



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Has ten-year implementation of the regional agriculture policy of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAP) contributed to improve nutrition?



Achieving nutrition outcomes through agriculture and food systems in West Africa

A publication in the framework of the Regional Projects GCP/RAF/476 & 477/ GER

“Establishing a zero hunger initiative in West Africa and mainstreaming nutrition in CAADP and Agriculture Policies and Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa”

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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For information about this document, please contact:

Richemont Seki (richemont.seki@fao.org)

Mawuli Sablah (mawuli.sablah@fao.org)

Mohamed Ag Bendeck (mohamed.agbendeck@fao.org)

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List of Acronyms

ECOAGRIS	ECOWAS Agricultural Information system
ECOWAP	ECOWAS regional Agricultural Policy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program
AU	African Union
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
RAIP	Regional Agricultural Investment Program
METASIP	Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan
WHA	World Health Assembly
ICN2	Second International Conference on Nutrition
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition Movement
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
CILSS	Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel
RAAF	ECOWAS Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food
WAHO	West Africa Health Organization
UEMOA	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NAIP	National Agricultural Investment Plan

I- Context

In 2005, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)¹ elaborated its first regional agricultural policy (ECOWAP), in line with the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP), to boost West Africa agricultural sector, improve livelihoods and reduce food insecurity and malnutrition. After 10 years of implementation, it became necessary to assess the progress made and the impacts of the Policy. Considering also the new developments at global and regional level in term of commitment to fighting hunger and malnutrition, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the Rome Declaration and Framework of Actions of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2); the African Union (AU) 2014 Malabo Declaration with its implementation strategy and roadmap; ECOWAS Hunger Free Initiative and other laudable initiatives. This assessment represents an opportunity to reinforce nutrition priorities which may not have been fully captured and addressed in the first version of the ECOWAP.

The analysis reviews the contribution of ECOWAP to the prevention and reduction of malnutrition with relevant contributing factors. It also proposes key nutrition interventions to mainstream into the new ECOWAP.

II- Performance of agriculture sector and link with nutrition

Key messages

“Cereals have benefited more from ECOWAP in comparison to livestock, poultry, fisheries/aquaculture and non-wood forest resources”

“Even if regional data are somehow encouraging, important disparities persist in term of food production among countries”

There has been encouraging results in agricultural production from 2005 to date comparing over previous decade, but more on “strategic crops” for the region and countries. During the elaboration and implementation of the ECOWAP, significant efforts were made to develop strategic productions for the region in terms of food sovereignty, food security and economic growth. Cereals which constitute the main staple food in all West Africa countries have recorded the most important productivity increases. This was reflected in the trends in cereals productions from 2005 to date, in comparison to the previous decade. According to FAOSTAT (Food and Agriculture Organization statistical platform) data, total

¹ In this document ECOWAS and West Africa are interchangeable words and refer to the 15 member countries of ECOWAS (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape-Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo)

cereals production increased in ECOWAS by about 21% from 2005 to 2014, while from 1995 to 2004 the increase was only 15%. Rice production recorded the most important growth (with rice paddy production increasing from about 96% within the period 2005-2014 compared to 21% from 1995 to 2004*) followed by maize production (about 68% from 2005 to 2014 compared to 4% from 1995 to 2004**). Concerning production of roots and tubers, the situation is mixed. Though increase was observed in total production by about 36% from 2005 to 2014, it is important to note that this growth is inferior to the one observed during the decade 1995 to 2004 (45%). The same situation is observed in vegetables and fruits, where increase in fresh vegetables production was only 13.5% from 2005 to 2013, compared to more than 64% from 1995 to 2004*** and increase in fruits productions (excluding melons) was around 11% from 2005 to 2013, compared to 39% from 1995 to 2004. It is essential to note that fruit and vegetable production data includes also production for export.

The results are also mixed for livestock and fisheries sub-sectors. For example total meat production increase from 2005 to 2013 was only 20%, compared to 35% from 1995 to 2004. It is also important to note that there has been a significant drop in west African meat production from 2010 to 2011 (about 34% decrease) and the actual production is still largely inferior to the production recorded in 2010. Fish production growth was higher from 2006 to 2012 (15%), compared to the period 2000-2005 (4%)² but these figures also include foreign fishing which is important in size. Concerning non-wood forest food production, information is scarce, but it could be considered that the production trend has not improved much, since the focus was not on this sector in the formulation of the ECOWAP.

There are important disparities among West African countries in terms of food production. The regional figures conceal important disparities among countries. For example, fish production in landlocked countries representing only 8% of the regional production³. According to FAOSTAT data, only a number of countries are driving cereals production, with Nigeria being the largest producer (26970000 tons) in 2013, followed by Mali (5736252) and Burkina Faso (5093000), contrasting with production in other populated countries such as Cote d'Ivoire (2651141) and Senegal (1318702) and less populated countries such as Benin (1691862), Togo (1208865), The Gambia (230700) and Cape-Verde (6000). Production of roots and tubers is more important in coastal countries (i.e. Nigeria (100050000 tons), Ghana (22595170), Cote d'Ivoire (8433500) and Benin (6939137)) compared to Sahel countries (i.e. Mali (453000), Niger (335000) and Burkina Faso (208400) in 2013). Meat production is also driven by Nigeria (with 1562925 tons), followed by Mali (383940), Niger (296566) and Burkina Faso (264419). Lowest meat production is recorded in The Gambia (8215), Cape-Verde (11410), Guinea-Bissau (26251) and Sierra Leone (42533).

* Cape-Verde excluded

** Liberia excluded

*** Data on vegetables production not available for Ghana in 1995

² Statistics and Information Branch of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. 2014: *FAO yearbook. Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics. 2012. Roma, FAO. 76pp.*

³ Ndiaye PG. La pêche et les produits halieutiques en Afrique de l'Ouest : un marché régional au potentiel inexploité. Passerelles. 2013 :14(1).

