



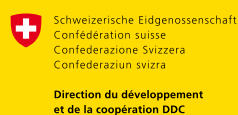
Bureau Issala



**Farmers' Organisations' Role in the Elaboration and Negotiation of Agricultural and Trade Policies in West Africa**

**Accomplishments & Lessons from Experience**

in partnership with



**A**GRICULTURE OCCUPIES a preponderant position in the economy and societies of West Africa. It is the primary productive sector and contributes extensively to the creation of regional wealth, employs the majority of workers, and plays

a decisive role in food security and natural resource management. It is a central pillar in the construction of the market, and is one of the primary vectors for regional integration and West Africa's insertion in international trade.

### 50 Years of Policies and Major Changes If Not Striking Results

**M**ARKED BY THE CONSTRUCTION of nation-States in the post-independence phase, protectionist agricultural and trade policies were overhauled extensively in the 1980s as part of the financial and budgetary adjustments. Long defined on the national scale, agricultural policies contained several major biases:

- they were often pro-urban, marked by wide openness to inexpensive imports;
- they took little into account the regional dimensions and complementarities of agricultural systems;
- they favoured production alone, neglecting the market, relationships with other sectors of the economy and the construction of development institutions;
- they saw smallholder farmers as archaic, unable to

evolve or meet food demand;

- they were defined according to bureaucratic processes and remained the private domain of the public authorities and their technical and financial partners; and
- finally, they were only partially implemented, through temporary and geographically limited projects.

Since the end of the 1990s, agricultural policies have undergone three major shifts. They are more proactive with the marked return of public intervention, are rolled out on the regional scale, and finally take socio-professional actors into consideration. Agricultural socio-professional organisations are currently playing a growing role in defining strategies and policies that affect the agricultural and trade sector.



### A Few Decisive Stages in the Construction of the Farmers' Movement

**T**HE MOVEMENT TO STRUCTURE farmers' organisations emerged from both the dynamics within the rural milieu and changes in the surrounding context. Consequently, some of the results of public policies and the major stages in organising the farming milieu can be aligned with major policy sequences.

**1960-1980: The construction of nation-States.** Regional issues were little taken into account in sectoral policies despite the large-scale integration projects. Farmer organisation was encouraged by the State or development companies. However, the food crises in 1973-74 and then 1984-85 in the Sahel triggered a powerful international solidarity movement that came with multiple development and partnership initiatives with NGOs and associations as diverse as they were numerous in developed countries. Starting in the 1970s, a few peasant leaders emerged and began structuring a farmers' movement "from the ground

up". The first exchange networks were initiated at this time, along the lines of the Six 'S' (6S): *Se servir de la saison sèche en savane et au Sahel* (using the dry season in the Savannah and the Sahel).

**1980-2000: Transferring functions from the State to farmers' organisations.** This period was one of policy reforms and economic and financial adjustments. They called into question the strong State doctrine and pushed most countries down the path of extensive economic and trade liberalisation. This period consisted of two phases:

- The first ran from 1980 to 1990, and corresponded to democracy-building in public institutions. Public decision makers recognised farmers' organisations (FOs) as credible interlocutors. The downsizing of the State led to a certain number of responsibilities being transferred to FOs: input supply, agricultural advice and extension, management of initial

collection and sale of agricultural products, etc. This is how the principle of FOs' participation in government decisions – still heavily influenced by international financial institution and donors – was born. It was a vision of FOs that was above all utilitarian.

- The second phase ran from 1990 to 2000 and corresponded to the generalisation and installation of structural adjustment programmes, the revival of regional integration processes, and the revision of the international trade system. All these dynamics strongly influenced agricultural policy directions. FOs managed to structure themselves around zonal and sometimes national umbrella organisations. Thanks to the “Sahel 21” process on the future of the Sahel, the first national farmers' platforms were set up in Sahelian countries. But this movement was still timid, with the exception of the Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux (CNCR, national rural people's consultation and cooperation council) in Senegal and the FO convergence group that was the precursor to the Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (CNOP, national farmers' organisation group) in Mali.

