

2018
2025

Supporting
family farms
in the **agroecological transition**



pae
Agroecology Program
in West Africa

The Agroecology Programme in West Africa (AEP)

Overall programme assessment

The AEP was implemented by the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with financial support from the European Union (EU) and the Agence française de développement (AFD).



CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
A regional programme to support family farms in the agroecological transition	3
Support for the agroecological transition for local stakeholders.....	5
Agricultural training and capacity building	7
Advisory support and dissemination of technological innovations	9
Exchanges, capitalization and contribution to the development of public policy	11
Outlook.....	14

Introduction

A regional programme to support family farms in the agroecological transition



A PROGRAMME ADDRESSING FOUR MAJOR CHALLENGES

West Africa is facing four major challenges:

-  climate change and variability,
-  food and nutritional security,
-  improving agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries incomes, and
-  transforming conventional agriculture, which degrades soils, pollutes the environment, destroys traditional local skills and exacerbates the climate crisis.

In this context, the **Agroecology Programme (AEP)**, with a budget of €16.2 million, was established between 2018 and 2025 by **ECOWAS**, with the support of the **European Union (EU)** and the **Agence française de développement (AFD)**. AEP, covering the 15 countries, aimed at assisting family farms in **transitioning to agroecology**, enabling them to reconcile economic performance (increased productivity and production, reduced losses, improved incomes, etc.), food security, greater resilience, environment preservation and public health.

AEP Coordination Unit and National Correspondents

The Programme's Coordination Unit is attached to the **Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF/ARAA)** of the ECOWAS Commission. It benefited from technical assistance from the AVSF - IRAM - INADES Formation consortium.

In each country, the AEP relied on a **National Correspondent (NC)** appointed by the **Ministry of Agriculture**. Each NC served as a liaison for the Coordination Unit in the country and was responsible for monitoring the implementation of AEP activities, organizing national consultations among agroecology stakeholders and strengthening the agroecology agricultural advisory services in the country.



A DIVERSITY OF STAKEHOLDERS FOR A WIDE RANGE OF ACTIONS

The AEP comprised a wide range of actions at local, national and regional levels, involving a diversity of stakeholders. The aim was to promote:

- participation and empowerment of local stakeholders,
- diversification and complementarity of support approaches,
- collective-action approach for the co-design/construction of innovations,
- advisory support and the dissemination of agroecology innovations,
- training and capacity building,
- experience sharing and capitalization to generate new knowledge and lessons learnt.

To achieve this, the AEP is structured around **four operational priorities**:

