



### WEST AFRICAN FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS' POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS\*

*Farmers' organizations ("FOs": farmers' and/or stock farmers' associations, cooperatives or unions) have particular influence in sub-Saharan civil society, especially in West Africa. Inasmuch as the majority of the population is involved in agriculture, they have the power of numbers. In addition, they are solidly anchored and structured in a representative manner from village to state level and beyond. Does this mean that the government authorities lend them an attentive ear?*

Long development's poor cousin, agriculture has become the subject of renewed interest from the international community and African States. The 2008 food crisis merely confirmed this shift in that, for many, it revealed a deficit of regulation and investment in this sector. The current discussions on agricultural commodity price volatility, notably within the G20, also lean in this direction. After the years marked by structural adjustment plans and State withdrawal from economies, the first decade of the 2000s seems to have been one of rehabilitation of public policies in Africa, especially in the agricultural sector. In Maputo in 2003, the African States committed to devoting 10% of their budgets to agriculture. Sub-regionally, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) began elaborating a common agricultural policy, the ECOWAP, for its member-States in 2003. As early as 2001, countries such as Senegal were deliberating major agricultural policy decisions inscribed in law.

Simultaneously with these changes, farmers' organizations (FOs)—which had structured themselves amply following the liberalization in the 1980s—seem to have attained the status of "social partners" for the authorities in most countries, going so far as to collaborate on policy conception. This can be seen in their noted participation in elaborating the ECOWAP and Senegal's and Mali's agricultural framework laws.

Shored up by an institution-building process underway and facing the rehabilitation of agricultural policy, do West African FOs now have a favorable environment in which to influence public policy in line with their demands?

This issue first describes the rise of FOs and their accomplishments in the field of policy negotiation, focusing in more depth on a few revealing examples. It then attempts to identify a few key conditions—both within and outside FOs—necessary for their demands to be considered. Let us specify from the outset the limitations of this exercise. As some authors state, it is not "possible to determine organizations' capacity to have a significant and lasting influence over national and supranational decision-making centers"<sup>[R6]</sup> in part because of the lack of hindsight and also because "the scope of strategies [...] to influence public policy has not yet been sufficiently documented and analyzed" <sup>[R1]</sup>. We hope that this paper provides an overview of existing work and invites further study.

## 1. A Brief History of Farmers' Demands

### A. The Rise of a Farmers' Movement in West Africa Against a Backdrop of Liberalization

**From the post-colonial State to the minimal State.** The financial crisis that struck African States in the 1980s had very deep-reaching consequences, both economic and political. Under pressure from their creditors (the World Bank and International Monetary Fund), African States made severe structural adjustments. Out of concern to cut spending, they passed suddenly from interventionism to laissez-faireism, promoting State withdrawal and handing off responsibilities previously assigned to the government to the private sector (including FOs). West African countries are still among those that invest the least in their agricultural systems worldwide even though this sector employs the majority of their populations,

contributes significantly to gross domestic product, and covers most of their domestic food needs.

**Economies with very little protection.** This mutation in the internal economic model, marked by widespread and rapid liberalization, was coupled with unilateral tariff disarmament at the borders. The structural adjustment programs contained clauses unilaterally reducing or even eliminating many customs protections in West African countries. At the same time, the multilateral negotiations at the WTO resulted in only partial reductions in the export support practiced by the major world exporters, penalizing African production chains. To such an extent that the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) is, paradoxically, one of the least protected regions of

the world today. This aspect partially explains the heavy investment of West African farmers' organizations in regional integration and trade policy issues, which are seen as decisive in creating a promising trade environment for farmers.

#### **Worsened production conditions for smallholder farmers.**

Since then, smallholder farmers' living and farming conditions have worsened overall. The transfer of responsibilities from the public to the private domain was generally not accompanied by transfers of funds, and generally ignored organizations' institutional and human capabilities to take over from the government. In this way, farmers have for thirty or so years been faced with deregulated markets widely open to competition from domestic and international private operators. Official development assistance has been inadequate in quantity and insufficiently coordinated or consistent to compensate for the withdrawal of the State and produce lasting, structural effects. In addition, by highlighting poverty alleviation in many of its programs, ODA perpetuates a vision of smallholder farming as a social issue.

