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**Retreat on the monitoring of recommendation of the RCFMAP in West Africa**

**Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 22-24 January 2014**

**STATEMENT OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**With the technical support of:**

**January 2014**

1. At the invitation of the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions, with financial support from USAID and the technical facilitation of HUB RURAL, was held at Hotel PALM BEACH, in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), the retreat on the implementation of the recommendations of the regional conference in Accra on the free movement of agricultural products (RCFMAP).

2. The retreat was attended by signatories of the key conclusions and recommendations of the Accra conference and other regional actors involved in advocacy on intra-regional trade in agricultural products in West Africa. The full list of the retreat participants is attached to this statement of conclusions.

## Objectives and expected outcomes of the retreat

3. The overall objective of the retreat was to assess the level of implementation of the recommendations of the RCFMAP in West Africa and lay the foundations of a regional programme for monitoring and operationalizing them

4. Specifically, the retreat aimed to:

* Take stock of actions carried out by the various stakeholders towards implementing the recommendations of the RCFMAP, held in Accra, in January 2013;
* Brainstorm on the results, activities, recipients and targets of a potential programme to accelerate the effective and prompt implementation of the RCFMAP recommendations;
* Establish a Task Force for monitoring the RCFMAP recommendations;
* Adopt a roadmap for implementing the monitoring programme of the implementation of the RCFMAP recommendations.

5. At the end of the retreat, it was expected that:

* Participants are informed of actions undertaken by the various actors towards implementing the RCFMAP recommendations;
* Participants adopt the logical framework of a programme for implementing and monitoring the RCFMAP recommendations;
* A roadmap for the implementation of this pogramme is adopted;
* The Task Force for monitoring the RCFMAP recommendations is established.

## Conduct of the retreat

6. The opening ceremony registered five speeches respectively by the Executive Director of HUB RURAL, the civil society Representative, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Network of West African Farmer and Agricultural Producer Organizations (ROPPA), the USAID Representative, the UEMOA Director of Agriculture, the Director of the ECOWAS Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food. All speakers stressed the importance of the meeting, given the major challenges facing the region in terms of promoting intra-regional trade in agricultural, pastoral and fishery products. All of them raised the need to strengthen actions undertaken by regional actors to overcome obstacles of all kinds that limit the expansion of regional trade in general and agro-food products in particular.

7. After the adoption of the objectives, expected outcomes and agenda of the retreat, the participants listened to three introductory presentations:

1. The first presentation, by the HUB RURAL, focused on recent developments in the West African market. After highlighting the progress made by the region on the front of its external trade (exports multiplied by 8 and imports by 4 between 2000 and 2012), the presentation underlined the weakness of intra regional trade and barriers that limit its expansion. It then reported the progress made by the ECOWAS Customs Union creation process. This Customs Union has a Common External Tariff including five tariff bands and safeguard measures. It will come into force on 1 January 2015 for a transitional period that will help settle the thorny issue of the community levy for regional integration;
2. The second presentation was made by the Borderless Alliance on the Observatory of Abnormal Practices (OPA). Established by the ECOWAS and UEMOA, the OPA collects information on the number of controls, bribes and delays caused by the controls. It also supports advocacy to eliminate fixed checkpoints. The actions that are currently being conducted in eight corridors involving eight countries rely on drivers and focal points installed at the borders. The results of the advocacy led helped record significant success in Togo, Côte-d’Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal. The Alliance suggests three strong actions to minimize the recurrence of certain constraints to trade and the free movement of goods and persons: (i) involve the computer services of focal points in the project, (ii) integrate the software into the computer environment of the focal point and (iii) renew the IT fleet of focal points;
3. The third presentation focused on the results of monitoring of cross-border trade in cereals and livestock, as well as those of the observatory of abnormal practices. The purpose of the cross-border trade flow monitoring by CILSS, who took over this component from the ATP programme activities, is to “**Capitalize the achievements of the former USAID E/ATP project and sustain the data collection and monitoring system to reduce road harassment and increase trade in agro-pastoral products in the CILSS/ECOWAS area”**. Over nine months in 2013, the monitoring showed that the trade flows observed in 7 countries are substantial and relate to a total value of $ 375 million. As for monitoring of road harassment, it is currently carried out on five corridors; three new corridors will be opened in the month of February 2014. The results of the observation indicate that despite improvements registered in some countries and corridors, road harassment materialized by unlawful payments persist in many countries and trade routes. Advocacy actions have already been conducted in Niger and Benin and others are planned this year in Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso.