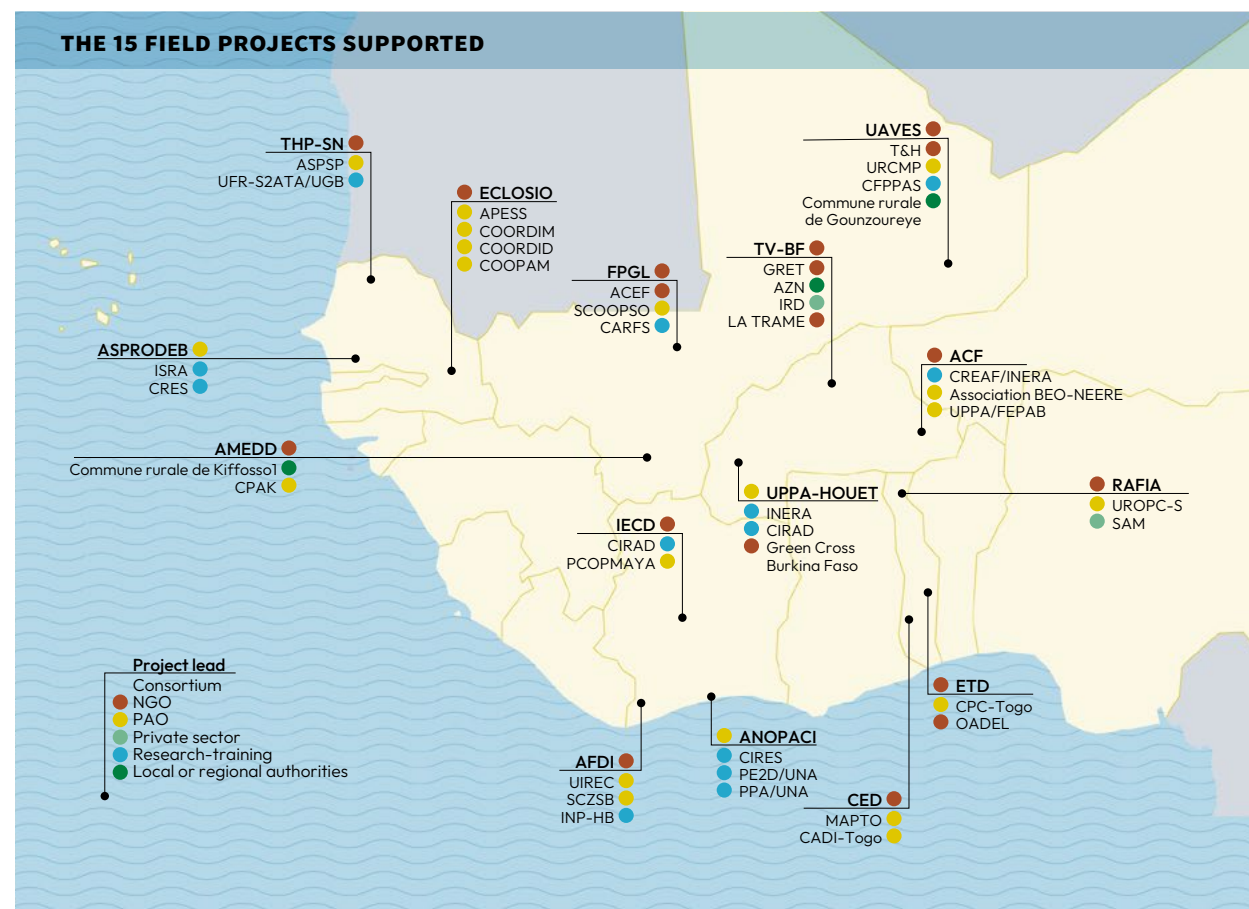
- promotion of research-action initiatives for sustainable agricultural intensification and agroecological transition, through field projects in five ECOWAS countries,
- agricultural training and capacity building to promote agroecology,
- advisory support and dissemination of technological innovations for sustainable agricultural intensification, notably within the framework of partnerships between professional agricultural organisations (PAOs) - research centres (RCs) - training centres (TCs),
- exchanges, communication and capitalization of what has been learnt in situ and contribution to the development of public policy in favor of agroecology.

Support for the agroecological transition for local stakeholders

PROMOTING RESEARCH-ACTION INITIATIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL INTENSIFICATION AND AGROECOLOGY TRANSITION.

FIELD PROJECTS SUPPORTING THE AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

Fifteen pilot field projects, distributed across five ECOWAS countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and Togo), were selected following a call for projects and awarded grants from 2019 to 2023 to develop innovative actions for the agroecological transition. These projects were based on tripartite partnerships between farmers' organizations, local or international NGOs, research institutions, local or regional authorities and private-sector stakeholders.



15 PILOT FIELD PROJECTS SUPPORTED WITH

€4.3m IN FUNDING



Over **62,500 farmers** trained in agroecology practices

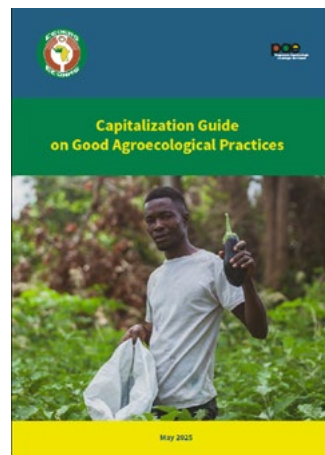


12,350 hectares of farmland covered with agroecology practices



40,000 tonnes of compost produced

CAPITALIZATION OF GOOD PRACTICES



A capitalization guide on good agroecological practices from the 15 field projects was developed. Targeted at agricultural development practitioners and facilitators, the guide gathers compiles technical, organizational and financial agroecological practices, and highlights the lessons learnt to support replication and scaling-up.



