



**Regional Dissemination Workshop on Agricultural Trends
and Progress in Living Conditions in West Africa**

Accra, Ghana - May 12-15, 2009

Synthesis report of the main conclusions and recommendations

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I. Introduction

The ECOWAS Commission and ReSAKSS WA jointly held a regional workshop on the studies on agricultural trends and progress in the living conditions in West Africa from 12th to 15th of May 2009 at the M Plaza Hotel Accra in Ghana.

The overall objective of the workshop was generally to track the main trends observed in the agricultural sector and measure the progress achieved in relation to the MDG1 and document especially the manifestation of the soaring food prices crisis in 2007/2008 and the responses of the countries to the crisis.

The representatives of the countries (Directorate in charge of agricultural statistics, Market Information Systems, National Institutes of Statistics, Universities, etc.), Regional and International organizations, developmental partners, Farmers and civil society organizations attended the workshop.

The opening ceremony was marked with two speeches: that of Mr. Salifou Ousseini, Commissioner in charge of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources of the ECOWAS Commission and that of Hon. Yaw Effah-Baafi, the Ghanaian Deputy Minister of food and Agriculture in charge of crop production.

After the acknowledgement of the Ghanaian government, the Development Institutions and Partners (USAID, DFID, SIDA), the commissioner Salifou Ousseini reiterated the objectives of CAADP. He pointed out the relevance of the strategies outlined in ECOWAP in the face of the spectacular rise in prices of essential commodities particularly the strengthening of food security and sovereignty in the context of a functioning regional market and mentioned the urgency of its effective implementation.

To this end, he praised the Coordinator of ReSAKSS in West Africa for the efforts being made to improve the capacities of ECOWAS and its member States in the areas of strategic analysis, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural policies and food security in the region.

Finally, he wished the workshop full success.

The Ghanaian Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture in charge of crop production, Mr. Yaw Effah Baafi gave a welcome address. He said that it was an illusion to think that without any substantial investment in agriculture, Africa can feed itself. There is, therefore, need to identify the various growth poles of the economy and the corresponding amount of national resources required and to do that we need accurate and reliable statistics.

II. Proceedings

After the opening ceremony, presentations related to the following were made (i) the objectives and results of the workshop, (ii) the context and the objectives of the study, (iii) the regional synthesis of the section "Funding of Agriculture", (iv) the regional synthesis of the economic performance and the contribution of the agriculture sector to the economy, (v) the regional synthesis of agriculture sub-sector performances, (vi) the regional synthesis of the living conditions of the households, (vii) an interim synthesis report of the stock taking of the soaring food prices crisis in the countries and (viii) a tentative analysis of the relationship between funding of agriculture, agricultural growth and poverty reduction.

At the end of the discussions which followed these presentations, the participants were divided into two groups to deal with the methodological aspects of the national surveys and examine the monitoring and evaluation forms provided for the CAADP M&E.

These exchanges enabled the participants to conclude and make the following recommendations.

III. Main conclusions and recommendations

III.1 Main Conclusions

In relation to the 2007/2008 edition, the countries covered in the study were extended this year to about ten countries. The national surveys also broadened the scope and permitted the measurement of progress achieved in agriculture and the living conditions of the households at a more detailed level.. The main lessons learnt from these studies can be synthesized as follows:

Agricultural funding

The summit of the African Union held in Maputo (Mozambique) in 2003, among others adopted the declaration of Maputo in which the member countries promised to commit at least 10% of their budget to agriculture.

The analysis of the indicators enabled assessment of the extent of compliance to the budgetary target of Maputo while considering the structural and size differences among the reporting countries.

These indicators show the profile of agricultural funding in terms of its share compared to total budget, to actual government expenditures, the distribution of government expenditures between capital and recurrent, among the different agricultural sub-sectors and among the various investment types.

