



AGIR / *Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative - Sahel*

**Position paper  
of ECOWAS and UEMOA and their technical branch CILSS  
for the planning and implementation of AGIR**

This paper is the outcome of a consultation between ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS,  
facilitated by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC).

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**With the facilitation of :**



## 1. Introduction

West African states have adopted regional policies and investment programmes on the prevention and management of food and nutritional crises, as well as instruments to implement them. Moreover, they have mandated their regional organisations to initiate a process of convergence and subsidiarity. ECOWAS and UEMOA, as well as CILSS, their technical branch in the area of food security and the desertification control, warmly welcome the AGIR initiative, whose aim is to unite the international community around West Africa's agenda for food and nutritional security.

## 2. Background and challenges

### *West Africa can be proud of its farmers, herders and fishermen*

Over the course of the last six decades, West Africa's population has grown by a factor of four, the urban population by a factor of 20 and rural residents by two and a half.<sup>1</sup> This explains why the first challenge of the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) is *"to adequately feed a growing and rapidly urbanising West African population..."*. The same is true for the UEMOA Agricultural Policy (PAU) which ultimately aims *"to feed the population in a context of strong demographic growth and urbanisation"*.

To meet this challenge, West African regional organisations are committing to a "vision of a modern and sustainable agriculture, based on the effectiveness and efficiency of family farming and the promotion of agricultural enterprises" (ECOWAP) and to the "reevaluation of farming incomes and the agricultural profession" (PAU).

In the past 30 years, agricultural production has grown an average of 3.7% per year, much faster than the population. Cereals production has grown even faster (3.8%); nine countries of the region are classified by the FAO among the 20 best agricultural performers in the world. This performance could have been even stronger if Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad and Côte d'Ivoire had not experienced prolonged periods of conflict and political instability.

The growth in agriculture has allowed for an increase of food availability such that, excluding imports, food availability has grown from 1 700 calories per person per day in 1980 to 2400 calories in 2007. Dependency on food from the rest of the world has not grown. It was 20% (in calories per person per day) in 1980 and remains at the same level today. In 30 years, rice imports (which represent 42% of the cost of food imports) have grown only 3.5 kg per person per year.

This remarkable performance is to the credit of the West African farmers and agricultural producers, who for 30 years have brought an additional 5.5% of agricultural products to market each year. They have managed to respond to a strongly growing and diversifying demand from increasing numbers of non-producer consumers. In 1960, agricultural producer households represented 83% of the total population. In 2010, they are not more than 50%. A decreasing proportion of the population has therefore had to feed the rapidly growing remainder of the population, a trend that will continue with the agricultural and rural transition. This response to food demand could only have been achieved through the constant improvement of the productivity of agricultural labour, which after having declined for many years, has grown at the impressive rate of 2.6% per year since 1980.

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<sup>1</sup> The figures and trends presented here are the results of a joint reflection conducted by the Sahel and West Africa Club, on long-term food prospects in West Africa. The results of this reflection will be presented at the 2012 SWAC Forum on 7 December 2012 in Ouagadougou.

## *Yet hunger continues to menace a large portion of the population*

Despite the strong agricultural performance, a still significant proportion of West Africa's population does not have enough to eat, meaning that overall agricultural progress at the regional level does not necessarily bring about "food security" for all. Farmers marginalised by the market and confronting environmental fragility, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists whose capital stocks are continually threatened by recurrent droughts, poor workers in the urban economy, millions of vulnerable households with weak purchasing power – all have been left on the side of the road. Nearly 33 million West Africans, 12% of the population, still suffered chronic malnutrition during the period from 2006 to 2008. Recurrent crises *"more complex and multifaceted than in the past, degrade diets, cause malnutrition and sometimes famine, [...] affecting the most vulnerable groups: children under the age of five, pregnant women, nursing mothers, people living with HIV/AIDS, refugees and displaced persons, but also certain specific groups such as small-scale agro-silvo-pastoralists and fisheries."*<sup>2</sup>

The causes of these crises are many and complex. They intertwine climate shocks and environmental disasters (droughts, floods, locust threats, etc.), socioeconomic conditions of households (deterioration of livelihoods, reduced purchasing power, extreme poverty, etc.) and problems linked to the market (excessive volatility in global food commodity prices and their repercussions for the West African regional market), armed conflicts and socio-political troubles.