Several video capsules: showcase the results of field projects: Sahelian Hedgerow Sharing Project (BSP) by Terre Verte in Burkina Faso; production of Autonomous Beneficial Microorganisms (MAB) and trees and woody plants in vegetable systems by IECD in Ivory Coast; Yessal Sunu Mbaay (YSM) project by Eclasio in Senegal; maize and pigeon pea intercropping by AFDI in Ivory Coast.

► **TWO STUDIES** were carried out as part of the BSP project (Burkina Faso) on the evaluation of the effects and conditions for the development of agroecology and on the capitalisation of the bocage schemes promoted by Terre verte and AZN associations. Through the BSP project, AEP also co-funded the GTAE's Guide for the evaluation of agroecology.

The 15 good practice factsheets from field projects

- *Cajanus cajan* and *Mucuna pruriens*, fertilising and cover plants
- Use of animal traction
- Contour land development
- Optimised compost use
- Heap composting (45-day maturity)
- Bokashi (rapid composting in 15 days)
- Compost pits (45-day maturity)
- Localised weeding for cereal crops in the Sahel
- Biopesticides
- Farmers' seeds
- Women and youth access to farmland
- Aflasafe SN01 to combat aflatoxins
- Family vegetable garden
- Community listening clubs
- Participatory guarantee systems

Agricultural training and capacity building

PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE OF AGROECOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES AND GOOD PRACTICES IN TRAINING MECHANISMS FOR THE AGRICULTURAL STAKEHOLDERS.



A STUDY TO IDENTIFY THE RANGE OF AGRICULTURAL TRAINING COURSES IN AGROECOLOGY

A study was carried out in the ECOWAS countries to assess the current state of agricultural training offer leading to qualifications in agroecology and sustainable agriculture. By analyzing both the supply and demand of training, the study helped identify unmet training needs.



SUPPORT TO AGRICULTURAL TRAINING CENTRES

Following an inventory and characterization study of training centres, **thirteen training centres were supported** in their efforts to improve their agroecology training offer.

