sahel, the war between Russia and Ukraine and effects of climate change, which are becoming increasingly acute. . The resulting consequences, among others, soaring food and fertilizer prices thus highlight the fragility of the agricultural model based on intensification with imported chemical inputs and the need to scale up initiatives so that to ensure food and nutrition security of West African populations.

To this end, the forum has set itself the overall objective of sharing the achievements and undertaking reflections on the prospects for promoting agroecology in West Africa (WA). Specifically, the forum set itself the objective of (i) showing the potential of agroecological practices and their contribution to the management of current crises in West Africa; (ii) carry out an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of the Agroecological Transition in order to identify the achievements, issues and challenges to be addressed in order to strengthen the resilience of ASPH farms; (iii) to make recommendations for the scaling up of agroecology in West Africa.

To achieve these objectives, the forum brought together 180 delegates from 19 countries in Africa, Europe and America, members of farmer organizations, civil society, representatives of public services from ECOWAS Member States, partners technical and financial resources involved in the agroecological transition. The four days of reflection enabled participants to (i) share and analyze successful experiences of the AT (Agroecological Transition) dynamics underway in West Africa, (ii) draw lessons from success stories and identify major challenges in order to better understand the prospects for scaling up AE in the region. Based on the conclusions of the works and recommendations, a contribution note for the development of a development strategy for agroecology in West Africa will be produced for ECOWAS.



II. Unfolding of the forum

2.1. Opening remarks

The opening ceremony had five interventions. Mr. Alanso FATY President of the national platform of Guinea Bissau, member of ROPPA, first to speak, welcomed the various delegations and expressed the wish for relevant conclusions to strengthen the resilience of the farmer dynamics underway in West Africa and particularly in Guinea Bissau because for him, in the current context, agroecology is the main solution accessible to the family farms.

For the Chairman of the 3AO Steering Committee and Chairman of the ROPPA's Board of Directors, Mr. Ibrahima COULIBALY, the holding of the forum is very important for farmers' organizations and all partners involved in the agroecological transition. And given the diversity of the participants, he has no doubts about the quality of the conclusions that are expected. To this end, he welcomed the presence of technical and financial partners, in particular ECOWAS, and hoped that the forum would lead to the concrete, realistic and feasible proposals to be submitted to President EMBALO so that he could bring "**the fight for agroecology to his peers of ECOWAS**".

For the representative of ECOWAS in Guinea Bissau, Mr. Amadou BOLY, agroecology is of particular interest for his organization because it will help develop sustainable and resilient agriculture for West Africa, faced with the effects of climate change. and unavailability of chemical inputs. He reaffirmed the availability of the institution to support actors across the region in the dynamics of Agroecology Transition (AE).

For the Minister of Transport representing the Minister in charge of Agriculture, his country's interest in agroecology no longer needs to be demonstrated because it is a lever to support youth and women in agricultural production. He is delighted with the organization of the forum in his country, which will certainly boost the interest of farmers and their organizations to invest more in the agroecological transition.

For the Deputy Prime Minister of Guinea Bissau representing his Excellency **Umaru Sissoko Embalo**, the relevance of AE as a sustainable model of ancestral sustainable production as a solution to climate change and food and nutrition security in West Africa is shared by the various agro-silvo-pastoral and fisheries development actors. He congratulated the Alliance for having chosen Guinea Bissau as a host country, before declaring open **the regional forum on agroecology in West Africa**.

2.2. The forum's reflection works

To support the conclusions and recommendations of the forum, the work was structured around five (5) key sessions:

a. A session for introductory presentations

This session focused on the framing of the forum, carried out by the chairman of the 3AO steering committee; the presentation of ECOWAS on its policy and agroecology in West Africa; the presentation of findings of the study on the ten-year program for the development of Agroecology in West Africa, commissioned by FAO; presentation of other initiatives at the international level and presentation of the experience of DyTAES on territorialization of the AE transition.

b. A review session on the implementation of the 3AO action plan and lessons learned

This session is dedicated to the 3AO secretariat to present the outcomes of the initiatives carried out by the members according to the 2021-2022 action plan and encourage exchanges for a better involvement of the members in the implementation of agroecological initiatives in West Africa.

