

REGIONAL INTEGRATION FOR FOOD SECURITY

From the African Community of Practice on Management for Development Results at the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)



Case Study
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SYNOPSIS

This case study presents the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP), a regional food security project championed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with World Bank support. The project's development objective is to generate and disseminate improved technologies in the participating countries' priority areas, as identified by the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (WECARD). Technologies include rice in Mali, cereals in Senegal, and roots and tubers in Ghana. Poor infrastructure, climate change, lack of innovation, and population growth are the four main challenges facing West Africa's agriculture sector. But the region can rely on its youthful workforce, the growing market, and abundant natural resources.

Among the key findings: The project reached about 297,000 beneficiaries of the 275,000 targeted, including 38 percent of women in Ghana and 25 percent of women in Mali and Senegal. The project enabled, in a participatory manner, the elaboration of strategies being implemented by each country on gender, communication, and the exchange of researchers. The project also helped with adopting common ECOWAS regulations on seeds and pesticides in the region.

The main conclusion: WAAPP helped improve agricultural productivity while promoting regional integration, which supports shared growth and poverty reduction.

The key lessons: Country farming specialization is critical; alignment of policies to regional regulations is essential; agriculture has a regional dimension; in regional programs, a country-owned process is critical; and regional food security depends on a peaceful, stable, and safe society.

The main recommendations: Promote regional programs and build capacity for reinforcing policy alignment in the agriculture sector. Encourage countries to specialize in specific commodities. Leaders need to promote a peaceful, safe, and stable environment.

Introduction

The West African population is expected to grow 100 percent between 2010 and 2050, compared with the global rate of 38 percent.¹ The region is already the most urban part of Sub-Saharan Africa, with nearly half its population living in urban centers. This places West Africa in a challenging position since it needs to provide food for a fast-growing population through resilient and modern agriculture. The agriculture sector is central to ECOWAS countries' economic and social development. It accounts for up to 35 percent of the region's gross domestic product and provides jobs for more than 60 percent of the workforce. Agricultural exports are about 16 percent of the region's exports.²

As stressed by a new report co-published by the African Development Bank and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (AfDB and FAO 2015), West Africa has unprecedented agricultural growth opportunities, but taking advantage of most of them will require more regional integration. Regional development has been defined as a group of nations enhancing their economic, political, social, or cultural interaction through regional cooperation and market, regional, and development integration (Lee 2002). West Africa, with many landlocked countries, small economies, and small national markets can benefit greatly from more integration.

This study aims to showcase WAAPP, a unique ECOWAS initiative at the nexus of food security and regional integration. WAAPP aimed to generate and disseminate improved technologies in the participating countries' priority areas, as identified by WECARD. This study focuses on the project's first phase, implemented from 2008 to 2013 in Ghana, Mali, and Senegal. It discusses the food security and regional integration context in West Africa, the project's results, and the lessons and policy implications.

Food security and regional integration in West Africa

Agricultural challenges and opportunities for regional integration

Before discussing WAAPP, it is important to identify briefly the main constraints reducing the region's capacity to improve agricultural performance.

Challenges include poor infrastructure, climate change, population growth, and lack of innovation. Inadequate infrastructure has long been identified as an important impediment to agricultural productivity in many African countries (Platteau 2000; World Bank 2007). In many remote agricultural areas, poor transportation hinders the marketing of agricultural produce and access to inputs and services.

Limited irrigation systems and underdeveloped telecommunication networks are also a main challenge (World Bank 2007). In addition, climate change poses a threat to the region's farmers. Possible impacts include reduced yields, welfare, and incomes (Jalloh and others 2013). The lack of innovative and profitable agricultural practices that can address current challenges is a major constraint in improving the region's agricultural performance.

West Africa continues to have one of the lowest per-hectare yields in the world for most crops. This is due partly to the technology divide and the failure of many research innovations to reach farmers. Population growth is also a challenge. In the next few years, West African agriculture will have to meet a huge increase in demand generated by rapid demographic growth. With a population of 310 million in 2011, United Nations projections show that the region's population should reach 500 million by 2030.

