



# SENEGALESE PEASANT ORGANIZATIONS IN TRADE NEGOTIATIONS: THE CASE OF EPAS

Marie Hrabanski and Denis Pesche (CIRAD)

with support from Amel Benkahla and Cheikh Oumar BA (IPAR)

## 1. ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS (EPAs) AND SENEGAL

The European Union (EU) and the West African region (WA - 16 countries) began negotiating an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in 2002. As of 1 January 2008, this free trade agreement was supposed to replace the non-reciprocal preferential trade regime enjoyed by all African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries since the Yaoundé Conventions (1967-1974) and the Lomé Conventions (1975-2000). The Cotonou Agreement defined a new strategy aimed at turning non-reciprocal ACP agreements into reciprocal free-trade agreements between the EU and the ACP countries. ECOWAS, which comprises both LDC and non-LDC countries, was mandated to negotiate the regional agreements on behalf of the 16 countries in the zone. The date of signing of the EPAs was initially scheduled for 31 December 2007, however, at the end of 2010, an agreement had yet to be signed.

Senegal is a beneficiary of the ACP agreements (Lomé Convention of 1975) which were replaced

by the Cotonou Agreement in 2000 and, as an LDC, it also benefits from the “Everything But Arms” initiative (2001) which grants imports of all products from some fifty countries duty-free access to the European market for an unlimited period.

In 2003, in the early stages of the negotiations, ECOWAS did not have a Common External Tariff (CET), which made the signing of an EPA problematical. Despite that fact, ECOWAS was chosen to negotiate the contents of the EPA, implying that economic integration under ECOWAS would be more precisely defined.

In January 2006, the WAEMU CET was extended to ECOWAS, and was to be applied as of 1 January 2008, following a two-year transition period. It was to include 4 tariff bands. As early as 2007, ROPPA members called on ECOWAS to establish a 5th tariff band at 35%. The creation of this additional band was officially approved at the latest Summit of Heads of State of ECOWAS in June 2009.

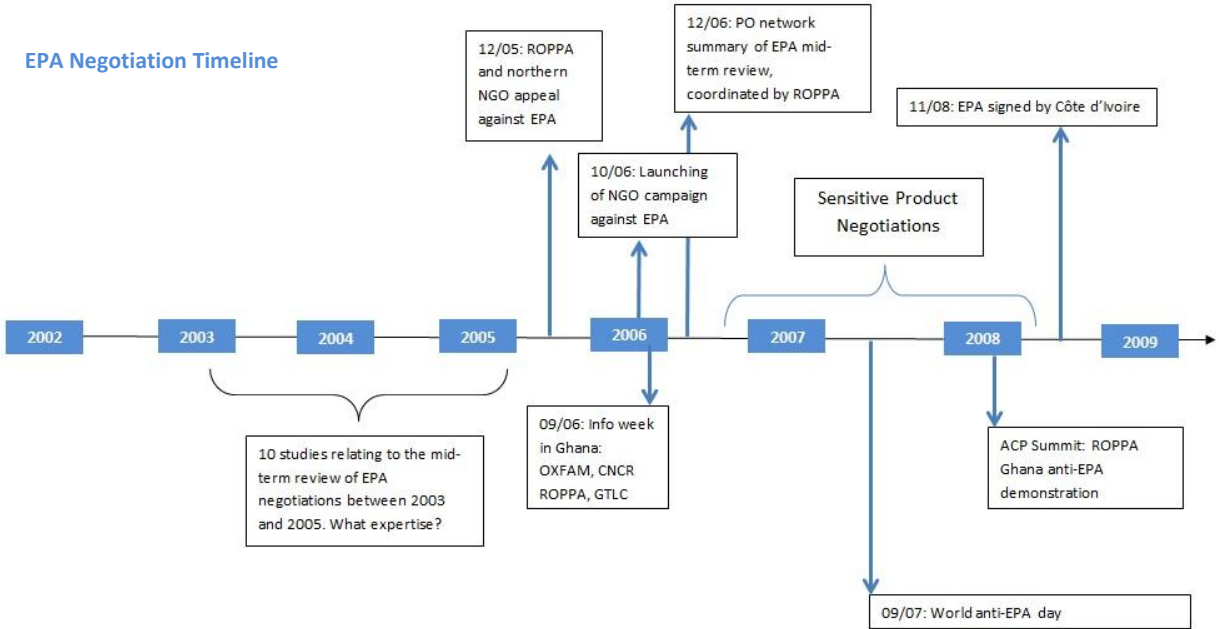
## 2. TIMING OF NEGOTIATIONS AS AN OBSTACLE TO PO PARTICIPATION

EPA negotiations began in 2003 and were scheduled for completion in December 2007. Above and beyond the contents of the EPA, the schedule was the subject of considerable discontent. ECOWAS representatives criticized the pre-planned nature of the negotiations and their speed. They reproached the European

negotiators for having precipitated negotiations so vital to the economies of West African countries, at a time when the negotiation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) had not yet succeeded and various agricultural policies (UAP, ECOWAP) had just been launched. Indeed, in the end, it was not possible to adhere to the

schedule. The timing of the EPA negotiations had an impact on the mobilization capacities of Senegalese peasant organizations. It is not easy to mobilize the resources of an organization over such a long period of time. The strategy of the peasant movement therefore consisted of

joining forces with others to exert pressure to defer the deadlines and gain time, while progressively building up positions that were sometimes difficult to formulate due to the diversity of the movement and its different environments in which it evolved.



