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The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) plans on doing, in the days ahead, some reforms in the organization of its departments, reducing their number from 15 to 7, leading to a merger of the said departments.

For the Network of Farmers’ Organizations and Agricultural Producers of West Africa (ROPPA), the strategic importance of the agricultural sector for the comprehensive development of the member countries from the Community, on the one hand, and multidimensional challenges of this sector on the other hand, argue in favor of strengthening the prerogatives of the current department of agriculture, environment and water resources, by transforming it into DEPARTMENT OF RURAL ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE.

In the current context of our region and in view of the various commitments of our Heads of State in Maputo and Malabo, it seems essential for ROPPA, while sharing the strategic objectives that ECOWAS seeks in its governance and the consistency of the operation of its bodies and structures, to set up a Department of Rural Economy, Environment and Agriculture. This transformation will meet more effectively the needs of a dynamic agricultural sector that is interconnected with other economic sectors. This provision will obviously be very consistent with the architecture of the sister and counterpart institutions with which ECOWAS dialogues or is called upon to conduct actions of synergy, such as the West African Economic and Monetary Union or the African Union. It will offer a real visibility of the Commission’s actions, not only to the Member States, but also to technical and financial partners and regional players, in this strategic sector.

The agricultural sector contributes 32% to the regional GDP and 80% to the regional supply of the agricultural production. According to the findings of several studies, in particular those carried out by NEPAD/AU and the OECD, it constitutes the only sector potentially capable of raising economies, and especially of fighting against food and nutrition insecurity as well as poverty; to promote the creation of remunerative and sustainable jobs for youth and women while contributing effectively to the fight against climate change and desertification. The ECOWAS department in charge of it cannot be diluted with other sectoral policies; the signal that would be sent to all the ECOWAS partners could be understood as a regression in the sectoral priorities of the regional authorities.

Ibrahima COULIBALY
Chairman of ROPPA
Advocacy for the creation of consistent investment programs for the various types of irrigation systems

What strategy for the coordinated mobilization of farmers and civil society, in advocacy and implementation of the investment programs adapted to their needs?

Faced with the growing effects of climate variability and change, irrigation has become a main adaptation solution and a factor in the sustainability and resilience of the communities and their food systems.

Unfortunately, the irrigation solutions proposed most of the time in public development policies and programs do not take enough or not at all into account the real concerns of these ones, through appropriate responses in technology and with all the services necessary for the development of the production, its diversification to ensure good nutrition for consumers, storage and processing and marketing.

It is necessary to reverse the trend and develop irrigation solutions integrated into a set of consistent sectoral policies that provide all the investments, measures, instruments and services necessary to increase the local supply of production and its development. It is important to orient and support more efficient future investments in irrigation by greatly valuing lessons learned from previous experiences. In this fight for a better future, it is thus a question of engaging in a way of valuing knowledge and know-how of family farmers and local communities for the design and management of irrigation works, supporting the dynamics for the renewal of the current irrigation solutions.

That’s why CSEAS, the Initiative Program for Irrigation in the Sahel and its regional support program (PARIIS) offer relevant guidances and restore hope to farmers and agricultural producers in the region, particularly in the countries of the Sahel.

Under the implementation of PARIIS, ROPPA has initiated a process of mobilizing FOs and CSOs, of which the purpose is to contribute to strengthening the commitment mechanism of the citizens and advocacy work for policy changes and development. investment financing.
To this end, ROPPA relies on its organizational structure (levels: local; national and regional) to enable farmers’ and civil society organizations to:

• Get more involved in the implementation of PARIIS;
• Deploy advocacy actions at the regional and national levels for (i) taking into account the concerns of agricultural producers and other grassroots water users in the process of planning investments in irrigation, in the reform of investment financing policies, in the international political commitment on the issue of water based on the strategic framework for agricultural water in the Sahel and (ii) the scaling up of irrigation solutions.

Foundations and approach of this strategy:

• A vision of the transformation of West African agriculture to meet the challenges it faces, based on family farms;
• Valuation of the network’s approach, tools and advocacy assets deployed under the institutional reforms and definition of policy instruments and measures since early 2000 (PAU, ECOWAP, etc.);
• Principles: (i) involvement of all stakeholders at national and regional level; (ii) subsidiarity and accountability;

The various stages of the advocacy process:

• Reflection on irrigation and adoption of the Dakar statement;
• Formulation process of CSEAS, 2IS program;
• PARIIS formulation and negotiation process alongside CILSS and States;
• Negotiation of a mandate for FOs/CSOs under PARIIS and resources for its implementation;

However, some aspects remain to be strengthened under the implementation of PARIIS.

