

**Meeting of Specialised Technical Committee on
Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources,**

For the validation of the fertiliser regulatory
framework and establishment of the regional food
security reserve project

Abidjan, 27 September 2012

FINAL REPORT

1. Upon invitation from the ECOWAS Commission, the Meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Water was held in Abidjan, (Republic of Côte d'Ivoire), on 27 September 2012.
2. The meeting which brought together Ministers of Agriculture of ECOWAS member States focused on five points : (i) consideration of the implementation of the ECOWAP/CAADP and prospects for 2013-2015 ; (ii) the establishment of the regional food security reserve, (iii) adoption of the regulations on fertiliser ; (iv) launch of the two new initiatives to speed up the impact of ECOWAP/CAADP : the Regional Offensive he sustained boosting of rice-farming in West Africa, and the "ZERO HUNGER" initiative in West Africa, (v) consideration of the harvest prospects and food situation in 2012-2013 in Sahel and West Africa.
3. In attendance were the following member States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.
4. Also in attendance apart from the member States were representatives of regional or technical cooperation Rural institutions (African Union, UEMOA, CILSS, CORAF, IFDC, Rural Hub), representatives of international institutions and Development partners (European Commission, USAID, Spain, CSAO, WFP, UNOPS), representatives of professional agricultural producers organisations (ROPPA, Bilital Maroobé Network, APESS, RECAO CICB, AGRODIA, AFITO) and the civil society (POSCAO, OXFAM).
5. Three speeches marked the opening ceremony: (i) the welcome address of Dr. Ibrahim DIOMANDE on behalf of the Minister for Africa Integration of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire ; (ii) the speech by MR. Marc Lapodini ~~ATOUGA~~, ECOWAS Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources and (iii) the keynote address by Mr Kobenan Kouassi ADJOUMANI, Minister of Animal and Water Resources, representing the Minister for Agriculture of the Republic of Côte-d'Ivoire.
6. In his welcome address, the representative of the Minister for Integration, Dr. Ibrahim DIOMANDE, extended the proverbial Akwaaba to the Ministers of Agriculture and all the participants. He thereafter recalled the importance of the two main topics slated for discussion during this session, namely, the establishment of the regional food security reserve, and the regional fertiliser regulatory framework. He was of the view that the outcome of these two topics would constitute an

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appropriate response to the challenges facing the agricultural sector and the food and nutritional crisis plaguing the region.

7. In his speech, the ECOWAS Commissioner in Charge of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Dr. Marc Lapodini ATOUGA, on behalf of the President of the ECOWAS Commission extended his thanks and gratitude to his Excellency, Mr. Alassane ~~QUATTARA~~, President of the Republic of Côte-d'Ivoire, and current Chairman of ECOWAS, and the Government and People of Côte-d'Ivoire for the warm reception and facilities provided for smooth and successful holding of this meeting. He recalled the challenges necessitating the establishment of a regional food security reserve to tackle the cyclical crisis that are gradually taking the form of structural crisis. He outlined the crucial character of a reserve system in a context marked by increasing price volatility, and an increased variability of the climate with increasingly frequent exceptional events. He continued his speech by recalling the challenge of developing fertiliser use in the regional agricultural intensification strategy. To this end, he outlined the role that a common regulation would play to ensure supply of quality fertiliser. After thanking the Ministers and the member States for their commitment, he implored the Ministers to adopt the proposal submitted by the experts to assist the ECOWAS Commission to quickly commence the implementation of these projects

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8. In his keynote address, Mr. Kobenan Kouassi ADJOUMANI, Minister for Animal and Fish Resources, on behalf of the Prime Minister, recalled the contrast between the crucial importance of food products in regional agriculture and food and the little support it receives. He pointed out that West African agriculture needed public support in order to ensure the region's food sovereignty and reduce its dependency on imports. It is against this backdrop that he put into context the importance of the decisions that the ECOWAS Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources is about to consider and take. He finished his speech by informing participants about the progress NAIP process in Côte d'Ivoire, and particularly the positive results of the donors' round table in the mobilization of financial resources.

9. The Ministerial Committee were walked through the reports of the experts on the five items on the agenda and listened to the presentation of the development partners.

10. Invited to take the floor, the representative of the European Union, Mr. Geza STRAMMER, Head of Cooperation of the European Union in Côte – d'Ivoire extended the warm greetings of the European commissioners in Charge of Development and Humanitarian Aid. He presented the

challenges of the European Commission's initiative in favour of resilience, the AGIR Sahel initiative. He commended the coordination efforts of the stakeholders under the auspices of ECOWAS. He expressed the entire support of the European Union for the ECOWAS initiative and assured the Ministers of the coordinated support that the population groups of the region will receive.