**The multiplication and consolidation of FOs.** The "peasant movement" that some authors deemed non-existent in the 1980s really took off in West Africa in the context of these changes [R6]. The rapid multiplication of farmers' organizations, their grouping into territorial bodies or entities focusing on a crop is an undeniable fact. While FOs' situations and structures vary from

#### **B. Farmers' Demands Against the Grain**

**"Defensive" structures.** While they have in some way benefited from this liberalization, FOs have also structured themselves in response to its harmful effects. Policy decisions were generally made in the direction of lowering spending in the agricultural sector and promoting private investment, which lead to a neglect of food crops and smallholder farms. This policy of promoting a model summarily described as "agri-business"—deemed more productive than "traditional" agriculture—has triggered and is still triggering a defense of smallholder farming among FOs.

**The defense of smallholder farming.** "Smallholder farming refers to agricultural systems in which there is a strong tie between economic activities and family structure. This link is reflected in decisions on the choice of activities, work organization, and the transmission of inheritances. Smallholder farms are very diverse [...]. This form of agriculture is different from other forms of agriculture that can be described as capitalist in the sense that one owner provides the capital, employs workers and seeks to turn a profit from the capital invested rather than from the work invested," (*Quelles politiques publiques pour les agricultures familiales du Sud*, C2A, 2010). The defense of smallholder farming notably claims that this model is able to provide jobs and fight the rural exodus, has higher per hectare productivity, is able to supply local and distant markets, is better able to adapt and more resistant to weather hazards, and is better suited to sustainable natural resource management. In actuality, the smallholder farm concept covers a very wide range of production structures with highly diverse evolution dynamics, ranging from very small, multi-activity farms without production

country to country, one can indeed see a mass peasant movement today, organized from village level to the national (umbrella organizations) and sub-regional (ROPPA, the Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles d'Afrique de l'Ouest, Billital Maroobé, West African stock farmers' organization network) levels, progressively joining a continental (PAFFO, the Pan African Farmers Forum) and even international (Via Campesina, for example) dynamic. On the policy level, civil society has also been promoted in West Africa, providing FOs with arenas of expression or even influence. FOs sometimes question the legitimacy of other civil society organizations and their platforms to address agricultural issues.

**Risk of instrumentalization.** The expression "farmers' movement"—while it reflects the mobilization of many FOs and their advance toward unity—should not, however, obscure the great disparities that still exist between countries and sectors, or the "centrifugal forces" that perpetuate a degree of fragmentation. Many projects, programs, governments and donors see FOs as tools for development rather than as social movements. This is evidenced by the current trend of encouraging the structuring of FOs by commodity chain and ignoring "generalist" FOs in the name of a vision of development centered on economic issues alone, farm specialization, and the limiting of FOs' political power restricting their fields of action to the provision of economic services [R4].

means other than labor that are only weakly inserted in the market to holdings of substantial size, strongly inserted into the market, that have significant production capacity and use outside labor—farms focusing on household self-consumption, or local food product markets, or even cash crops and international markets.

**The right to food sovereignty.** Another of the peasant movement's fundamental demands is countries' and regions' right to "food sovereignty." Conceived by Via Campesina, this notion is the opposite of the food dependency arising from the expansion of agricultural imports and global competition. It favors local production and seeks to defend as a right the possibility of States to intervene in the agricultural sector, including in ways currently prohibited by World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. This demand, strongly relayed by FOs at the sub-regional level (ECOWAS), guides their position on agricultural policy (ECOWAP) and trade policy (Common External Tariff [CET], Economic Partnership Agreements [EPAs]) and should be viewed in light of the very low levels of market protection in Africa. It is also based on the finding that many industrialized countries have developed their agricultural systems by combining market protections and interventionist agricultural policy.

