



● **Joint Regional Initiatives to Strengthen Economic and Agricultural Integration**

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● **Creating a more Efficient Regional Market for Agricultural Products: ECOWAS Amends its Regulations to Lift Trade Barriers**

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and Agriculture,  
ECOWAS Commission

## Dear Partners,

*The year 2025 marks the end of the second decade of the implementation of the Regional Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) with significant progress and success, as well as persistent challenges. The four (04) major strategic areas of ECOWAP covering productivity, value chains, access to food and the business environment contributed, on the one hand, in harmonising agricultural policies and facilitating their coordination at the regional level and, on the other hand, in improving access to food and nutrition. Despite these achievements, agricultural productivity continues to face several challenges: poor market access, insufficient public support, vulnerability of agricultural systems, effects of climate change, civil insecurity limiting access to production areas, and the increasingly worrying socio-political crises.*

Over the past six months, the ECOWAS Commission's interventions in the agricultural sector have focused on strengthening communication and dialogue and bringing ECOWAS institutions closer to the people. More attention has been given to promoting the animal feed industry and developing the livestock sector, particularly animal production and health. Substantial efforts have been made to promote and scale up good agroecological practices and regional trade in agricultural products. ECOWAS's interventions have also focused on supporting the implementation of national response plans to food and nutrition crises in some countries in the region.

Going forward, ECOWAS will engage in 2026 in the review and adoption of policies, strategies, plans and other instruments for promoting and managing food, nutrition and pastoral security. This includes the review of ECOWAP for the period 2026–2035, which will integrate the central issue of optimising institutional arrangements and financing mechanisms for the agricultural sector to ensure sustainability and impact.

This issue of **ECOWAP News** highlights the need to further strengthen our collective action by promoting synergy and coherence among the various directorates of the ECOWAS Department of Economic Affairs and Agriculture. Our initiatives must serve as a link between the Commission, Member States and grassroots communities. They must also consolidate institutional proximity and mitigate the negative effects of the current difficult socio-political and security context in the region.

Improving communication means reaffirming and supporting the relevance, credibility and legitimacy of ECOWAS among our fellow citizens.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and wish you all a joyful holiday season and a happy New Year 2026, bringing peace, prosperity and shared progress.

## Ecwap News

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## Joint Regional Initiatives to Strengthen Economic and Agricultural Integration

*Following the first series launched in Accra, Ghana, from 19th to 21st November 2025, ECOWAS, through its Department of Economic Affairs and Agriculture, launched the second series of regional meetings in Abuja, Nigeria, from 26th November to 3rd December 2025 aimed at accelerating regional integration, promoting trade, strengthening agricultural productivity, protecting the environment, improving food security, and stimulating inclusive economic growth in Member States.*



mitigate the effects of the current different socio-political and security context. Strengthening communication therefore appears to be a means for increasing the credibility, influence and impact of ECOWAS, in alignment with the Vision 2050 of the “ECOWAS of the Peoples: Peace and Prosperity for All”.

Through the joint consultations, ECOWAS wishes to share with all stakeholders some key achievements in the agricultural, environmental and trade areas, geared towards stimulating adherence, support and strengthening of regional and international cooperation.

The initiative consists of jointly opening regional consultations to strengthen consistency of actions among the Department’s technical directorates. This generally involves the host country’s senior authorities, particularly ministers from the relevant sectors.

In Ghana, for example, the first series covered four (04) regional interventions, namely: alignment of national and regional strategies and data monitoring and evaluation mechanism, the ECOWAS agricultural information system (Ecoagris), fisheries and aquaculture, and cross-border trade. In Nigeria, the series focused on five (05) regional meetings, namely: the ECOWAS e-commerce strategy, the trade in services programme, plastic pollution management, the West African Fertiliser Quality Control Committee (WaCoFeC) and the technical committees for monitoring the implementation of regional agricultural policy projects and programmes.