## *The double challenge of the future*

The population of West Africa is expected to grow by 150 million in the next 20 years. In the same time, the number of agricultural producers is expected to remain stable. To produce more, farmers will increasingly resort to intensification. Yet to intensify, that is to say invest in and modernise family farms; agricultural marketing infrastructure must be strengthened and risks in agriculture must be mitigated, the market must also become more stable, more liquid and allow for better incomes; producers must have secure land titles, they must be able to preserve and regenerate the soil, they must have an appropriate entrepreneur status, and finally they must have access to credit under reasonable conditions. In a word, they must be placed in the conditions necessary for the development of agricultural entrepreneurship. All these issues go to the heart of the food and agricultural revolution that West African producers must lead.

In the agricultural zones that are the most challenged and less connected to the markets, public authorities will be called to unlock these areas through massive rural road construction and pastoral hydraulics programmes, mostly benefitting poor farmers and breeders. Elsewhere, considerable investment will be needed to: i) develop the immense potential of irrigable land, ii) improve the availability of good quality fertilizers, improved seeds, skilled agricultural jobs, iii) strengthen storage and agro-processing infrastructures and facilitate the setting-up of local financial and non-financial services, iv) increase efforts to improve transport and telecommunication networks and eliminate barriers to regional trade in order to make the market more fluid, etc.

***In addition to the long-term challenge of constructing a strong subsistence farming (supported by family agribusinesses with secure land rights), there is the challenge of finding structural solutions to chronic malnutrition without neglecting the need to respond to cyclical food crises.*** Of the 150 million additional West Africans from now until 2030, 115 million will be city dwellers (of which two-thirds will be born in urban settings). The urban economy will remain dominated by the informal sector, which today is where chronic food insecurity is most prevalent. Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists and other poor peasants will also remain in a state of chronic fragility. Climate change, natural disasters and socio-political troubles will continue to cause or exacerbate cyclical food crises.

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<sup>2</sup> Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management in the Sahel and West Africa. ECOWAS-UEMOA with technical support from the CILSS Executive Secretariat and the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat.

These two challenges will be at the heart of the food issues of the future and at the centre of the concerns and policies of West African states and their regional organisations. They must be addressed simultaneously.

**They must also be addressed in a manner that takes into account their strong regional dimensions.** Deemed weak because of the lack of records, regional trade is significant in reality (several millions of tonnes of grains and hundreds of thousands of head of livestock) and growing robustly at an average of 5% annually for several decades. Future agricultural growth and the effective prevention and management of food crises will depend, in large measure, on the fluidity of this regional market.

### 3. The Resilience Initiative

#### *The West African agenda, reference framework for the definition and implementation of this initiative*

The issues summarised above impose two major demands on the region:

- On the one hand, and above all, to implement policy and technical options addressing the root causes of food crises by promoting greater resilience among vulnerable populations and sustainable food and nutritional security overall.
- On the other hand, to be prepared to better respond to crises when they occur.

These demands require co-ordinated strategies within a single, articulated and coherent approach in order to avoid compromising major investment efforts. Such are the commitments undertaken by the governments and intergovernmental organisations in the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management to “i) *Look for sustainable solutions to the structural causes of food and nutritional insecurity: Implementing overarching development and investment policies that encourage local food production... Strengthening national and regional food markets...(...)...; Increasing the incomes of vulnerable population groups; Promoting more productive agriculture through provision of significant support to pastoral farmers and fishermen in terms of access to land and credit, agricultural inputs, water control, market organisation...; and ii) Include in post-crisis programmes actions to help structurally vulnerable households gradually escape from the vicious circle of poverty and food and nutrition insecurity.*”

This regional ambition formed the basis of the policy design that West African regional organisations have deployed over the past ten years, notably the CILSS Strategic Framework for Sustainable Food Security and Poverty Reduction (CSSA) in 2000, the UEMOA Agricultural Policy (PAU) in 2001 and the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) in 2005. In the area of food and nutritional security, these policies and strategies all converge toward three priority areas: (i) the search for sustainable structural solutions; (ii) development and implementation food and nutritional crises management tools; (iii) preparedness and early-warning. They have thus resulted in a regional agenda including:

1. *National Agricultural Investment and Food Security Programmes (PNIA-SA)* centred on enhancing food production, the market environment and access of vulnerable populations to food, etc. The *Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR)* should mainly focus on accelerating the implementation of the PNIA-SAs. To this end, AGIR should be part of the co-ordinated negotiation frameworks of development partners (multi/bilateral organisations, solidarity networks) established with the concerned governments; AGIR must also rely on the national structures responsible for co-ordination, reinforcing them in the long-term. This approach at the national level must be implemented within a coherent regional framework.