**A vision that goes beyond strictly economic issues.** In short, in countries where nearly three-quarters of the population earns its living from farming, the farming model issue is a societal choice. FOs defend a vision of agriculture and of rural life that is sometimes different from the authorities' vision. This is why the dialogue between FOs and government authorities, while often

policed, can cover deep-seated differences. This is also why, even though major strides have been made in listening to farmers' demands, accomplishments are still fragile. Many States view smallholder farms from a social perspective and rely on agribusiness to provide agriculture's economic development and

cover growing food needs. For their part, FOs put forth the economic and productive efficiency of smallholder farms and their ability to respond to economic, social and environmental challenges simultaneously.

## 2. The Strengthening of Social Dialogue over the Last Decade

### A. Growing and Diverse Participation of FOs in National Policy (the Senegal Example)

It is difficult to make unequivocal statements about FOs' relationships with their governments over the past decade. The situation is very different depending on the country, decision-making center, subject matter and period of time (nothing is ever definitive). At most, we can note that significant progress has been made recently, and that this progress gives FOs hope and raises questions for them. Unable to cover the full diversity of situations here, we shall examine in particular the case of Senegal as it is both a pioneer in some areas related to FOs and the site of symptomatic difficulties.

**Exemplary advocacy by the CNCR for the ASPFL?** One often commented upon example of progress due to social dialogue is the process that led to the passing of the agro-sylvo-pastoral framework law (ASPFL) in Senegal [R5]. The Senegalese government wanted to develop a roadmap for the long-term development of agriculture. The CNCR, a historic Senegalese farmers' union, was invited to the negotiating table and managed to convince the highest authorities of the State to open a national debate on the subject and entrust the running of the debate to the CNCR. The elaboration of a framework law for agricultural development, engaging the State over the long term, was a first in West Africa. It showed a clearer than usual mobilization of the authorities in this field. The way in which the process was conducted was in many ways exemplary: as a result of this agreement with the CNCR, the authorities agreed to adapt the initial agenda and finance its animation. In the end, the ASPFL incorporated many of the FOs' proposals when it was enacted in 2004, including the recognition of smallholder farming and the institutionalization of peasant consultation. A similar exercise was undertaken in Mali with the definition and adoption of the Agricultural Framework Law. In this case, FOs were entrusted with running the discussion process. There are now similar initiatives underway in Ivory Coast, Benin, Togo and Burkina Faso.

**Today, the issues focus on implementing these laws.** In the three years following its enactment, very few ASPFL application decrees were published. The national consultation framework established by this law has not met to date. Requiring massive, sustained investments over time, application of this law seems to lack the necessary means and political will. The problem of a text

obtained by FOs that ultimately struggles to be applied is a frequent occurrence, which we shall discuss later. In Mali, there are now two "poles of elaboration" for agricultural policy: the AFL executive secretariat and the Ministry of Agriculture that is responsible for defining the PNISA in the framework of ECOWAP/CAADP implementation.

**Ambiguities around land issues.** Among other things, FOs are not always heard as attentively, and some subjects seem to resist any democratic debate. Not the most trifling issues either. In Senegal, the issue of land tenure is emblematic [R2]. We know the strategic importance of this production factor for both the State and farmers. During the reflections on the ASPFL, while the discussions advanced on all other subjects, they ran up against the land issue. To save the negotiations, FOs and the authorities agreed to leave this issue out of the framework law and postpone the debate on the issue. In the end, it would seem that the Executive Committee created a hidden parallel working group on land reform from which civil society organizations were excluded.

**Economic successes.** For all that, West African FOs have distinguished themselves with often highly successful contributions to trade policy. In Senegal, faced with competition from imported onions during the selling periods for local crops, farmers wanted to establish greater regulation. After considerable effort, they obtained from the Market Regulation Agency - MRA (under the authority of the Ministry of Trade) the establishment of a consultative onion monitoring committee bringing together FOs, the major importers, traders' associations, consumer groups, the MRA, and State technical services. At the request of the "Onion Committee" and based on the special safeguard provisions in the agreement on agriculture in the GATT, the Senegalese government declared a freeze on imports during the local onion marketing period. This measure, later extended, allowed farmers' incomes to rise significantly and national output to nearly double between 2003 and 2007. The system has evolved into an interbranch association under the auspices of the State. Many examples of this type can be found for various crops in neighboring countries (Guinea, Burkina Faso, etc.). They helped change many observers' perception of FOs by proving that they were able to conduct major operations and significantly affect national economies.

