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Public policy for supporting the development of agroecology



Main recommendations in short

Public policy is likely to play a key part in the development of agroecology. It can especially guarantee the sustainability of experiments carried out locally and help to scale up, i.e. a generalisation at territorial level of the agroecological practices and systems successfully implemented on a small scale as part of these experiments.

The ECOWAS Agroecology Programme in West Africa (AEP) has been set up between 2018 and 2025 to support family farms in an agroecological transition by enabling them to

reconcile economic performance (increasing productivity and production, reducing losses, improving income, etc.), food security, resilience strengthening, environment and people's health preservation.

The AEP capitalization study led to the formulation of a number of recommendations related to public policy, which is detailed in each of the seven (7) thematic notes of the capitalization. This note presents a summary of these recommendations. Depending on the case, they may concern local, national or regional authorities more or less directly.

Making agroecology central to public policy

FOCUS ON AGROECOLOGY

- › Make agroecology a strategic focus of national and regional agricultural policies.
- › Establish harmonised regional markers to identify public funding for agroecology and conventional agriculture, and set ambitious targets for increasing the share of the former.
- › Ensure that policies on crop production, livestock farming and the environment are coordinated to promote greater integration between agriculture, agro-forestry and livestock farming.

DURATION OF INTERVENTIONS AND DEFINITION OF THE CONDITIONS FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

- › In the case of time-limited initiatives to promote agroecology (programmes and projects), provide for a minimum duration of six (6) years or the existence of several successive phases, as well as the definition of the conditions for the development and sustainability of the changes from the design phase onwards.

Funding agroecology

ACCESS TO NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FUNDING

- › Mobilising national and regional funding as part of strategies and policies needed to promote agroecology and facilitate access to this funding for stakeholders, by means of agricultural credit mechanisms and actions to strengthen farmers organisations.
- › Building national capacities as well as public development funds and banks ones to mobilise, manage and effectively direct funds likely to finance the agroecological transition, including international climate funds.
- › Setting up an agricultural credit mechanism for family farming
- › Promoting village savings and credit mechanisms and strengthen existing ones via credit lines with national and regional commercial and investment banks.

GRANTS

- › Coordinating at national level a subsidy policy for farms targeting agroecological investments (livestock, infrastructure) and agricultural equipment enabling producers, including young people and women, to reduce working time, as well as bio-inputs.

Education, research, farm advisory services and the dissemination of knowledge as support to agroecology

EDUCATION

- › Revising the agronomic curricula of universities, institutes and college, making agroecology a centre-point of them (including aspects related to farm management and the commercial development of agroecological products) and by promoting digital technologies.
- › Planning to upgrade trainers' skills in agroecology principles and techniques as well as in facilitation, supporting peer-to-peer exchanges and promoting their knowledge.
- › Integrating post-training follow-up systems for farmers trained in technical training centres.
- › Increasing funding for educational infrastructure for agroecology training centres, in particular units for the application of agroecological practices.

RESEARCH

- › Strengthening the participation of farmers organisations in defining research priorities and topics for agroecology.
- › Identifying, capitalising on, promoting and improving traditional agroecological practices.
- › Setting up work to assess socio-economic and agro-environmental effects and impacts of agroecological practices and systems, as well as the conditions for their development, with a view in particular to specifying the public policy to be mobilised.
- › Carrying out research into the marketing of agroecological products.

ADVICE AND DISSEMINATION OF INNOVATIONS

- › Integrating agroecology and participatory approaches (choice of topics and types of experimentation, peer-to-peer exchanges and training) as a focus of agricultural support and advice, particularly for women and young people.
- › Implementing a system to raise awareness and communicate with farmers about successful agroecological innovations and their benefits (public competitions, fairs, broadcasting programmes, digital platforms, etc.).

Guaranteeing the availability and accessibility of quality agroecological means of production

AGROECOLOGICAL INPUTS AND EQUIPMENT

- › Supporting, through appropriate funding (grants and loans), the establishment of activities and industries manufacturing agroecological means of production (equipment, bio-inputs, animal feed) with, as a prerequisite, regulatory recognition of farmers' knowledge and practices in this area, to avoid their confiscation for commercial purposes.
- › Defining and implement harmonised standards for the manufacture and use of bio-inputs, especially bio-pesticides.
- › Better regulating the use of chemical pesticides, including a ban on the most dangerous ones.

Improving marketing conditions for agroecological products

MARKETING CHANNELS

- › Supporting the setting up of marketing activities and processing industries for agroecological products, particularly by farmers organisations (training and exchanges on marketing strategies, quality management and traceability), product certification and the development of income-generating sectors, including by means of appropriate financing offers, sales outlets and dedicated spaces on markets, public purchasing (especially for school catering and other catering) and digital platforms.

RAISING CONSUMER' AWARENESS

- › Raising consumer' awareness of the benefits of agroecological products through communication campaigns, fairs, tastings and educational workshops.

PROTECTING LOCAL INDUSTRIES

- › Better protect local food sectors (milk, cereals, fruit and vegetables, etc.) from competition from low-cost imports, by means of appropriate trade and tax policy measures, ensuring that they are applied and monitored.



Guaranteeing rules of access to land and natural resources needed to promote to agroecology

RULES GOVERNING THE MANAGEMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

- › Implementing rules agreed with livestock farmers at local level on the management of land and natural areas in order to guarantee the viability of agroecological practices (ANR, tree planting, hedgerows, fodder crops, soil fertility protection and improvement systems) and to integrate farmers and livestock farmers, including transhumant farmers, in a shared agroecological transition.

ACCESS TO LAND FOR WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- › Promoting community consultation approaches to strengthen the land rights of women and young people.
- › Encouraging local authorities to free up land, especially for women, for agroecological farming

LAND LEGISLATION

- › Implementing, where necessary, reforms to land legislation to support the agroecological transition and access to land for women and young people.

MANAGEMENT OF TRANSHUMANT LIVESTOCK FARMING AREAS

- › In areas of transhumant livestock farming, promote the development and implementation of rules for sustainable land management : social agreements between different groups of livestock farmers on the management



of hydraulic structures and associated resources, social agreements between farmers and livestock farmers on the definition and marking of transhumance corridors.

Supporting partnerships and cooperation between stakeholders

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

- › As part of the policy to promote agroecology, support structuring multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly those led by farmers' organisations, and also involving research and training centres, farm advisory services and other stakeholders (upstream and downstream industry ones, local authorities) to promote the development of agroecology and stable, profitable outlets for agroecological products.

PLATFORMS AND CONSULTATION FRAMEWORKS

- › Strengthening multi-stakeholder platforms to foster knowledge sharing (e.g. national or local workshops on key agroecological transition issues), collaboration, business linkages, political dialogue and public policy input, ensuring representation of women and young people.

Special political attention for women and young people

Women and young people can play a central role in the agroecological transition, but, given their specific situation, they require special attention from the public authorities, especially in terms of:

- › access to agricultural credit and subsidies for agroecological investments,
- › training and advisory support,
- › helping to set up marketing networks for agroecological products,
- › secure access to land and natural resources,
- › participation in multi-stakeholder platforms.

- › Supporting especially the National Consultation Frameworks for Agroecology (NCFs) by promoting the establishment of sustainable funding mechanisms for the NCFs, including through national public funding, ensuring that they are representative and that there is shared governance.
- › Promoting exchanges between NCFs in various countries in conjunction with the 3AO alliance to facilitate regional advocacy by countries.
- › Provide long-term ECOWAS support for the NCFs and the 3AO alliance.

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