### 3. PEASANT MOVEMENT CONSULTATION LIMITED BY COMPLEX NEGOTIATIONS

EPA negotiations are part of the broader dynamics of trade agreements (GATT, then WTO) of which it is a variant. The negotiations include both a political and an institutional dimension, since they are also a component of the partnership between the EU and the ACP countries, which comprises a variety of other instruments (EDF, etc.) in addition to EPAs. This twofold dimension (inclusion on the international trade and development agenda, inclusion in EU/ACP partnership relations) gave EPA negotiations a complexity that made peasant leader participation more difficult. In addition, the negotiations implied highly specialized technical knowledge which only a handful of experts and top-level civil servants could claim to possess. Finally, it is not easy for farmers, fishermen or herders to clearly grasp

the effects of international trade, since they combine with other institutional, economic and political factors (withdrawal of the State, liberalization of national production and distribution chains) and their impact on everyday life is diffuse, albeit very real.

Since Doha in 2001, and subsequently Cancun in 2003 and Hong Kong in 2005, WTO negotiations have been deadlocked and this has been a problem during EPA negotiations because, in theory, the EPA was supposed to provide a framework more conducive to exchanges and development than the multilateral rules of the WTO. It therefore seemed that there was a limited interest in taking the risk of negotiating EPAs whereas the multilateral rules of the WTO had yet to be stabilized.

#### 4. FRAGMENTED NEGOTIATION, LIMITED HUMAN AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITIES

EPA negotiation is a complex and highly technical subject, which requires extensive expertise and broad knowledge of international affairs, trade, law, etc. According to its leaders, the lack of broad consultation within Senegal's National Council for Rural Dialogue and Cooperation (CNCR) was due to the complexity of the debates, the limited human resources at the disposal of the organizations, and the tight deadlines allowed the representatives to issue their positions; indeed, although the process was spread out over several years, it was marked by phases of acceleration when positions had to be established very quickly. Only four Senegalese leaders were involved in the EPA negotiations, and they were not able to follow all of the issues

due to the fragmentation and overlapping of the debates. For instance, the talks on sensitive products took place at the same time as those on "Rules of Origin" and on the ECOWAS Common External Tariff. The EPA negotiation process was not unidimensional: not only were there more intensive moments, but there were also moments when the negotiations were fragmented, when there was a need to be active on several fronts at once. For organizations with very limited qualified human resources at their disposal, the situation posed a serious handicap. The splitting up of the negotiations on different subjects and in different places led to a partial disconnection of POs from the process.

#### 5. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION: THE THORNY ISSUE OF DEPENDENCE ON EXTERNAL ACTORS

The environment during EPA negotiations was not very conducive to consultation of CNCR members, due to the complexity and multidimensional nature of the issues at hand. Strategies of alliance with civil society played an essential role. A chronological analysis of anti-EPA mobilization reveals complex relationships between the CNCR and ROPPA and the various civil society organizations. The risk was that the radical message advocated by the "NO to EPAs" NGOs might be imposed on POs whereas the latter were seeking a more balanced position.

At the same time, Senegalese leaders, although they did not adhere to the position of radical rejection of the EPAs, were pleased with the mobilization to the extent that, from their point of view, it helped defer the process deadlines. The alliances they struck with NGOs allowed POs

to develop their cognitive and financial capacities and build their political capital, while also highlighting the dependency they could cause in terms of knowledge of the issues, participation and formulation of positions. This refers to the expertise capacities of the POs. In the case of the EPAs, the leaders called on several external experts. Different political sensibilities emerged from these collaborations. The variety of sources of inspiration was able to contribute to the emergence of the CNCR's own position.

As coordinator of the West African Platform of civil society organizations on the Cotonou Agreement (POSCAO-AC), the ENDA-SYSPRO NGO was particularly active during the negotiations. Many other NGOs also participated, notably OXFAM, CCFD, GRET, the Europafrica platform, CSA, etc.

## 6. POs... IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SENEGALESE GOVERNMENT?

During EPA negotiations, CNCR representatives took part in certain think tanks, notably the national committees on international negotiation (CNIIs) set up by the government as early as 1999, which allowed peasant leaders to become trained on the issues and technicality of international trade negotiations. The other POs in the sub-region had to wait until 2004 before information workshops on EPAs timidly began to be set up. ROPPA and CNCR representatives not

only participated in the negotiations on the national scale and within ECOWAS committees, but also engaged in protest in the wake of international civil society. These positions were not contradictory, but rather complementary to the extent that the Senegalese government itself was engaged in negotiations with other West African States to build a joint ECOWAS position in relation to the EU.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis of the involvement of Senegalese POs in EPA negotiations leads us to formulate the following recommendations:

- ➔ Reinforce existing dialogue frameworks and include all actors (independent farmers' movement, private sector actors) able to make a contribution to the negotiations;
  - ➔ Specifically take account of PO positions on EPAs, including their attempts to strike balanced positions;
  - ➔ Launch internal consultations on EPAs within POs, even if the schedule forces leaders to issue their positions rapidly;
  - ➔ Develop and reinforce alliances between producers organizations and the business, administrative and political worlds;
  - ➔ Capitalize on the gains achieved within POs in the EPA negotiation process, by disseminating the knowledge gleaned throughout the organization;
- ➔ Create alliances between producers' organizations, independent organizations and civil society stakeholders to better deal with overlapping debates, negotiate with the government on resources aimed at participating more intensively in the permanent dialogue frameworks set up for joint monitoring of the EPA negotiations;
  - ➔ Promote PO capacity-building components in State-initiated projects in order to allow POs to take on a more active role in trade policy development and negotiation;
  - ➔ Promote international negotiation schedules that allow POs to consult their bases internally and then conduct negotiations over a reasonable time.