III-Impact of ECOWAP on poverty reduction, food insecurity and malnutrition

Key messages

“Food production and its actual level of diversification is insufficient to meet the growing demand, thus exposing the populations to food insecurity and malnutrition”

“Poverty remains prevalent among rural areas, where agriculture represents the main economic activity”

“Food insecurity has declined in the region. Yet there are still 25 million West Africans affected by undernourishment”

“Nutrient-rich foods are less affordable, particularly for the poor”

“Malnutrition is still prevalent in West Africa, particularly stunting and micronutrient deficiencies”

Food deficit has reduced, but agriculture production is still insufficient to meet a growing food demand. The increase in food production has contributed to reducing the regional food deficit. For instance, the regional depth in food deficit declined from 79kcal/capita/day in 2005-2007 to 64 in 2014-2016, while it was 106 in 1998-00. Even though all West African countries registered reduction in food deficits, some countries continue to experience high level of food deficits, for example Liberia (256), Burkina Faso (167), Guinea-Bissau (143) and Guinea (115)⁴. Despite these reductions, available data showed that there are still important gaps to be filled. It is also essential to note that according to FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), 14 West African countries were low-income food deficit countries in 2015. The deficit is caused by several factors, such as (i) low agricultural performance and (ii) growing food demand, as a result of increased population, rapid urbanization and the rise in middle class in West Africa. This situation contributes to increased vulnerability of the populations to food insecurity which can lead to malnutrition, as there is a strong link between food security and nutrition⁵. In order to fill the food supply gap, countries in the region rely heavily on food imports, which have increased over the years. Major foods imported into the sub-region include cereals and livestock products. For example, wheat and rice imports have increased respectively to 9.8% and 9.6% in the decade 1996-2000 to 2006-2010, in comparison to 7% and 6% in the previous decade. The annual growth rate of chicken net imports has also consistently increased by 22% over the decade 1996-2000 to 2006-2010. In the same period, other meats products such as bovine meat, canned meat, pig meat, fresh ovine meat and goat meat have also increased by 11%, 10%, 15%, 23% and 10%⁶ respectively.

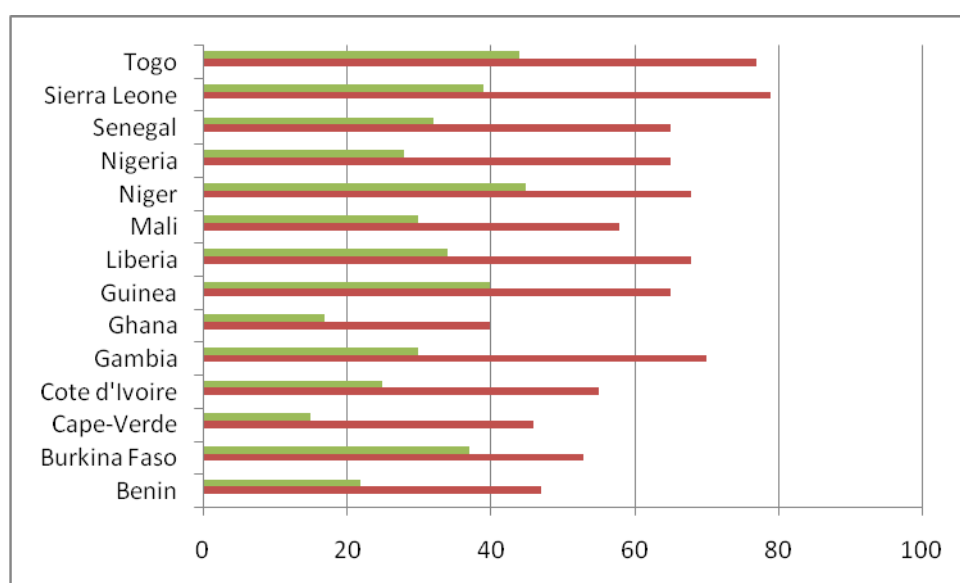
⁴ Statistics from FAO website, available at http://www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-fs/ess-fadata/en/#.VgvD_LL1ako

⁵ Reference to UNICEF Conceptual Framework on the causes of malnutrition

⁶ Hollinger, Frank, and John M. Staatz. Agricultural Growth in West Africa: Market and Policy Drivers. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization, African Development Bank, 2015. Web. <<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4337f.pdf>>.

Poverty in rural area has declined, but still remains high, and this contributes to food insecurity and malnutrition. Various studies suggest a strong relationship between poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition^{7,8}. Majority of West African countries have made some progress in poverty reduction, particularly in rural areas, where agriculture remains the most predominant economic activity. Reduction of rural poverty in the region can be partially attributed to improvement of agriculture sector, among others. Evidence consistently shows that agricultural development is paramount in poverty reduction, particularly in rural settings. It is estimated that every 1% increase in per capita agricultural output leads to a 1.61% increase in the incomes of the poorest 20% of the population and every 1% increase in agricultural yields reduced the number of people living on less than US\$1 a day by 0.83%^{9,10}. Nonetheless, the prevalence of rural poverty in West African countries remains high (Figure 1) and this shows that more efforts are needed to overcome rural poverty, particularly in agricultural households.

Figure 1: Trends in rural poverty rate in West Africa*



Source: Authors from (i) a Compilation from World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.RUHC>, accessed February 2012 and (ii) IFAD's Rural Poverty Portal

*green color corresponds to data from 2014 and brown color corresponds to data from 2003 (Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia and Sierra Leone), 2007 (Cape-Verde, Guinea, Liberia, Niger), 2008 (Cote d'Ivoire), 2006 (Ghana, Mali and Togo), 2004 (Nigeria), 2005 (Senegal).

⁷ Mönckeberg, F. (2013). Poverty and Malnutrition. *Nutrition and Agricultural Development: Significance and Potential for the Tropics*, 7, 13.

⁸ Schiff, M. W., & Valdes, A. (1990). *The link between poverty and malnutrition: a household theoretic approach* (Vol. 536). World Bank Publications.

⁹ Gallup, J., S. Radelet and A. Warner (1997) "Economic Growth and the Income of the Poor". CAER II Discussion Paper No. 36. Harvard Institute for International Development, Boston MA

¹⁰ Thirtle, C., X. Irz, L. Lin, V. McKenzie-Hill and S. Wiggins (2001) Relationship Between Changes In Agricultural Productivity And The Incidence of Poverty in Developing Countries. Report commissioned by Department for International Development, London

Agricultural development and improvements of living conditions: the case of Ghana (FAO, SOFI 2015)

Since 1990-92, Ghana has experienced a strong economic growth per capita of about 3.3% annually. At the same time, the proportion of extreme hunger has declined from 51% in 1991 to 29% in 2005 and other studies suggest that the trend has continued over time. In parallel, undernourishment prevalence has also strongly decreased, from 47.3% in 1990-92 to less than 5% in 2012-14.

The agriculture sector has played an important role in the economic growth. Domestic food production has increased significantly, as well as cocoa, driven by a conducive policy and institutional environment and appropriate investments (particularly through the 1991-2000 Mid Term Agriculture Development Program and the 2011-2015 Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (METASIP).

Yet, trade liberalization has contributed to increase food import, raw or processed, thus impacting negatively domestic production and incomes generation for local farmers. This has also led to development disparities between regions and populations, with a GINI Index at 43 in 2005. To overcome the situation, the Government has initiated several actions, among them, establishment of social protection mechanisms, within the framework of the National Social Protection Strategy.

The Ghana success in achieving MDG 1c target depends on several key national drivers including the effectiveness of political leadership and governance, the implementation of policies and programmes and the right balance of effort between the regions.

Food price volatility has reduced but price of main nutrient-rich foods remains high.

