



National committees as a phytosanitary governance innovation in West Africa: Lessons learned from SyRIMAO project

The capitalization note analyzes the institutional framework of the SyRIMAO project, set up to control fruit flies in West Africa. It highlights how the creation of national committees, supported by strong institutional anchorage and the commitment of States, has strengthened governance and coordination, despite funding challenges. The sustainability of this model depends on financial autonomy and the extension of its scope to other agricultural sectors.

Introduction

The need for a coordinated institutional response to the fight against fruit fly in West Africa

West Africa faces a major agricultural threat due to the proliferation of fruit flies, which cause production losses estimated between 50 and 80%. For the mango sector, these pests have resulted in considerable financial losses, approaching 9 million euros, mainly due to interceptions of shipments at the borders of the European Union. In response, the Fruit Fly Control Project (PLMF) was initiated in ECOWAS countries for the development of control technologies and an orchard monitoring system. This first initiative has had significant achievements but has also revealed major challenges, institutional, organizational, and technical. Added to this was a strong dependence on

external funding and the absence of sustainable financial mechanisms. It is to overcome these obstacles that the Innovative Regional System for the Control of Fruit Flies in West Africa (SyRIMAO) was designed, with the objective, among others, to build an integrated and sustainable institutional framework of governance of the sector. This note aims to share the lessons learned from this large-scale sub-regional experience. It is based on a review of national and regional activity reports, online interviews with national actors responsible for implementing project activities at various levels and field visits in three countries.

Synthesis of the experience

Multi-actor national spaces are created, institutionalized and supported

Faced with the challenges left by the PLMF, the SyRIMAO adopted an approach focused on institutional strengthening and governance. The intervention aimed to build an integrated system linking the regional and national levels to ensure effective governance, smooth coordination, and sustainable capacity building. One of the first actions was the creation and operationalization of **National Committees (NC)** composed of representatives of ministries, phytosanitary services, farmers organizations, and civil society in member countries. Their attributions is articulated generally around the coordination, planning, capacity building, and mobilization of funding for the control of fruit flies only in some countries, and in addition to other mango pests in others. More operationally, the CN identifies research challenges and needs, oversees the research activities (technological development, product approval), surveillance of infestations in orchards, organization (launch and closing) of campaigns, strengthening phytosanitary governance, and strengthening the structuring of the sector (establishment of mechanisms, support à setting up interprofessional organizations). The operation of the committees is punctuated by statutory meetings, which are essential to their activities. These include a general assembly, a planning workshop, and a review workshop. The interprofessional organizations bringing together producers, processors, and traders are considered legitimate to represent the direct players in the sector in the national committees. SYRIMAO supported the structuring and improvement of governance within interprofessional organizations for this purpose, in order to enable them to play their part well.

SyRIMAO also placed particular emphasis on the **capacity building of national institutions**. Training was provided to national committees and their teams on planning tools (AWPB), monitoring and evaluation, procurement and financial reporting, with a view to harmonizing national procedures with those of ECOWAS.



Meeting of the national committee for the fight against fruit flies
Source: 2023 Annual Report, Nigeria

The project supported **the development of Annual Work Plans and Budgets (AWPB)** by each country and initiated, in six pilot countries (Guinea, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, and Togo), the establishment of **national support funds**.

In addition, the project introduced **accountability mechanisms** through regular reports to promote **transparency and good governance and annual audits** of each National Committee's expenditure. The completion of the planning and of **reporting** conditions the disbursement of funding. At the regional level, a Technical Committee composed of experts was established to validate the research protocols, supervise their execution and guarantee overall coherence of interventions.



EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST FRUIT FLIES
SOURCE: 2024 ANNUAL REPORT, BURKINA FASO

From the creation of national committees to inclusive management marked by accountability

SyRIMAO's intervention has produced significant results. **15 national committees** have now created, and for many are functional. They are endowed with **financial autonomy** thanks to subsidies from the States and contributions from partners. The majority of committees are created by ministerial or interministerial decrees and very often housed within the ministries of agriculture. These committees have served as a **platform to bring together and organize the various players in the sector**, including the private sector, producer associations, and traders.