**2000-2010: Farmers' organisations assert themselves as partners in the major negotiations.** This period was marked by the definition of new agricultural and trade policies, later encouraged by the global food crisis caused by the skyrocketing international prices in 2008. This crisis helped rehabilitate the role of the State and public regulation to manage food security, seen as a global public good. At the start of

the 2000s, Mali and Senegal, who at the time had the best organised platforms, began working on defining agricultural framework laws through fairly in-depth processes of dialogue on the main agricultural development challenges (land tenure, social protection, farmers' status, markets, research, extension, etc.). FOs played a leading role in decentralised consultation processes.

Under the impetus of existing national platforms, West African farmers' organisations federated themselves within a regional network. The Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles d'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA, West Africa network of farmers' and producers' organisations) set for itself the ambition of (i) promoting and defending the values of efficient and sustainable smallholder farming at the service of smallholder farms and farmers; (ii) informing and training members of farmers' organisations and farmers' associations; and (iii) encouraging and supporting consultation and structuring among organisations.

Simultaneously with this shift, the region opened a large number of areas of negotiation: construction of a customs union and the definition of WAEMU's agricultural policy (WAP), opening of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) talks with the European Union. These negotiations provided a unique opportunity for FOs to improve their structure and test their ability to influence public decisions. They provided a learning environment for organisations, who took advantage of this to expand their organisational base, refine their arguments and develop advocacy.

### A Leader Says...

*In the 1960s-70s, there was agricultural over-production in the West fostered by Europe's common agricultural policy and the United States' agricultural policy. They subsidised agriculture heavily. Their production therefore flooded our markets at very low prices. In addition, in 2000, we were at about fifteen years of structural adjustment. This had limited agricultural production in our countries and increased food insecurity. It was in this context that the ECOWAS heads of State had decided to establish an agricultural policy.*

Mamadou Cissokho, honorary chair of ROPPA, Ouagadougou, July 2010

The opening of the EPA negotiations between the European Union and the West African region, and of those pertaining to the creation of the ECOWAS customs union (starting in 2003), followed by the 2004 launch of the process to formulate the ECOWAS agricultural policy (ECOWAP) and then the environmental policy made it possible to solidify FOs' new role in formulating public policy.

Simultaneously with this involvement on the regional level, farmers' organisations attempted to enter the arena of the international trade negotia-

tions within the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the “cotton” dossier, “trade and food security” challenges, and the recognition of the multifunctional nature of agriculture.

The 2000 decade was in this way devoted to the rise in power of farmers' organisations that – despite certain divergences as to the strategic directions that characterise them and especially their very strong dependency on outside financing – positioned themselves as true actors, interlocutors for the government authorities and even the catalyst for certain public decisions.

## Agricultural Policy Directions Marked by the Stamp of Farmers' Organisations...

OVER THE COURSE of the past ten years, farmers' organisations have managed to instigate a new dynamic within policy elaboration processes, and in particular new content.

ROPPA's doctrine cannot be disassociated from the international debates that emerged in the second half of the 1990s following agriculture's introduction into

the WTO negotiations. This doctrine is opposed to the liberalisation of agricultural trade in the name of the food stakes and multifunctional nature of agriculture ("agriculture is not merchandise"). It advocates the sovereignty of States and regional communities over agricultural and food policies.

### A Leader Says...

*Our vision of the future for the coming decades is based on promoting and defending smallholder farming that is multi-activity and concerned with transmitting exploitable production capital to our children and grandchildren. This smallholder farming conducted by small farmers is capable of offering growing, sustainable incomes and consolidating the most positive social and cultural values of rural West African societies.*

Ndiogou Fall, Chair of ROPPA from 2000 to 2010, Paris, November 2001

### Recognition of smallholder farming as the basis for the development of West African agriculture.

At the heart of the farmers' organisations' plans was the defence of smallholder farming, the dominant production model. This defence requires land tenure security and access to credit and services, as well as recognition of farmers' status and the establishment of social insurance for farmers and their families.

**Governments remain convinced that smallholder farms are not able to meet the rising demand for food**

National and regional policies included this direction. For instance, in its vision statement, the ECOWAP states: *"The West African agricultural policy is set within the perspective of a modern and sustainable agriculture based on effective and efficient family farms and the promotion of agricultural enterprises through the involvement of the*

*private sector. Once productivity and competitiveness on the intra-community and international markets are achieved, the policy should be able to guarantee food security and secure decent incomes for agricultural workers."* Important recognition, but one that does not close the door to other types of farms that are more entrepreneurial or capitalistic. The ways in which governments responded to the 2008 crisis have since shown that they have not abandoned the idea of supporting agribusiness. The cession of thousands of hectares of land to foreign investors is part of the same strategy.