According to FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), Regional domestic food price volatility index which has reached its highest value in 2005 (14.6) has subsequently decreased to 3.8 in 2013. The same trend is observed at national level, except Ghana where after a reduction period from 2005 to 2011 (10.3 to 7.4), the index has more than doubled to 18.3 (FAO, Statistics Division). If price volatility has declined, food prices are still high in West Africa. For example, between July 2007 and July 2008 rice prices rose by 43% in Mali, by 50% in Niger, by 64% in Burkina Faso and by 112% in Senegal¹¹. Food price increase in the region is driven by high international food prices volatility and global market speculations under food politics. According to FAO, food price index for meat, dairy products and cereals have continuously increased, reaching 198.3 in 2014 against 96.5 in 2000 for meat, 224.1 against 95.3 for dairy products and 191.9 against 85.8 for cereals in the same period¹². This is particularly worrying in term of accessibility, especially for the poor, to cereals that constitute the main staple food in West Africa and food particularly rich in nutrients such as fruits and vegetables as well as livestock and fisheries products, considering the poverty situation that prevails in the region. This has an impact on diet diversification, with less consumption of meat, fish and dairy products, including lower consumption of pulses, fruit and vegetables.

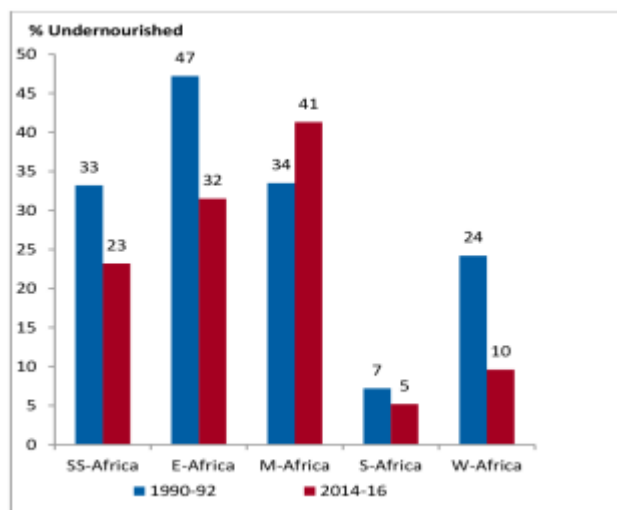
Despite some improvements, food insecurity continues to affect several people in the region. ECOWAS region has made significant effort in the reduction of undernourishment, being the second sub-region in Sub-Sahara in term of undernourishment reduction. The

¹¹ Demeke, M., Pangrazio, G. & Maetz, M. 2011. Country responses to turmoil in global food markets: the nature and preliminary implications of the policies pursued in the 2006-08 episode. In A. Prakash, ed. Extreme volatility in agricultural markets: causes, consequences and policy options. Rome, FAO.

¹² Indice FAO des produits alimentaires. Disponible sur <http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/fr/>

prevalence has dropped from 24% in 1990-1992 to 10% in 2014-2016 (Figure 2), corresponding to a reduction of more than 58%. The region has therefore met the MDG (Millennium Development Goal) 1C target related to hunger reduction. There has also been a slight improvement in the Average Dietary Energy Supply Adequacy measuring adequacy between food supply and individual food energy requirement, from 112% in 2004-2006 to 122% in 2012-2014¹³. It is also important to note that there are still 33.7 million people affected by undernourishment in West Africa in 2014-2016¹⁴. The regional figures hide important disparities among countries. According to FAO State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015, out of the 15 ECOWAS countries, only 7 have met the MDG 1C target focusing on halving the proportion of people suffering from hunger from 1990 to 2015 (Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo). These statistics give an overall picture which does not reflect necessarily the food security situation at household level. It is essential to note that food insecurity at household level is high in West Africa countries. For example, in Burkina Faso, moderate household food insecurity was estimated at 18% in 2012¹⁵. In Senegal, about 16% of households were in food insecurity in 2013.¹⁶ In Ghana, a survey conducted in the Northern part revealed that 16% of the households were affected by food insecurity¹⁷.

Figure 2: reduction of undernourishment in Sub-Sahara from 1990-92 to 2014-16



Source: FAO, Regional Overview of Food Insecurity in Africa 2015

Malnutrition remains prevalent in West Africa. Prior to ECOWAP implementation, malnutrition rates at regional level were high. For example, under-five-year children stunting and underweight prevalence represented respectively 35.5% and 22.2% in 2005¹⁸, which

¹³ Data are from FAO Statistical Division website (<http://www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-fs/ess-fadata/en/#.VqkJ5fmLTIU>)

¹⁴ FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2015. The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015. Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress. Rome, FAO.

¹⁵ PAM, FEWS NET. Analyse Globale de la Vulnérabilité, de la Sécurité Alimentaire et de la Nutrition (AGVSAN) : Burkina Faso, résumé. Juillet 2014.

¹⁶ PAM, FAO, UNICEF, OMS, Secrétariat Exécutif du Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire. Analyse Globale de la Vulnérabilité, de la Sécurité Alimentaire et de la Nutrition (AGVSAN) : Sénégal. Juillet 2014.

¹⁷ WFP, Ghana Statistical Service, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Aus Aid. Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis; focus on Northern Ghana. 2012.

¹⁸ UNICEF, WHO, The World Bank. Joint child malnutrition estimates 2015.

constituted an alert situation, based on World Health Organization (WHO) classification of public health problem of under nutrition among under-five-year children. In the meantime, acute malnutrition affected 9% of the same group¹⁹. In 2014, stunting has slowly reduced to 32.4%. The same trend is observed concerning underweight prevalence, which decreased to only 19.8%, while acute malnutrition prevalence remains unchanged at 9%. In addition, the region is currently experiencing rising phenomenon of overnutrition, with overweight prevalence among under-five-year children which increased from 3% in 1990 to 3.5% in 2014¹⁸. Women of reproductive age are also affected by chronic energy deficiency and over nutrition, as shown by the different Demographic and Health Surveys conducted in West African countries. Micronutrients deficiencies- also called “hidden hunger” because their symptoms are insidious- are other form of under nutrition that affect heavily women of reproductive age and children in the region²⁰, particularly vitamin A, iron, zinc, folic acid and iodine deficiencies. At national level, though a reduction of the different forms of undernutrition is noted, the observed trends remain insufficient to meet the commitments in terms of reduction of malnutrition, such as the 2025 Global Nutrition Targets, adopted by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 2012²¹ and the targets set in the 2014 African Union Malabo Declaration of reducing stunting to below 10% and underweight to below 5%. According to 2015 Global Nutrition Report which assessed countries’ improvements in meeting five 2025 Nutrition Targets (related to stunting reduction, wasting reduction and overweight reduction among under-five year children, anemia reduction among reproductive women and increase of exclusive breastfeeding rate among children under-six months), none of the 15 west African countries were on track to meet all the 5 targets and only 6 will meet 1 target (Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo). Only Ghana is on course to meet 4 Targets, including the one for children under-five-year stunting reduction (stunting is the one of the most common form of malnutrition which causes are more structural and fundamental and more difficult to reverse). Ghana’s case should be better investigated to serve as an example in the region. Figure 3 and Table 1 below give an overview of the progress to reduce malnutrition in West Africa countries.

