



Agroecology Program in West Africa

a solution for ECOWAS family farms to face climate challenges

In the current context of climate change and variability, the scaling up of production techniques based on agroecological practices and sustainable agricultural intensification is essential for West African countries to meet the challenges of adaptation, resilience, agricultural productivity and food and nutritional insecurity.

Since these agricultures are the basis of the economy of the poorest, most vulnerable and malnourished households, sustainable agricultural intensification that will increase the productivity and net margins of family farms will contribute to the global development goals (especially MDGs 1 and 2). Agroecological intensification is, therefore, the reference to the implementation of techniques and agricultural and livestock practices that enhance biological mechanisms for increased, sustainable and healthy production.

Faced with the need to address four major challenges : (i) climate change and variability , (ii) food and nutrition security, (iii) the improvement of agri-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries revenues, and (iv) the transformation of conventional agriculture which degrades the soil, pollutes the environment, destroys traditional local know-how and worsens the climate crisis ; ECOWAS has launched, within the framework of the implementation of its Common Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP), a Regional Agroecology Program in its 15 member states aiming at the "Promotion and dissemination of agroecology and ecologically intensive agriculture for the resilience of populations to food insecurity and climate change in West Africa". To operationalize this program, 2 projects are already underway.

Support Project for the Dissemination and Implementation of Good Practices for Sustainable Agricultural Intensification

Financing : European Union

Amount: 8,2 millions Euros.

Implementation period : 2020 - 2024

Objective: Strengthening the resilience of West African populations in terms of food and nutritional security

Support Project for the Agroecological Transition in West Africa

Financement : Agence Française de Développement

Financing : 8 millions Euros.

Implementation period : 2018 - 2024

Objective : To improve the performance of family farms for food security, increased income and better resilience to climate change while promoting processes of preservation and restoration of the state of cultivated and natural ecosystems.

Objectives

The program aims to support family farms in an agro-ecological transition to enable them to reconcile economic performance, food security, strengthening resilience, environmental preservation and population health.

It will allow a regional mobilization to promote the exchange of experiences, the strengthening of human, technical and institutional capacities, and the support to the development of more resilient agroecological systems.

- Improve good governance of natural resources
- Reduce the region's vulnerability to climate and environmental risks
- Disseminate sustainable agricultural intensification and agroecological practices
- Co-constructing knowledge with stakeholders to ensure favorable conditions for private investment in ecologically intensive and economically sustainable agriculture

Expected results

The expected results of the program are as follows:

- ❶ Collectives of farmers and rural communities are accompanied towards an agroecological intensification
- ❷ Knowledge on sustainable agricultural intensification and ecologically intensive agriculture techniques and good practices are promoted in the training systems of the actors of the agricultural sectors
- ❸ Technological innovations for sustainable agricultural intensification, adapted to the production methods of small producers, are disseminated to stakeholders in strategic priority sectors (rice, maize, cassava, millet/sorghum)
- ❹ Lessons learned and recommendations from the implementation of supported field projects are disseminated and knowledge is discussed
- ❺ Experiences on sustainable agricultural intensification and ecologically intensive agriculture in West Africa are capitalized, integrated and promoted in agricultural policies

Intervention strategy

Although the program's implementation strategy consists of disseminating agroecological technical innovations, it aims first and foremost to support the agroecological transition that producers have decided to undertake. This commitment may be their own initiative, but it may also be the result of initiatives led by support-advice and research and development structures. As a result, the approaches and levels of intervention will be more complex than those for technology transfer or vulgarization.

Key principles underpin this implementation strategy

- The participation and empowerment of local actors is one of the bases of the project's interventions
- Support approaches for producers and local actors (village, commune or sector scale) must be diversified and complementary
- Collective action must not only continue efforts to co-design innovations, but also address the mechanisms and approaches that promote their adoption
- Training and capacity building of training centers, support-advice and dissemination of innovations are the main drivers for the adoption of practices and technological innovations in agro-ecology and sustainable agricultural intensification
- Training and capacity building is based on the existence and deployment, at the regional level, of a network of agricultural vocational training schools and centers for the promotion of agroecological practices, which already exist or are to be promoted, in order to allow a large number of women and young people from rural and peri-urban areas to benefit from training and also to participate in an inclusive manner in the co-construction of knowledge
- The exchange of experiences should generate new knowledge and lead to more generic lessons than those drawn from each individual initiative.
- The capitalization of what has been achieved and the lessons learned from successes and failures will be the subject of various products facilitating exchanges at the local, national and regional levels. This capitalization and these exchanges will provide useful elements to decision-makers to make public policies evolve.

The Program provides financial and methodological support to development operators associated with producer groups that are committed to the agro-ecological transition on the basis of achievements already made. These operators can be NGOs, public or private advisory structures, researchers, downstream actors, etc.



Axes of intervention

Promotion of action research initiatives for sustainable agricultural intensification and agroecological transition

The objective is to accompany farmer groups and rural communities towards agroecological intensification. This will provide practitioners, political bodies and cooperation institutions with technical, economic, social and environmental references concerning agroecological techniques; and elements for analyzing the drivers and obstacles for their development, and feeding the dialogue between actors, their reflections and their decisions.

To this end, fifteen field projects in five ECOWAS countries are receiving grants to develop innovative actions in favor of the agro-ecological transition. They are based on tripartite partnerships between farmers' organizations, local or international non-governmental organizations, research institutions, local or territorial authorities, and private sector actors.

Agricultural training and capacity building for sustainable agricultural intensification and promotion of agroecology

The objective is to promote knowledge on techniques and good practices of sustainable agricultural intensification and ecologically intensive agriculture in the vocational training of actors in the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sectors in West Africa.

The capacities of training centers are strengthened; pilot initiatives developed (like those conducted at the Songhaï center in Benin and at CIDAP in Togo) are identified, selected and networked to be scaled up in the region.

Support-advice and vulgarization of technological innovations

The objective is to vulgarize technological innovations on sustainable agricultural intensification adapted to the modes of production of small producers in strategic priority sectors.

To this end, tools and methods for the adaptation and dissemination of agroecological and sustainable agriculture practices are made available, and training and support-advice systems that integrate these practices are strengthened and revitalized.

Finally, support is provided for the establishment of partnerships between farmers' organizations, research centers and training centers in order to strengthen skills and vulgarization mechanisms and promote sustainable agricultural intensification funds.

Exchanges, capitalization and contribution to the development of public policies

The objective is to set up mechanisms

to encourage exchanges between field projects and to examine existing networks and the possibilities of integrating these exchanges into one or more agroecology networks.

In addition, based on the concrete experiences of the field projects, themes for which changes in public policies are necessary to support the agro-ecological transition (regulatory framework for natural resource management, marketing, training and agricultural advisory systems, etc.) will be identified.

Finally, national and regional consultation frameworks on these themes are facilitated to lead to advocacy and recommendations for decision makers.



Coordination, management and communication

The program is managed by the ECOWAS Commission through the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (ARAA).

Its implementation is steered by a coordinator and management unit based at ARAA in Lomé, Togo. This unit defines the working procedures for all participants and organizes the monitoring and evaluation of field projects and consultation frameworks.

It contributes to the capitalization and visibility of the Program, to the preparation and support of evaluations and financial audits, to the management of contracting support activities, and to the regular monitoring of indicators

Finally, the Steering Committee is the governance body of the Program. Chaired by the Commissioner of the ECOWAS Commission in charge of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, it meets at least once a year to examine progress reports, decide on the program's main orientations and approve the activity plan for the following year.



PARTENAIRES FINANCIERS



PARTENAIRES TECHNIQUES



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