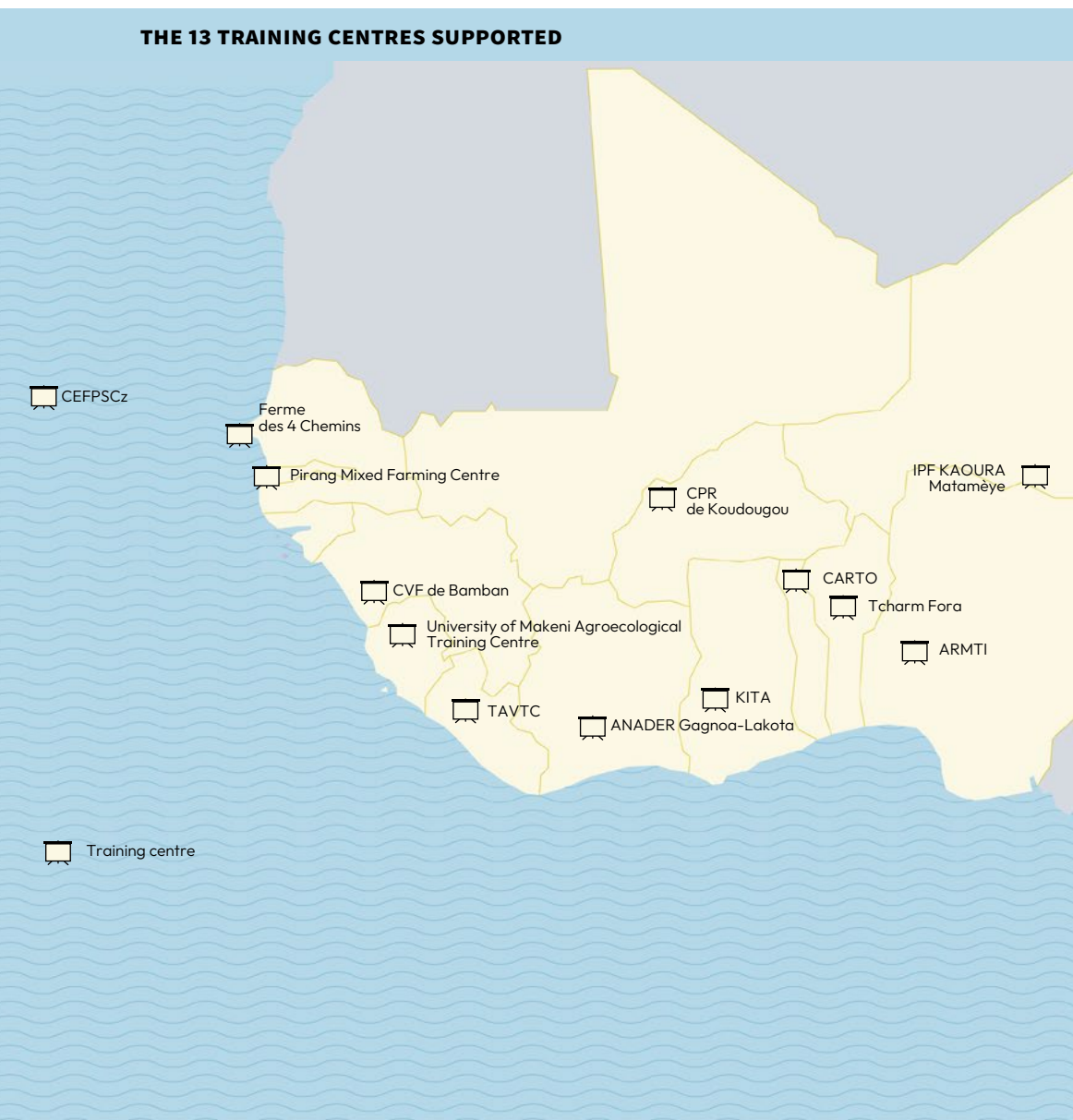
The support provided to these training centres enabled:

-  training of over **3,250 learners** in the centres,
-  capacity building of around **400 trainers** in training engineering and agroecology approaches,
-  revision of curricula and training modules of the centres to incorporate agroecology approaches,
-  rehabilitation of training and accommodation facilities, in addition to the purchase of appropriate teaching equipment,
-  investment in the pedagogical units of animals and plants production (demonstration sites, hen houses, piggeries, sheepfolds, cowsheds, fish ponds, biogas production units, beekeeping, etc.),



POLICY BRIEF

THE 13 TRAINING CENTRES SUPPORTED



 continued training courses in a multiplicity of topics, including crop associations, conservation agriculture, integrated rice-fish farming, water conservation and management techniques, agriprocessing, agribusiness, crop-livestock integration, beekeeping integrated with agroforestry, fertilization systems using compost and fertilizing plants, biopesticides production, drying of produce using solar energy, and agroecological gardens.

A MOOC ON AGROECOLOGY IN WEST AFRICA

The AEP is supporting ECOWAS in **adapting and delivering a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on agroecology**, developed by Institut SupAgro (France), to the West African context. This is carried out by a consortium of **nine West African universities** coordinated by the Université Gaston Berger (UGB) of Saint-Louis in Senegal, with the technical support of **Institut SupAgro**. At the end of the AEP, adaptation of the MOOC was underway, with training set to begin in 2025.

