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POLICY BRIEF

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SUPPORTING CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

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INTRODUCTION: CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD IN WEST AFRICA

According to the Notre Dame -Global Adaptation Index (ND GAIN), nine countries in the ECOWAS-CILSS region are among the 30 most vulnerable in the world to future climate change[1]. Indeed, for West Africa, climate change is already a reality that makes the maintenance of various agricultural systems increasingly precarious. These changes will continue during the 21st century and beyond, leading to an increase in inter-annual climate variability and in the occurrence and intensity of extreme climate events. In particular, the main climate models predict a clear reduction in rainfall in the rainiest areas (western Sahel), and possible increases in the driest areas (eastern Sahel). Beyond the simple accumulation of rainfall, the distribution of rainfall will tend towards an intensification and regrouping, resulting in a late start and early end of the rainy season with potential breaks in the middle, thus leading to a high vulnerability of rainfed crops, hence the vulnerability of rainfed agriculture. More broadly, changes in the middle and extreme values of climate parameters, increase in frequency of extreme weather and climate events such as floods, droughts, heat waves, will result in reduced agricultural yields in West Africa. By 2050, modeling results show an overall reduction in average yields of 12% (millet), 16% (sorghum), 20% (maize) and 25% (rice) for the main food crops. Groundnut and cowpea yields could decline by up to 25% and 30%, respectively, by 2030. Cash crops (cocoa, cotton, coffee, etc.) will not be spared by these yield changes either. These changes compromise the food security and livelihoods of West African populations. They will also have economic repercussions, with a reduction in GDP of between 3.7 and 11.7% - at least in the absence of adaptation interventions in key socio-economic sectors, including agriculture[2].

VARIOUS PRACTICES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO STRENGTHENING THE ADAPTATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Since the adoption of ECOWAP in 2005, the consideration of climate issues in regional agricultural policies (in the sense of agro-sylvo-pastoral) has progressed considerably. In addition, regional climate efforts are now under the umbrella of the ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy (RCS), adopted in 2022, whose objective is to consolidate and complement regional climate actions that are already conducted at the sectoral level in order to structure regional climate action within a common framework. On the one hand, ECOWAP was revised in 2016 with the adoption of a Strategic Policy Framework for 2025, allowing for a first integration of climate issues. In addition, in response to the impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity in West Africa, particularly on small-scale producers, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has developed a financial mechanism integrated with the Regional Fund for Agriculture and Food (RFAF) called the West African Initiative for Climate-Smart Agriculture (WAICSA).

[1] ND Global Adaptation Index Project, 2020 : https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/

[2] http://www.climatestrategy.ecowas.int/images/documentation/Strategie_Regionale_Climat_CEDEAO_avril%202022_FINALE.PDF

In the field, adaptation in the agricultural sector encompasses different sets of practices implemented at various scales - plot, farm, watershed, industry, country - and which can be combined. These practices can be part of agroecology (AE) or Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA). Both approaches have a strong potential for multi-scale climate resilience. This is why they are included in the climate intervention frameworks of ECOWAS and its Member States. Agroecology aims to help family farmers cope with difficult production conditions - soil degradation, climatic instability, low and irregular yields - with practices that enhance the potential of ecosystems and contribute to their restoration. CSA is based on three (03) principles that must be achieved jointly: i) increased productivity, ii) resilience to climate change, and iii) reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Although the two (02) concepts are based on different philosophies, the delineations between AE and CSA are less clear-cut when one looks at the practices that underlie them, and many points of convergence appear in the field. For example, both CSA and AE promote agroforestry, as well as soil and water conservation techniques (zai or half-moons, etc.). ECOWAS recognizes the potential of both CSA and AE in the fight against climate change, both of which are included in the climate intervention frameworks of ECOWAS and its Member States (WAICSA), and wishes to encourage the cross-cutting nature of AE and CSA projects for the benefit of greater adaptation. It thus supports the scaling up of AE practices that take into account vulnerabilities linked to climate change and of CSA practices that are anchored in the territories and promote sustainable development and the empowerment of small producers.

Whether we are talking about AE or CSA, the issues of capitalization and scaling up are of great importance. If the feedback from the pilot projects implemented between 2020 and 2022 within the framework of GCCA+ WA has shown that spontaneous dissemination is possible within mutual knowledge networks, provided that the innovations or good practices have tangible results, there is a strong need to promote and support the dissemination and replication of these practices on a larger scale. This implies identifying the scope of these good practices, but also the necessary socio-economic conditions and the obstacles to be overcome. This note to decision- makers aims to share these experiences and draw lessons for local, national and regional public policies.

CAPACITY BUILDING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE IN WEST AFRICA

Capacity building is an important step to promote the transmission and adoption of innovations, and to anchor changes in practices in order to strengthen the adaptive capacity of the agricultural world. It has been emphasized on several occasions that producers, intermediaries, civil society organizations, farmers' organizations and decentralized government services need to be better informed and to develop their skills on climate issues. Furthermore, capacity building is often considered a «no regret» action as it can have benefits regardless of the actual level of climate change.

SHARING OF FIELD EXPERIENCES DEVELOPED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF GCCA+ WA: TAKEAWAYS AND MULTIPLE SCALES LEVERS

Adaptive capacity building activities thus run through most of the pilot projects that have been implemented between 2020 and 2022 under the GCCA+ WA. Several capacity building mechanisms have proven their worth and deserve to be highlighted here. Several pilot projects are based on peer-to-peer dissemination of innovations. For example, relay farmer systems have been tested.