Held in parallel after the joint openings, the meetings form an essential link between the Commission, Member States and grassroots communities, promoting strategic ties and helping to

Scheduled to continue into 2026, the initiatives aim to consolidate regional integration, increase intra-regional trade, improve agricultural productivity, protect the environment, enhance food security and encourage inclusive economic growth. This momentum reflects ECOWAS’ determination to implement more coherent, visible and member-state-friendly interventions, particularly in a challenging socio-political and security environment.



## Rethinking the Animal Feed Industry: ECOWAS Ramps up Regional Action

*In response to stakeholders’ desire to create and operationalize a network of animal feed producers’ associations and establish a regional animal feed traceability system in West Africa, ECOWAS undertook a high-level dialogue with sector stakeholders in November. Discussions build on the results of the PRISMA Project and their consideration in agricultural priorities such as the networking of animal feed industry stakeholders.*

Despite the importance of the sector, the development of livestock farming in West Africa continues to face a major challenge: limited availability and poor quality of animal feed. Indeed, while considerable progress has been made in establishing traceability frameworks, regulatory harmonisation and policy dialogue, there remains a critical deficit in the operational mechanisms needed to supply aflatoxin-free raw materials in the livestock feed production chain. Ensuring feed safety requires targeted interventions at all stages of the value chain, particularly at production, processing and packaging levels.

In this regard, ECOWAS, in collaboration with its partners, has carried out preparatory work that has yielded concrete results likely to inform and contribute to the development of an efficient animal feed industry in the region. Such results include: (i) a feasibility study for the establishment of a livestock feed purchasing

centre, (ii) an analysis of the needs and procedures for exceptional imports of livestock feed in times of pastoral crises, (iii) the development of an online booking and purchasing application and an information platform on the availability and affordability of feed in livestock feed banks, and (iv) the development of a harmonised protocol for the sampling and analysis of animal feed.

Stakeholders in the high-level dialogue approved a roadmap focusing on harmonizing the protocol for sampling and analysing aflatoxins and establishing a robust framework for monitoring and tracing aflatoxins. A strengthened animal feed industry will improve livestock productivity, reduce contamination risks and create new employment opportunities, particularly for women and young people in agropastoral value chains. Support for the emerging network of animal feed producer associations should be provided and led by the private sector to ensure sustainability, competitiveness and regional ownership.



## Creating a more Efficient Regional Market for Agricultural Products: ECOWAS Amends its Regulations to Lift Trade Barriers

*Despite the very promising potential of the sector, regional trade in agricultural products is still struggling to achieve sustained growth owing to structural issues such as institutional inefficiency, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate financial markets, administrative barriers and political challenges in the region. To address the bottlenecks, ECOWAS and its partners continue to work towards improving the performance of the market.*

For reference, according to a 2024 study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the importance of intraregional trade in West Africa, intraregional trade in agricultural and food products in this area is estimated to be worth nearly US\$10 billion per year, an estimate that includes 'invisible' (unrecorded) flows. The report highlights that this internal trade is a pillar of food security, nutrition and resilience to external shocks. The figures are not just statistics; they reflect realities that have a direct impact on the lives of millions of people in West Africa. These are missed opportunities for farmers, entrepreneurs and local communities.

To facilitate this trade, ECOWAS and its partners have established several tools aimed not only at regulating the sector but also at supporting stakeholders. One such tool is the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS), which aims to eliminate customs duties and taxes equivalent to duties on imports of products recognised as originating in Member States.

In this context and in view of recent regulatory developments, it was deemed necessary to update the draft reports and regulations proposed by a study conducted in 2019 to identify administrative and technical measures promoting the free movement of agricultural,



forestry, pastoral and fishery products in West Africa. Legal, food and nutrition security experts, representatives of producer organisations, ECOWAS, CILSS, UEMOA Member States and development partners have reviewed the updated draft regulations to identify solutions to lift several structural and functional restrictions.

