



Press Release



Towards a Regional Support Strategy for Youth Employability in the Agro-Sylvo-Pastoral and Fisheries Sector in West Africa: Stakeholders of the Region share experiences and initiatives in the sector

Cotonou (Benin), 8th November 2018. On Wednesday November 7th, 2018, ended in Cotonou, Benin, a regional workshop on the sharing of experiences and initiatives on youth employability in the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector with a view to combating rural exodus and uncontrolled emigration of young people in the ECOWAS Region.

Indeed, in the face of the socio-economic consequences of massive youth unemployment, ECOWAS member States are exploring various levers and facilities for improving youth's access to stable and decent income-generating jobs. These initiatives often target the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector given its potential for creating jobs in the various blocks of the value chains.

Discussions at the regional level contribute to the operationalization of the orientations of the regional Agricultural Policy: ECOWAP which, through its Regional Plan for Agricultural Investment and Food and Nutrition Security, has identified the role and place of young people in the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector as major concerns for agricultural and rural development. To this end, ECOWAS has set itself the ambition of developing the sector's attractiveness. It wants to lay the foundation for a controlled transformation of family farms to accelerate economic growth and contribute to improving the living conditions.

This approach aims to help increase productivity and agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries production through diversified, intensified, sustainable production systems incorporating post-production loss reduction technologies. Moreover, in addition to the development of value chains and the strengthening of production systems, the scope of this specific objective is to change the image of the sector and its attractiveness, so as to particularly encourage young

people to acquire quality vocational training and to settle in agriculture, be it at the level of production, processing or marketing.

The Cotonou workshop comes after the exchanges that the networks of the regional professional organizations (ROPPA, APESS, RBM) and ECOWAS had on 14 September 2018 in Lomé, Togo, and which had made it possible to agree on the orientations and the definition process of the regional support strategy for youth employability.

Specifically, it has helped document (i) the socio-professional situation of youth in the countries, (ii) experiences of expanding employment opportunities for youth in the sector, and (ii) experiences of skills building and youth insertion capacities in the sector in order to facilitate the finalization of the regional support strategy for the sector.

Moving forward, the strategy to be finalized will rest, among others, on three major pillars: (i) the preparation of the youth for jobs in the agro-sylvo-pastoral, fisheries and agro-food sector, (ii) public policy measures to facilitate the integration of the youth into the sector with much emphasis on the dimensions and nature of financial facility and (iii) the promotion of youth employment monitoring in the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector.

To recall, the promotion of youth employability in the sector is a regional issue, a major concern for the actors: (i) public authorities (Governments of Community States, Technical and Financial Partners) who see it as a means to minimize the migratory phenomenon, to guarantee to the youth incomes likely to remove them from the grip of the new forces of the evil which skim the region, to support an agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector whose systems of production are still consuming large and local workforce; (ii) producers' organizations, pastoralists and fishermen, for whom youth employability is a key concern, that of the reproduction of the family farming system, a mode of exploitation which is at the heart of their advocacy actions and (iii) rural youth who see it as a way to combating underemployment and endemic unemployment they are confronted with, by creating decent jobs that can develop and give them an acceptable and recognized social status.

The definition process of the strategy is facilitated by [the financial support of the Swiss Cooperation](#) and the technical assistance of the Hub Rural.

Kindly watch the [video](#)

For any further information on the subject, kindly contact **Mr Francis Dabiré**,
Communication Officer for the ECOWAS Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food.
fdabire@araa.org, Tel.: +228 92 60 76 74.