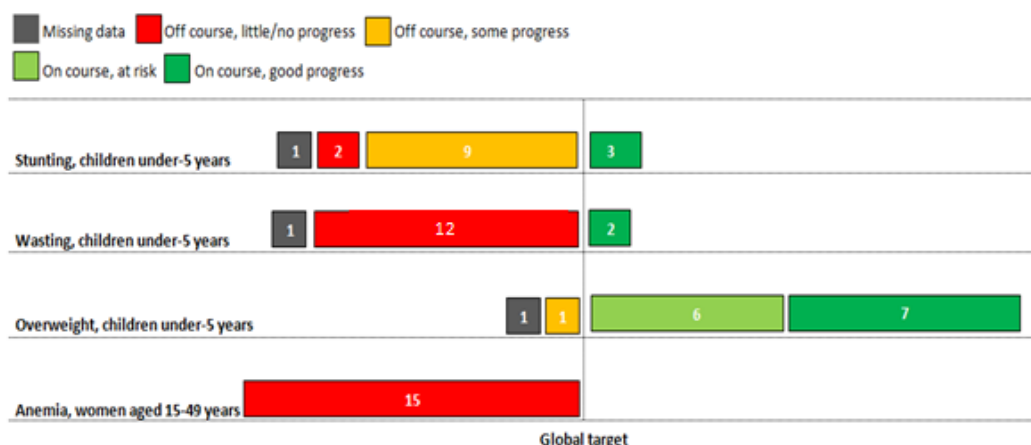
One of the main causes of malnutrition is inadequacy between nutrients needs and intake. Nutrients are naturally provided by food (such as food crops, livestock and poultry products, fish and non-wood forest resources), and access to nutritious and quality foods, particularly for vulnerable populations (including agricultural households) can contribute significantly to overcome the different forms of malnutrition. This implies West African countries elaborate and implement agricultural development strategies which take into account the importance of food-based approaches in the fight against malnutrition.

¹⁹ UNICEF. State of the World’s Children 2007. The data does not include wasting prevalence in Cape-Verde

²⁰ Ruel-Bergeron JC and al. Global update and trends of hidden hunger, 1995-2011: the Hidden Hunger Index. PLoS One. 2015; 10(12): e0143497.

²¹ Reduce by 40% the number of under-five stunting, reduce by 50% the prevalence of anemia in WRA, Reduce underweight to less than 5%, increase exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6-month of life to over 50%, reduce prevalence of low birth weight by 30%.

Figure 3: Number of West African countries at various stage of progress against World Health Assembly (WHA) Global Nutrition Targets



Source: 2015 Global Nutrition Report

Table 1: The number of West African countries on course to meet the WHA Global Nutrition Targets 2025 for 5 WHA targets ²²

Number of targets	Number of countries on course for the number of targets	Countries
5	-	-
4	1	Ghana
3	2	Benin, Liberia,
2	4	Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Niger,
1	11	Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo
0	-	-

Source: 2015 Global Nutrition Report

The reduction of undernourishment is not yet translated into important reduction of malnutrition, particularly for stunting and micronutrients deficiencies among under-five. Though food insecurity is not the only factor contributing to malnutrition, it constitutes one of the most important and decrease in food security prevalence should have a considerable impact on nutritional status. While undernourishment decreased strongly at regional level, malnutrition did not follow the same trend. Regional undernourishment prevalence has decreased to over 50% from 1990 to 2014-2016 and regional stunting prevalence has slowly dropped, from 39.1% in 1990 to only 36.4% in 2011²³. At national

²² **Note:** The targets are for stunting, wasting, and overweight among children under age 5; anemia in women 15–49 years of age; reduction in low birth-weight and rates of exclusive breastfeeding for infants 0–6 months of age. The data for anemia are the same as those presented in the *Global Nutrition Report 2014*

²³ United Nations Children's Fund, World Health Organization, The World Bank. UNICEFWHO-World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates. (UNICEF, New York; WHO, Geneva; The World Bank, Washington, DC; 2012).

level, countries that have met the MDG 1C still have important stunting prevalence, with the exception of Ghana (Table 2), where stunting prevalence has dropped from 29 in 2008 to 19 in 2014, about 35% of reduction in 6 years (Ghana Demographic Health Survey 2008 and 2014). This suggests that while addressing food security, all aspects should be taken into consideration, including ensuring the availability of, and access to, more and better quality food, enhanced hygiene conditions and access to clean water, improved access to health services and education. Agriculture should therefore collaborate closely with other sectors targeting rural areas to have better food and nutrition security outcomes.

Table 2: West African countries which achieved MDG 1C target and their under-five year children stunting prevalence

West African countries that have achieved MDG 1C	Under-5 year Stunting prevalence (%) (2010-2014)	Severity classification of under-five year stunting prevalence (according to WHO Classification)
Benin	34	High
Gambia	24.5	Medium
Ghana	18.8	Low
Mali	38.3	High
Niger	43	Very high
Nigeria	36.4	High
Togo	27.5	Medium

Source: IFPRI's Global Hunger Index 2015 report

Reduction of under nutrition in Ghana: a case for hope

Ghana continues to make notable improvements in reducing the prevalence of under nutrition. The recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS, 2014) recorded 18.8 percent of children under 5 suffering from chronic malnutrition (stunting), down from 23.1 percent in 2011. In 2014, the same survey recorded wasting prevalence at 4.7 percent. This is very remarkable, as it is the first time wasting rates have fallen within the acceptable public health threshold and the first time stunting rates have dropped below 20 percent, also a cut-off point indicating low-severity of the problem, considering the short period. These are encouraging trends for the country. Under nutrition reduction in the country is built on strong political commitment and enabling food and nutrition security policy/program environment, with increasing recognition of the importance of agriculture to improved nutrition outcomes. The Government of Ghana is committed to eliminating malnutrition and ensuring sustainable food and nutrition security for its people. Both the recently released Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (2014-2017) and the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (2014-2020), An Agenda for Transformation, cite nutrition as a priority for the country. In 2013, Ghana validated the first National Nutrition Policy. The Government has also joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and committed to ensuring that all relevant sectors are actively pursuing measures to ensure optimal nutrition for all.