The marginalization of agriculture in government interventions is reflected clearly in this analysis of funding. Neither in the budgetary intentions nor in the actual expenditures has agriculture received the position it deserves in the governments' efforts. Paradoxically, countries that are less endowed with natural agricultural resources seem to give greater importance to their agriculture. But it is also in these countries that the share of external resources in the funding of agriculture seems to be relatively higher. In the light of these results the extent of compliance with the budgetary target of Maputo should be given more attention in each country of the region. Certain Sahel countries have since some years past exceeded this target, but the objectives of a sustainable growth, of poverty reduction, of food security and safety seem remote.

The level of disaggregation of data related to the agricultural funding was not adequate for most of the countries for the analyses of the linkages between agricultural funding and agricultural growth.

However the preliminary results of the current regression analyses indicate that recurrent expenditure is more important than capital expenditure in terms of its impact on agricultural growth.

The linkages between agricultural growth and the funding of agriculture seem also to be stronger in the coastal countries than the Sahel countries.

Agricultural Economic performances

The ECOWAS countries had an uneven progress in terms of GDP between 1990 and 2007 with low growth between 1990 and 1994 and a rebound between 1995 and 2007 despite a slight deceleration

between 2000 and 2004. Between 1990 and 2007 the average growth rate of GDP went from a minimum of 1.4% in Togo to a maximum of 6.5% in Cap Verde. Concerning the GDP per capita, it is still very far from that of developed countries. Agriculture is one of the major sectors of wealth creation and support to economic growth in most of the ECOWAS countries. It was 31% of GDP of the region and was the source of 39% of growth.

Agricultural growth still remains low in certain countries. The average agricultural growth rate varied between 1.2% in Senegal and 7.1% in Nigeria over the period 1990-2007. Between 2003 and 2007, certain countries like Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Gambia and Sierra Leone reached the average agricultural growth rate of 6%, targeted by the CAADP. For the other countries, a lot remains to be done for agricultural growth to translate into meaningful improvement in the incomes of farmers.

Agricultural Sub sectors Performances

The trends of agriculture in West Africa show that the growth of staple food crops supply was commensurate with population growth except for rice.

The industrial and export sub sectors witnessed some difficulties these past years partly due to the drop in world market prices and the problems that arose after their liberalization.

Generally the growth of production was based more on expansion of the land area than on gains in productivity. The average growth rate of yields in the region was 1.2% as against 2.1% for land area expansion. However, the yields in the Sahel increased faster than the land areas (2.1% as against 1.7%) as compared to the Coastal countries (0.9% for the yields as against 2.7% for the land areas)

The production of small and big ruminants in West Africa and particularly in the Sahel with its extensive character and low productivity will be unlikely to meet the consumption needs of the population, most especially that of the urban area which is growing very fast. Concerning the modern aviculture sector; it is threatened by the importation of poultry at "cheaper price".

The reduction in fishery resources due, among others to overexploitation and pollution, may likely aggravate the fish deficit of the region.

Living conditions of the households

The populations were greatly impoverished over the period 1990/2008 even if certain countries succeeded in slowing down the progression of poverty. The rural area is more affected than the urban area due to low income that comes generally from agriculture and to the infrastructural deficit which it is suffering from). This pauperization is reflected in the difficulties which the households face in trying to feed sufficiently. The prevalence of underweight and stunting are still at high levels. These difficulties are much more pronounced in rural area than in urban areas.

Although it is expected that some important efforts have been made in the area of provision of potable water, a lot of households still do not have access to it, especially in rural areas. In certain countries almost 70% of the rural population does not have access to potable water.

Although, maternal and infant mortality rates have dropped showing an improvement in the access to health care, a lot of effort still remains to be made, because of the high levels of the various indicators, which reveal that a lot of households (especially in rural areas) have difficulties in accessing health care.

Finally like in the case of health, for the educational sector, the various indicators improved generally thus justifying the efforts made by the various countries. Nevertheless, in addition to the weakness of these levels compared to the MDGs, big disparities still exist between the urban and the rural areas in on the one hand and between girls and boys on the other.

Soaring Food Prices Crisis

The prices of rice, which is consumed in relatively large quantities, increased between 2006 and 2008 – ranging from a 14% increase in Cote d'Ivoire to 38% in Niger.