**Promotion of food sovereignty.** For farmers' organisations, the poverty and food insecurity in which West Africa languishes can be curbed through policies based on food sovereignty (see sidebar). This position is strongly supported by the international movement, Via Campesina.

### Definition

*Food sovereignty is defined as "the right of each country or group of countries to define its agricultural policy in the interest of its population, to develop and protect its domestic production and markets in order to satisfy the need for healthy, sufficient, culturally and religiously acceptable food, and that they also be fairly compensated for the value of their agricultural labour."*

Food Sovereignty Forum, ROPPA, Niamey, 2006

Agricultural policies have integrated this concern. For instance, ECOWAP's first objective aims to *"guarantee food security in the West African rural and urban population as well as the health standard of produce in the context of an approach guaranteeing*

*the food sovereignty of the region"*. This preoccupation is reinforced by the second objective, which aims to *"reduce dependence on imports by giving priority to food production as well as its processing by the economic development and exploitation of complementarities*

*and comparative advantages within the region [...].”*

However, in practice, the government authorities fear rising prices for imported goods and their consequences on access to food in cities. During the 2008 crisis, they preferred cutting taxes on imported products over subsidising consumption of local products. The arbitration on customs duties on rice is equally symptomatic (see sidebar page 6).

**Priority to the regional market and border protection.** The West African population is predicted to double over the next 20 to 25 years, and the regional market is seen as the largest opportunity to develop West African agriculture. FOs plead in favour of protecting the regional market by setting up significant customs duties and instituting safeguard mechanisms to address price instability.

These demands were taken into account in ECOWAP, which set itself the objective of supporting “*the equitable economic and commercial integration of agricultural enterprises into national, regional, and international markets, so as to improve rural incomes, and notably the incomes of females*”. This required revising customs duties. One of the largest accomplishments in this field was the creation of the 5<sup>th</sup> tariff band within ECOWAS’s Common External Tariff (CET) (see page 6). This major accomplishment can largely be attributed to advocacy by farmers’ organisations.

**Land tenure security and the sustainability of production systems.** FOs see the land as the primary production factor. The land tenure insecurity of small farmers due to the absence of land policies recognising their rights to the land is intensified by the new pressures arising from population growth, urban spread, and land grabbing by foreign companies or countries seeking to secure their food supply or produce agrofuels.

Securing tenure for small farms or securing land for ranchers or farmer-shepherds is at the root of the modernisation and sustainable intensification of production systems.

Given that these are national prerogatives, regional policies have little influence over the matter. Niger and Burkina Faso have made progress towards real tenure security. On the regional level, public policies emphasise “management of shared resources”, which



notably include managing cross-border transhumance and preventing conflicts over access to resources. The sustainability of production systems is envisaged through: intensification of production systems suited to the various agro-ecological contexts so as to ensure increased production while optimising and preserving natural resources and biodiversity.

**Real participation in all key stages of public policy.** Farmers’ organisations demand an important position and role in all stages of policies and programmes, from formulation to implementation to monitoring and assessment. They refuse to see this participation diluted in the overly vague notion of “civil society involvement”. They do not want to endorse incomplete, unimplemented reforms; rather, they want to be seen as true actors in these policies on both the national and regional levels.

FOs’ involvement is unanimously accepted by national and regional government authorities. FOs were, for instance, placed at the heart of the steering mechanism for ECOWAS’s agricultural policy. ROPPA was a member of the task force that piloted the process. FOs signed the compacts setting the commitments of all of the parties involved in implementing the regional investment programme. The same is true in a majority of countries. The Consultative Committee on Agriculture and Food and the Regional Fund for Agriculture and Food’s supervisory board formally include representatives of farmers’ organisations. The same is true of national systems.