Advisory support and dissemination of technological innovations

CONTRIBUTION TO ADVISORY SUPPORT AND THE DISSEMINATION OF TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL INTENSIFICATION ADAPTED TO THE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS OF SMALL-SCALE PRODUCERS.



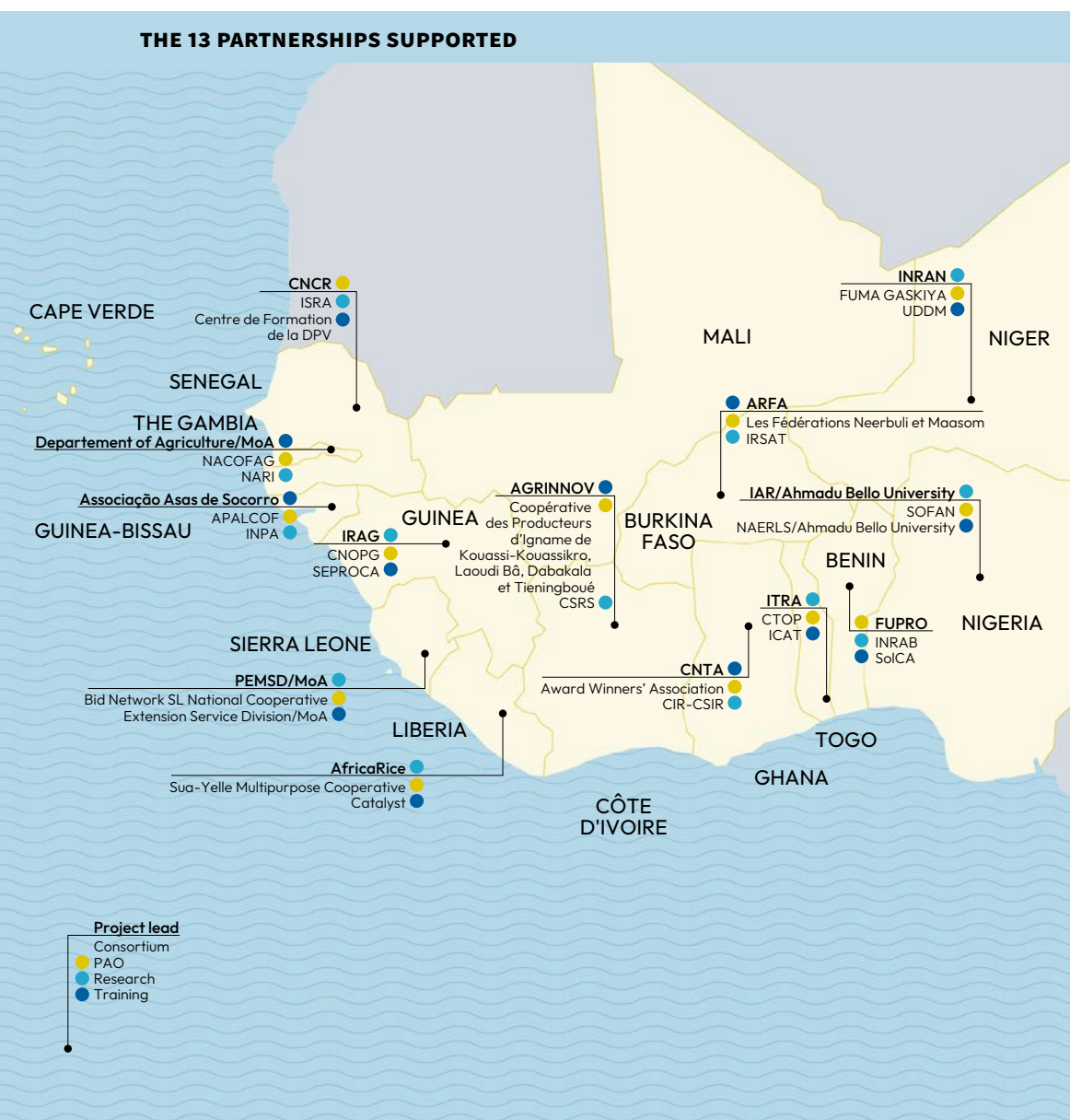
This section is based on the findings and recommendations of the research and on the outputs of the field projects supported by the programme.