The governance and monitoring of national committees have been improved by **digitalization**. The introduction of harmonized digital tools has increased the countries' quarterly reporting rate from 53% in 2021 to 87% in 2024. Finally, significant progress has been made in terms of **financial autonomy**. Three mechanisms of financing based on the recovery of export taxes are operational, and three others are being put in place, in particular thanks to the involvement of the ministries of commerce and finance.

Interbranch organizations are at **different levels of institutional maturity in the countries**.

In some countries like Togo, the recognition process is still ongoing. In others like Côte d'Ivoire, this recognition occurred in 2024, well after the establishment of the National Committee, thus requiring an update of the act of its creation. In some cases, such as in Burkina Faso where the interbranch organization has been established for a long time, it fully participates in the National Committee.

Capacity building has also been a notable success.

The training of more than 120 national executives in planning allowed 14 of the 15 countries to develop PTBA completely from the second year. In addition, 1243 agents from the public and private sectors were trained on phytosanitary standards and risks, and **seven partnerships** were established with input suppliers in order to facilitate access to producers.

However, it should be noted that the implementation of certain activities (meetings, follow-up visits, seasonal monitoring etc.) could not be carried out regularly due to insufficient and delays in the disbursement of funds. This led to demotivation among some actors and members of the committees.



General Assembly of the National Committee for the Fight against Fruit Flies in Niger
Source: 2024 Annual Report, Niger

Lessons

Success factors

Several factors explain the success of SyRIMAO in the implementation of this organizational model for combating fruit flies in many countries. **Solid institutional anchoring** and **the commitment of government actors** were decisive in consolidating the **political and technical legitimacy** of the project. The integration of the committees into the national structures favored the **synergies with existing agricultural policies**. Another key factor was the freedom left to institutions to designate their representatives within the committees. This established a **climate of trust** and reduced conflicts. Finally, the allocation of a monthly allowance to members played a crucial role in their **motivation and their mobilization for the implementation of activities**.

The main constraints identified are **the inadequacy and the delay in the disbursement of funds** by the technical and financial partners due to the complexity and requirements of the procedures.

These delays have not only disrupted the schedule of critical seasonal activities but have also generated demotivation among the actors involved in the project. In addition to the unavailability of resources, the **frequent replacement of members** due to professional mobility and renewals of the governance bodies of the associations has also been cited as factors of disturbance. The administrative burden in the processes of setting up endogenous financing mechanisms is also another challenge for financial autonomy.

Sustainability conditions

To ensure the sustainability of the system after the SyRIMAO project, several conditions must be met. The **respect for the regular holding of statutory meetings of the committees** is essential to maintaining the proactivity of stakeholders and anticipating problems in the sector.

Ensuring continued financial autonomy is also crucial. For this, local fund-raising mechanisms through export taxes must be made strictly effective. **Rotation at the head of committees** and **inclusiveness of governance** are also conditions to ensure good management and innovation.



Packaged mango

Conditions for scaling up

Scaling up such a system in other sectors requires well structuring the latter. At the national level, a **strong commitment from governments** is essential. This commitment must translate into decrees creating a **clear institutional anchoring**, a **participatory mode of operation**, a **local funding mechanism**, and a **motivation system for the actors**.

Perspectives and recommendations

Perspectives

The prospects for sustaining the system are promising. It is planned

- **To integrate the new interprofessions**, once formalized, as members in the national committees to ensure more inclusive governance of the sector.
- **To broaden the scope of action of national committees** beyond the fruit and vegetable sector to make them reference structures for the coordination of other sectors. Depending on the context, the creation of specialized committees by sector (food crops, horticulture) within the national committees could be an option, while maintaining the inclusive governance established by SyRIMAO.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- **To the countries:** Governments must ensure compliance with the statutes of the committees, particularly about the renewal of governing bodies. It is also crucial to evaluate the system in place to correct its shortcomings, mobilizing all relevant ministries and integrating a component of fundraising to ensure sustainable financial autonomy.

- **To ECOWAS:** To ensure institutional sustainability, it is suggested that existing committees be perpetuated and their mandate extended to other agricultural sectors, and to other pests, while providing them with continuous capacity building.
- **To technical and financial partners:** It is imperative to streamline financial procedures and further strengthen the financial management capacities of local actors to allow the timely transfer of funds, so as not to hinder the implementation of seasonal activities. The establishment of an annual regional consultation framework between the committees is also recommended to promote the sharing of experiences.





Financial partners



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