### B. The Remarkable Emergence of FOs on the Regional Scene

A striking fact of the past ten years linked to the acceleration of the regional integration process in West Africa is the emergence of FOs on the "supranational" scene and the active role they

have played there. ROPPA's remarkable participation in the elaboration of the ECOWAP, ECOWAS's common agricultural policy, is a good illustration of this.

**ROPPA's active participation in elaborating the ECOWAP.** From the formulation stage, ECOWAS offered ROPPA a position on the "task force," the steering body that included representatives of the State and regional actors. This body was asked to propose regional and national scenarios through participatory consultation processes. In this way, ROPPA, its member FOs (national platforms) and RECAO (the Réseau des chambres d'agriculture d'Afrique de l'Ouest) were able to give workshops lasting several days in their respective bases. Several overarching principles were ultimately able to be communicated up from the grassroots and then approved, in particular recognition of family farms, the promotion of food sovereignty, regional preference, and differentiated protection. As limitations, one can regret a lack of clear position, open to multiple options, in regard to both the outlines of smallholder farming and the content of food sovereignty. Thus, the choice of which agricultural model to promote was not made clearly and definitively. Similarly, the preference for local products was shattered by the first food crisis (2008). Finally, the question of implementation remains unresolved, implying FOs' additional investment in details, and the gathering of the necessary resources. The big challenge facing FOs will be how to move from a "co-designer" role to that of "co-implementer" in regard to ECOWAP [R1].

**ROPPA's relative contribution to raising ECOWAS's customs duties.** Early on, ROPPA sought to ensure coherence between agricultural and trade policies as these two tools must work together to support smallholder farming. It was therefore very active on the issue of ECOWAS's Common External Tariff. Believing that opening markets to agricultural imports penalizes local agriculture, and taking note of a regional body with trade

authority, FOs campaigned, via ROPPA, for an increase in customs tariffs in the framework of ECOWAS. Joining the position of the regional "giant," Nigeria, in favor of increased protection, FOs obtained — albeit on the cheap — the establishment of a tariff band more heavily taxing so-called "sensitive" imported products (a 5<sup>th</sup> band). But this victory is relative inasmuch as the categorization of sensitive products for this 5<sup>th</sup> band is not yet complete and will require case-by-case negotiations, and ROPPA's challenge is to mobilize the right skills to work on this highly technical subject.

**ROPPA's role in blocking the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).** For equivalent reasons, ROPPA began work on EPAs [R3]. Indeed, these agreements to liberalize trade between the ECOWAS zone and its largest trading partner, the European Union, encounter the same reluctance among farmers. On this subject, ROPPA joined a vast civil society movement. Many campaigns, events and delays contributed to the suspension of these agreements today, whereas the Cotonou Agreements that had previously governed trade between the two regions became obsolete at the end of 2007.

These three examples show ROPPA's activism and relative success on the regional level. The action of the sub-regional stock farmers' network Billital Maroobé, particularly on transhumance-related issues, land law harmonization and responding to food crises in pastoral areas, should also be emphasized. However, while regional integration in West Africa is growing and offers opportunities that FOs can grasp, several authors point out that the dominant level is still the State, and that the policies decided on the level of ECOWAS currently seem little restrictive.

### C. FOs' Ambition to Participate in International Negotiations

**A global balance of power to Africa's disadvantage.** Having realized the importance of trade policy issues for the agricultural economy of West African countries, FOs rapidly took an interest in the negotiations underway at the WTO. Nevertheless, overall, their influence in these discussions remains limited due to African States' limited power on the international scene. On the surface, the international cotton negotiations are an exception [R9]. In the grip of an unfavorable international context, African cotton growers wanted to denounce the subsidies granted to their European and American competitors in the "Bobo Dioulasso Call" (2001). The economic interest of the cotton industry for several African governments led them to endorse the motion and bring the matter before the WTO. Relayed by a vast mobilization campaign orchestrated by NGOs, this paralyzed the negotiations and helped bring about (or served as an excuse for) the failure of the Ministerial Conference in Cancun. In the end, this operation is viewed differently by different actors. Although it did make it possible to carry the expression of some African voices to the highest level, it was also manipulated by some States (emerging markets in particular) and NGOs, and fermented division among farmers.

