

Ecowap

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● **Facilitating Better Access to Climate Finance for the Implementation of the Regional Climate Strategy**

● **Mobilising Resources for Agroecological Transition in West Africa**

● **Improving Producers' Access to Agrometeorological Information**

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Editorial



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Facing this challenge, we shall all increase efforts in the implementation of the various initiatives underway and those to come. I salute the dedication of all agricultural development stakeholders in the countries and at regional level, our financial partners as well as political decision-makers for the measures taken to avoid the region sinking into a severe food crisis.

For 2024, I wish to reiterate the importance of further strengthening regional and international cooperation to sustain the achievements and consolidate the results and impacts already obtained for the benefit of the populations in the various sectors. Strengthening collaborative work and pooling efforts and resources as well will also enable the region to maintain the momentum raised and to open up new avenues for tackling food, nutrition, and pastoral crises.

In this issue, we have chosen to take a closer look at issues such as access to climate finance, mobilisation of resources for agro-ecological transition, access to agro-meteorological information, peaceful transhumance, digital agricultural advice, intra-regional trade of agricultural products, and food system resilience. This is a way of showing that working together in the framework of regional solidarity is increasingly becoming an absolute necessity for reducing the region's vulnerability and collectively facing up the risks induced by the impacts of climate change, on the one hand, and strengthening the resilience of West African agriculture in the face of multiple shocks, on the other hand.

ECOWAP News gives us a cross-reading of the achievements, challenges, and prospects of the current dynamic within targeted thematic areas.

The ECOWAS Department for Economic Affairs and Agriculture remains committed to strengthening partnerships and synergies in the regional coordination of projects and programmes in view of the multiplicity of initiatives in the implementation of the Regional Agricultural Policy and the recurrent food and nutrition crises in the region.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue and thank you all for the various supports.

Dear Partners,

The multiple shocks arising from climate change, civil insecurity linked to terrorism and the large number of internally displaced people in several countries continue to exacerbate the region's food and nutrition situation. The gloomy picture painted by the December 2023 Harmonised Framework figures indicates that the number of people in need of food assistance could reach 44.4 million (+4% compared to the same period in 2023) during the next lean season between June and August 2024.

Ecowap News

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Facilitating Better Access to Climate Finance for the Implementation of the Regional Climate Strategy

In 2022, ECOWAS adopted a Regional Climate Strategy (RCS), the objective of which is to adapt to and to mitigate climate change by sector (transport, agriculture, energy, forestry, water, health, etc.). Effective implementation of the Strategy depends on the mobilisation of innovative additional financial resources known as "climate fund". ECOWAS and the Green Climate Fund therefore join forces to facilitate stakeholders' access to the fund.



At various degrees, ECOWAS Member States have challenges in meeting the demands of the battle against climate change and in transforming their climate action strategies into bankable projects, particularly in the agricultural sector.

This was highlighted in the mapping of international climate finance flows carried out by ECOWAS (2003-2022), which shows a shortfall in climate action investment compared with the conditional needs expressed by the States under the Paris Climate Agreement. Despite useful collaboration with various partners, the need to increase the volume and effectiveness of climate finance flows remains a serious matter of concern.

In this vein, ECOWAS has strengthened its collaboration with international funds dedicated to climate action, in particular the Green Climate Fund, which is the largest fund dedicated to the climate. One of the cornerstones of this cooperation is the accreditation of its Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) and its Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF) to the Fund to increase ways for channelling climate funds to the region through direct access.

ECOWAS is thus providing a conducive framework for meeting climate commitments of its Member States while actively contributing to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

As an implementing partner for Member States under the preparatory support programme and adding to the West African Climate Smart Agriculture Initiative (WAICSA), which aims to facilitate access to finance for climate-smart agriculture, RAAF has secured, in 2023, funding of USD 1.4 million from the Green Climate Fund (GCF). With this funding, ECOWAS, through RAAF, will work to facilitate better access to climate finance for the implementation of the Regional Climate Strategy through (i) institutional and technical capacity building, (ii) preparation and submission of project portfolios and (iii) knowledge sharing and learning. The implementation of such actions will contribute to removing the obstacles identified and facilitating the ECOWAS Commission's support to Member States in mobilising the additional funding of USD 239,852.18 million expressed in their Revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for conditional and unconditional actions by 2030.