But the population challenge for West African agriculture also has opportunities. The huge youth population is a vital labor source for agricultural development and transforming rural areas. The rapid population growth has created for the first time a pool of urban consumers, a big market for agricultural produce. West Africa also has abundant

¹ Aggregated data from United Nations Population Division.

² Aggregated data from World Bank and FAO.

natural resources, including land and underground water. The highly diversified ecosystems help produce many plant and animal types.

Vision and priorities of ECOWAS in the agriculture sector

At the start of the 2000s, ECOWAS countries engaged stakeholders in a dialogue about creating a framework for a regional agricultural policy. Detailed assessments were carried out to identify the agricultural and food security issues and challenges facing West Africa and the strengths, weaknesses, and development potential of agriculture in different countries. The process culminated in adopting a regional agricultural policy (ECOWAP) on January 19, 2005. ECOWAP sets out a vision of “a modern and sustainable agriculture based on effective and efficient family farms and the promotion of agricultural enterprises through the involvement of the private sector.” Its general objective is to “contribute in a sustainable way to meeting the food needs of the population, to economic and social development, to reducing poverty in the member states, and thus to reduce existing inequalities among territories, zones and nations.” The three major themes of this policy are:

- Increasing West African agricultural productivity and competitiveness.
- Implementing a West African trade regime.
- Adapting the trade regime in relation to countries outside the region.

Six priority action fields (figure 1) were selected for their short- and medium-term feasibility and their potential contribution to food insecurity, poverty reduction, and regional integration.

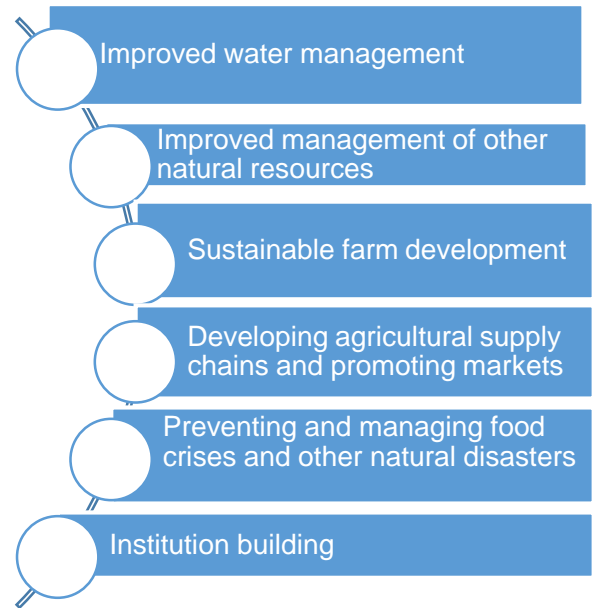


Figure 1. The six ECOWAP priority areas

WAAPP overview

The context of the project

Through the agricultural component of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Union (AU) believed that Africa’s Millennium Development Goals would be achieved if rural development was a priority. Therefore, in June 2002, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) was approved. The Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa was then ratified by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU meeting in Maputo in July 2003 (renewed in Addis Ababa in 2013 and more specifically supported by the Malabo declaration in 2014). The declaration gave strong political support to CAADP, which defined a comprehensive framework of the priority action areas for restoring agricultural growth, rural development, and food security in Africa.

On these guidelines, ECOWAS began WAAPP, supported by the World Bank to strengthen regional agricultural cooperation. WAAPP's geographic coverage is evolving and the program is now implemented in 13 countries (figure 2). Because of

limited data availability, project indicators—in this case study—are given for the first phase (2008–2013) implemented in three countries: Ghana, Mali, and Senegal. But data and lessons from other participating countries may be presented.