c. A practical experience sharing session on AET in West Africa

The experience-sharing session was planned through cinq (5) thematic workshops to highlight agroecological practices and their contribution to the management of current crises (food, climate, environmental, economic, etc.). Workshops focused on the promotion of sustainable agricultural inputs (seeds, biopesticides, biofertilizers); agro-silvo-pastoral and fisheries production (ASPH) in a context of multiple crises; access to markets for produce from agroecological systems; training and setting up of youth in agroecological systems and public policies on agroecology in West Africa: achievements-breakthroughs and challenges.

d. A session for sharing the FRN approach (Farmer Research Network)

This session enabled McKnight Foundation to share its experience on farmer action research carried out in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali.

e. A session for analyzing and defining strategic orientations for the development of AE in West Africa

This session was structured around the following cinq (5) areas: (i) support for FOs, community and development organizations; (ii) development of territorial markets for agroecological productions; (iii) support for co-innovation and knowledge exchange; (iv) development of financing mechanisms and means necessary for the agroecological transition and (v) advocacy in favor of agroecology.

2.3. Key outcomes of the forum's works

Exchanges and discussions during the various sessions led to the findings, conclusions and recommendations below:

On the access of FFs to the organic farming inputs (farmer seeds, biopesticides, biofertilizers)

SUCCESS FACTORS	CHALLENGES
• The inclusion of farmer seeds in several international treaties and instruments such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (TIRPAA), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Declaration of the United Nations on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. • In the field, several varieties of farmer seeds have been produced and distributed for several generations • Biopesticide production units are set up • The interest of farmer in biofertilizers and biopesticides	• Improve the availability of raw materials for the production of bio-inputs • Create production units to support production basins • Concerted work with research to improve the quality and efficiency of bio-inputs; • Reduce the monopoly of the distribution of inputs to States by transnational firms • Farmer seeds excluded from the seed market • Regulations/policies not conducive to the expression of farmer seeds • Extinguishment of some varieties of farmer seeds due to the armed conflicts • Lack of gene banks for saving farmer seeds

On ASPH production in a context of multiple crises

SUCCESS FACTORS	CHALLENGES
• Co-construction with research based on endogenous knowledge • The development of coordinated collective actions using a monitoring mechanism • Financial support for experimentation with AE practices • The diversity of agroecological practices developed and disseminated within countries in West Africa; • Consideration of all the agro-silvo-pastoral and fisheries sectors in the process of agroecological transition; • Mainstreaming agroecology into agricultural extension systems	• Access to secure land and basic equipments, especially for women and youth • Mastery of AE techniques and technologies • Access to funding to support AE actions or products by financial and banking institutions because funds exist but are increasingly focused on "climate" and those dedicated to AE require support from States and FOs to control their access procedures (Agroecology fund, FEM, ARAA, BMZ, AFD funds) • Improving storage and conservation infrastructure adapted to the produce, in particular onions

On market access for produce from the agro-ecological systems,

SUCCESS FACTORS	CHALLENGES
• Consumer awareness of the importance of healthy eating • The development of niche markets for agroecological products; • The existence of labeling initiatives for agroecological products • Lessons from the health crisis (COVID 19) related to the border closures	• The weakness of trade outlets for AE productions • The successful experiences of marketing products from AE systems relate to the "affluent classes" (niche markets) requiring to increase the consumption of these products • The low visibility of AE produce and their lack of knowledge by consumers, in particular of what AE production is



- Inadequate conservation infrastructure
- **Irregularity** of supply (difficulty staggering) due to the seasonality of AE produce
 - Production constraints that limit the food supply of AE produce and make it difficult to meet the demand for AE produce
 - Difficulty in consolidating the quantities of AE produce, weak purchasing group strategy, etc. to show the ability of AE produce to **deliver volumes..**
 - Weak organization of AE actors: better organization / coordination should help work on the structuring of AE sectors
- Inadequate marketing and communication-information strategies/techniques for the promotion of AE produce;

On the training and setting up of youth in AE systems

SUCCESS FACTORS	CHALLENGES
● The awareness of States and partners of the agro-ecological issue as well as the consideration of initiatives by the national platforms in training systems ● Taking into account the action-research projects of learners in agroecological training centers and training of farmers by farmers; ● The involvement of the learner in the operation and work in school farms as well as the follow-up of the learners via WhatsApp groups	● The mass dissemination of existing farmer systems in the countries and their extension to countries that do not have them; ● The promotion of training in AE for the benefit of youth and women ● L'accès aux ressources publiques et la mobilisation de ressources internes ● Better use of learning channels (rural radios and ICTs) for the scaling up of AE practices