Experienced solution - COUNTRY	**Disseminate information via relay farmers - NIGER** (pilot project holder: Mooriben)**, BENIN** (Eclosio)

Professional organizations and CSOs are important partners for the wider dissemination of CSA and AE practices

Necessary conditions	The prior existence of networks/unions/cooperatives of farmers and peasants makes it easier to organize capacity building of final beneficiaries; a supportive community context is facilitating to organize a successful demonstration of «champion» farmers and peasants of CSA and AE practices.
Barriers to implementation	Identifying these «champions» is not always easy. Indeed, they must have both pedagogical and technical skills. The provision of compensation to reward the involvement of the relays can complicate the system
Policy levers to encourage its implementation	**Locale :** Pre-identify (i) producer organizations and networks, (ii) farmer «champions» who can drive capacity building within these networks and communities Set up monitoring systems at the level of producer organizations to identify and report on emerging good practices, while involving local authorities **Nationale :** Train and encourage agricultural advisory services to work with endogenous relays Promote the establishment of producer unions as relevant and autonomous actors for the dissemination of knowledge **Régionale :** Promote the practice of using endogenous relays in calls for projects; make use of them in the deployment of capacity building actions planned by the RCS

Other approaches focus on the co-construction of innovations with farmers, based on strong farmer involvement. The school field is a place for exchanging experiences and knowledge where farmers who share the same interests research, discuss and make decisions on the management of a field based on its real situation

Experienced solution - COUNTRY	**Farmer Field Schools** (FFS) **and Farmer-to-Farmer popularization** (FFP)

The FFS values the expertise of the producer and puts him at the center of all the steps of the training: diagnosis of the problems, identification and experimentation of the best solutions, evaluation of the results obtained and post-FFS actions.

Necessary conditions	FFS: Building a body of knowledge on agroecological practices; identification and training of model farmers to train their entourage; provision of facilitators. Farmers need a strong link with development agents. The provision of simple and appropriate reference materials. Farmer trainers should be drawn from the community and selected on the basis of their skills and interest in transmitting and exchanging information, not just on the basis of their agricultural know-how
Barriers to implementation	Challenge of making the process sustainable.
Policy levers to encourage its implementation	**Local:** collaboration with local authorities is useful in order to manage possible land issues for the establishment of the school field Farmers and local institutions should have a joint role in the selection of farmer trainers and in their monitoring and evaluation. **National:** ensure a network of school fields in the territory, for example by presenting the practice in agronomy schools. **Regional:** encourage the development of skills in regional research centers on agroecological practices to support these school field systems.

Finally, the participatory workshops also ensure a better appropriation of knowledge on climate issues and adaptation to climate change at the local level, through action research.

Experienced solution - COUNTRY	**Participatory Analysis of Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change** (PAVACC) **approaches in - CAP VERT** (pilot project leaders: COSPE and ADPM)

The involvement of communities in the climate diagnoses aims to raise their awareness of vulnerability issues, but also to mobilize their knowledge of their own environment, in contexts where more standardized observation data are rare or not easily accessible.

Necessary conditions	Dissemination of methodologies and financing of diagnostic workshops
Barriers to implementation	Obstacles related to the mistrust or lassitude of local farmers with regard to the multiplicity of participatory approaches
Policy levers to encourage its implementation	**Local:** foster the link between beneficiaries and local authorities **National:** develop a national vulnerability assessment with a regional resolution to feed into these approaches **Regional:** fund vulnerability studies of the agricultural sector at different scales, to provide a knowledge base.

TAKEAWAYS FOR ECOWAS AND ITS MEMBER STATES

While training remains the most commonly adopted method for disseminating good practices, several other modalities can be used for capacity building in agricultural adaptation to climate change: learning by doing and experimentation in the farming environment; awareness-raising approaches, using various media and formats (participatory workshops, mobilization of community radios, awareness-raising «caravans,» etc.); support from research organizations, etc. While some capacity building techniques are «classic» for agricultural capacity building, they have proven their worth in raising awareness among agricultural stakeholders. This capacity building should not be limited to farmers and peasants. For authorities and decision-makers, capacity building can increase ownership, coordination and integration of adaptation solutions into their planning. The adoption of new agricultural practices requires strong and sustainable support beyond the life of the CSA and AE pilot projects.

At the regional level, ECOWAS could continue to encourage regional research centers to train agricultural advisors[3], both public and private, to ensure better transmission of knowledge related to the main vulnerabilities linked to climate change and good CSA and AE practices, as well as learning about integrated climate, soil and crop management techniques.

- The operationalization of these training centers is an integral part of the implementation of the Regional Agricultural Policy (Ecowap), which aims to significantly transform agriculture in West Africa by supporting family farms in the agro-ecological transition.

- In terms of financing, the challenge is to operationalize the WAICSA, which aims to provide the Technical Assistance Facility to financial intermediaries to design loan products that integrate CSA conditionality and guide smallholders in implementing CSA practices adapted to the local context.

At the national level, the national agricultural advisory services could be more encouraged to take over to ensure a wider dissemination of good practices. The number of agricultural advisors trained in climate issues and adaptation solutions under the CSA or AE is too small compared to the needs, and prominently male.

[3] In this regard, the Ecowas Commission proceeded on November 3, 2022 in Cotonou, Benin, to the official launch of the activities of 15 specialized training centers selected and accredited for the improvement of their training offers in agroecology.

#ECOWAP2025

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