IV-Governance of the ECOWAP

Key messages

“Insufficient participation of regional institutions working on nutrition in the governance of ECOWAP”

“There is no unique and harmonized regional multi-sectoral coordination mechanism on food and nutrition security”

Insufficient consideration of nutrition in the governance structure and mechanisms of the ECOWAP. During the elaboration of the ECOWAP, an institutional framework was created to ensure proper coordination and implementation of the regional policy, and was comprised of:

- The Consultative Committee for Agriculture and Food
- The Inter-department Committee for Agriculture and Food
- The Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food
- The Regional Fund for Agriculture and Food

This framework is responsible for the implementation, the monitoring and evaluation, as well as the coordination of the policy. It is also responsible for the implementation of the Regional Agricultural Investment Program and the financing of the ECOWAP through the Regional Fund.

In this framework, an important consideration is given to regional stakeholders involved in food security (CILSS (*Comité Inter-Etats Permanent de Lutte contre la Sech eresse au Sahel*), Directorate of Agriculture, Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF), etc.). Concerning the regional stakeholders in charge of nutrition, such as ECOWAS West Africa Health Organization (WAHO), though they are mentioned, they were not directly involved in the functioning of the governance mechanisms, particularly for the implementation and monitoring/evaluation aspects. This might be due to the fact that WAHO is more seen as an institution working on health-related nutrition specific aspects of nutrition rather than nutrition sensitive agriculture.

No unique and harmonized regional multi-sectoral coordination mechanism on food and nutrition security. The non-existence of a unique and harmonized regional food and nutrition security multi-sectoral coordination mechanism hampers the integration of nutrition in the ECOWAP. To overcome food insecurity and malnutrition in the region, there is a need to establish one regional food security and nutrition coordination body, under the leadership of ECOWAS, considering that there are several regional initiatives working to achieve the same goal, reducing durably food insecurity and malnutrition, which seem to function on their own, without real alignment to the regional objectives and commitments leading to poor

coordination. Improving coordination at regional level could lead to better integration of nutrition into agriculture and food security sector, as this harmonised coordination body will bring all stakeholders together, including experts in food security and experts in nutrition, and improve adoption of multi-sectoral approaches to overcome hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

V- Main challenges facing regional agricultural sector and agri-food systems toward the 2025 Agenda for hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition eradication:

West Africa region is evolving and countries are experiencing many changes that will have an impact on their food and nutrition security. Considering these changes, the agriculture sector, as one of the most important sectors to achieve food and nutrition security will face several challenges and countries and food systems will have to adapt. Some of the challenges are listed below:

- Linking small scale farmers to markets for better incomes and vulnerable households to markets, particularly to access nutrient-rich foods
- Increased demand for more diverse and safer foods including bio-fortified
- Increased demand for more processed foods with large scale industrial food fortification
- Persistent climate change impacts with limited adaptation and mitigation technologies
- Improving mechanization and strategic nutrition sensitive value chains
- Rural exodus with decrease in agricultural workers coupled with increasing urbanization
- Expansion of cities without appropriate Food security and Nutrition policies and competition with rural and peri-urban agricultural land

VI-Perspectives for better integration of nutrition in the ECOWAP

VI-1 Important challenges that hamper adequate integration of nutrition in the ECOWAP

Insufficient technical staffs in nutrition in regional institutions in charge of food and nutrition security. Another important aspect which hampers better consideration of nutrition into agricultural sector is the insufficient number of specialists in nutrition in regional institutions dealing with food security and nutrition. There are no nutrition experts at the Directorate of Agriculture and the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food of ECOWAS and at UEMOA (*Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine*). There is only one nutrition expert at CILSS, which is the technical partner of ECOWAS and UEMOA. This is particular worrying, considering the scope of the region and the magnitude of the nutrition problems to be solved.

Low knowledge on nutrition-sensitive agriculture during the elaboration of the ECOWAP. At the moment of the elaboration of the ECOWAP, several stakeholders at regional and national level involved in the process did not have a strong knowledge on nutrition-sensitive agriculture approach and its recommendations. It was therefore difficult to better integrate nutrition into the ECOWAP. In 2011, NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) in partnership with FAO and other stakeholders organized the first multi-stakeholder capacity development workshop on linking nutrition and agriculture. Countries developed multi-sectoral roadmaps on linking nutrition and agriculture. These roadmaps were however not fully implemented by most countries in West Africa.

No integrated regional food and nutrition information system before the elaboration of the ECOWAP. There was no regional harmonized information system that integrates appropriate nutrition indicators into agriculture and food systems before the elaboration of ECOWAP, to better inform the policy process. Information systems are very important in policy process as they provide quality and timely data to guide decision.

VI-2 Important aspects of nutrition that were not adequately integrated in the ECOWAP

Right to food. For the United Nations, the Right to Food is realized when « *every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement* »²⁴. This definition shows the complexity of the subject and its multisectorality. Right to Food is also a fundamental human right and therefore needs to be respected. A recent survey conducted in West Africa revealed that despite signature of several international conventions and agreements related to right to food, very few countries have inserted right to food in their national Constitutions and promote it by concrete actions²⁵. Yet, promotion of Right to food is the essential pillar to eradicate hunger and malnutrition. This implies that stakeholders, including decision-makers and civil society are fully sensitized on the benefits of right to food and empowered to actively participate to its promotion.

Nutrition information in the situation analysis. While assessing ECOWAP and its operationalized documents (RAIP (Regional Agricultural Investment Program) and NAIPs (National Agricultural Investment Plans)), it is noted that there is little or no information about nutrition in the situation analysis and the problems identified, which most of the time focus on low agricultural productivity and production and their contributing factors. For example, there is insufficient information concerning the nutrition prevalence and trend, the affected population and geographic areas and food consumption patterns. This implies that there should be strong collaboration between Agriculture sector and the national institution in charge of nutrition which can normally provide such information.

²⁴ The Right to Food was interpreted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in the General Comment 12

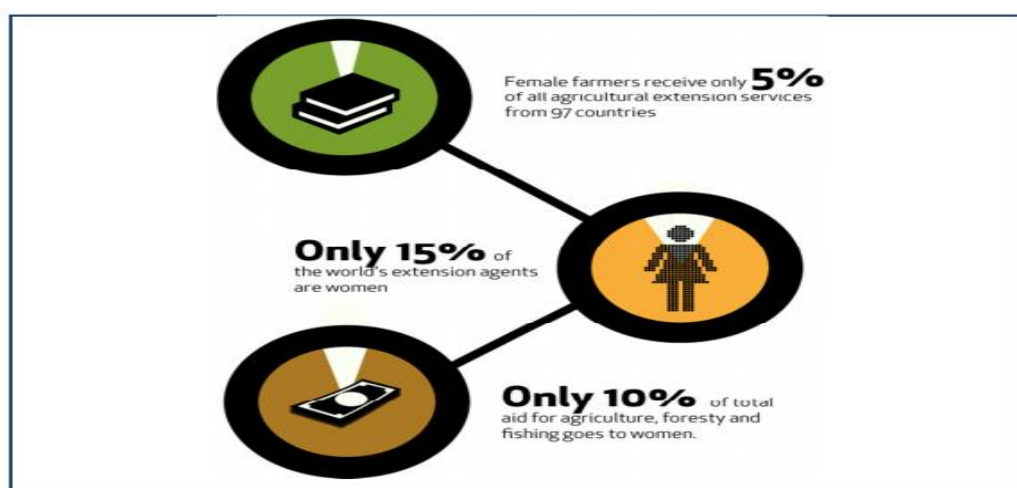
²⁵ Enrique de Loma-Ossorio, Carmen Lahoz and Luis F. Portillo. Assessment of the right to food in ECOWAS region. 2014. Food and Agriculture Organization
Disponible sur <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4183e.pdf>