SUPPORT TO PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS (PAOs), RESEARCH CENTRES (RCS) AND TRAINING CENTRES (TCS)

Thirteen partnerships between professional agricultural organisations (PAOs), research centres (RCs) and training centres (TCs) were supported by the AEP to promote participatory and inclusive research, develop research products tailored to small-scale producers and disseminate those products.

The support to these partnerships between farmers' organisations, research centres and training centres enabled:

-  setting up systems for the co-experimentation of innovations with producers,
-  adaptation and/or capitalization of numerous agroecological technical innovations such as the production of fertilizing plant seeds, promotion of farmers' seeds, crop rotation and intercropping, improved composting techniques, rice-fish-vegetable integration, and biopesticides production,
-  training of over **5,650 farmers** in agroecological practices,
-  production of various dissemination tools (technical fact sheets, videos, etc.),
-  organisation of exchange visits among producers to to share experiences and strengthen knowledge.



CAPACITY BUILDING AND METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR EXTENSION SERVICES

The AEP supported the **training of national agricultural extension agents** through training sessions organized by the National Correspondents (NCs) on agroecology and sustainable intensive agriculture. Over **500 national extension agents** were trained in agroecology.

The AEP also supported the establishment and revitalization of **knowledge exchange platforms between agricultural advisory stakeholders in West Africa**, in particular by supporting the **Network of Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services in West and Central Africa (ReSCAR-AOC)**, through the **ACOTAF project** implemented by CIRAD. A study was conducted to (i) set up and strengthen exchange platforms for advisory stakeholders in each of the countries; (ii) consolidate knowledge and formulate recommendations for the development of agroecology advisory services and (iii) organize learning and strategic dialogue for the renewal of agricultural advisory services in West Africa. This study complements the work conducted under the ACOTAF project and extends its results to Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea-Bissau.

Exchanges, capitalization and contribution to the development of public policy

EXCHANGES, COMMUNICATION AND CAPITALIZATION ON FIELD PROJECTS ACHIEVEMENTS, SUPPORT TO AGRICULTURAL TRAINING CENTRES AND –PAO-RC-TC PARTNERSHIPS, AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY IN FAVOR OF AGROECOLOGY.



Through this component, experiences in agroecology were debated and capitalized on, and contributed to agricultural policies through the development of national strategies on agroecology and organic farming. The outputs of successful initiatives, lessons learnt and their evaluation were disseminated. A study was also carried out on funding mechanisms to support and encourage the agroecological transition and sustainable agricultural intensification in West Africa.