## A Leader Says...

*During implementation of the agricultural framework law (AFL), thousands of tapes were distributed in the smallest towns and translated in every language so that they would be accessible to the smallest farmers. Consultations were held on a vast scale, nationally and locally; they made it possible to reach the largest number of farmers.*

Foulani Cissoko, Coordinator CNOP-Mali, Bamako, July 2010

## More Varied Results in Regard to Trade Policy

OVER THE COURSE of the past twenty years, the countries in the region have entered into three major trade negotiations, which were partially connected:

- the construction of the ECOWAS customs union, after that of WAEMU;
- the Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations between the West African region and the European Union; and
- finally, the multilateral negotiations within the WTO.

These areas of work considerably mobilised farmers' organisations that, historically, had gotten involved in trade issues due to the consequences of Europe's dumping of milk and meat in West African markets.

**The CET's 5<sup>th</sup> tariff band: a response to farmers' concerns.** The adoption of the ECOWAS CET was the subject of intense negotiations between WAEMU and the other countries in ECOWAS. Several products crystallised the differences on the desired level of protection for regional commodity chains. Rice, a

strategic product, illustrates the conflicting interests and visions. The Joint ECOWAS-WAEMU Committee for the CET recently issued an arbitration that will be submitted to the region's trade ministers: "The negotiations on the rates applicable to rice imports were the subject of intense debates. Because of the region's potential, [...] delegates believe that local rice production must be intensified and protected with the aim of attaining food self-sufficiency and meeting regional demand.

In response to these demands, the Heads of States of ECOWAS modified the CET tariff structure and introduced a new tariff band for specific goods impacting economic development, but set this band at 35%. During the reclassification of products within the five tariff bands (0%, 5%, 10%, 20% and 35%) — a long and complex exercise in which FOs participated little — many agricultural products were placed in this last category (meat, processed dairy products, cassava, cereal flours, and pasta). However, cereal grain (5%), powdered milk (5%) and rice (10%) still receive little protection. This product classification has not yet been validated.

### Rice: A Symbol of the Fragility of the Consensus on Food Sovereignty

*The adoption of the ECOWAS CET was the subject of intense negotiations between WAEMU and the other countries in ECOWAS. Several products crystallised the differences on the desired level of protection for regional commodity chains. Rice, a strategic product, illustrates the conflicting interests and visions. The Joint ECOWAS-WAEMU Committee for the CET recently issued an arbitration that will be submitted to the region's trade ministers: "The negotiations on the rates applicable to rice imports were the subject of intense debates. Because of the region's potential, [...] delegates believe that local rice production must be intensified and protected with the aim of attaining food self-sufficiency and meeting regional demand. Some delegates note that despite political determination and the efforts made, most of the countries in the region continue to rely on rice imports to meet domestic demand. In addition, the recent economic and financial crises and their consequences on the prices of basic goods and products, including rice, make it necessary to address this issue prudently and cautiously. In all, given the social and political sensitivity of the issue, the participants decided to maintain the status quo, that is to say apply the rate of 10% and take note of the reservations of Ghana who demanded a rate of 20%."*

Taken from the final report of the 10<sup>th</sup> CCG-CET meeting, Banjul, 4-8 April 2011

**Blocking the EU-West African Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations.** The EPA negotiations aimed to reform the preferential trade regime between the EU and ACP countries to comply with WTO rules. EPAs are based on the principle of an eventual free trade zone between the two regions. From the outset, FOs and other civil society actors expressed their disagreement with a doctrine that made trade liber-

**Liberalising trade between the EU and West Africa: Still no agreement after ten years of negotiations!**

alisation the be-all and end-all of development. This doctrine placed economies with very different levels of development into direct competition with each other.

ROPPA focused its advocacy on the prior establishment of the regional common market, and on negotiating a liberalisation schedule that gives the region enough time to upgrade its production sectors and



excludes the liberalisation of strategic agricultural products.

Following demanding work classifying products (more than 5,000 tariff lines) based on various sensitivity criteria in each country and on the regional level, in which FOs were involved, ECOWAS and WAEMU proposed a market access offer to the EU. It included a liberalisation schedule that distinguished between four categories of products based on their degree of sensitivity. Most agricultural products, deemed very sensitive, are excluded from liberalisation. Liberalisation of other products is progressive and spread over 25 years. At the end of 2011, disagreements remained with Europe, who is seeking liberalisation of 80% of imports (compared to West Africa's proposed 70%) over a 15 year period. The lack of agreement by the initial deadline of 2007 can largely be explained by the mobilisation of civil society actors.