Mobilising Resources for Agroecological Transition in West Africa

Against a backdrop of global change mainly due to climate change, energy crisis, loss of biodiversity, etc., the current economic development model, which is not very respectful of natural resources, is increasingly being questioned. The ECOWAP 2025 Strategic Orientation Framework, adopted in 2016, therefore advocates the need to change the agricultural development paradigm.

Agroecological transition (AET) is set up as the essential pivot in the face of agricultural challenges West Africa is going through. The key to turning this vision into reality lies in mobilising appropriate financial resources. Main lesson learned is the need to secure long-term funding to sustainably support agroecological transition. Such resources must guarantee ongoing technical and financial support, giving agroecological projects the best chance of success. Diversification of funding sources is therefore a MUST.

To this end, ECOWAS has been implementing, since 2018, the West African Agroecology Programme with a total budget of €16.2 million. In addition, as part of the drive to build on the achievements of the Programme, another project, DéSIRA+, with a total budget of €20 million, still funded by the EU and AFD to support innovation activities that address agroecological issues on a larger scale will soon kick off. Finally, a study commissioned by ECOWAS as part of the Agroecology Programme has identified sources of private and public funding for agroecological transition, which will support the ECOWAS Regional Agriculture and Food Fund (RAFF).



Mobilising resources from these funding sources is the ECOWAS Commission's next objective towards increasing funding for agroecological transition in West Africa. International climate funds also represent

a major opportunity for financing agroecological transition on a large scale. However, coordination challenges need to be addressed to maximise the impact of the resources.



Improving Producers' Access to Agrometeorological Information

Improving productivity remains a major concern in the face of the challenges due to climate change. In this context, agrometeorological information tailored to producers is an agricultural input in the same way as fertilisers, seeds, or seedlings. Numerous ECOWAS initiatives aim to facilitate this access.



Access to weather and climate information in real time makes it possible to better plan agricultural activities and increase agricultural productivity and production. It considerably reduces the risk of agricultural investment losses due to late and/or irregular rainfall. Through several mechanisms, including those supported by the regional project to promote climate-smart agriculture (CSA) in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, and Togo), funded by the Adaptation Fund through the West African Development Bank (BOAD) with an amount of US\$14,000,000, the ECOWAS Commission is responding to the issue.

Thanks to the work of the CSA project, for example, the weather and climate observation networks for data collection and analysis in the five countries covered by the project have been expanded through the acquisition and installation of direct-reading rain gauge kits, thermometers, and anemometers. Besides, thanks to the mechanism supported by the project, 60,000 farmers, meaning about 5,000 farmers, now have access to agrometeorological information tailored to their needs.

Through capacity-building workshops, producers are grouped around a WhatsApp platform where climatic information relevant to their activities is shared daily. With the support of the AGRHYMET Regional Climate Centre for West Africa and the Sahel (CCR-AOS), producers have previously been trained to read and use agro-hydro-climatic information and its implications for agriculture at local level.

Success of such a process also requires the involvement of national meteorological services, which participate in the provision of climate services with a view to community resilience. Besides the best appropriate arrangements to be promoted as part of the paradigm shift, the need to develop capacities through improving assets of West Africa's human capital shall also be a priority for governments and regional intergovernmental organisations.



Facing Shocks to the Food System and the Growing Number of Vulnerable People

According to the 2023 Harmonised Framework figures, the region will have more than 40 million people in a food deficit situation during the lean season of 2024. This is mainly due to the vulnerability of the food system, climate change, fluctuations in the global food market, security crisis, etc. To address the situation, ECOWAS is making the region's food security the focus of its strategies, notably the Regional Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP).