Public policies on agroecology in West Africa,

SUCCESS FACTORS	CHALLENGES
- Consideration of agroecological transition in international, regional and national agendas since COP 17 - The launch at the regional level of the Agroecology Program in West Africa (PAE) in 2017 by ECOWAS which facilitated the establishment of AE strategies/action plans and/or National Correspondents within the ministries - Mobilization of actors (institutions, states, donors, CSOs, but also research) on AE and local markets - The setting up of national consultation frameworks in favor of agroecology facilitating multi-stakeholder consultative dialogues	- The consideration by the international programs and trade policy frameworks of the WTO of agroecology and needs of FOs - The translation of agro-ecological policies into regulatory and legislative texts as well as their deployment and implementation in the field. - The orientation of State financial support to the non-food exporting sectors (cocoa, sesame, cotton, peanuts, etc.) that does not promote food security - The lack of own funding dedicated to AE.

III. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FORUM

3.1. Directed to the international and regional organizations (ECOWAS)

At the political level

- Initiate a renegotiation of framework trade treaties (EPA and CET) to facilitate support for agricultural food and agroecological sectors carried by POs;
- Develop a regional strategy on agroecology in an inclusive way by 2024 with the consideration of our contribution note which will be sent to you very soon;
- Set up an information system on territorial markets and a database to know the realities and evolution of territorial markets (configurations, structuring, transactions, origin of produce, volumes of AE produce, etc.);
- Allocate a quota of public food contracts to the agro-ecological productions of FOs with ARAA/RRSA;
- Institutionalize a "National Day of Agroecology" in each country to raise awareness and mobilize the various actors by seizing the opportunity of the UNDF

3.2. Directed to our States

On farmer seed systems (farmer seeds, biopesticides, biofertilizers)

- Strengthen farmer seed systems to facilitate access to the farming bio-inputs (farmer seeds, biopesticides, biofertilizers) by:
 - a. The creation of a register to characterize farmer systems
 - b. The development of protection mechanisms for farmer systems
 - c. The definition of a set of criteria for the quality of farming systems
 - d. Participation in a continental campaign to promote farmer seed systems
- Improve the secure access of FOs and in particular of women and youth to the basic resources: farmer seeds, water, land
- Putting farmer training systems at the heart of public policies for training in agroecology
- Fund agricultural advisory and action-research and AE impact measurement systems
- Strengthen collaboration between FOs, research centers and private entrepreneurs and/or youth in particular, for the manufacturing of bio-inputs and preservation of farmer seeds: certify products to allow them to be marketed, tax the import of phytosanitary products

On ASPH productions

- Strengthen the technical capacities and basic equipments of actors involved in agroecology
- Support expansion of AE produce supply to meet demand
- Work towards close integration between livestock and agriculture
- Support the scaling up of successful practices through a form of knowledge sharing

On market access for products from the agro-ecological systems,

- Support the implementation of production charters (common rules) and participatory guarantee systems to ensure consumer confidence
- Support the PGS subsidy as a mechanism for accessing markets for agro-ecological products
- Allocate a quota of public food contracts to farmers' organizations for the constitution of national food stocks

On the training and setting up of youth in agroecological systems

- Support access schemes for youth to set up in agroecology
- Support the strengthening of ROPPA's farmer university to promote AE in all countries:
 - a. Support the extension of AE training centers in all the countries
 - b. Ensure the setting up and mass dissemination of AE training farms
 - c. Allocate public financial resources for the training and setting up of youth
 - d. Pool and mobilize various training and communication media (community radio, ICTs (YouTube, tiktok, etc.))
- Initiate reforms of national training systems to integrate Agroecology into higher education curricula for the training of senior managers, developers of policies and training and advisory systems

On public policies related to agroecology in West Africa,

- Develop national strategies on agroecology in an inclusive way by 2024 followed by action plans
- Establish a minimum percentage of agricultural funding for agroecology and food sectors in the state budget
- Promote the agroecological transition by promoting agroecological production through various mechanisms: taxation and VAT, resale price, public purchases, consumer awareness, etc.