11. On behalf of the technical and financial partners signatories to the Regional Partnership Compact for the ECOWAP implementation, Mrs Elena Bravo TABERNE, Counsellor at the Spanish Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire, expressed her thanks to the ECOWAS Presidency and the authorities of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for taking the initiative to host this important meeting. She acknowledged the regional facilitation and coordination efforts initiated by the ECOWAS Commission and helping to accelerate the implementation of the RAIP in the context of the CAADP. She hailed the regional food security reserve project, indicating that this is one of the greatest challenges for the regional agricultural policy, aimed at ensuring food security for people. She underscored the process that led to the design of the reserve notion through a close partnership between ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILS, with a strong involvement rallying professional stakeholders and civil society around a concrete initiative. She underscored the importance of involvement of regional stakeholders the international community will come and support in the context of the G8 and G20 dialogue. She hailed both new initiatives proposed by the ECOWAS Commission. The Rice Initiative meets the challenges of a strategic subsector for regional food sovereignty. The Initiative for proximity food security named « Zero Hunger » will highly contribute to reinforcing regional leadership in terms of resilience. It will enable the regional initiatives, notably AGIR Resilience, to align on regional efforts and support them. She closed her remarks asserting partners' firm commitment to support the region's efforts aimed at setting a reserve aside.

12. Mrs Candace BUZZARD, USAID Representative and Director of the Agricultural Office for West Africa, congratulated ECOWAS for its leadership and initiatives aimed at fast-tracking the implementation of ECOWAP and at promoting ECOWAS growth and food security through regional agriculture. She recalled the longstanding cooperative tradition between the USA, the member States and ECOWAS regional institutions. She reiterated the highly intensive involvement of the USA alongside the region in the context of the implementation of the ECOWAP/CAADP. She recalled President Obama's initiative *Feed the Future*, its convergence with the ECOWAP/RAIP and encouraged the region to keep up and scale up its efforts towards ensuring food and nutritional security and boosting resilience.

13. The Ministers subsequently reviewed the report and had a comprehensive exchange of views, which focused on the various submitted to them for consideration.
14. Discussions mainly focused on the regional food and nutritional situation deemed alarming, in spite of efforts made by the public authorities and the generally favourable climate situation. Several delegations specifically underscored locust-related risks in the prevailing context of insecurity that is disrupting the surveillance and control of swarms of locusts.
15. The Ministers stressed on the need to speed up the implementation of the regional agricultural policy to provide lasting solutions and focus its instruments to better meet the needs of the most deprived rural households. In view of the complexity of the food and nutritional challenges, they acknowledged the importance of developing multi-sectoral approaches allowing for strengthening households' means of existence, build resilience and satisfy basic social needs.
16. As such, the Ministers took note of the report on ECOWAP and commended the ECOWAS Commission for the efforts made in order to implement the regional agricultural policy. They called on the Commission to increase its support to the implementation of the NAIPs, and to ensure a balanced implementation of all the programmes planned as part of the regional investment programme.
17. To this end, the Ministerial Committee expressed delight about the upcoming establishment of the Regional Agriculture and Food Agency and urged the ECOWAS Commission to provide it with the appropriate human and financial resources. It further urged the Commission and EBID to speed up the institution of procedures to enable the ECOWADF to commence initial financing activities.
18. The Ministers decided to adopt the establishment of the Regional Food Security Reserve in view of the crucial nature of this instrument for the management of food crisis and promotion of regional solidarity. They urged the Commission to commence its establishment without delay. They expressed the wish to see the Commission engage Chad and Mauritania in order to map out technical cooperation modalities in this area. The Ministers requested the Commissions to finalise the institutional mechanism so as to ensure ECOWAS leadership, while also ensuring a strong involvement of regional institutions and stakeholders, in the steering and management of the Reserve. They urged the Commission to: (i) rely on the technical and infrastructural capacities of member States, (ii) gradually diversify the stored products to meet the diversity of food systems, and the specific needs of livestock farmers (cattle feed),

