



PRESS RELEASE

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Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF)

Implementation of ECOWAP: Conclusions and Recommendations of the 2023 Meetings of the Regional Steering Committees for Projects and Programmes

Stakeholders in the implementation of projects and programmes of the Regional Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) took stock of 2023 activities during meetings of the regional steering committees for projects and programmes (COPILS) held in Lomé (Togo), from 22 to 24 April 2024 under the chairmanship of the ECOWAS Commission. Working together is a key driver for better coordination at regional level.

This year, the COPILS were held in a thematic committee format, with thematic introductions on the achievements and challenges of all the projects and programmes contributing to each thematic area of ECOWAP. The nine (09) thematic areas of the Regional Policy include (i) livestock and pastoralism, (ii) fisheries and aquaculture, (iii) agricultural productivity and competitiveness, (iv) agroecology and climate change, (v) environment, forests and biodiversity conservation, (vi) pesticide management, plant pest control, (vii) resilience, food and nutrition security, (viii) youth employability in the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector and (ix) institutional and organisational capacity building. The thematic introductions served as a basis for discussions.

Discussions on each theme focussed on the contextual situation, main trends in relation to the results of ECOWAP, major actions and initiatives underway: main results achieved, lessons learned/good practices, synergies to be developed, challenges, issues at stake and perspectives. Participants also identified the missing links and players to be involved, and strongly recommended greater collaboration between the regional and national levels.

The programmes and projects related to the ECOWAP thematic areas have contributed to achieving the objectives of the regional food and nutrition security programme, the main pillar of ECOWAP.

As part of the drive to increase productivity and agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries production, 44 pilot projects on agro-ecology and climate-smart agriculture were funded, the Regional Climate Strategy (RCS) was adopted in June 2022 with a view to consolidating and harmonising a framework for action to combat climate change in the ECOWAS space, and more than 48,857 producers were given capacity-building in agro-ecological techniques, capacity-building for more than 500 public and private sector players in the formulation of climate projects, and the mobilisation of resources from the Green Fund for the formulation of climate projects, the vaccination of more than 5,001,081 sheep/goats against Peste des petits ruminants (PPR) in the border areas of Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Senegal, Ghana and Guinea-Bissau, with an overall vaccination coverage rate of 76%, reaching 357,673 small ruminant breeders, 26% of whom are women.



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Regarding the promotion of agricultural and agri-food value chains, action was taken to ensure proper monitoring of 106,132 ha of mango tree plantations. Early warnings were issued by the monitoring system, which led to the detection of infested 5,783.58 ha and 3,875 ha or 67% of the infested area treated using the technology developed. Funding was also provided to 24 local initiatives to promote local milk value chains, which will help to increase milk production from 1.5 to 20 litres/day/cow with improved local breeds. Considerable efforts have also been made under the leadership of ECOWAS to enhance the employability of young people in the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sectors. Such initiatives will be reinforced by interventions under the milk offensive programme.

Concerning the objective of improving food and nutrition security and the resilience of vulnerable populations, a pilot action on the integrated school feeding model has been launched and enabled 23,860 pupils, 58.10% of whom are girls, to benefit from hot meals during the school year. The establishment of the Regional Food Security Reserve with a capital of 63,711.10 tonnes of cereals has already made it possible to intervene in six ECOWAS countries, namely Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. In total, the Regional Food Security Reserve has intervened 18 times between 2017 and 2023.

To improve the business environment, governance and financing mechanisms for the agricultural and agri-food sector, innovative financing mechanisms for the sector are being developed with a view to mobilising not only external funding, but also domestic private financing. Such initiatives include the start of the operationalisation of the Regional Fund for Agriculture and Food (RFAF), the submission by ECOWAS of a proposal to the Global Risk Financing Facility (GRiF) to complement the West African Food System Resilience Programme (FSRP), and the support that ECOWAS has been receiving from USAID in the conduct of the Regional Agricultural Policy and its associated policies and strategies.

The COPILS also drew the attention of stakeholders to the fact that the food and nutrition situation in the region is deteriorating. Analyses of the Harmonised Framework predict that 49.5 million people will not be able to cover their basic food needs during the next lean season (June-August 2024), including 31.7 million in Nigeria, i.e., more than 60% of the region's vulnerable population, 3.4 million in Niger, 3.3 million in Chad, 2.7 million in Burkina Faso, 1.6 million in Sierra Leone, 1.4 million in Mali and around 1 million in Ghana. Figures have been rising steadily over the last 5 years and should call for responses commensurate with the challenges at both national and regional level.

This alert shows how urgent it is to work in synergy with all partners and stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of project and programme implementation. Strengthening collaborative work



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and pooling efforts and resources will also enable the region to maintain the momentum that has already been built up and to open up new avenues for tackling the food, nutrition and pastoral crises more effectively.

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