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NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency
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NEPAD PLANNING AND COORDINATION
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Accelerating ECOWAP/CAADP implementation



STATEMENT OF CONCLUSIONS

With support from:



1. Introduction

1. A regional meeting of the Task Force on the regional offensive for sustainable revival of rice production in West Africa was held on 21 and 22 March 2013 in Cotonou, Republic of Benin. The offensive is an initiative driven by the Economic Community of West African States, with the technical support of the Hub Rural and AfricaRice.
2. The objectives of the meeting focused mainly on the following points: (i) inform regional and national stakeholders of the status of implementation of the Regional Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) and strategies deployed by ECOWAS to ensure the leadership of the region on Initiatives aimed at ensuring food and nutrition security of the populations; (ii) analyze and validate the strategic orientation framework and TOR for the conduct of the technical and financial feasibility study of the Regional Offensive on rice.
3. In terms of expected results, the participants should, at the end of the meeting:
 - a. Be familiar with programmes and initiatives to accelerate the ECOWAP implementation at the regional level;
 - b. Internalize the status of implementation of the Regional Agricultural Policy;
 - c. Make proposals for improving and enriching the programmes and initiatives;
 - d. Validate the strategic orientation framework and TOR for the conduct of the technical and financial feasibility study of the Regional Offensive on rice;
 - e. Establish a roadmap for the conduct of the feasibility study and identify opportunities for collaboration between the participating institutions and ECOWAS;
4. Took part in the meeting : (i) The NAIP Focal Points and managers of national strategies to develop the rice sector; (ii) representatives of regional networks of producer organizations (ROPPA, RBM, APESS,PROPAC), the private sector (AAFEX), civil society (POSCAO), NGOs (OXFAM,VECO, SNV, Wildaf); (iii) Representatives of ECOWAS, NPCA/NEPAD, AfricaRice, Hub Rural, ReSAKSS and CORAF/WECARD; (iv) resource persons mobilized by the Hub Rural and AfricaRice, as part of their support for the technical facilitation of the process. The list of participants is attached to this statement of conclusions.

2. Conduct of business

2.1. Opening of session

5. The opening session registered four speeches by: HUB RURAL; AfricaRice; NPCA/NEPAD; ECOWAS.

The HUB RURAL Executive Director welcomed participants in the meeting organized by ECOWAS with his technical support and that of AfricaRice. He noted that the objectives of the workshop fall within the framework of the mission entrusted to his institution by ECOWAS to facilitate the Task Forces responsible for operationalizing the regional agricultural policy and especially the operationalization of the regional agricultural investment programme. He then focused on the main purpose of the meeting, i.e., to present the status of implementation of ECOWAP and validate the basic documents of the feasibility of the Offensive for the sustainable revitalization of rice production in West Africa.

Speaking after the Executive Director of the Hub Rural, the AfricaRice representative insisted on the availability of her institution to assist ECOWAS in implementing this regional programme in support of national policies it has greatly contributed to develop. She then stressed the achievements of her institution in terms of not only research but also studies available on rice. The feasibility study of the “Regional offensive for sustainable revival of rice production” initiative could benefit from this experience.

Speaking in third position, the NEPAD Secretariat representative insisted at length on the initiatives this institution deploys to support the implementation of national agricultural investment programmes. In this respect, the NPCA/NEPAD is committed to support the inclusion of three important dimensions in the NAIPs to help achieve the core mission assigned to them, i.e., to help reduce at least by half the incidence of poverty in the countries by 2015. These are mainly: the “risk” dimensions limiting investments in the agricultural sector; nutrition, one of the core indicators of food insecurity; research, a vector of agricultural progress and the CAADP Pillar IV; and finally, resilience for the vulnerable populations to cope with shocks of all kinds. She said that NPCA/NEPAD will soon organize a regional conference on the inclusion of these dimensions and approaches to their integration into the NAIP operationalization strategies.

On behalf of the Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, the Acting Director of Agriculture and Rural Development welcomed participants in the meeting. He then insisted on the ECOWAS Officials’ expectations to see the completion of the formulation process of the feasibility study prior to the next ministerial meeting scheduled for late June 2013.