**A promising dynamic can be seen on the continental level.** Through their involvement in decisions on WTO agreements and EPAs, FOs have become aware of the dangers of splintering debates by country and of the interest in "standing together" on the African continent. This position was bolstered by the 2008 food crisis. Starting in 2003, they therefore became involved in the formulation of NEPAD and the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). For four regional organizations in West Africa (ROPPA), Central Africa (the Plateforme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Central, PROPAC), East Africa (the East African Farmers Federation, EAFF) and Southern Africa (the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions, SACAU), this was their first experience collaborating with each other. Several meetings followed, joint positions were taken in the context of the EPA negotiations, and then the Union Maghrébine des Agricultures (UMAGRI) representing Northern Africa joined the movement. The conditions were then in place for the birth of the pan-African organization, PAFFO, in 2010. The African Union strongly supported these efforts, which augurs well for FO participation at this level. However the continental body will also need to be strengthened.

### 3. The Conditions for Better Inclusion of Farmers' Demands in Public Policies

#### A. The Authorities' Political Determination

**Applying laws.** Over time, we have seen the authorities become more open to social dialogue. It is not rare that FOs are invited to attend decision-making bodies at multiple levels of government, even the highest. But, as we saw in the examples above, this openness can sometimes hide less democratic intentions. Some authors speak of “displayed” vs. “real” policy [R1] to designate this double game. The reasons that push decision makers to give the appearance of listening to FOs can cover a wide range of things, from electoral calculations (peasant leaders in Mali took advantage of the presidential elections to demand a debate on an agricultural framework law) to the desire to look good to financial partners. These double games can partially explain some of the difficulties encountered when implementing policies and the contradictions between texts and realities.

**Freedom of association.** Even though we speak of democracy-building, one must keep in mind the fact that power remains highly imbalanced: even if African States more or less willingly accept farmers' word on technical subjects, they find it more difficult to accept it as a challenge on the political register [R6]. Very often, FOs have no choice but to collaborate and risk being marginalized by the authorities if they appear to protest too much. The example of CNCR in Senegal reveal a FO that, having been able to reconcile the authorities, was able to accomplish a great deal but ran into difficulties when it was no longer aligned with government positions.

**Transparency.** Several authors note that since peasant unionism is generally not as “on the offense” in West Africa as it

#### B. Policy Coherence

As several authors indicate, the institutional situation of West African States is characterized by a multiplication and segmentation of public policy negotiation arenas. On the supranational level, regional and continental organizations have opened new negotiating areas; on the local level, a decentralization movement has been underway for several years; and at multiple levels, donors and outside actors—both bilateral and multilateral—have become increasingly important.

**Applying the Paris Declaration.** In this way, multiple projects and programs complete and overlap the measures taken directly by national authorities, helping obscure policy elaboration processes. FOs attempt to be heard in a splintered landscape. It is also difficult for them to know where decisions are made. In 2006, some farmers feared, for instance, that ECOWAP would be “shattered by projects and programs” [R7]. According to some, the public policy elaboration process itself needs to be revised. In particular, the excessive presence of donors in policy negotiations prevents the emergence of true social dialogue and alters the notion of social compromise within societies [R1]. The fault is placed on the international foreign actors (donors and NGOs) who struggle to apply the principles in the Paris

is in some European countries, very often the dialogue between the central authorities and FOs ends with vague compromises. The real decision is then relegated to less participatory bodies. For example, in regard to land issues, in Mali—a country that also has an agricultural framework law favorable to smallholder farming—we can see land allocation practices that are not very compatible with the spirit of the law (large-scale cession of lands in the Office du Niger zone, for instance, or the authorities' flip-flop in favor of GMOs). Beyond the rhetoric, the agricultural model actually promoted by a government manifests itself strongly in the ways it handles land issues in practice.