POLICY BRIEF



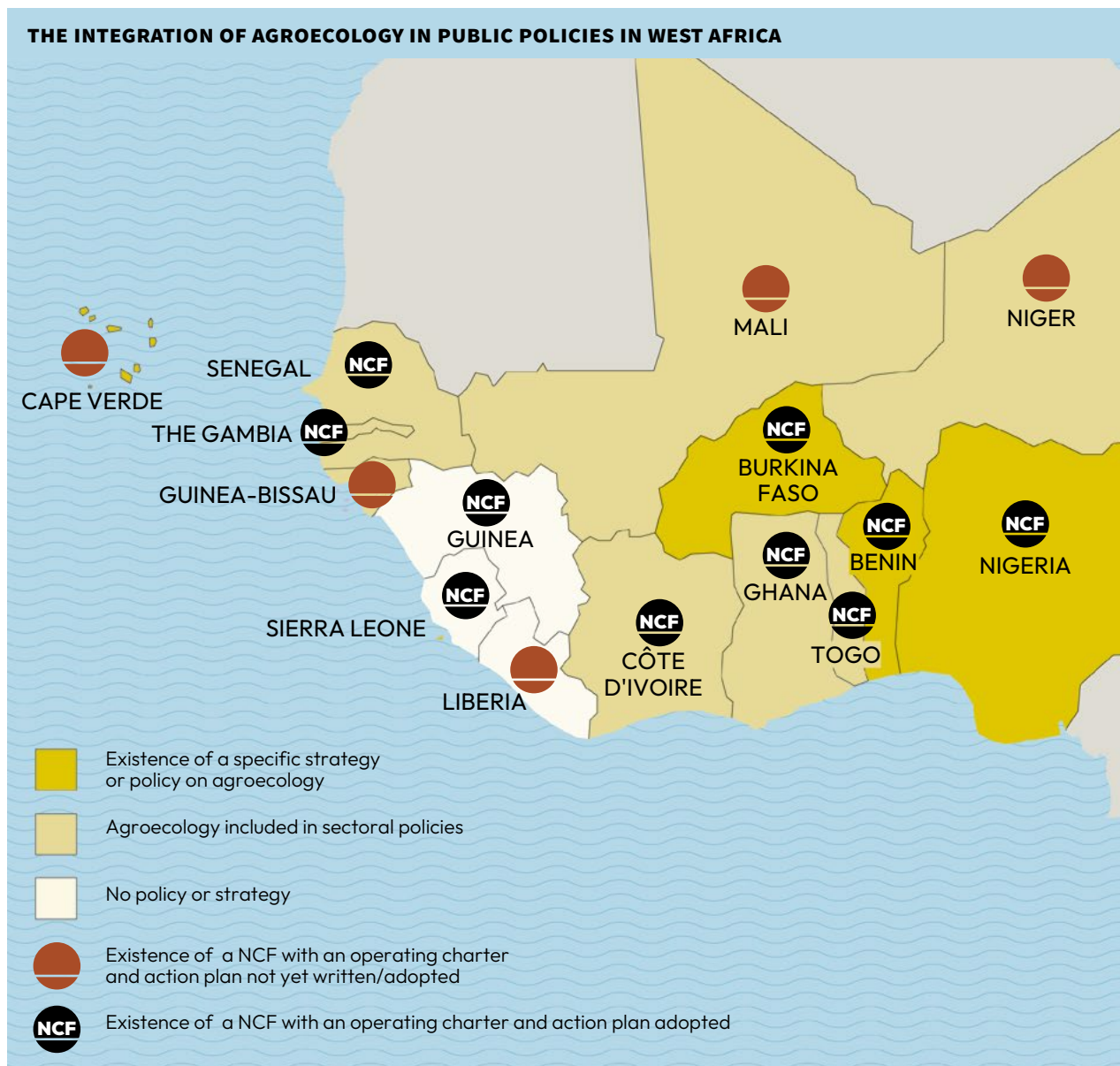
ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS FOR AGROECOLOGY (CCNS)

Following a study assessing the current state of national and regional networks and platforms related to agroecology, training, and sustainable agriculture, **national multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks for agroecology (CCNs)** were established at the initiative of the national focal points (CNs) of the PAE. Their goal is to facilitate dialogue among agroecology stakeholders at the national level and to develop public policy proposals. By the end of 2024, **nine CCNs** had been established.

In several countries, the CCNs have begun to serve as dialogue spaces for public policy development, complementing other actions such as experience-sharing, training, and event organization.



POLICY BRIEF



SUPPORT TO THE ALLIANCE FOR AGROECOLOGY IN WEST AFRICA (3AO)

The AEP supported the **Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa (3AO)**, coordinated by ROPPA, to organize experience sharing, consultations, mobilization and advocacy at the regional level in favor of agroecology and sustainable agriculture. This support enabled the organization of **two regional forums on agroecology**, one in Bissau in 2022 and, another in partnership with the WafroNet network on the topic of funding agroecology and organic farming, in Abuja in 2024, with 180 and 357 participants respectively. These forums led to recommendations addressed to international and regional organizations, governments, farmers' organizations and local authorities for the promotion of agroecology in West Africa. The 3AO Alliance also contributed to the AEP implementation through training young people in agroecology, developing a digital platform for knowledge and information sharing on agro-ecology (the 3AO Hub platform) with CIRAD support via the Fair Sahel project, organizing a seminar on producers' training in Sally, Senegal, in 2021, and supporting advocacy initiatives at regional level.