Enriched draft regulations will soon be submitted to ECOWAS Commission departments for amendment

before being forwarded to Member States for consultation with relevant stakeholders. The documents will then be submitted to the relevant experts for approval by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers. This extensive consultation process aims to ensure ownership of their content and, consequently, their proper implementation once adopted by regional decision-making bodies.



## Promoting the Integration of Nutrition into School Feeding Programmes: Member States Pledge their Commitment

*Nutrition-sensitive school feeding is an outstanding tool for sustainable food and nutrition security. For this reason, ECOWAS adopted the Regional Nutrition Agenda in 2024, marking a decisive turning point in ensuring diverse and child-friendly diets. This sends a strong signal about the importance of school feeding as a strategic vehicle for health, education, local production, women's economic empowerment and job creation.*



As part of the implementation of the Regional Agenda for Strengthening Nutrition in Sectoral Policies, Strategies and Programmes in West Africa, ECOWAS enhanced the capacities of national school feeding stakeholders in Dakar from 30th September to 3rd October 2025. Participants in this capacity-building session included sixteen (16) school feeding project leaders funded by ECOWAS with the support of Spanish cooperation as part of the Project to Promote Integrated

School Feeding Models in West Africa (PMAI-AO), expert in charge of the operations of national school feeding programmes implemented by the sectoral ministries of Member States as well as technical partner organisations (WFP, CRS, ACF).

Participants discussed approaches and tools for ensuring that children receive healthy, balanced, nutritious school meals that make use of local food resources. Session topics included best practices for food safety, preserving nutritional quality during preparation, nutrition education and communication for social and behavioural change, and the use of the WFP's SMPPlus (School Meal Planner Plus) digital tool to assess menu quality and plan more balanced, nutritious, appropriate and economically viable menus for children benefiting from school canteens.

The initiative illustrates ECOWAS' vision for a West Africa where every child has access to nutritious, healthy and sustainable school meals, ensuring human capital that benefits the region.

## Climate Finance Access: Stakeholders Agree on a Portfolio of Projects to Strengthen Community Resilience

*In the wake of ECOWAS capacity-building initiatives for stakeholders on prioritising project ideas and developing concept notes, government experts, stakeholders including farmers' organisations and civil society, and regional organisations agreed last October on a portfolio of projects aligned with the Regional Climate Strategy, the Regional Agricultural Policy as well as the Nationally Determined Contributions.*

Draft concept notes cover agricultural resilience, pastoralism, energy and hydrometeorology initiatives centred on early warning systems. Accordingly, the climate finance project portfolio is expanding, alongside efforts to align investments and planning with the Paris Climate Agreement.

To recall, West Africa is facing increasingly frequent, intense and severe climate risks, the growing impact of which is undermining socio-economic development efforts. Climate change is reflected in rising temperatures, more frequent extreme events such as floods and droughts, and sea level rise, with various negative impacts: lower agricultural yields, limited access to drinking water, soil erosion, famines, epidemics, large-scale migration and social conflicts. Despite efforts to support the implementation of national climate measures, ECOWAS countries continue to face challenges in accessing climate finance at various levels.

Given the limited resources available, Member States need to

work synergistically to find ways and means to design and implement projects that are specifically tailored to climate change. Member States must also step up joint action to support the Regional Climate Strategy and nationally determined contributions. Above and beyond technical and political efforts to mobilise resources, strong commitment to climate justice is also needed at both regional level and among designated national authorities.

The next step in the process, which involves finalising the development of concept notes, will focus primarily on: (i) engaging investors and partners around this portfolio of climate-resilient agricultural projects; (ii) empowering national and regional stakeholders to develop relevant projects aligned with climate objectives and national priorities; and (iii) fostering collaboration among the various stakeholders involved in securing climate finance and engaging designated national authorities.