At the level of States and partners:

• make the 2IS Program and PARIIS a reference framework for interventions in the field of irrigation;
• need to revise policies in the light of the current crises to better take into account the orientations of the 2IS program and PRIIS for more and better investment in irrigation: ECOWAS – UEMOA task force; Agenda 2025 – PAU of UEMOA;
• taking into account the issues of young people who constitute a potential for bringing about the expected changes; encourage youth and women empowerment processes;
• Genuinely support the diversification of plant, animal and fish production in irrigation systems;

Regarding the program governance at national and regional level:

• need to stimulate more innovations under the governance of PARIIS (RCU, country PMU, ROPPA) to ensure and strengthen the participation of FO and CSO networks;
• Strengthening the participation and commitment of FO and CSO networks: (i) Capacity-building of the FOs and communities; (ii) promote local, participatory and inclusive regulation; (iii) strengthening of mandate; (iv) enhancement of the expertise of FOs and CSO networks.
• Set up a real strategy for scaling up the results of PARIIS involving all the actors;
• Encourage community management of irrigation systems.

Aurélien LAKOUSSAN
PARIIS Focal Point at ROPPA
Promoting agroecological transition in West Africa: how ROPPA recalls the urgency and mobilizes West African youth

“The Africa of tomorrow is emerging through its youth today, anxious to break with everything that handicaps its future. Africa needs a conscious, committed youth who have a vision because without vision nothing can be built. ROPPA is convinced of this urgent need because our survival depends on it. That’s why I placed my first term under the sign of the empowerment of youth”, said Ibrahim Coulibaly, Chairman of ROPPA to the West African youth who met from March 19 to 23, 2022 to the first edition of the Farmer Agroecology Camp for Climate and Community Management of Natural Resources (CAP-GCRN) at Lake Tanma, and in Thiès in Senegal and from March 24 to 26, 2022 for reflection works for the development of an advocacy strategy on AE of the ROPPA youth college.

The camp, which gathered more than 130 young people from Senegal, Mali, Burkina, Nigeria, Benin, Guinea Bissau, Togo, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, Liberia, Gambia and Sierra Leone, allowed us to get closer to the reality of the consequences of climate change, the importance of human action in the degradation of natural resources but also the need to change behaviors to ensure the survival of mankind.

The camp contributed to the emergence of young citizens and a local community committed to the climate causes, to the restoration of the natural and productive resources and protection of biodiversity in Senegal in particular and in West African states in general with regard to the training activities, reforestation and talks debates carried out.

According to the Chairman of ROPPA’s regional youth college, Mr KOUDASSE Afantchawo, “thousands of young Africans are living in one way or another, the consequences of climate change, the inconsistency of national and regional public development policies in agri-forestry-pastoral and fisheries sector. We have difficulty finding decent jobs, feeding our families and contributing effectively to the socio-economic development of the region while we are taking over”.

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While thanking ROPPA for this foresight and OXFAM International for their technical support, CNCR President Nadjirou Sall was delighted with the organization of this meeting in Senegal. According to him, this meeting is not only crucial to strengthen the skills of youth on the causes and consequences of climate change, the good agricultural practices to adopt to reverse the trend but above all to improve the leadership of youth in order to prepare the next generation.

Indeed, with the community leaders of the village, local elected officials, administrators of CNCR and the Chairman of ROPPA, youth benefited from the true story of the endangered Lake tanma and above all from valuable advice on the restoration and protection of the natural resources mainly through agroecology. For Chairman Coulibaly, youth align with agroecology because you are the future.

Youth seized this opportunity to draw up a declaration called the declaration of the agroecology generation to not only show their commitment to agroecology but above all to call upon grassroots communities, farmer organizations, ECOWAS member states and sub-regional institutions to put global warming back at the heart of the priorities and map out development policies based on agroecology to initiate the total liberation of the West African region.

To guide their actions, youth mapped out an advocacy strategy that will rely on youth experiences, their experiences, the constraints limiting their commitment to the promotion of agroecology and their expectations from the regional, national and local policies for improve their active participation in achieving the agroecological transition of their respective States and in the West African sub-region.

Karim SAWADOGO
3AO Coordinator
The Confédération Paysanne du Faso issued an alert on a probable difficult food situation in Burkina. It was during a press conference organized on February 18th 2022 in Ouagadougou around the topic: farmer analysis of the food situation in Burkina Faso.

The results of the family farms observatory show that the 2021/2022 agri-forestry-pastoral campaign was poor throughout the national territory and alarming in some localities. This portends, according to CPF, a very difficult food and nutrition situation for the Burkinabè population. That’s why it seized the opportunity of the installation of the country’s new officials to call upon them to take urgent measures on the very precarious food situation which is already raging on the national territory.