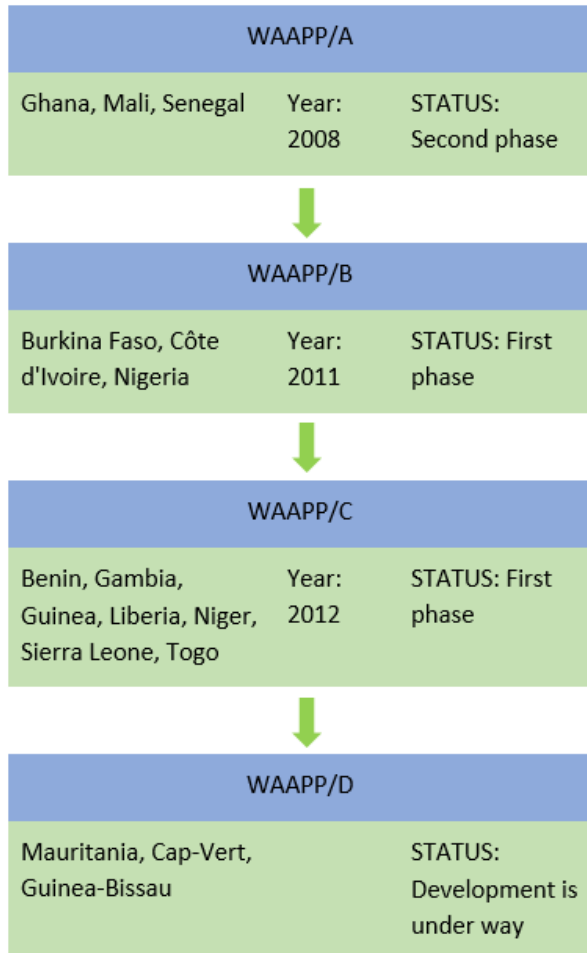


Figure 2. Countries covered by WAAPP

At the regional level, the project is implemented by WECARD (as mandated by ECOWAS) and nationally coordinated by the ministry in charge of agriculture. At the continental level, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa is mandated by NEPAD and the African Union to provide inputs to project implementation and to ensure that the project is aligned with continental priorities.

Project development components and objectives

WAAPP's development objective is to generate and disseminate better technologies in the participating countries' priority areas, as identified by WECARD.

These include rice in Mali, cereals in Senegal, and roots and tubers in Ghana. The region's consumers, particularly those affected by extreme poverty, are WAAPP's ultimate beneficiaries. Agribusinesses and agricultural producers, as users of the improved technologies, are the program's main beneficiaries. Participants also involve researchers, universities, and extension agencies. To harmonize its implementation among countries, the project has four complementary components.

Component 1: Enabling conditions for regional cooperation in technology generation and dissemination. This objective is to strengthen the mechanisms and release of technology (pesticides, genetic materials) to make them available for domestic use and for trade and distribution in neighboring countries.

Component 2: National Centers of Specialization. This objective is to strengthen national and regional priorities. The thinking is that countries should focus on their top research and development (R&D) priorities to make the best use of scarce resources and achieve results.

Component 3: Demand-driven improved technology generation and adoption. This objective is to strengthen more priority-focused, transparent funding mechanisms for agricultural R&D for each country's priority commodity to make the developed technologies relevant to the region.

Component 4: Project management, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation. This objective is to build the capacities of participating institutions in monitoring and evaluation and financial, information, communication, and administrative management.

Outcomes and program assessment

This section presents the project's many results. Aggregated data of the three countries shows that the project reached about 297,000 beneficiaries of the 275,000 targeted, including 38 percent of

women in Ghana and 25 percent of women in Mali and Senegal.

Adopting and elaborating regional strategies and regulations

The project enabled, in a participatory manner, the elaboration of strategies being implemented by each country on gender, communication, and the exchange of researchers. The project also helped with adopting common ECOWAS regulations on seeds and pesticides. The comprehensive regulation would ensure access to quality seeds by West African farmers and help local production of quality seeds and intra-community trading to help create the common market envisaged under ECOWAP.