**FO consultation modes.** Finally, very often, the way in which FOs are consulted determines the sincerity of the authorities' openness. FOs' participation is completely different depending on whether they are invited at the last minute to a “validation workshop” to act as participatory window dressing, or are involved in the initial stages of reflection, have an influence on the agenda and can get organized materially to be a true source of proposals and consult their grassroots.

Ultimately, the main condition allowing FOs to participate effectively in public policy and transmit a form of change is merely the willingness of the political authorities. The quality of the social dialogue depends on their perception of FOs' role, the ear they lend to FOs' proposals, and their benevolence toward those sociologically dominated actors.

**Declaration.** This declaration approved in 2005 and committing most donors and their partners, proposed solutions to improve the effectiveness of official development assistance. Among these solutions, donors' alignment with policies set by countries and the harmonization of their interventions figure as confessions of the poor paths taken until then. However, nothing today would seem to indicate that these lacks of coordination with the central authorities and between technical and financial partners are things of the past.

**Coherence between aid and FOs.** At the same time, it is undeniable that aid is strengthening FOs and giving them new opportunities. Some donors tend to include them in the elaboration of their sectoral intervention frameworks (World Bank, IFAD), at least formally. Others struggle to embody the participatory nature they promote elsewhere. This is the case with the European Union, for instance, that offered civil society a choice place in the framework of the Cotonou Agreements but was criticized by FOs during the mid-term assessment of the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund. In the end, at the confluence of several spheres of decision, FOs themselves undoubtedly have a role to play in reforming aid.

**Coherence across public policies.** Public policy coherence does not only play out among outside actors, but also among the authorities themselves. The case of the initiatives taken by governments following the 2008 crisis outside any consultative process is revealing. One such initiative is the Grande Offensive Agricole pour la Nourriture et l'Abondance (GOANA, or great push for food and abundance), a Senegalese government initiative whose connection with the ASPFL is difficult to see.

### C. FOs' Resources and Capacities

**FOs' "political capital."** Finally, for them to solidify and manage to inspire change, there is a combination of factors inherent to FOs themselves. Some authors insist on the importance of FOs holding a degree of "political capital" [R3]. This capital can be based in part on the charisma of their leaders, their strong legitimacy in the eyes of their grassroots, and their natural authority with outside actors. But this capital is also built up collectively and over time. A FO's credibility can be judged in the light of its ability to mobilize its grassroots and take collective action. Each successful operation—whether union-related or economic, local or national—helps strengthen the political capital of the FO as a whole if it can be made visible. The key role of information and communication in policy negotiations is often stated. This role exists on all levels. When the FO is unable to obtain first-hand information on processes underway in a timely manner, it is inevitably pushed aside. Similarly, when FO leaders are not able to ensure that information circulates well within the organization and transmit messages from the grassroots, they rapidly lose relevance and the ability to make proposals.

**Expertise within FOs.** The imbalance in negotiations to the detriment of farmers is frequently caused by a lack of expertise within FOs. For highly technical subjects such as agricultural and trade policies on the State level or in sub-regional institutions, whoever has the expertise has a political advantage. Lacking sufficient in-house expertise, FOs often turn to consultants or NGOs to shore up their arguments. No matter how decisive and useful this recourse is, it raises the question of FOs' analytic autonomy. FOs lobbying the government have themselves been influenced by outside actors to the point of deviating somewhat from their objectives. In the EPA negotiations, farmers defend a more nuanced position than formal civil society organizations, but they have a hard time making their difference be heard. It would seem that FOs' in-house expertise could be developed by

## Conclusion

The renewed interest and investment in agriculture and the renewed demand for policy that have recently become visible worldwide are certainly a "window of opportunity" for the demands of Africa's smallholder farmers. Yet, positions remain sharply divided as to which development model to promote. Many actors and decision makers doubt the ability of smallholder farming to overcome the continent's food challenges, which leads FOs to fear that the coming investments and policies will focus on the most productive farms. The West African experience is

Policy coherence across levels of government is also an issue. There is a theoretical continuum between continental guidelines (in the framework of NEPAD), regional guidelines, national policies and finally local policies. In reality, it often seems that sharp contradictions can be seen between levels. These policy coherence notions are crucial. The effectiveness of not only social dialogue but also policies themselves depends on them.

recruiting executives and training leaders as well as by analyzing and documenting the collective knowledge and experience of FO members [R1]. This is all the more important during the policy implementation phase, which requires the parties involved to go further into detail, propose tools, and learn from field experience. This issue brings up the question of FOs' human and financial resources, which are generally insufficient in light of the amount and complexity of challenges, which in turn implies pressure on the agendas of leaders and staff and sometimes a harmful scattering effect in the strategies employed.