2.2. Presentations

5. The first day of the meeting was devoted to the presentation of programmes initiated to operationalize the ECOWAP public policy instruments and initiatives promoted by the various stakeholders: technical institutions and producer organizations and socio-professional organizations, and the private sector.
6. Three programmes and the “Zero Hunger” Initiative focusing on the operationalization of the public policy instruments have been presented :
 - i. The Regional Programme to support Agricultural and Pastoral intensification in West Africa, structured around two main lines for action: (i) Facilitating access to inputs (fertilizers, animal feed and seeds) and (ii) promoting innovative and sustainable production systems;
 - ii. The Regional Programme to support Market Regulation in West Africa, structured around two objectives: (i) having border trade instruments that make it possible to control the impact of international price volatility on regional markets, (ii) establishing a strategic and regulatory environment conducive to the development of initiatives of producer and private sector organizations;
 - iii. The Regional Programme to support National Social Safety Nets in West Africa, focused on strategies to promote preventive social safety nets that contribute to building resilience of households and communities, and more particularly, reducing child malnutrition in the Member States;
 - iv. The presentation on the “Zero Hunger” Initiative, designed as a tool for governance that ECOWAS is promoting to enhance the resilience of populations vulnerable to various shocks, causes of recurrent food and nutrition insecurity periodically affecting West Africa.
7. This series of presentations was supplemented by a presentation by CORAF/WECARD on research efforts and available results that can contribute to the success of the offensive for the sustainable revitalization of rice production in West Africa. CORAF/WECARD then focused on the IAR4D paradigm, which is an approach to integrate research and development.
8. The ReSAKSS-WA gave a presentation on the status of establishment of national SAKSS and ECOWAP/CAADP Monitoring/Evaluation Systems in the countries. They recalled the absolute necessity to set up these systems for proper implementation of the NAIPs. In addition, an approach was proposed to accelerate the establishment of said mechanisms. Moreover, ReSAKSS-WA gave a presentation on the major findings of studies carried out in recent years to analyze the performance of agricultural policies

in the countries. It emerged from these results, amongst others, that if the number of States that meet the Maputo commitment is still limited, investments in the agricultural sector have largely helped boost the production of many crops, including rice. Similarly, the studies show that the improved purchasing power expected from the implementation of the ECOWAP/CAADP and other public policy instruments will lead to increased regional demand for rice.

9. The second day registered several interventions, including from regional actors active in the sector of rice promotion. Thus, successively :
 - i. ROPPA intervened to insist on PO contribution to the improved environment of rice production and marketing, through their participation in the development and implementation of regional policies and strategies. To that end, ROPPA initiated a consultation framework for rice producers, which adopted its action plan;
 - ii. The AAFEX representative outlined the actions of his institution by emphasizing the centrality of contractualization between the various stakeholders of the value chains of products his organization is working on.
 - iii. The IPAR Representative recalled the missions of this institution which positions itself as a think tank for prospective thinking to support agricultural transformation in West Africa;
 - iv. Representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations active in the field of rice production in West Africa (OXFAM, VECO, SNV) commended ECOWAS for this initiative which will now register their interventions in a coherent framework driven by the region. The NGO VECO thus outlined the regional programme for rice promotion in West Africa which brings together the said NGOs. The programme places the regional actors at the centre of its implementation strategy. Individual presentations were also made (see Annexes).

2.3. Presentation of the offensive for the sustainable revival of rice production in West Africa

10. The first presentation focused on the framework document of the Offensive for the sustainable recovery of rice production in West Africa. After showing the heavy trends of the West African rice economy, especially during the last five years (rapid increase in production driven by higher yields, but persistent deficit), the presentation highlighted the challenges and issues of this sector. It then stressed the central objective of the offensive which is to support actions carried out by the States, regional technical institutions and producer and private sector organizations, and NGOs. The offensive is structured around three main lines of action for the sustainable revitalization of rice production in West Africa: (i) sustainable increase in production; (ii) promotion of the

value chains and (iii) promotion of an environment conducive to the regional rice sector development. Its implementation involves all stakeholders in the region, under the leadership of ECOWAS.

11. Following the presentation of the framework document of the Offensive, the TOR of the feasibility study identify four specific objectives to be achieved:
 - i. Make a synthesis of studies on the West African rice sector , highlighting the potential, assets, weaknesses, major challenges and opportunities;
 - ii. Identify the major production and consumption basins based on their comparative advantages;
 - iii. Identify public policy measures and targeted investments along the value chain, to be facilitated by ECOWAS to increase rice supply, at least 3M/year;
 - iv. Develop an analytical tool for the detailed technical and financial feasibility study of formulated programmes;
 - v. Simulate the impact of rice production increase in West Africa on the basis of selected indicators, including the income for rice stakeholders, employment and prices.

3. Discussions and conclusions

3.1. On the status of implementation of the ECOWAP.

12. The points and questions raised by participants covered several points:
 - i. Insufficient consideration for livestock and fishery resource dimensions in the intensification programme;
 - ii. The issue of subsidizing agricultural inputs (inadequacy of resources provided);
 - iii. The issue of irrigation;
 - iv. The importance and role of agricultural research and funding needs to put in place in order to promote rice production technologies;
 - v. Strengthening research on the development of agro mechanization;
 - vi. Energy management to promote the competitiveness of businesses;
 - vii. The model of agribusinesses and private investments to promote;
 - viii. The thorny issue of funding, including the current financial situation of the Regional Food and Agriculture Fund;
 - ix. Little consideration for women’s specificities in the various plans;
 - x. Progress in CET and EPA negotiations and weak participation of Agriculture Ministries and Commissions as well as the civil society and POs;
 - xi. The multi-sector approach required to have impact on food security.