Relevant nutrition objectives and indicators. The ECOWAP, the RAIP and the NAIPs lack pertinent nutrition objectives and indicators that are in line with international commitments such as the Global Nutrition Targets 2025 and national nutrition targets. There are insufficient indicators and targets related to food consumption and quality of diet (for example indicators related to food diversity such as Household Dietary Diversity Score and Minimum Dietary Diversity-Women). This implies that they should be available and updated information on these indicators in the national and regional food and nutrition security information systems that could be used during the elaboration of ECOWAP, RAIP and NAIPs.

Nutrition education. Nutrition education can provide valuable information and knowledge to agricultural households to improve their food habits and consumption, particularly for women in reproductive age and children. During the process, a particular emphasis should be put on locally available foods and cooking demonstration on how to better use them. Pre-service and in-service training of agriculture extension officers and staffs involved in rural development should prioritize capacity development on nutrition.

Women and youth. There is no doubt about the important role women play in agriculture sector and throughout the value chains. Women constitute a large part of the agricultural workforce. Despite this fact, they have difficulty to access productive resources (Figure 4), due in majority to cultural and social barriers. This has a negative impact on their livelihoods and those of their families. On the other hand, they constitute one of the most vulnerable groups to malnutrition. All these factors show the necessity to improve the consideration of women in ECOWAP through related objectives and indicators, as well as women-oriented interventions. West African countries are predominantly young and considering the high rate of unemployment in the youth sector both in urban and rural areas, agriculture represent an opportunity for decent job creation. Yet, appropriate measures and incentives should be developed to attract this segment of the population.

Figure 4: Women's access to agricultural resources and services



Source: FAO, 2013 cited in ²⁶

²⁶ Meerman, Janice. "Review of Country-Level Programming in Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture." 142nd APHA Annual Meeting and Exposition (November 15-November 19, 2014). APHA, 2014.

Diversification of food production. Cereals, roots and tubers in addition to cash crops remain the main focus of agricultural development strategies in ECOWAS region, while production of fruits and vegetables, livestock (especially short cycle animals), fisheries/aquaculture and non-timber food products, particularly important in term of diet quality and diversification are less considered. Improving the diversification of food production will contribute to improve food availability, accessibility and utilization, particularly for nutrient-rich foods and generate more incomes for the farmers.

Climate change. Climate change is one of the main factors that affect agriculture sub-sectors, particularly in Sahel countries where crop productivity and production can be significantly reduced. Fisheries (through reduction of fishing spaces (both continental and maritime)) and livestock (with depends heavily on rainfall) are also threatened. There is therefore a strong link between climate change and nutrition, as it can negatively impact on availability of food, particularly nutrient-rich foods. Implementation of affordable and proven technologies in agriculture sector to mitigate the impacts of climate change should therefore be one key priority of ECOWAP and its operationalized documents at regional and country levels.

Social protection. Evidences show strong interactions between social protection and agriculture²⁷. This is really on aspect that is absent in ECOWAP, RAIP and NAIPs. The majority of farmers in West Africa are small scale farmers/family farmers who have difficulty to access agricultural resources, credit and markets, thus producing and earning less, therefore increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition. On the other hand, there are rural people who want to engage in agriculture but do not have access to resources. Developing adapted social protection in agriculture mechanisms and instruments could be one option to overcome this situation and move people from vulnerability into active participation to countries' socioeconomic development through productive activities.

Post-harvest losses/value chains/food processing/conservation. Post-harvest losses in West African countries are important, particularly among small scale farmers and in the crop sub-sector (especially in fruits and vegetables as well as cereals)²⁸. Use of poor harvesting technologies, inadequate food storage and conservation, among others, constitute some important contributing factors resulting in food losses. It is also the case in the livestock and fisheries sub-sectors, which produce easily perishable foods and where lack of adequate storage and cold chain infrastructures can cause serious damages. This is particularly worrying, considering the difficulty for farmers to have access to these facilities (due to their inexistence or their high cost). Post-harvest food losses reduce significantly availability of foods, particularly nutrient-rich foods and increase the risk of poverty among farmers.

Food safety. Foodborne diseases are widespread in developing countries and represent an important public health concern. Improper agricultural practices (i.e. use of contaminated water for production of fruits and vegetables, misuse of pesticides) and food processing, handling and conservation are key factors that contribute to food contamination by microbes, toxins or chemicals. Among these contaminants, aflatoxins constitute a serious threat to West African agricultural sector. These toxins which develop easily under climatic conditions

²⁷Tirivayi, N., Knowles, M. and Davis, B. (2013) The interaction between social protection and agriculture: A review of evidence. Rome: FAO.

²⁸ Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). 2013. Establishing the status of post-harvest losses and storage for major staple crops in eleven African countries (Phase I). AGRA: Nairobi, Kenya

that prevail in the ECOWAS sub-region can contaminate both crops and livestock products and contribute to malnutrition (there is a potential link between aflatoxins contamination and stunting).^{29,30}

However some progress is being made at regional and national level in the implementation phase. In 2011, West African representatives (from countries and regional institutions) participated in the regional workshop organized by FAO and NEPAD in Senegal to improve their knowledge on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and receive guidance on how to better mainstream nutrition into agriculture in general and the NAFSIP. National Action Plans and roadmaps to improve the integration of nutrition in their national agricultural strategic documents were developed and some countries received support from ECOWAS partners in the implementation of these action plans. For example, Ghana has improved integration of Nutrition in its METASIP, Togo has developed an Action Plan for Nutrition; 2012-2015 within the framework of its NAIP, Nigeria developed a Food and Nutrition Security Strategy 2015-2020 within the framework of its Agricultural Transformation Agenda and Benin is developing a Common Results Framework for stunting reduction which integrates nutrition-sensitive agriculture aspects. At regional level, there is an increased interest on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, which is reflected in the adoption of the ECOWAS Zero Hunger Initiative. In March 2016, countries in West Africa and Regional Economic Commissions including ECOWAS, under the joint initiative of the African Union, NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency and FAO CAADP (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program) Nutrition Initiative, convened in Accra, Ghana to take stocks on countries' progress in the implementation of their roadmaps on mainstreaming nutrition into agricultural investment plans and programmes. During this event, participants also shared lessons to re-frame their multi-sectoral institutional arrangements for advancing nutrition sensitive food systems, in the context of post-ICN2 agenda which aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals and 2014 Malabo Declaration commitments. Countries are also being capacitated to report biennially on the nutrition indicators in the CAADP Result Frameworks. West Africa has advanced ahead of other sub-Regions in committing to eliminating to ending hunger through the Hunger Free Initiative for West Africa, being jointly implemented by FAO and the ECOWAS Commission.