3.3. Directed to our farmer organizations:

On agricultural training

- Strengthen the ROPPA's Farmer University in the promotion of AE in all the countries by
 - a. The extension of AE training centers in all countries
 - b. The setting up and mass dissemination of AE training farms
 - c. The mobilization of public financial resources for the training and setting up of youth
 - d. The pooling and mobilization of the various training and communication media (community radios, ICTs (YouTube, tiktok, etc..))
- Initiate reforms of national training systems to integrate Agroecology by advocating for the integration of AE in basic education and public and private training institutes for technical field agents
- Develop a digital knowledge sharing platform
- Increase peer visits and exchanges
- Develop a network of farm schools / training centers / inter-FO farmer universities to capitalize and better value knowledge generated

On marketing of agroecological produce

- Develop a marketing strategy for AE produce, with a process of distinguishing/differentiating these products from conventional products”..
- Develop trade linkages between farmers and traders to guarantee fair remuneration for farmers and a fair price for consumers,
- Communicate/educate consumers about agroecological produce (farmers' fairs, tastings, etc..)
- Collectively identify 2 or 3 successful initiatives in the sub-region that promote the marketing of AE produce and the circular economy, led by 3AO members, and capitalize on them (3AO) and study their scaling up to feed advocacy and policy proposal

On public policies related to agroecology in West Africa,

- Conduct capitalizations to support advocacy in favor of agroecology
- Develop mechanisms for monitoring agricultural policies in order to make evidences available for agricultural policies that are more sensitive to agroecology

3.4. Directed to the local communities

At the political level

- Strengthen frameworks for dialogue in the territories (municipalities, regions) for the development of agroecology in the territorial markets;
- Integrate agroecology into municipal development plans;
- Allocate a quota of public food contracts to farmers' organizations, particularly in the supply of school canteens..

IV. Commitments of the Forum

Delegates to the regional forum on agroecology held in Bissau made the following commitments :

- Mobilize alliances with civil society organizations to initiate actions so that to denounce the monopoly of transnational corporations
- Build the capacities of our farmers' organizations on mastery of alternative legal tools for the democratization, movement/marketing and access to the natural inputs, including fertilizers, phytosanitary products and farmer seeds;
- Encourage action research and farmer research within our family farms
- Develop a digital knowledge-sharing platform to produce and disseminate evidences on agroecology in order to support "farmer-to-farmer exchanges".

V. Closing remarks

The closing ceremony began with the reading of the forum's declaration (see appendix) by the coordinator of the alliance for agroecology in West Africa followed by the interventions of the authorities.

The first to speak, Mr. Alanso FATY , President of the national platform of Guinea Bissau, hailed the diligence of the various delegations in the work, relevance of the conclusions which will certainly contribute to strengthening the dynamics of the agroecological transition in West Africa and in Guinea Bissau in particular. He thanked all the participants, organizers who honored his country and their platform through the holding of the forum in Bissau. He wished a safe journey back to the participants in their respective countries before giving the floor to the Chairman of the 3AO's steering committee.

Mr. Ibrahim COULIBALY, Chairman of the 3AO's steering committee, congratulated all the participants and particularly technical and financial partners who remained committed during the four days of works and hoped this commitment would be further strengthened through the mobilization of substantial financial resources to support the scaling up of agroecological initiatives in West Africa. He particularly thanked ECOWAS which, through RAAF, facilitated the holding of this forum with its agro-ecological program financed by the European Union and the French Development Agency (AFD). Then, he called on all the actors, in particular the members of 3AO, to get more involved in the activities of the Alliance to boost the agroecological transition in West Africa. He ended by thanking everyone for the presentations, exchanges, logistics, translation, thus help successfully organize the forum, of which he hopes that President EMBALO will take up the conclusions in order to bring "the fight for agroecology to his peers of ECOWAS" for food and nutrition security of the populations.

For IFAD, representing the technical and financial partners, agroecology is of particular interest because it constitutes a solution to the crises that the West African region in particular and the world in general are going through. That's why the technical partners through his voice reaffirm their availability to support the dynamics of the AET (Agroecological Transition) in West Africa.

The representative of ECOWAS underlined that the forum had a high level of participation, thus helping reach relevant and inclusive conclusions for which ECOWAS will pay particular attention, especially as it is a stakeholder in the organization of this event and exchanges. He congratulated organizers, the national authorities before welcoming the presence of the Executive Director of RURAL HUB who, in view of his involvement in the development of regional agricultural policies of ECOWAS, was a resource person who greatly contributed to making the various proposals. At last, he said he was very happy with the quality of reflections and reiterated the availability of ECOWAS to play its role in the implementation of the recommendations.