The mapping of the food situation in Burkina Faso, resulting from the CPF data collection system, indicates that “in their majority, i.e., more than 60%, farmers estimated that the agri-forestry-pastoral campaign was very bad”. “The situation is even more alarming in the North, Center-North, Center-East and East regions, where more than 80% of farmers assessed the results of the campaign very negatively. Around 67% of family farmers believe that they cannot meet their food needs,” said Marc Gansonre, Secretary General of the Federation of the Associations of Cooperative Societies of Agricultural Professionals of Burkina (FESCOOPA-B). This mapping predicts nearly 2.7 million people who could need food assistance by August 2022, or 12% of the global population, revealed the president of CPF, Bassiaka Dao.
Several factors explain this catastrophic situation, according to the farmer analysis carried out by CPF: the long pockets of drought, drop in rainfall in most regions of the country are among others reasons for this food crisis.

According to the president of CPF, it is high time to rethink the irrigation policy in Burkina Faso. He recommends a professionalization of the agricultural sector in order to be independent vis-à-vis the increasingly failing rainfall.

Then, the security situation has a negative impact on the agricultural production due to the massive displacement of farmers, resulting in the loss of their production factors.

In its role of defending the material and moral interests of farmers, CPF invited the new regime to take strong and immediate measures in order to strengthen the security and intervention stock, provide food to the vulnerable households, secure throughout the territory, the return of internally displaced persons to their localities of origin and support for the resumption of the agricultural activities.

Obi julienne OUATTARA
Communication officer at CPF
The United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF 2019-2028) : Togo has validated its draft National Action Plan for the Promotion of Family Farming in Togo (2021 – 2030)

Togo, through the National Platform for the Promotion of Family Farming in Togo (PNAFAT) and in collaboration with the Togolese Coordination of Farmer Organizations and Agricultural Producers (CTOP), has adopted a National Action Plan for the Promotion of Family Farming in Togo (2021 – 2030) with the support of the World Rural Forum (WRF). This action plan aims at strengthening family farming and promoting diversified and innovative food systems to help achieve the goals of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF 2019-2028).

Indeed, during the 72th session of its General Assembly, on December 20, 2017, the United Nations Organization proclaimed the period 2019-2028, United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF) in order to generate a commitment strong policy at national, regional and global levels, and to help create an enabling environment for family farmers.

On May 29th, 2019, at the launch of the UNDFF in Rome, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), mandated by the General Assembly of the United Nations United to lead the decade, shared a Global Action Plan for the decade based on seven (7) pillars.

It should be noted that the global initiative for the promotion of family farming is justified by several realities, including:

- its sustainability: family farming uses only 30% of the agricultural resources available in the world;
- its strong food and economic potential: it produces 80% of the food consumed in the world, although little support and value;
- its significant contribution to the fight against unemployment: family farming employs 4 out of 10 workers in the world, and 2/3 of African workers; or
its dynamism: it is not fixed and closed to progress; many innovations are produced and/or implemented there almost every day.

Following the Rome meeting, each country was tasked with developing a national action plan contributing to the overall goal.

It is within this framework that in February 2021, with the support of the Forest and Farming Mechanism (FFF) of the FAO, Togo under the leadership of the CTOP and the PNAFAT with the effective participation of state and non-state actors validated a roadmap for the development of a national action plan for the UNDFF 2019-2028.

A National Coordination Committee for the Development of the National Action Plan (CNCE/PAN) chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development (MAEDR) has been set up to lead the process of development of the action plan in an inclusive and participatory approach. This process resulted in the development of the draft National Action Plan for the Promotion of Family Farming in Togo (2021-2030) and submitted to the validation of the actors with a view to its sharing and implementation.

The national action plan of Togo proposes to the actors to rely on 7 pillars of the Global Action Plan which are:

1. The development of a political environment conducive to the strengthening of family farming;
2. Support for youth and generational renewal of family farming;
3. Support for women and promotion of gender equality in family farming;
4. Support for the capacity-building of farmers’ organizations;
5. Improving the resilience and well-being of family farmers;
6. Improving the sustainability of family farming;
7. Valuing the multidimensionality of family farming.

The next steps in the UNDFF process include the establishment of a national steering committee (NSC), the official launch of the action plan for the decade in Togo and the organization of a roundtable of partners to mobilize the resources necessary for its implementation.

The stakes of this plan are important. Its rigorous implementation should enable Togo to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition, reduce social and economic inequalities, protect and promote biodiversity, protect soils and restore degraded ecosystems, preserve and to convey know-how and culture, etc.

As a reminder, in Togo, family farming comprises small-scale farmers and employs 70% of the working population and feeds 80% of the population. It contributes 38% to the GDP and is the main source of economic growth.

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It should be noted that Togo, through this validation, has become the second African country, after The Gambia, to adopt an action plan for the promotion of family farming, under the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF).

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