- (iii) give priority to supplies from regional producers, (iv) increase support to all countries of the region in order to deploy reliable and independent information systems, by which detailed analysis on vulnerability could be produced.
19. They underscored the importance to deploy the entire storage strategy, including national reserves and local reserves. As such, and in view of the costs of regional solidarity in this area, the Ministers pledge to approach the statutory authorities of ECOWAS in order to define new financial mechanisms that would enable the region to eradicate hunger and malnutrition while also ensuring its sovereignty. Furthermore, to show their commitment to the regional reserve, the Ministers pledged on behalf of their governments, to provide contributions in kind to the tune of one half (1/2) of the initial reserve according to an equitable distribution formula among member States .
20. The Ministers urged the Development Partners to complement the region's efforts, in the spirit of the commitments of the Cannes G20 Summit, and give preference to the mechanism chosen by the region to channel support, to ensure efficiency and sound management of the Regional Food Security Reserve.
21. In more general terms and for coherence and to improve governance, they called on the international Community to recognise the West African leadership that ECOWAS and all the stakeholders of the region, stand for and align the food security initiatives around the approaches developed by West Africa.
22. In view of the importance of the challenges relating to the improvement of productivity, the Ministers took up the issue of regulations on fertiliser within the Community. They validated the texts on the common regulations and pledged to: (i) explore the best conditions of use of fertilisers in member States; (ii) further support research and sensitisation on fertilisers ; (iii) build the capacities of reference laboratories identified for fertiliser quality control within the ECOWAS region; (iv) Strengthen technical requirements of fertiliser storage and transportation; and finally, (v) continue the establishment of National Committees responsible for fertiliser control
23. The Ministers had a lengthy discussion on the challenges of rice farming in West Africa and its prospects. They lauded the Commission's initiative to coordinate and deploy efforts made by member States to counter the effects of the 2008 crisis caused by the hike in prices of staples commodities, boost production and organise efficient sectors. As such, adopted the regional offensive for sustained boosting of rice-farming in West Africa. They recommended the provision of adapted policy instruments, to guarantee its success, particularly : (i) institution of a

steering, coordination and implementation mechanism involving all the stakeholders ; (ii) the institution of an appropriate financing mechanism, with accessible credit rate for small farmers ; (iii) the development of institutional procurements with guaranteed prices for farmers; (iv) mobilisation of the private sector ; (v) the development of a communication and marketing strategy with focus on local rice.

24. The Ministers pledged to pursue and intensify dialogue with the Ministries of Trade and other ministerial departments, and called on the commission to do the same, in order to equip the rice sector with border trade defence and protection instruments that are consistent with the region's ambition.
25. The Ministers called on the ECOWAS Commission to detail the strategy proposed and commence a process similar to that of rice, for the other strategic sectors contained in the RAIP (Livestock, maize, cassava, fish products).
26. The Ministers considered the opportunity of engaging the region on a local food and nutritional security, called « Zero Hunger » in West Africa », in reference to the Brazilian initiative. As several countries had already embarked on this project, the Ministers very favourably bought into this initiative with the hope that it would allow for developing renewed and more efficient approaches of ensuring food and nutritional security, and in the long run, guarantee every citizen of the region's right to food.
27. The Ministers pledged to support this initiative and reform governance of food and nutritional security by working around three thrusts : (i) a strong involvement of grassroots population groups, especially women and vulnerable groups and a strong articulation of national and regional policies in support of local strategies; (ii) a cross-cutting approach allowing for a coherent way of working on enhancement of sustainable livelihoods for poor households and the setting up of safety nets ; (iii) a strong articulation of short, medium and long term measures;
28. They called on the ECOWAS to prepare an inclusive regional strategy that would allow for mobilising all the stakeholders around this strategic objective. They expect this strategy to offer a governance framework that ensures the coherence and relevance of the interventions of all the public, socio-professional and non-governmental stakeholders. The Ministers called on the international Community to channel the different initiatives around this regional strategy.

29. Finally, the Ministers took note of the harvest prospects and food and nutritional situation, presented by CILSS. They decided to : (i) ensure a close monitoring of the risk areas ; (ii) ensure sustained consultation in the context of RESOGEST between national organizations in charge of reserves as well as NGOs and international organizations buying commodities in the countries, to coordinate security re-stocking operations to avoid pressures arising from possible rise in cereal prices as a result of massive and simultaneous purchases; (iii) develop tools to prevent the effects of an increasingly recurrent climate variability.

30. As a conclusion, the Ministers convened as an ECOWAS Technical Specialized Committee for Agriculture, the Environment and Water Resources endorse the initiatives submitted by the ECOWAS Commission in the context of the ECOWAP implementation. They recommend the ECOWAS Council of Ministers to

- a. adopt the regional regulatory framework on fertilizers;**
- b. adopt the establishment of the regional reserve for food security and allocate an appropriate budget for its launch by 2013.**

**Done in Abidjan this 27th Day of September 2012
For and On Behalf of the Committee**

**The Chairman
Mr. Kobenan Kouassi ADJOUMANI**