**Multiform alliances, a key factor.** Finally, one factor unanimously described as decisive in the success of FOs' advocacy efforts is their capacity to forge alliances and federate a large number of actors in the rural world and outside the rural world around their demands. Alliances between FOs are seen as "obvious" alliances but constantly need to be deepened within countries, between countries in a given region, and on the international level (south-south alliances as well as south-north alliances, etc.). The alliances between FOs and NGOs are well known: there are several specialized in strengthening FOs, including in terms of advocacy. Beyond this, it seems that one challenge for FOs is to manage to form alliances with less "obvious" actors such as private operators. On trade policy issues such as the ECOWAS Common External Tariff, such alliances would probably have shored up farmers' positions advantageously. Finally, several authors agree that, in order to be heard, FOs must necessarily develop a degree of complicity with State bodies themselves and with opinion leaders. Indeed, "considerable progress has been made in the farmers' movements in several West African countries when FOs were able to generate an affinity with civil servants and policymakers, as well as with journalists and other influential opinion leaders" (Denis Pesche, *Grain de Sel*, No. 52).

striking in that the region's FOs were able to get an alternative model written into fundamental texts—agricultural laws and regional agriculture and trade policy. Although questions remain as to how these texts will translate into reality, one can wonder whether the conditions have not come together uniquely in this region to try betting on smallholder farming. From this point of view, smallholder farmers in West Africa have an opportunity to seize. And a responsibility to uphold. The role of development cooperation in this challenge, as Mamadou Cissokho, a historic

leader in the West African farmers' movement, said (speaking in Brussels in July 2010), is difficult to "describe because it is part of the solution and the problem." There is no better way to state the

urgency of applying the Paris Declaration principles and reforming an aid system in which many individually worthy initiatives can become counter productive when combined.

## REFERENCES REFERENCES REFERENCES REFERENCES REFERENCES

The first four references are capitalization documents coordinated by Inter-Réseaux as part of the project to build the agricultural, food and rural policy capacities of networks of agricultural organizations (Réseau Paar) financed by the AFD. They were carried out by institutional actors from developed and developing countries in close conjunction with West African farmers' organizations.

For more information on this project, visit <http://www.inter-reseaux.org/reseau-paar/article/dossiers-de-capitalisation-dans-le>

**R1. *La participation des organisations paysannes dans les processus d'élaboration et de négociation des politiques agricoles et commerciales en Afrique de l'Ouest*, Issala, LARES and Jade Production, forthcoming May 2011, 55 pages.**

This capitalization document examines the history of farmers' organizations' participation in public policy setting processes, focusing on the sub-regional level (in particular ECOWAP, the CET, and EPAs). It analyzes the factors behind successes, including the importance of context, FO preparation, the role of expertise, donors' and NGOs' attitudes, alliances and complicity within institutions, etc.

**R2. *Les organisations paysannes sénégalaises dans le processus de réforme foncière*, January 2011, IPAR, 69 pages.**

This capitalization document describes the processes by which Senegalese farmers' organizations participated in the land reform. The ambiguities of the State, more or less openly in favor of agribusiness, along with the dispersion of land-related projects and programs contributed to varying levels of FO participation on these issues. *A policy brief is also available in English (5 pages).*

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/reseau-paar/article/l-implication-des-organisations-de>