**FOs in the World Trade Organization negotiations.** The farmers' organisations' concerns are centred around the content of the agreement on agricul-

ture, and in particular on the destructuring effects of developed countries' agricultural subsidies. FOs demand strong intervention by the government authorities in the agricultural sector, which they say is justified by the multiple dimensions of multifunctional agriculture (employment, environment, territorial development, food security).

Cotton was the warhorse in FOs' offensive in the field of multilateral trade rules. The cotton producers' organisations in four major cotton-producing countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad) spearheaded this battle. The WTO Dispute Settlement Body was seized in the matter at the initiative of Brazil. In regard to trade rules in general, however, the "Doha Development Round" still seems irrevocably blocked today. The rise in power of certain countries such as India has threatened to upset the traditional compromises reached between Europe and the United States and then validated by all WTO members. Positions on food security partially meet the expectations of West African FOs.



## The Reasons Behind Farmers' Organisations' Accomplishments

TWO BROAD CATEGORIES OF FACTORS contributed to the consideration of farmers' demands in national and regional agricultural policies: (i) factors within farmers' movements; and (ii) outside factors.

**Factors within the farmers' movement...** The charisma of leaders and their mastery of the issues along with well-prepared demands by farmers' organisations were decisive. The most interesting example deals with ECOWAP, a process during which FOs contributed heavily to the elaboration of scenarios that were discussed by professional actors and States. Another element was FOs' capacity to build networks of affinities with institutional bodies, which allowed them to have credible information in a timely manner and elaborate their advocacy strategies. But regional advocacy is really only effective if it is relayed

and based on advocacy in countries, including via awareness-raising campaigns, demonstrations, and communication targeting the public opinion, elected officials and decision makers. This is what creates the balance of power.

However, the process was unable—or ROPPA was not sufficiently organised to this end—to utilise the achievements and experiences of grassroots organisations in the construction of regional arguments and proposals. Therefore, the discussions that became much more specific on regional public policy instruments to promote production (seasonal financing, access to inputs, financing storage/warrantage, marketing, etc.) were little fuelled by concrete proposals from ROPPA even though its members had a great deal of experience.

### A Leader Says...

*From the start of the process to create ROPPA, the founders had understood that consolidating the network and its national, regional and international visibility would depend mainly on FOs' capacity to produce data and information, and on the fluidity of communication between the FOs and their surroundings.*

Ndiogou Fall, Chair of ROPPA from 2000 to 2010, Grand Bassam, May 2010

**... And outside factors.** The strong utilisation of ROPPA's network of international alliances (agricultural organisations belonging to Via Campesina or the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, European and Canadian NGOs, etc.), and the mobilisation of external expertise contributed greatly to ROPPA's success. It managed to reconcile the sometimes divergent positions of its allies to have credible, first-hand information and build the foundations for its advocacy.

The strong complicity of certain partners from bi- and multilateral cooperation agencies in the north and other international technical cooperation institutions—IFAD, FAO, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation ACP-EU (CTA), etc.— and regional bodies—the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)—helped create negotiating capacity among FOs. Above all, these international actors helped lend farmer leaders and their positions credibility by connecting West African debates with international states and giving them arenas for expression. This complicity has spread within national and regional administrations.

Finally, the international context marked by the failure of the agriculture negotiations, growing criticism of the effects of structural adjustment programmes, and a renewed interest in regional integration have been decisive in farmers' organisations' successes.

**A very unique negotiating context.** The dialogue on agricultural and trade policies is necessarily complex. It calls into play:

- the specific interests of multiple actors: farmers, traders, importers, processors, consumers, etc.;
- the general interest in each country;
- the specific interests of each country, based on the specific characteristics of its agricultural systems, weight, urbanisation, status (LDC or not), etc.; and
- regional interests, which are not the sum of national interests.

This complexity is intensified by a quality unique to policy dialogue in Africa: the members of the international community—as technical or financial partners—invite themselves or are invited to the negotiating table. They negotiate public decisions on equal footing with African actors. This obfuscates the dialogue and responsibilities.