Increasing agricultural yields

As described in Component 2 of the project, National Centers of Specialization (NCoS) have been set up in Mali (rice), Senegal (cereals), and Ghana (roots and tubers). Component 3 of the project enabled each country to establish a functional competitive agricultural research grant scheme that aims to promote development/adoption of improved technologies. From these two strategies, 37 technologies have been developed/released in the NCoS, each providing a potential yield increase ranging from 20 to 60 percent. About 135,000 hectares are covered with improved technologies, and about 127,000 producers/processors (equivalent to about half of beneficiaries) have adopted the project's improved technologies, mainly the improved seed varieties.

Promoting regional integration

Under the research exchange program, countries have either sent or hosted several researchers from other participating countries, facilitating knowledge sharing and capacity building. The creation of the NCoS is a major outcome for regional integration since it promotes participating countries' specialization, which supports the exchange of competencies and the development of a regional complementary technology space. Thirteen of the technologies developed have crossed borders and are being adopted/disseminated in the region (for

example, rice seeders in Mali, solar dryers in Ghana, composite flour in Ghana and Senegal). The project organized a workshop on the exchange of technology, resulting in the development of a regional technology marketplace.

These results show that WAAPP has helped improve agricultural productivity while promoting regional integration, which supports shared growth and poverty reduction.

Lessons

Agriculture has a regional dimension

It is often more profitable for a country to plan and manage its agriculture sector in a regional context. West Africa's ecological diversity creates capacity differences among individual countries in producing various plants or animals. This is an opportunity for countries to improve collaboration. And certain problems—climate change, poor infrastructure, and changes in food prices—can be more effectively addressed regionally.

Aligning policies is essential

Every group of countries should share a vision to develop common policies, but it is far more important that these policies are integrated among nations. WAAPP is a good example. The project is a major instrument for implementing ECOWAP, derived from CAADP. WAAPP is now positioned as a unique program, supporting CAADP Pillar 4 implementation at the regional level. And a main criterion for countries to be part of the WAAPP process is the alignment of the program with national policies and priorities.

In regional programs, a country-owned process is critical

Regional programs are unlikely to have a positive impact if not driven by national processes. With WAAPP, regional coordination is managed by WECARD, but most activities are nationally implemented. These activities, the core of the project, include the NCoS, the research grant schemes, and adopting and developing technologies. This strategy is important to ensure that strategies

elaborated at the regional level include local constraints and benefit local populations.

Policy implications

ECOWAS will need to help countries enhance their capacities in the following areas:

Promotion of regional programs and reinforcing policy alignment in the agriculture sector

Regional development is also relevant for the agriculture sector. Countries have individual agricultural potential that can be undermined by regional threats and challenges, such as climate change or price volatility. Yet African regions have growing markets, which will be more effective if regionally addressed. Outcomes will have more impact if overall regional development is promoted. Various agricultural policies should also be aligned regionally and nationally.

Getting countries to specialize in specific commodities

West Africa's diversified ecosystem offers a unique opportunity for individual countries to specialize in a given agricultural produce. WAAPP integrates that opportunity and has positioned the participating countries for specific products. Mali specialized in rice, Senegal in cereals, and Ghana in roots and tubers. Such specialization creates a pool of specific competencies that foster cooperation between countries. More important, specialization helps create an organized supply and demand environment and eliminates useless competition. WAAPP's success is due partly to that strategy.

Promotion of a peaceful, safe, and stable environment

Peace, safety, and stability are also important for regional food security. For example, Mali encountered some problems with WAAPP due to recent political instability. As a result, the project's closing date was extended to June 2013. The current (2016) political situation in Burkina Faso is also a constraint. And the Ebola outbreak, which seriously affected Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, and

threatened the whole West African region, is an off-sector problem that can harm regional food security and that needed to be addressed properly.

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Acknowledgement

This knowledge series intends to summarize good practices and key policy findings on managing for development results (MfDR). African Community of Practice (AfCoP) knowledge products are widely disseminated and are available on the website of the Africa for Results initiative, at: www.afrik4r.org/page/resources.

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