3.2. The strategic framework of the Offensive and TOR

13. The participants expressed many opinions and comments on the concept note and TOR of the feasibility study:

- i. Place the issues of development of paddy processing at the centre of the strategy to promote West Africa's rice economy;
- ii. The existence of numerous studies conducted by both the States, regional and international institutions. To that end, the literature review should help clearly highlight the challenges, constraints and current opportunities to be included in the feasibility study;
The issue of funding for the offensive, both nationally and regionally. For the participants, the issues of funding must appear explicitly as an axis of orientation. Emphasis must also be placed on the types of funding, contracting and risk management needed at each stage of the value chain (production, processing, etc.);
- iii. The role of the private sector in the implementation of the offensive is not yet clear in the concept note;
- iv. The overall objective of the study is not well formulated; it focuses on the reduction of imports and not explicitly on increasing the regional production;
- v. The scoping paper does not make a good review of strategies already underway at the State level;
- vi. Gender is not explicitly and sufficiently addressed in the concept note, given the important role of women in the rice sector in West Africa. A proposal was made to set up a Committee, headed by WILDAF, which would make proposals for integrating this aspect;
- vii. Emphasize that the regional potential is not only in terms of available land, but also in terms of existence of family farms that still have a very important potential to increase production qualitatively and quantitatively. The offensive is primarily intended for these family farms.

3. Recommendations

3.3. General recommendations

19. For the general recommendations, it is necessary to:

- i. Restate the objectives of the study terms of reference, by linking them, not only to the challenges but also to the issues at stake identified in the scoping paper;
- ii. Redefine the human resources, including their area of expertise and their qualification;

- iii. Clearly define the expected results of the feasibility study;
- iv. Target leverage actions that can be used to make progress;
- v. Ensure that the rice offensive establishes a coordination system of all regional interventions in the sector;
- vi. Complement the TOR with a summary outline of the study to better supervise the work of consultants;
- vii. Identify the actors involved in the sector and analyze their role in the offensive (including initiatives such as the G8 new alliance).

3.4. Regarding Axis 1: Sustainable increase in production

14. It was recommended for this axis to:

- i. Focus on the development of production basins on the basis of their comparative advantages;
- ii. Specify the mechanisms of supply and access to inputs and production factors: seeds and fertilizers and production equipment;
- iii. Focus on facilities to intensify production;
- iv. Analyze the possibilities of extending the area devoted to rice production;
- v. Place more emphasis on adaptation of agriculture mechanization instead of development of agriculture mechanization and suggest avenues for the assembly of agricultural equipment and spare parts for such equipment in the region;
- vi. Base the simulations of projections of rice production trends mentioned in the offensive on those made in the 15 countries of the Community;
- vii. Address, on the different production systems, the need for sustainable production vis-à-vis the environment;
- viii. Take the reduction of disaster risks into account

4.3 Regarding Axis 2: Promotion of value chains

15. Under this axis, it was requested to:

- i. Insist on marketing , labelling and packaging aspects for the development of the local rice market;
- ii. Promote a producer price mechanism and measures to support prices for consumers;
- iii. Clearly explain the link between this offensive and the development strategies initiated by the CARD to avoid redundancies and overlapping objectives;
- iv. Differentiate between the time horizon for achieving the objectives of the CARD (which was to double production in 10 years) and that of the offensive, which is to ensure food self-sufficiency by 2020;

- v. Focus on the facilitation and development of contracting at the level of the various chain actors;
- vi. Take into account the organization and infrastructure necessary to facilitate access to markets for the producers and their position in relation to the other actors.

4.4. Relatively to Axis 3: Promotion of an environment conducive to the development of regional trade in rice

16. It was recommended, under this axis 3, to:

- i. Insist on strengthening statistical institutes for reliable data;
- ii. Provide adequate funding for agricultural research and advisory support services to accompany the dissemination of proven technologies;
- iii. Focus on the development of an information system, both on the production and market functioning;
- iv. Insist on the necessary market reforms to ease regional trade in rice;
- v. Identify ways to ensure a market for the production, including the development of institutional procurements both in the countries and the region (regional food security reserve).

4. Closure of the meeting

17. The closing ceremony was marked by three speeches: HUB RURAL, NPCA/NEPAD, ECOWAS.

18. On behalf of his institution, the HUB RURAL Executive Director thanked participants for the work well done and the results achieved. He promised to take into account the comments and suggestions made by participants, both in the TOR of the feasibility study and in the conduct of the process.

19. The NPCA/NEPAD Representative focused on projects in progress to take the risk and nutrition dimensions into account in the NAIPs. A number of studies are underway, culminating in two publications: (i) on price volatility and risk management, (ii) with an inventory of all the tools that could be used in the countries. This work has been carried out with the technical assistance of FAO, funded by the EU and multi-donor funds.

20. In his closing remarks, the ECOWAS Acting Director of Agriculture and Rural Development insisted on the financial instruments put in place by the regional institutions, namely by UEMOA (BOAD) and ECOWAS (EBID) to facilitate access to credit and other subsidies to finance agricultural and rural development strategies and

activities in West Africa. He urged the regional stakeholders to use these instruments instead of trying to create parallel mechanisms. He thanked the participants and renewed his confidence in the HUB RURAL, a neutral platform, and declared closed the first Task Force meeting on the offensive for the sustainable revival of rice production in West Africa.

Done in Cotonou, on 22 March 2013

The Chairman

Mr. Alain Sy Traoré, ECOWAS