2. The *Regional Agricultural Investment Programme (PRIA)* complements and supports national efforts within the PNIA-SAs. Adopted in 2010, PRIA has three priority objectives: (i) Promoting strategic products to enhance food security and food sovereignty; (ii) Creating a favourable environment for regional agricultural development; (iii) Reducing food insecurity and promoting sustainable access to food. The PRIA includes a Regional Food Stock Strategy – encompassing the establishment of a regional food reserve and the implementation of regulation tools to foster the regional market. This strategy constitutes the framework for convergence and coherence among several initiatives aiming to enhance regional solidarity in the face of food and nutritional crises, including: i) the RESOGEST agreement (network of offices and bodies responsible for the management of national food security stocks), signed on 2 March 2012 with the facilitation of CILSS; ii) The initiative promoted by UEMOA in 2010 for the establishment of a regional mechanism for the enhancement and co-ordination of national food security stocks within UEMOA; iii) The regional food security reserve facilitated by ECOWAS which is currently in development. The *Resilience Initiative* must serve as an opportunity to advance the co-ordinated implementation of these critically important instruments for food and nutritional security in West Africa.
3. *Financing mechanisms* including the ECOWAS Agricultural Development Fund (ECOWADF) housed within the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) and the UEMOA Regional Fund for Agricultural Development (FRDA<sup>3</sup>). Regardless of the amount of any additional financing provided by AGIR, the regional organisations wish to have a clear understanding of their political leadership in the allocation of these resources. Administrative procedures should be as flexible as possible so as to ensure optimal execution and efficiency. In addition, they would like food and nutritional security to be instilled as a full pillar in the process of formulating the European Development Fund (EDF) and more particularly that of 11<sup>th</sup> FED which is currently under negotiation. This would allow the process to take better account of the priorities of the region.
4. *Information systems, vulnerability analysis, monitoring and early-warning.* The pillars of the information mechanisms are the regional system for the prevention and management of food crises (PREGEC), the UEMOA Regional Agricultural Information System (SIAR) and the ECOWAS Agricultural Information System (ECOAGRIS), which serve as a gateway for all existing agricultural information systems. Several projects are currently under way, among them the implementation of the **Harmonised Framework (Enhanced)** for the analysis of food insecurity and vulnerability which should become a priority within the *Resilience Initiative*.
5. Benchmark tools to enhance the effectiveness of food and nutritional security policies and strategies, namely the **Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management**. A key instrument of PRIA, this code of good conduct was adopted on 17 November 2011 within the framework of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA). The regional food security reserve constitutes one of the commitments of the Charter, to “Promote first and foremost setting up/strengthening food reserves at the local, national and regional level.”
6. *Governance mechanisms* (consultation and decision-making tools): The UEMOA High-Level Committee on Food Security, the ECOWAS Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources (CTS-AERE) and the Consultative Committee on Food and Agriculture (CCAA), as well as the RPCA which was created in 1984.

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<sup>3</sup> The first meeting of the High-Level Committee on Food Security (CHN-SA) in the UEMOA zone was held on 14 February 2012 in Niamey and recommended an increase in the annual endowment of FRDA in order to support medium- and long-term structural actions, notably in support for the implementation of the PNIA-SA.

The Sahelian and West African countries have reiterated their call to their regional organisations to accelerate the implementation of this agenda, in particular on the occasion of:

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> UEMOA High-Level Committee on Food Security held on 1 June 2012 in Niamey: nine strategic pillars<sup>4</sup> were identified as priorities for intervention toward the revitalization and modernization of sustainable agriculture
- The ECOWAS-UEMOA High-Level Meeting on the food and nutritional crisis held on 5 June 2012: participants recalled the need to advance the implementation of coherent policies aimed at finding structural solutions to food insecurity and chronic malnutrition, as well as a solemn appeal to governments for substantial budget allocations (at least 10% of the budget) from their own financial resources from fiscal year 2013 for the implementation of the PNIA-SA.

The implementation of this agenda requires an intra-West African co-ordination effort for which the regional organisations are well suited, particularly through the use of their common platform, the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC). This dynamic will be even more effective if it is accompanied by an equally co-ordinated support from development partners..