For maize the prices increased between 2006 and 2008 in all the countries, except in Burkina Faso and Mali. The price hikes recorded vary from 8% in Côte d'Ivoire to 62% in Togo. In addition to the price hikes of food items, the prices of agricultural inputs also increased considerably.

The countries largely resorted to fiscal and tariff instruments to increase the supply of high consumption products, especially rice: the removal of taxes on imports, the suspension of customs duties, the suspension or reduction of VAT and or other indirect taxes on certain products. Sales of government stocks at subsidized prices and the negotiation with wholesalers in order to reduce the margins and or the prices of products took place in certain countries.

In some countries, policies to increase internal production were widely implemented in order to significantly increase the supply of products.

III.2 Main pathways of methodological improvement

Despite the progress observed in the report of this year, avenues for improving the methodologies and data quality were explored:

Concerning the monitoring of government agricultural expenditures:

- The need for a more systematic monitoring of government agricultural expenditures outside the budgetary channel, especially the expenditures of non governmental organizations and other development partners;
- The disaggregation of agricultural expenditures by type of activity (inputs, irrigation research, extension, processing...) by all countries as being done in certain countries already, with the goal of exploring the relationships between agricultural growth and funding of agriculture.

For monitoring the agricultural performance:

- The regularity of agricultural statistics, which remains a challenge for certain countries because of the low human and financial resources;
- The consideration of the most important aspects of agriculture in the agricultural surveys particularly irrigation, commercialization of production, inputs used, equipments, livestock, fishery and forestry, etc.
- The pursuance of the improvement of the reliability and the harmonization of the methodologies used for agricultural surveys in the countries of the region;
- The introduction of an information system that permits capturing of data on value chain particularly processing, commercialization and consumption;
- The strengthening of the consultation between the producers and the users for the adequacy of supply and demand of agriculture products;

Concerning the monitoring of the living conditions of the households

- The harmonization of the methodologies of calculation of poverty indexes between the countries;
- The uniqueness or the compatibility of the methodologies used in the different surveys to ensure necessary comparability of indicators from the different surveys.

Concerning high cost of living and the Market Information Systems

- The sensitization of countries about some measures constituting obstacles to regional integration particularly the ban on exportation of staple food crops;
- The extension of the range of products considered in the analyses as well as the costs of commercialization (transport, storage, etc.) in the monitoring of agricultural markets.

III.3 Recommendations

Considering the preceding issues the participants recommended:

To the countries

- To ensure the funding of the existing national systems of agricultural information by allocating appropriate budget to them;
- To build the human capacities for the production of agricultural statistics;
- To start considering the collection of data on funding outside the budget (non governmental organizations, development partners, farmers organizations);
- To encourage adoption of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) by all countries;
- To reinforce the financial and accounting systems of monitoring and evaluation of the agricultural projects and programs in order to get detailed data on the expenditures;
- To reinforce the Agricultural Market Information Systems in rural areas and in poor areas.
- To put in place a system of monitoring and evaluation of the measures taken in response to the soaring food prices crisis, especially to analyze the impacts and the efficiency of the measures.
- To look closely at the analyses on the agricultural markets by considering other aspects such as transport, prices, integration of the markets, etc.
- To put in place a mechanism of monitoring cross-borders trade;
- To put in place a regular arrangement for the monitoring of stocks and seed stocks;
- To think of the institutionalization of a minimum guaranteed price or some similar options in order to maintain some threatened crops in the production systems

To ECOWAS

- To do Advocacy to the countries for the funding of agricultural statistical systems ;
- To encourage the reinforcement and extension of the scope of coverage of AFRISTAT and CILSS to other countries of ECOWAS which are non members of these organizations in order to harmonize the statistical methodologies;
- To promote ReSAKSS WA at regional level and to encourage the setting up of national units of ReSAKSS;
- To support the countries in adapting their system of budgetary classification to the classification of the functions of government (COFOP);
- To support the countries in harmonizing the methodologies of evaluation of the thresholds of poverty.