



The agroecology newsletter

April 2023 · Issue 3

Acting together to transform our agri-food systems



TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE and food in West Africa is a complex challenge. Working closely and acting together allows the different actors in the sector to articulate the six major and inseparable pillars of a sustainable, agro-ecological transformation of agriculture and food systems. First of all, capacity building for farmers in sustainable agricultural practices, integration of agriculture-livestock-forestry, diversification, rotation and association of crops, management of water whose cycle is increasingly on the verge of breaking, soil conservation techniques and more generally the restoration of soil fertility, etc. is crucial. This can be done through training programmes, awareness raising and advisory support.

Second, promoting research and innovation is essential to improve agricultural productivity, reduce crop losses and improve food quality. Strengthening participatory agricultural research in West Africa and supporting innovation and the co-construction of knowledge help farmers to produce more efficiently.

The third pillar is the production of alternative inputs to synthetic chemical fertilisers and pesticides, based on biomass and natural biodiversity. It reduces producers' dependence on international firms, reconciling local know-how with modern methods of nature-based intensification to reduce production costs and pollution and increase their sources of income.

Collaboration between actors in the supply chain is the fourth pillar. Farmers, processors, retailers and consumers must work together to improve food quality and enhance food safety. It is therefore important to promote high value-added products and to enhance their value. This requires partnerships between these different actors in the value chains.

Fifth pillar, rural infrastructure. To improve agricultural productivity and market access, it is important to develop and improve rural infrastructure, such as roads, markets, warehouses, irrigation networks, access to energy and water, etc. This requires close cooperation with local and regional authorities and the state. This requires close cooperation with local authorities and the state.

Finally, it is essential to support sustainable agricultural policies that focus on agricultural productivity, natural resource protection and food security. It is therefore important to support policies that promote sustainable agriculture in West Africa, including incentive mechanisms: financing, land tenure security, etc.

Together we can transform agriculture for a more sustainable, productive and resilient food system in West Africa.

Borgui Yérima
Coordinator of the ECOWAS Agroecology Programme

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The number...

15

This is the number of pilot projects promoting agroecology supported by the EAP in five countries and which are in the evaluation and capitalisation phase.

The main recommendations of the EAP Steering Committee

The 2023 regional steering committee meetings of ECOW-AP projects and programmes were held in hybrid in Lomé from 20 February to 3 March 2023 under the leadership of the ECOWAS Commission. It is within this framework that the 6th ordinary session of the Steering Committee of the Agroecology Programme (PAE) in West Africa was held.

The Steering Committee strongly recommended that the team further strengthen the collaborative work and synergies between the EAP and other projects, programmes and initiatives working on the theme of “Climate Change Adaptation and Agroecology”. In addition to the bridges to be strengthened between the EAP and the other projects directly implemented by ECOWAS (AIC project, GCCA+AO), the Committee recommended to:

- Continue exchanges with FAO for the formulation of the TEN Agroecology Programme;
- Continue to support the 3AO Alliance and ROPPA in advocacy activities for the agro-ecological transition at national and regional level; and

- Joining forces with the 3AO Alliance and the FAIR Sahel project (Promoting agroecological intensification of agriculture to foster farm resilience in the Sahel - Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal) to capitalise on good practices and set up a digital platform dedicated to agroecology.

Finally, particular emphasis was placed on the finalisation of the study on the financing of agroecology. It was recalled that this study is strategic as it should help to answer the questions of the “post-project”. To this end, a high-level workshop, bringing together regional and national actors, will be organised to share the results of the study. The challenge is to convince banks and other partners in the region to provide more funding for the agro-ecological transition to sustainable agriculture (opening of credit lines for banks, loans to states, guarantee funds, etc.).

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The EAP's flagship activities in 2023

In 2023, while consultation activities will continue at both national and regional levels, the main activities will focus on the effective launch of support to training centres, on building partnerships between professional agricultural organisations, research and training centres and national extension services.

In addition, the EAP will have to address several challenges such as:

- The inclusion and effective financing of agroecology in national agricultural policies;
- Determining the costs/benefits of the agroecological transition of family farms in different agroclimatic zones;
- The establishment of financing mechanisms for the agro-ecological transition and favourable conditions for private investment; and
- The overall capitalisation of the Programme to build the evidence base, facilitate scaling up and accelerate the agroecological transition of West African agriculture.

It is important to note that the realisation of these activities will depend on various factors, such as political will, both national and regional, adequate funding and the commitment of farmers and local communities.