Before announcing the closing of the forum on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture of Guinea Bissau, the Director of Agriculture hailed the success of this important event, reassured the availability of the highest authorities of his country to support the dynamic of the agroecological transition and bring "the fight for agroecology to his peers of ECOWAS. He expressed the recognition of his country for the honor granted to them through the organization of the forum in their country, the place which was granted to them to make their country known, wished a safe journey back to the participants before declaring closed the forum to the applause of the participants.

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Appendices

- Statement
- Attendance list

Bissau Declaration on Agroecological Transition



We, the 180 participants, from 19 countries in Africa, Europe and America, members of farmers' organizations, civil society, representatives of public services from ECOWAS Member States, technical and financial partners engaged in the agroecological transition, gathered under the regional forum on agroecology organized by the Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa (3AO) in Bissau from December 10 to 13, 2022 under the implementation work of the ECOWAS Agroecology Program (EAP) declare as follows:

Noting the complexity and magnitude of the various food, security, health, climate, environmental crises and the soaring prices of synthetic agricultural inputs that are jeopardizing millions of agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries farms (ASPH);

Worried about the uncertainties and constraints generated by the effects of increasingly severe climate crises, in terms of massive degradation of natural resources, loss of soil fertility and erosion of biodiversity (cultivated, raised or wild), and their impacts on food sovereignty in the region;

Concerned by the abusive use of synthetic chemical inputs and persistence of policies promoting agriculture dependent on these inputs;

Appalled by the slow scaling up of proven agroecological solutions within development policies;

Convinced that agroecology, as a holistic approach to the positive transformation of food systems, constitutes a viable, urgent and necessary response to take up challenges facing West Africa, by promoting plant and animal diversity, by stimulating synergies between different species and promoting social equity, has the capacity to optimize the resilience of territories, while ensuring decent incomes and preserving natural resources and mitigating the effects of climate change,

Recognizing the crucial role played by women and youth in the agroecological transition;

Recall the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas;

Call on our regional institutions and our States to develop and support the implementation of strategies for scaling up agroecology to implement structural solutions allowing the resilience of our food systems and a real sustainable economic and social recovery local communities and countries in the region;

Invite ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS and other regional institutions as well as our States to support the establishment in the short, medium-sized and long term of financing mechanisms adapted to the needs of ASPH operations, to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of major policy instruments such as the Regional Fund for Agricultural Development (RFAD), the Regional Fund for Agriculture and Food (FRAA) and the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) and to be included in national budgets the means necessary to support the agroecological transition;

Invite the private sector, consumer organizations and populations to each play a full active role in supporting the agro-ecological transition in West Africa;

Ask the technical and financial partners (PTF) to provide substantial, multifaceted, adapted and flexible support as soon as possible to the actors involved in the agro-ecological transition to ensure the training and supervision of a critical mass of young women and men, and participate in the co-creation of innovations in order to boost agro-ecological production systems and better market access conditions



Ask for transparent, more ambitious, more coherent, more inclusive, and more appropriate policies and strategies to support the dynamics of agroecological transition.

We, the 180 participants in the regional forum on agroecology:

We are committed to the agroecological transition in all its economic, environmental and social dimensions. In particular, we are committed to promoting farmer seed systems, raising consumer awareness, training young people and women who are the spearhead for the promotion of agroecology and participating in multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks for better mainstreaming agroecology into development priorities at all levels;

We will work together to institutionalize the organization of a regional forum on agroecology with a view to highlighting the solutions generated by the field actors in the face of the various crises and explore their scaling up dynamics under the national and regional development policies for the ASPH sector and to improve collaboration with national and regional institutions and development partners;

We will implement a campaign to raise awareness, monitor and call upon policy-makers at the national and regional level on the implementation of the commitments made at the national, regional and international levels and recommendations of this forum to develop structural political solutions to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of food systems.

Finally, we are committed to developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating an action plan for the operationalization of the conclusions and other deliverables resulting from this forum with the effective participation of all the actors involved in the dynamics of agroecological transformation.

Bissau, December, 13th 2022