In the area of food and nutrition information systems, ECOWAS has created ECO-AGRIS (ECOWAS Agricultural Information System), the regional agricultural information system and the Cadre Harmonisé, a tool to monitor food security at regional and country level has been developed, with technical assistance of the CILSS (*Comité Inter-états permanent de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel*), with the objective to better inform decision and policy processes.

Concerning aflatoxins control, ECOWAS in partnership with The African Union has developed in 2013 its Aflatoxin Control Action Plan 2014-2024 which integrate key strategies and interventions to reduce aflatoxins contamination in agriculture sector and value chains.

²⁹ Gong Y.Y. and al. Dietary aflatoxin exposure and impaired growth in young children from Benin and Togo: cross sectional study. BMJ. 2002 Jul 6; 325(7354): 20–21.

³⁰ Unnevehr L, Grace D, editors. Aflatoxins: Finding solutions for improved food safety. Intl Food Policy Res Inst; 2013 Sep 30.

VI-3 Propositions to enhance the integration of nutrition in the new ECOWAP

Key messages

“The new ECOWAP should be built by taking into consideration ECOWAS Zero Hunger Initiative and include nutrition indicators for accountability”

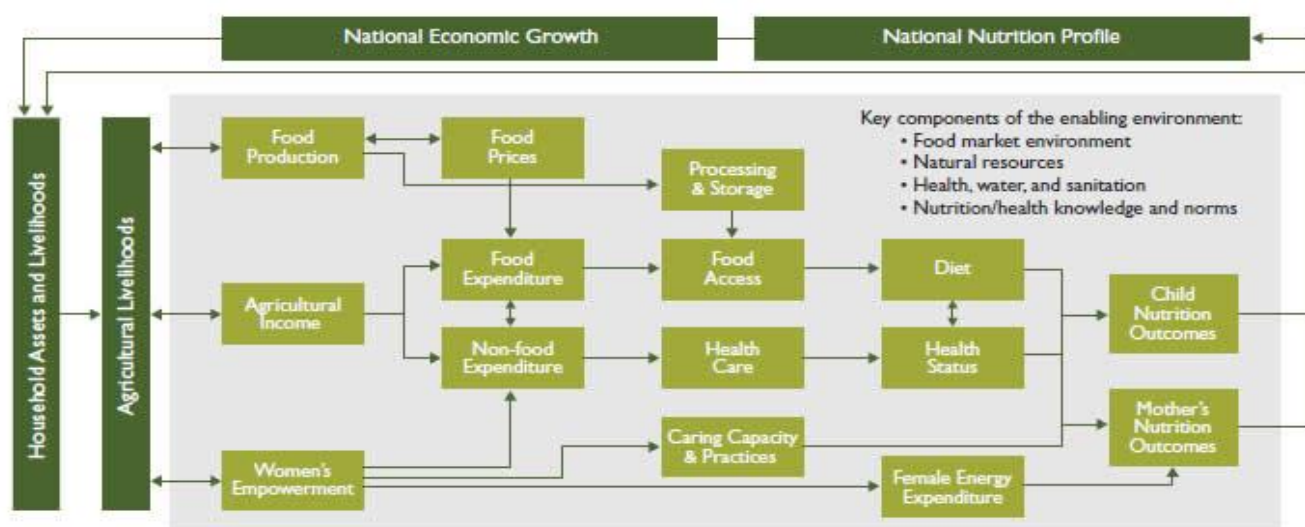
“The new ECOWAP should promote right to food as fundamental pillar”

“Diversification of food production (with better consideration of nutrient-rich crops, fisheries and small-scale livestock), food processing, food safety, social protection targeting small-scale farmers, gender and climate change, nutrition education, among others, should be better considered in the new ECOWAP, to improve nutrition”

“Support countries in revising and implementing their CAADP Nutrition Initiative Action Plans”

Agriculture can significantly contribute to improved nutrition security through several entry points. The picture below describes the linkages between agriculture and nutrition:

Figure 5: Conceptual pathways between agriculture and nutrition



Adapted for Feed the Future by Anna Herforth, Jody Harris, and SPRING, from Gillespie, Harris, and Kadiyala (2012) and Headey, Chiu, and Kadiyala (2011).

Source: Herforth and Harris, 2014³¹

The suggestions below are made in order to increase the integration of nutrition into the ECOWAP and are built around FAO's recommendations for improving nutrition through agriculture and food systems³²:

Change the paradigm. While support to agriculture sector has been oriented to increased productivity, at the expense of nutrition, it is now important that the sector should be considered as a whole: (i) increasing the productivity to meet the food demand but also (ii) diversifying the production to respond to increasing demand for diversified nutrient-dense food, particularly for nutritious food (we can see the example of fruits consumption in Ghana that has increased over the years), while (iii) creating incomes for farmers including women and the most vulnerable population and (iv) economic growth for countries.

Invest more on small scale farmers. Agricultural development will not be concrete if small scale family farmers are not the primary beneficiaries of ECOWAP, given their difficulties to access productive resources and their importance for the region's agricultural production. Most families could be assisted to promote enhanced homestead food through mixed farming systems; combining short cycle livestock and poultry with home gardening, fruit and vegetable production.

Put consumers at the center of the new ECOWAP. Agriculture and food systems should not only be seen in terms of economic benefits. The consumer's evolving food choices and habits should be at the center of any agricultural and food systems development programs.

³¹ Herforth, Anna, and Jody Harris. 2014. Understanding and Applying Primary Pathways and Principles. Brief #1. Improving Nutrition through Agriculture Technical Brief Series. Arlington, VA: USAID/Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) Project.