**Interference from donors complicates the social dialogue**

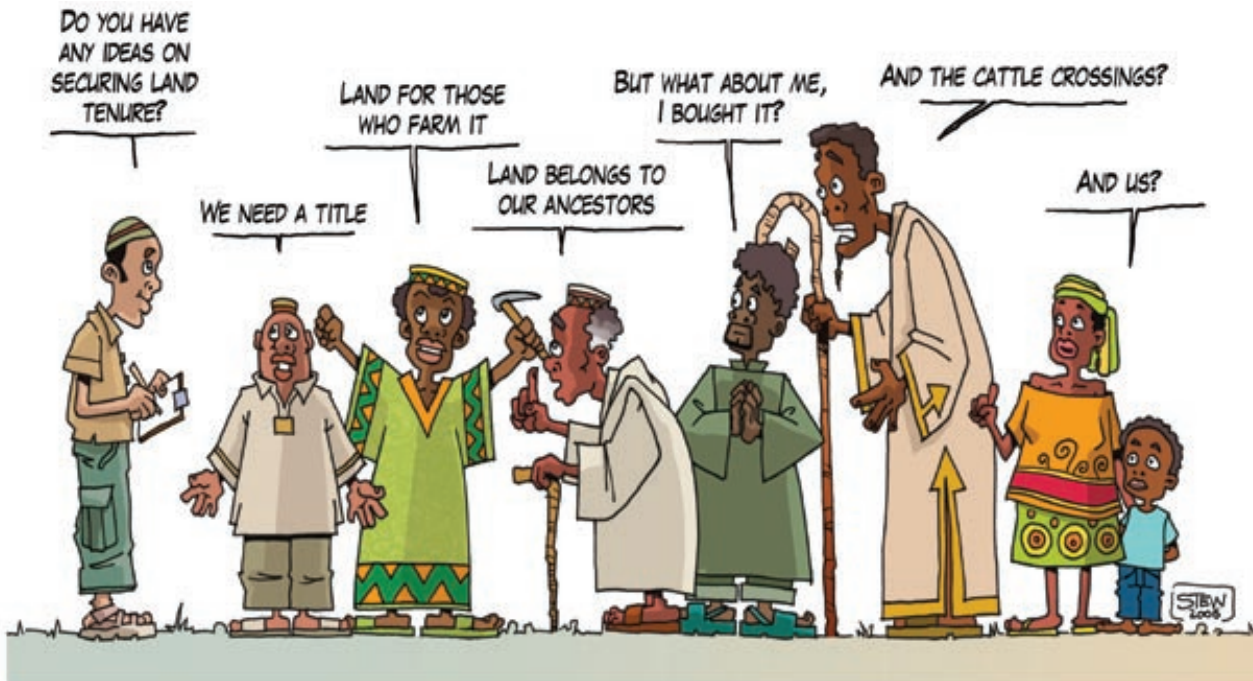
In addition, agricultural administrations are very weak and are in the habit of managing technical programmes (projects) rather than orientations and policy instruments. These are largely managed by finance and trade administrations.



The public decision-making centre is often difficult to identify: Who decides? When? Following what procedures? Does Parliament really play a role? Do countries really respect the areas of regional sovereignty (trade, for example)? The dilution of centres of decision and the unpredictable nature of schedules make FOs advocacy work uniquely complicated.

FOs strongly contest the interference of international

partners in the negotiation of public decisions, which they believe to be linked to States' financial dependency on donors. But their own financial fragility and dependency on their outside partners limit the impact of this criticism. FOs themselves are also led in one way or another to negotiate their working agendas with their partners, which is not necessarily without any incidence on FOs' policy independence.



### **From Major Policy Orientations to Policy Implementation: New Challenges for Farmers' Organisations**

WHILE FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS have been able to significantly influence the general directions of agricultural and trade policies and the public choices that underlie them, significant challenges remain to turn these orientations into realities. Indeed, they must manage to:

- remain sufficiently mobilised to ensure that the policy orientations that they inspired remain effective references during the implementation phase;
- turn the general orientations into detailed operational proposals on policy implementation instruments;
- consolidate their capacity to intervene in the discussions and international negotiations that impact

West African agricultural and trade policies; and – take an active role in the concrete implementation of regional and national programmes (RIPs and NAIPs), which raises the issue of grassroots FOs' capacities.

This last challenge calls into question not only FOs' capacity to conduct advocacy and have an influence, but also their local roots, and their ability to manage structuring tools and deliver services to their members in the areas of production, storage and marketing of products, financing, support and advice, etc. They also challenge FOs in regard to their ability to build on their accomplishments to forge these instruments with public institutions.