**R3. *Les organisations paysannes sénégalaises dans les négociations des APE*, December 2010, CIRAD, 48 pages.**

This capitalization document describes how FOs, initially hesitant and not mastering the subject, progressively got involved alongside civil society in the EPA negotiations and ultimately took an original—and somewhat unexpected—position. The lessons to be learned from this document are numerous, touching on scheduling notions, the role of expertise, "political capital," strategies of allying with the State, etc. *A policy brief is also available in English (5 pages)*

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/reseau-paar/article/l-implication-des-organisations-de>

**R4. *The effects of institutional and political changes on West African FOs and adaptation strategies Lessons to be drawn from the experiences of the Faso Farmers' Federation (CPF) and the Federation of Producers' Unions of Benin (FUPRO)*, IRAM, AFDI, September 2010, 70 pages.**

This capitalization document studies FOs' adaptation strategies in response to pressure from States, donors or the market to commodity chain-based structuring. Two case studies are proposed: the Confédération Paysanne du Faso (CPF) and the Fédération des Unions de Producteurs du Bénin (FUPRO).

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/reseau-paar/article/effets-des-changements>

**R5. *Les organisations paysannes dans la négociation des politiques agricoles en Afrique de l'Ouest et au Sénégal*, D. Diagne, September 2010. Pedagogical factsheets.**

This set of three pedagogical factsheets examines Senegalese and West African farmers' organizations' involvement in agricultural policy negotiations. The first factsheet covers the changes in agricultural policy and FO structure since the structural adjustment policies. The second focuses on understanding the context of and stakes behind these negotiations at different geographic levels. The third focuses on negotiation instruments and the formulation of peasant proposals.

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/ressources-thematiques/politiques-agricoles/article/les-organisations-paysannes-dans>

**R6. *Les organisations paysannes et les politiques agricoles*, M.R. Mercoiret, *Afrique Contemporaine*, No. 217, 2006, pgs. 135-157.**

This article by Marie-Rose Mercoiret, sociologist and researcher with CIRAD, offers an analysis of African farmers' movements since the independences. She provides research's vision of the rise of FOs on the African and international scene. During the 1990s, FOs multiplied at the grassroots level and federating dynamics grew stronger. Their influence on agricultural policy definition has grown even if their proposals are taken into account to diverse degrees depending on the country and sector concerned.

[http://www.cairn.info/article.php?ID\\_ARTICLE=AFCO\\_217\\_0135](http://www.cairn.info/article.php?ID_ARTICLE=AFCO_217_0135)

**R7. *Les organisations paysannes et rurales pour un développement durable en faveur des pauvres*, M.R. Mercoiret, D. Pesche, J.M. Bosc, World Bank, 2006, 45 pages.**

This set of documents is the result of a workshop that was held on October 30 and 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 in Paris in the context of the drafting of the World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development by the World Bank. This excellent work, done in conjunction with representatives of FOs, offers multiple keys to analyze FOs' participation in public policy: State attitudes, FO capacities, the role of alliances and expertise, the multiplication of decision-making arenas, the role of donors, etc. (some documents are in English and some in French).

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/ressources-thematiques/article/contribution-a-la-redaction-du>

**R8. *Dynamiques d'organisation des ruraux et renforcement des capacités pour l'élaboration des politiques publiques en Afrique Subsaharienne***, D. Pesche, CIRAD, 2006.

This article by Denis Pesche, researcher with CIRAD, proposes several analyses of the political context in which FOs in sub-Saharan Africa evolve and develop: tension between FOs' economic and political visions, multiplication of arenas and public policy segmentation in particular.

[http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf\\_PESCHE\\_CERI\\_OPetPolAgric\\_2006.pdf](http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf_PESCHE_CERI_OPetPolAgric_2006.pdf)

**R9. *L'Afrique du Coton à Cancun : les acteurs d'une négociation***, D. Pesche, K. Nubupko, *Politique africaine*, No. 95, 2004.

This article examines the striking mobilization of West African cotton growers against the subsidies given to Western farmers and the various manipulations (by States and non-governmental actors) to which this campaign was subjected.

[http://www.abcburkina.net/ancien/documents/2004\\_coton\\_pesche\\_nubukpo.pdf](http://www.abcburkina.net/ancien/documents/2004_coton_pesche_nubukpo.pdf)

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