³² Available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4922e.pdf>

Build the ECOWAP around ECOWAS Zero Hunger Initiative. In 2012, West African countries under ECOWAS have adopted The Hunger Free Initiative, with the general objective to eradicate hunger and malnutrition by 2025, using ECOWAP as the key pillar. Therefore, it is important for the new version of the ECOWAP, to be aligned to the Initiative and its strategies such as promotion of right to food, nutrition-sensitive agriculture and social protection. Actually, FAO is supporting ECOWAS to (i) conceptualize and create the enabling environment for accomplishing the Hunger Free expectation which is aligned with the 2014 Malabo Commitment of bringing down stunting to 10% and underweight to 5% in the next decade and (ii) develop the conceptual framework and strategic documents that could be used to monitor ECOWAS and countries' progress and efforts needed to achieve zero hunger, existing indices will be used such as IFPRI's Global Hunger Index.

Integrate pertinent nutrition objectives and indicators in the new ECOWAP cycle. These objectives and indicators should be in line with international nutrition targets (Global Nutrition Targets, Nutrition indicators in the CAADP Result Framework and SDGs) and national efforts mobilized and reinforced for accountability on these targets. Indicators should include outcome level (ex. change in food availability, accessibility and diet diversity (particularly household food diversity and minimum women dietary diversity scores) and impact level (for example anthropometry and biologic measurements such as micronutrients status). Indicators on the impact of food systems on nutrition should also be integrated.

While keeping interest on “strategic crops”, diversify food production, particularly increase production of nutrient-rich and bio-fortified foods. While acknowledging the fact that there are some strategic productions for the sub-region, it is important to also increase the consideration of other sectors such as fisheries/aquaculture, production of short-cycle animals, poultry and derived products as well as non-wood forest products, through integrated mixed farming systems. This will advance the diversification of food production, thus contributing to improve incomes generation for the farmers and increasing availability and utilization of nutrient-rich foods. Appropriate incentives should therefore be proposed to farmers who are used to monoculture to shift into sustainable mixed farming systems.

Develop more resilient food systems. As far as agriculture is concerned, more resilient food systems need to be promoted. The present commodity based market and export-oriented “value chain” approach needs to be complemented by integrated and risk adverse local approaches based on the sustainable management of natural resources and retrieval of relevant indigenous knowledge and culture. Such approaches would privilege local production, including production of staples, and year-round supply of local markets. They would also contribute to diversify diets through increased access to and consumption of fresh foods, shorten the producer-consumer chain - thereby reducing transport and storage costs - and increase resilience to external shocks. Healthier and more nutritious local foods would thus contribute to more sustainable and adequate diets. The promotion of local food systems would require combined investments in research, education and training, as well as policy support to small-scale farmers. Accurate agricultural and ecosystems' expertise will provide the necessary backup for developing coherent and specific strategies. Consumers will need

to be aware of the nutritional value of local food products and familiar with food preparation techniques which preserve micronutrients.

Increase markets access, both for small scale farmers and consumers, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. This is important in order to improve the incomes of the farmers and permit access to food for the vulnerable, particularly for nutrient-rich foods. Investment in development of rural infrastructures should really be oriented to ensure small scale farmers and populations have accessed to markets. Emphasis should be put on rural roads and markets infrastructures, as well as measures to inform on food price and ensure control of food price volatility, particularly for nutrient-rich foods. Agriculture should better collaborate with others sectors to make this happen. Legislative instruments and standards should be developed, harmonized and implemented at scale in the sub-region to facilitate intra-regional trade but also regulate the behavior food industries for safe and nutritious food.

Integrate nutrition promotion and education in the new ECOWAP. It is observed that malnutrition rates are high in region producing more food, particularly among agricultural households³³. If access to food constitutes one of the explaining factors, it is important to note that lack of nutrition education is also responsible. Farmers and their families should know what to eat to have a healthy life to better carry out their activities. Approaches like Farmer Field Schools could be used as mean to carry out nutrition education activities among farmers. Nutrition education could be integrated into pre-service and in-service training of all Agriculture extension training. The overall population should also be sensitized on nutrition, particularly the necessity to eat balanced and diverse foods, insisting on local foods. This will participate in increasing the demand for some products and create opportunity for local agriculture.

Integrate adapted and efficient social protection instruments in agriculture. Due to its “informal” characteristic, agriculture in West Africa does not benefit from social protection and small scale farmers are mainly supported with punctual assistance and responsive measures during food and nutrition crises which are recurrent in the region. On one hand, there is a need to develop more preventive social protection mechanisms and in another hand to implement efficient measures that can help poor rural and agricultural households to move from poverty and be actors of countries’ development. Evidences show that social protection policies and programmes in agriculture can contribute to address immediate, underlying causes of malnutrition. Well and effectively designed and implemented, they can increase access to quality food, dietary diversity and help poor and vulnerable families to access to essential services that are key in improving nutrition. Moreover, social protection in the context of fragile environment prone to natural shocks can prevent and minimize the impacts of crises on nutrition. To have impactful agriculture-related social protection policies and programmes on nutrition, they should be designed and implemented as part of a broad agriculture policy that integrates a multi-sector nutrition response to ensure sustainable impacts on all forms of malnutrition.

Prioritize gender mainstreaming and focus on women and youth in the new ECOWAP. West Africa has a predominantly young population and considering the high unemployment

³³ This is known as “Sikasso Paradox”

rate among youth in West Africa, efforts should be put to attract them into agriculture, by developing incentives and putting in place the favorable environment to support them. Women also constitute an important group involved in agriculture activity, but they face difficulties to access agricultural resources, as a result of cultural and social barriers and high level of poverty. The new ECOWAP should give better attention to women in its strategies, by integrating appropriate gender-related objectives, activities and indicators. Many studies have shown the positive impact on investing in agricultural women to reduce household food insecurity and malnutrition. Time saving technologies should be deployed for farming in order to free up time for women to take care of themselves and their children. Women should also be protected and empowered to have continued access to productive assets including land.

Promote nutrition sensitive value-chains, including good agricultural practices and food processing. This can contribute to increase incomes for the producers and other actors involved throughout the chains, by creating employment. On the other hand, good practices throughout the chains and food processing can reduce post-harvest food losses which remain high in West Africa and seasonality of certain foods such as fruits and vegetables. This implies promotion of entrepreneurship and development of Public Private Partnerships, including adding essential nutrient to staple foods and condiments through food fortification.

Invest in agricultural research and development. In order to improve food productivity and production, reduce post-harvest food losses and food seasonality and develop nutrient-rich crops (e.g. pulse and vegetables). This will support transition for more diverse agricultural and food systems and higher value crops.

Strengthen capacities of agriculture staffs in nutrition. By integrating nutrition into existing curricula of regional and national schools that train agricultural staffs, including extension agents or developing in-service trainings. This aspect should be integrated in the new ECOWAP.

Improve governance of the new ECOWAP and establish institutionalized multi-sectoral engagement at all levels; national and sub-regional. The governance framework and implementation arrangements should be more inclusive by increasing participation of regional stakeholders involved in nutrition issues in the policy process. Civil Societies and Parliamentarians, among others should be also involved to improve mutual accountability.

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