## Advancing Agroecology: from Innovation to Scaling up Technologies

*Since 2018, ECOWAS has been committed to agroecological transition in West Africa through its Agroecology Programme. The programme was designed as an integrated response to the major challenges facing the West African agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector and as a means of promoting farmers' knowledge. ECOWAS welcomes the momentum that has been generated, and which has sparked great enthusiasm and commitment among stakeholders. Today, the challenge is to scale up achievements.*

The Programme was implemented through 15 pilot projects, 13 tripartite partnerships, 13 training centres, 15 consultation frameworks and 15 national correspondents to facilitate the implementation of actions and the integration of lessons learned into national policies. It has therefore laid the foundations for a

sustainable agroecological transformation of production systems in the 15 ECOWAS member states. It has helped to anchor local dynamics while laying the foundations for a regional alliance for sustainable agriculture, focusing on producer participation and collective innovation. Going



forward, national and regional initiatives must be unified alongside the mobilisation of flexible financial resources tailored to stakeholders' realities.

With environmental and socio-economic pressures intensifying, the achievements of the Agroecology Programme will serve as a catalyst for strengthening the resilience of family farms and accelerating the adoption of ecosystem-friendly practices. The results will also enrich the process of revising the ECOWAS Regional Agricultural Policy for the next ten (10) years (ECOWAP 2035), providing concrete guidance for a more sustainable, inclusive and self-sufficient West African agriculture.

From this perspective, ECOWAS is working to consolidate, expand and sustain the programme's achievements through the EU-funded DESIRA+ West Africa initiative, which promotes and scales up innovations developed over the past seven (07)

years. The aim is to help increase producers' incomes and strengthen their resilience to climate change.



## Antimicrobial Resistance: Emerging Trends in West Africa

*Antibiotic resistance is increasingly becoming a global public health concern, mainly due to the emergence of antimicrobial resistance and the inadequate discovery of new treatments to meet the challenge. Therefore, and following the call by OMSA, WHO and FAO for countries to fight this scourge in a coordinated manner under the 'One Health' concept, the ECOWAS Regional Veterinary Committee (CVR) devoted its sixth meeting, held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2025, to this very issue.*



Described as a 'silent pandemic', antibiotic resistance is considered by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to be one of the ten greatest threats to public health worldwide. It is referred to by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) as one of the greatest health challenges of our time, becoming a major cause of death.

Like efforts being made elsewhere around the world, discussions at the sixth meeting of the CVR laid the groundwork for the need to review the status of this fight. Facilitated by the ECOWAS Regional Animal Health Centre (RAHC), directors of veterinary services, presidents of state veterinary associations and resource persons from regional and international institutions such as UEMOA, ECOWAS and OIE shared experiences that could support a concerted regional effort.

Discussions highlighted the existence, in most countries, of

legislation and regulations governing the veterinary profession, production, marketing, importation, distribution and use of veterinary medicines. However, the fight against antimicrobial resistance is not sufficiently addressed. Furthermore, each country has a strategy to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR) with varying levels of implementation.

These findings led participants to agree on the urgent need for both national and regional responses. This involves, in particular, (i) strengthening advocacy with political authorities with a view to adopting strong measures to combat AMR (advocacy note), (ii) raising awareness among all stakeholders to take strong action (communication plan), (iii) developing and implementing a regional strategic plan to combat AMR (situational analysis), (iv) enhancing the capacities of veterinary services and laboratories for the prevention, control and surveillance of AMR (training, veterinary networks, equipment, research, etc.), and (v) sourcing and mobilising the necessary financial resources.

Combating antimicrobial resistance is a collaborative approach based on the integrated principle of 'One Health' whereby all stakeholders (Member States, ECOWAS and partner institutions) must contribute to effectively tackling antibiotic resistance in the region. Vaccines that prevent bacterial or viral infections leading to secondary bacterial infections should become part of a multi-pronged approach to reduce antibiotic use while protecting animal health and welfare.



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