Since 2022, the region has been implementing the West African Food System Resilience Programme (FSRP) with financial support from the World Bank. The FSRP project is a programmatic approach that aims to increase agricultural productivity through agropastoral climate-smart practices while promoting digital advice, development of agricultural value chains and increase of agricultural products intra-regional trade.

For the moment, it targets about 6 million people in 8 countries: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Chad, and Togo. With this programme, the region aims to reduce the number of vulnerable people by at least 25% by 2026. After two years of implementation, more than 1,200,000 people have benefited from the project's actions, 37% of them are women.

Digital advice versus agricultural advisory services

Though complementary, the two (02) concepts should be distinguished. Over 60% of the region's economy is based on agricultural labour. To take full advantage of this asset, it is essential to provide support to agricultural players. In the field, this support involves combining learning approaches such as (i) farmers' field school approach, which encourages cross-learning among farmers, technicians and sometimes researchers; (ii) innovation platforms, which bring together sector players to solve technical and organisational issues; (iii) farmer-to-farmer advice, which promotes farmers' knowledge and ensures endogenous advice dynamic, (iv) experience sharing visits, etc.

But the current situation, which is marked by a shortage of agricultural supervisory staff in relation to needs in most countries, highlights the need for the region to change its approach to achieve better results. ECOWAS, therefore, encourages governments and partners to take advantage of digital technology and lay particular emphasis on digital advice, which is an innovative approach aimed at integrating technological advances into agriculture. This approach allows to anticipate shocks, particularly climate ones, reduce production costs and inputs quantity (water, energy, fertilisers, pesticides, etc.), thereby helping to improve competitiveness of the entire production and marketing chain.

Intra-regional trade of agricultural products among ECOWAS countries

International trade has grown steadily over recent decades, while intra-regional agricultural trade remains well below its potential. Currently, recorded intra-regional trade represents 12% of total exports, compared with 59% in Asia and 69% in Europe.

These figures are not just statistics, they are realities that have a direct impact on the lives of millions of people in the region. They represent missed opportunities for farmers, entrepreneurs, and local communities at a time when the region represents a vast market with the potential to foster economic growth and prosperity.

Faced with this situation, ECOWAS is leading several initiatives to improve the trend. With the FSRP project, ECOWAS has acquired an innovative analysis tool, the ECOWAS Agricultural Trade and Market Scoreboard (EATM-SCORECARD), which aims to better document intra-regional trade in agri-food products, identify gaps in agri-food trade policies and strengthen the implementation of regional policies and regional instruments to promote intra-regional trade by countries (SLEC, ECOWAP, AfCFTA, CET, etc.). The tool is being deployed in the FSRP countries, with capacity building for stakeholders to facilitate collection of trade data.



Consolidating the Mechanism for Managing Short-Term Food Crises

West Africa is one of the world's regions where structural food and nutrition insecurity is of greatest concern. This challenge is compounded by cyclical shocks. In response, the region has adopted an integrated storage strategy whose operational implementation began in 2016.

Since 2011, ECOWAS has developed a regional food security storage strategy which is in line with the threefold vision of the Regional Agricultural Policy to act on production, markets, and price volatility. It is based on the following pillars: (i) food security storage to meet the needs of vulnerable populations in the event of short-term food crises, (ii) interventions (broader than storage alone) to improve the functioning of markets and reduce price volatility, and (iii) social food security

nets for populations with structural livelihood deficits. The strategy is based on the complementarity of three (03) levels of storage known as lines of defence: (i) local stocks, generally managed by producers' organisations, (ii) national security stocks managed or co-managed by governments and their partners, and (iii) the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) managed by the ECOWAS Commission.