## Improve the Quality of Policy Negotiation Processes

TRANSFORMING agricultural systems requires coherent public policies that rise to the challenges to be overcome and address the long term. The quality of public policies can be evaluated in light of their ability to: (i) provide concrete solutions to real problems as they arise in the field; (ii) tackle long-term challenges facing the agricultural sector and society as a whole; and (iii) stimulate a framework for convergence and coherence for all public action and external intervention.

The conclusions in the capitalisation paper emphasise three necessary lines of progress:

- improve the quality of policy negotiation processes;
- build the capacities of farmers' organisations;
- revisit the position of outside partners.

The strength of the "social compromise" that underlies the legitimacy of public policy and therefore the real possibility of its implementation is decisive. It is based on the quality and depth of the dialogue between sector actors, governments, legislative bodies, and national and regional administrations. With regard to multi-stakeholder negotiations, possible paths to improvement involve the respective responsibilities of the various protagonists in the negotiations.

**Improve public institutions' capacity to steer policy.** Improving public institutions' capacity to

steer policy notably requires:

- the recognition of organisations' independence and autonomy, avoiding all forms of interference in farmers' organisation structuring;
- the establishment of a clear legislative and regulatory framework governing organisations and their diverse functions;
- incentives to encourage the emergence of strong umbrella organisations able to be true interlocutors for the government authorities;
- the establishment of formal institutional frameworks to consult and negotiate with FOs (and other actors in the sector);
- improvements in the transparency and predictability of policy negotiation processes, working with FOs to define a shared working method (expertise, information, etc.) and agenda;
- the clarification of the roles and places of different types of actors in the negotiations;
- the founding of the dialogue on different policy scenarios that make it possible to clarify the underlying options and their impacts; and
- the identification of topics that embody real divergences in public policy options, and the definition of a study method that makes it possible to truly clarify the choices (for example, on the entrepreneurial smallholder farm model, the introduction or not of GMOs, land status, etc.).



**Build farmers' organisations' capacities.** Seven ways to improve farmers' organisations' capacity to advance the interests of farmers and rural areas were identified over the course of the capitalisation exercise.

*Improve the representativeness of FO networks and thereby the legitimacy of their proposals and their capacity to influence public decisions.* This representativeness is linked to geographical scope (for instance, the importance of ROPPA having a solid platform in Nigeria, which accounts for half of the regional agricultural economy) and the ability to cover different topics (for instance, specific issues related to pastoralism, financing, etc.), and issues pertaining to value chains (consultation arenas for each product value chain). This also requires an ability to facilitate the synthesis and internal compromises of all FOs to avoid the proliferation of sectoral platforms without overall coherence defending only individual sectors' interests.



*Strengthen in-house analysis and documentation of FOs' practices, initiatives and experiences in conjunction with the negotiation agenda.* Promoting such in-house capitalisation implies a significant strengthening the umbrella organisations' and ROPPA's capacities by: (i) developing technical teams or units devoted to this work, (ii) empowering a few leaders to guide and run the technical staff, and (iii) establishing working groups, thematic committees or FO networks for strategic value chains, in function of FOs' own agendas or the agenda for the negotiations between the government authorities and FOs.

*Better combine three complementary areas of expertise:* expertise within FOs, permanent expertise within umbrella structures and ROPPA, and outside expertise mobilised by the umbrella structures and ROPPA. For leaders, the challenge is to have solid technical foundations while maintaining strong policy control.

*Strengthen the flow of information within the network and in both directions* (from the grassroots to the regional network, and from the regional network to the grassroots) to improve leaders' ability to defend the interests of grassroots FOs, and for grassroots FOs to understand the knowledge obtained by their representatives and allow them to seize the opportunities offered by the policies set up.

This implies developing a true information management strategy that combines the flows between

grassroots FOs, the national umbrella structures, ROPPA on the regional level and its allies, using the available media: websites, e-mail, newsletters, etc. As in the case of experience capitalisation, this implies setting up or, when they exist, strengthening information management units in the umbrella structures and ROPPA. This aspect also involves monitoring policy implementation in order to contribute to the monitoring and assessment of policies and guide advocacy work.