### *Implementation principles*

West African regional organisations are delighted that the high-level consultation on the food crisis in the Sahel, held in Brussels on 18 June 2012, in which they actively participated, led to the need to implement the “*Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative - Sahel*”. Based on the key principle of reinforcing regional leadership and focusing its activities on the priorities of the West African agenda on food and nutritional security, AGIR can and must be an example of successful international partnership and improvement of development effectiveness in Africa.

From this point of view, some operating principles should guide both the design process and the implementation:

1. Emphasise and build on a permanent dialogue with agricultural and livestock producers organisations, the private sector and civil society at both the national and regional levels. At all stages of the initiative, a “special space” should be reserved for them which would also allow them to increase their organisational capacities, for reflection and dialogue.
2. Enunciate the intervention process based on rules of information sharing and initiative monitoring, co-ordination and division of labour, and subsidiarity between the local, national, regional and international levels.
3. Rely on an expert group involving all stakeholders during the preparatory phase; this group must oversee the design of the roadmap that will be approved on 6 December in Ouagadougou. The implementation of AGIR will require joint space (region – international community) for dialogue and follow-up. This joint space could be provided within the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA), of which ECOWAS and UEMOA have formally committed to ensure joint political leadership. This issue will be addressed within the framework of the expert group mentioned above.
4. Make full use of the SWAC platform as a common space for policy dialogue, lobbying and advocacy for the initiative in global debates.

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<sup>4</sup> Strategic pillars: Water control ; Increasing agricultural productions, livestock, fishery and forestry; Access to sub-regional and international markets; Development of tools for food security management; Improvement of the nutritional status; Reforms of the institutional framework; Agricultural research and technology transfer; Capacity building; Financing for agriculture

5. Focus priority actions of AGIR on those of the West African regional agenda for food and nutritional security. These priorities will be defined after a consultation process at the national and regional level, involving all stakeholders of the initiative. Priority should be given to address root causes while reinforcing the region's capacity to cope with cyclical food crises.

More specifically in relation to governance and political leadership, the following principles merit consideration:

1. The AGIR initiative should be placed under the joint political leadership of the two regional economic organisations (ECOWAS and UEMOA), which will encourage subsidiarity in the interest of efficiency. For example, UEMOA may ensure co-ordination of action among its eight member states, with ECOWAS ensuring overall co-ordination. The two organisations further agree to make full use of CILSS and to strengthen its role as their technical branch for the implementation of activities within its area of expertise (design, monitoring, technical co-ordination at the nation and regional levels). Other regional organisations or technical agencies could be mobilised in their respective fields of competence (research, health, education, etc.).
2. Governance mechanisms should be built around existing ones in order to further strengthen the capacity of regional organisations. As such, the 'renewed RPCA,' under the joint political leadership of ECOWAS and UEMOA, and with the technical facilitation of CILSS and the SWAC Secretariat, would play the key function for technical consultations within the framework of the initiative. Under this arrangement, recommendations and proposals will be submitted to the official decision-making bodies of ECOWAS and UEMOA. Their respective ambassadors in Brussels will assume a key role as interface with the European Union for the implementation of AGIR.
3. Leadership and the capacity for international mobilisation of the European Union will be promoted and developed.

**In conclusion**, the AGIR initiative must be based on the political leadership of ECOWAS and UEMOA in both design and implementation. More broadly, AGIR should explicitly hold among its principles the strengthening of West African national and regional organisations as an instrument for the sustainability and success of the initiative. Everything must converge on the implementation of the regional objective of food and nutritional security with particular attention to structural solutions.

### *Next steps in the formulation and validation phase*

The regional organisations agree to the following steps and tasks to be implemented before the official launch of the initiative on 6 December 2012:

1. Send to the European Union a position paper of the regional organisations on the initiative by 25 September 2012
2. Officially inform ECOWAS member states on the initiative at the meeting of ministers in charge of agriculture and food, scheduled for 27 September 2012
3. Further reflect on the drafting of the roadmap based on the findings from the study commissioned by the SWAC Secretariat on the regional food security architecture
4. Organise consultations with civil society organisations and NGOs as well as the meeting of the experts group between the last week of October and the first week of November. The SWAC Secretariat has been charged with proposing three dates and initiating consultations with all stakeholders in view of urgently agreeing a date for the two consultation meetings.