Created in 2013 by a Supplementary Act to the ECOWAS Treaty by the Heads of State, the RFSR is meant to provide a sovereign instrument for managing short-term food crises, in support to Member States. It has three specific objectives: (i) to complement the efforts of Member States to provide rapid and diversified food and nutritional assistance, (ii) to express regional solidarity with Member States and affected populations through transparent, fair, and predictable mechanisms, and (iii) to contribute to food sovereignty and political, economic, and commercial integration of West Africa. It comprises a physical reserve and a financial reserve.

Following 10-year implementation, what are the main achievements of the Regional Food Security Storage Strategy?

To date, an estimated €70 million has been invested in implementing the regional storage strategy, more than 16 million of which come from ECOWAS internal resources. It has enabled the region to reach key achievements such as the RFSR with a clearcut governance and regulatory framework. The RFSR has been able to build up a capital of about 63,000 metric tonnes of physical stocks and has intervened eighteen (18) times to support countries in the region undergoing food and nutrition crises. Besides, ECOWAS countries + Mauritania and Chad have adopted national strategies and harmonised storage procedures. Local storage organisations have made a major effort to codify their best practices and strengthen management capacities. Food security information systems have also been strengthened, enabling the

development of decision-making tools for better stock management at all three levels.

How to ensure the growth and sustainability of the Regional Food Security Reserve?

To make it more effective, ECOWAS has encouraged the revision of the regional storage strategy in 2024. The challenge is to adapt the RFSR instruments to current realities based on experience gained in the field and the region's new challenges and ambitions.

Main concerns include operationalisation of the animal feed component in response to pastoral crises and reinforcement of the nutrition products component, revision of triggering criteria, development, and adaptation of product basket, development of the RFSR's calibration, operationalisation of the financial reserve, improvement of RFSR products storage approaches through contracting with private operators and POs and experimentation of silo storage.

The process will be participatory and steered by a high-level committee that will set broad guidelines and validate the products developed at the various stages. It will conclude with a regional workshop to validate amended tools, thus launching a new phase in the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Food Security Storage Strategy.



Promoting Pastoralism and Transhumance in West Africa: Significant Achievements Available for Stakeholders

Peaceful transhumance in West Africa and the Sahel is a major objective that ECOWAS is pursuing through several initiatives aimed at contributing to the development of mobile livestock farming or pastoralism by equipping the sector with modern infrastructure. This is being carried out through setting-up pastoral resource management mechanisms and strengthening dialogue among stakeholders to reduce conflicts.

Under the Regional Dialogue and Investment Programme for Pastoralism and Transhumance in the Sahel and Coastal West Africa (PRE-DIP), implemented from 2019 to 2023 under the technical coordination of CILSS, several achievements are now available.

The region records, among others:

- a regional pastoral information service that provides agro-pastoralists with reliable technical information tailored to their needs, enabling

them to optimize their tactical and strategic herd management choices and reduce their exposure to risk,

- strengthening of dialogue and governance of cross-border transhumance through direct exchanges among livestock actors and farmers. Perception of pastoralism has somewhat been improved with a view to reducing conflicts,

- In terms of pastoral infrastructure, the region has increased its facilities, with 1,482 km of marked/secured tracks, 43 water points, 10 new livestock markets, 28 resting grazing areas, 14 feed banks, supplied with 1,100 tonnes of feed, and 15 loading bays. All this infrastructure has been mapped and geo-referenced to facilitate access and use.
- With the aim of controlling cross-border animal diseases that have an impact on animal and human health, a system for epidemiological surveillance, prevention, and management of priority cross-border diseases and zoonoses, defining frameworks and strategies that each country must comply with has been set up.

The advances in the sector do not, however, overshadow the need for ECOWAS to facilitate scaling up of its achievements to meet the challenges still prevailing in the region. Experience gained from the various projects is being used in other initiatives (PRIDEC, PRAPS2, PRADEP-AOS, PRISMA, etc.) to meet the region's new challenges. The aim is to continue efforts to boost cross-border consultation frameworks and operationalise the regional observatory of mobile livestock systems in West Africa and the Sahel.





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