COMMUNICATION/VISIBILITY AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Throughout the programme, communication and visibility actions and result dissemination were carried out via the ARAA website, [the Agroecology Newsletters \(nine issues\)](#), the development and dissemination of video clips on the ARAA and DADR social networks and via the ARAA mailing lists. With the support of National Correspondants (NC), **radio spots** were produced for broadcasting on national radio stations.



Links to 3 videos:

[The West Africa Agroecology Programme \(PAE\) of ECOWAS](#)
[Community Listening Clubs \(CLC\): using radio waves to promote agroecology adoption](#)
[Bokashi: the fertilizer that brings soil back to life](#)



[Link to all newsletters](#)



[Watch all PAE videos on ARAA's YouTube channel](#)

CAPITALIZING ON THE ENTIRE PROGRAMME

A **cross-cutting capitalization study** was conducted at the end of the AEP. Structured around **seven topics**, it identified key lessons from the programme's global implementation. Based on these findings, public policy recommendations were formulated to support the development of agroecology. [An analysis report](#) and seven thematic notes, as well as a summary on public policy were produced and disseminated.

Thematics of the AEP cross-cutting capitalization study



[Innovative partnerships for successful agroecology initiatives](#)



[Innovations for agroecological cropping systems](#)



[Market dynamics for agroecological products](#)



[Vocational training and integration of young people into agroecology systems](#)



[Multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks for the inclusion of agroecology in public policy](#)



[Participatory research, advisory support systems, co-creation of knowledge and agroecology innovations tailored to producers' needs](#)



[Agroecological livestock-production systems](#)



Outlook



ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

Over its six-year of implementation, the Agroecology Programme in West Africa helped **train over 72,000 people (farmers, extension agents, trainers and young people** interested in entering the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sectors). It supported local initiatives, training centres and partnerships between professional agricultural organizations, research centres and training centres. It also contributed to capitalizing on these experiences, i.e. drawing lessons for replication, and to disseminating results accross countries in the region. The AEP has also initiated or supported training, knowledge sharing and coordination initiatives among agroecology stakeholders , with a view to better integrating agroecology into public policies, both at national level with the national consultation frameworks (NCF) and at regional level with the 3AO Alliance.

Some of these actions undertaken will be pursued and consolidated under the DéSIRA+ project, funded by the European Union and AFD.

The DéSIRA+ Project in West Africa



The DéSIRA+ project in West Africa is a continuation of the AEP. Its goal is to increase the income and resilience of agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries producers to climate change by mobilizing agroecological processes to intensify production. It will support fifteen field projects led by consortia of stakeholders, and promote knowledge echange among them. It will also carry out training in agroecology for national managers and technicians (including the implementation of the MOOC Agroecology in West Africa), strengthen the regional network of agricultural and rural advisory services (RESCAR-AOC) and support consultation and advocacy activities for agroecology policy inclusion. Finally, the project will continue to fund and expand the 3AOHub digital platform for knowledge management and sharing.



In a region facing multiple economic, social and environmental challenges, the AEP has demonstrated the relevance of agroecological transition approaches and the importance of farmer training and support, and coordination among agroecology stakeholders.

The success of the agroecological transition will depend on the ability of the various actors to sustain the changes initiated with external support, and scale them up across territories and countries in the region. The organization of stakeholders, and in particular professional agricultural organizations, and the commitment of governments through appropriate public policy will be decisive to this end.



**Find all PAE documentation
on the ARAA website**



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