*Developing training for leaders at different levels is an essential element in improving democracy within the farmers' movement to discuss and negotiate policies.* Significant efforts were made on issues relating to the CET and EPAs, but these efforts were often piecemeal instead of part of a training strategy designed for the medium term.

*Strengthen the capacity to formulate proposals by better linking the various issues in the negotiations* so as to avoid dispersal and exhaustion. The same applies to the advocacy strategy.

*Strengthen alliances within the region and on the international level.* In a context of strong interdependency between national, regional and international policies, it is crucial to act on all these levels. The question of alliances is all the more important as it cannot be disassociated from the debate on leaders' intervention priorities.

**Revisit the position of outside partners.** This aspect applies to the partners of public institutions (regional and international technical cooperation bodies, aid agencies) and to FOs' partners (NGOs, FOs on other continents).

When it comes to governments and regional institutions, the dialogue should better differentiate the roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved, reserving policy negotiation (social dialogue) for socioeconomic partners and civil society actors, and limiting the scope of the dialogue with technical and financial partners to implementation-related aspects.

When it comes to FOs' partners, several aspects are involved: (i) the strategy for building the autonomous financial capacities of FOs; (ii) building technical expertise and communication capacities; and finally, (iii) policy dialogue between FOs, partners and allies on a multilateral basis to improve the coherence of FOs' action plans and reduce interference in FOs' agendas by partners and their own priorities.

## Farmers' Organisations and Public Policies: Analysing & Documenting Accomplishments

This paper is a summary of the results of an experience capitalisation exercise focusing on West African farmers' organisations' participation in agricultural and trade policy elaboration and negotiation processes.

It focuses in priority on the processes for regional agricultural policy (ECOWAP and WAP), and on the Common External Tariff, the negotiation of the Economic Partnership Agreement between West Africa and the European Union and the negotiation of WTO trade rules, for trade policy. It also examines certain national processes around agricultural framework laws and trade strategies adopted for certain production sectors.

The capitalisation paper aims to identify: (i) the achievements and limitations of FOs' interventions in the negotiations and consultations; (ii) the decisive factors in the effectiveness of FOs' interventions; (iii) the principles and methods allowing institutions to develop policy dialogue more favourable to real participation by FOs and able to improve the quality of their participation; (iv) internal working methods to enable FOs to increase their capacity to influence policies and their involvement in implementation; and finally, (v) FOs' capacity building needs and the lessons to be learnt by FOs' partners.

This capitalisation exercise takes place at a pivotal moment when regional agricultural policies and national and regional agricultural investment programmes have been adopted in West Africa. FOs' role will now be a decisive part of making the directions adopted in these policies a reality.

### Partners

This capitalisation paper was produced in the framework of the project to build the capacities of agricultural organisations when it comes to agricultural, food and rural policy (the PAAR Network), financed by the Agence Française de Développement and implemented under the contracting authority of ADEPRINA-Inter-Réseaux Développement Rural.

It received co-financing from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and from OXFAM. It mobilised contributions from the leaders of FOs, national platforms and CNOP, the elected members of ROPPA's board of directors and members of its Executive Secretariat, various partners and allies of FOs in advocacy actions, and national and regional agricultural and trade institutions.

It was conducted by two consultancy firms —Bureau Issala (France) and LARES (Benin)— and one communication agency —Jade Productions (Burkina Faso).

The content and analyses expressed are those of the authors and should not be construed as representing the points of view of ROPPA or the project's technical and financial partners.

### Available Materials

The capitalisation work gave rise to the production of:

- a complete report;
- the present summary, also available in French;
- one 13-minute film and one 26-minute film in French and English, "From Plot to World Market: When Farmers' Organisations Influence Agricultural and Trade Negotiations".

These materials are available from the following websites:

- [www.bureau-issala.com](http://www.bureau-issala.com);
- [www.lares-benin.org](http://www.lares-benin.org);
- [www.inter-reseaux.org/reseau-paar/article/dossiers-de-capitalisation-dans-le](http://www.inter-reseaux.org/reseau-paar/article/dossiers-de-capitalisation-dans-le) (access to the eight capitalisation papers produced in conjunction with the PAAR Network);
- [www.jadeproductions.info](http://www.jadeproductions.info).

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