8. The discussions that followed these presentations mainly enabled to capitalize good practices in terms of advocacy to overcome barriers that impede the free flow of regional trade in agricultural and food products in West Africa.

9. Participants then recollected the recommendations of the RCFMAP in West Africa. On that occasion, they reviewed the level of implementation of these recommendations by the various regional institutions and networks of non-state actors. They appreciated and praised the collaboration that developed between some regional actors in the implementation of the recommendations of the conference.

10. Participants then took cognizance of the outline of the draft programme for monitoring the recommendations of the regional conference on free movement of agricultural products in West Africa, presented by the HUB RURAL. The programme whose objective is to “**support regional actors to develop a strategic watch on the regional market in order to promote intra-community trade in agricultural and food products in West Africa”** is built on three areas of intervention: (i) contribute to a better knowledge of the functioning of agricultural trade, (ii) provide a strategic watch on the free movement of agricultural products in West Africa, (iii) contribute to the formulation and implementation of regional policies and strategies to promote trade in agricultural and food products. These three areas are broken down in six major results.

11. The discussion that followed the presentation helped to improve the various aspects of the programme, both in substance and form. The new version of the programme is attached to this statement of conclusions.

12. Participants then heavily dwelt on the contours of the Task Force to ensure coordination and cooperation amongst actors and actions undertaken as part of the programme implementation. They expressed the wish for an ad-hoc, light structure in the image of those that ECOWAS has already implemented as part of the conduct of the numerous projects of agricultural and land policies. Member structures will be represented at the Task Force by only one representative. The functions and missions of this Task Force are recorded in a brief note to be sent later to participants, together with the detailed draft programme.

## Recommendations

13. At the end of the workshop, the participants made the following recommendations:

* Capitalize, in a common table proposed by CILSS, all actions carried out by the various regional actors contributing to the implementation of recommendations of the RCFMAP in West Africa. To that end, the contributions of the different actors should reach CILSS; for the attention of Mr. Brahima Cissé (see full address in the list of participants) before the end of January 2014;
* All retreat participants are invited to provide the HUB RURAL with experiences, strategies and initiatives they would like to capitalize in the programme before 30 January 2014. In this context, they should clarify the expectations in terms of capacity building, partnership needs and contributions they could make to the programme.

14. Finally, the participants recommended extending the programme formulation and implementation process to include other regional actors and technical and financial partners, including the European Union, GIZ, Canada, the Dutch Cooperation, the World Bank, etc.

## Roadmap of the programme formulation process.

15. Participants identified the following elements for the roadmap:

* Collection of actions undertaken by the different regional actors contributing to the implementation of the recommendations of the RCFMAP in West Africa : 30 January 2014 ;
* Collection of experiences, strategies and initiatives that can be capitalized in the programme: 30 January 2014.
* Writing a detailed draft programme on the basis of the logical framework adopted: 28 February 2014;
* Transmission of the detailed draft programme to participants in the retreat of January, for comments and amendments: 28 February 2014;
* Collection of comments and amendments of participants in the retreat of January : 7 March 2014
* Preparation of a revised version of the detailed draft programme: 15 March
* Transmission of the revised version of the detailed draft programme to participants in the validation workshop of 31 March – 2 April 2014 in Cotonou: 20 March 2014.

**List of participants**

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