Echoes from the field

Agroecology Days in Senegal, February 2023

From 6 to 16 February 2023, the Dynamique pour une Transition Agroécologique (DyTAES) organised the fourth edition of the Journées de l'Agroécologie dans les territoires et à Dakar (Agroecology Days in the Territories and in Dakar) on the theme of the territorialisation of agroecology. The aim of this event was to relaunch a new cycle of national and local policy dialogue to support the territorialisation of agroecology. The event produced four notes for decision-makers on the following themes and recommendations:

- Soil restoration: strengthen the technical capacities of actors, develop and implement an incentive policy in favour of soil fertility, reform and apply the forestry code, facilitate the conditions for land use;
- Water management: fostering sustainable access to wa-

ter for populations, establishing inclusive and local water governance, promoting sustainable management of quality water;

- Reducing dependence on inputs: strengthen national regulations and enforce them, raise awareness and promote agroecological practices, provide incentives for the adoption of agroecological alternatives and build the capacity of stakeholders, while supporting research and development and knowledge sharing;
- Food systems: developing an inclusive, integrated and coherent agri-food policy based on the right to food.

All the notes produced can be downloaded:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yD6UwzigiG-Zf6qLg1j5OwHY-99liBGm/view>

Training of public and private extension agents in Ghana, February 2023

The Ministry of Food and Agriculture, in collaboration with the Ghana Peasant Farmers' Association, organised a capacity building workshop for public and private agricultural extension workers on the principles and concepts of agroecology from 6–8 February 2023 at Amanchia-Nkawie to improve their performance for the benefit of farmers.

In addition to technical training, the workshop also aimed to encourage officers from all regions of Ghana to work closely with farmers in the country to boost agricultural activities. Agroecology is a system where traditional

knowledge, farmer practices and the science of ecological principles are applied to food systems. It includes socio-cultural and economic aspects and practices such as organic farming and regenerative agriculture to contribute to sustainable development.

At the end of the training, a film was produced:

<https://app.box.com/s/5d7gs18ju0wcu3vnyiv9la99ih1buOr1>

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Studies and publications

Guide pour l'évaluation de l'agroécologie : Méthode pour mesurer ses effets et comprendre les conditions de son développement. Éditions du GRET et Éditions QUAE (Editorial Coordination : Laurent Levard); 320 pages.

<https://www.quae.com/produit/1797/9782759236466/guide-pour-l-evaluation-de-l-agroecologie>

The weakness of public policies to support agroecology in Mali – Policy brief TAFS-FAIR

<https://fairdoc.cirad.fr/read/aQPoz756lm34001999>

Agroecology in Burkina Faso: What are the challenges for its institutionalisation? Policy brief TAFS-FAIR

<https://fairdoc.cirad.fr/read/aQPoz756lm34002000>



The quarterly agenda

24–28 April 2023 – Saint-Louis, Senegal – **Workshop of the consortium of universities in West Africa for the adaptation and animation of an Agroecology MOOC in the framework of the EAP.**

For more information, contact Kado Alphonse Simba :
asimba@araa.org

29 June 2023 – Paris, France (Pavillon de l'eau) – **Study day organised by IRAM: “Agroecological transitions: challenges and support conditions. Experiences of transitions in the South.”**

For more information, contact Liora Stuhrenberg:
l.stuhrenberg@iram-fr.org

“We call on our regional institutions and states to develop and support the implementation of agroecology scaling-up strategies to implement structural solutions for the resilience of our food systems and a genuine sustainable economic and social recovery of local communities and countries in the region”

Extract from the Bissau Declaration on the Agroecological Transition of the Alliance 3 Forum
(Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa) – 13 December 2022

<https://app.box.com/s/q1cuuayvy8i35s5uhuqnjvkezbop73ws>

The agroecology reduces carbon emissions, protects soils and biodiversity, cares for women, men, ensures their food and provides them with the livelihoods to protect, educate and care for their children, the future generations.



Director of publication: Ousseini Salifou
Editor-in-chief: Francis Dabiré
Editorial coordination: Borgui Yérima
Photographies: IRD, RAAF, ECOWAS
Layout: Emmanuel Jeudy

The agroecology newsletter, n°3, April 2023. A publication of the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF).

This publication is edited under the sole responsibility of the ECOWAS Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food, with the editorial support of the “Bureau Issala – Jade Productions” Group. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union, AFD, ECOWAS Member States and technical partners.

Comments on this document can be addressed to the RAAA:
✉ pae@araa.org

RAAF

83, rue de la Pâture (Super Taco)
01 BP 4817 Lomé, Togo
+ 228 22 21 40 03
www.araa.org

financial support



technical support

