

## SEMINAR 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015 – Milan

### Debate on resilience in Sahel and West Africa and on AGIR Views of West African and European civil society

#### West African Civil Society Statement on Resilience in West Africa

**We**, Representatives of West African agro-forestry-pastoral and fishery organisations and networks of civil society and the private sector, after a process of dialogue and analysis, present in the Civil Society seminar on 28 October 2015 in Milan, Italy:

#### **Recall that:**

The effects of successive climate shocks (1973, 1984) raised awareness of the need for a new framework for interpreting the concept of community resilience in the Sahel and West Africa. Since then this concern has been the mandate of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

This awareness has led family farms and organisations to undertake collective initiatives to restore and preserve natural resources. As part of this process, actors have set in motion a process of consultation on the technical, political and institutional modalities required to place at the heart of policy and strategic thinking the problem of the vulnerability of farm communities and their members, who represent some 65% of the working population.

The strategy of the actors directly concerned has been hampered by the negative impacts of free trade policies, in particular the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), which have affected public investment and market regulation instruments to the benefit of imported foodstuffs. These policies look set to continue and worsen through the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

**Reaffirm that** family farming is a mainstay of food and nutrition security and an asset of primary importance for the equitable development of Africa;

**Confirm** the role and place of family farms in resilience in West Africa and the urgent need to promote food production, which is a custodian of strong cultural identity and has been neglected for several decades in favour of export crops;

**Are convinced that** the fight against a recurrence of food crises in West Africa means strengthening the coherence of all policies, strategies, initiatives and interventions for agricultural and rural development,

**Confirm** the need to promote food sovereignty policies to achieve food security, and in particular the obligation to guarantee producers' right of access to land, water and inputs (quality seeds, credit, etc.) in line with ECOWAS agricultural policy, and to protect regional markets;

**Recall** the commitments:

- ✓ of Heads of State and Government in Maputo in 2003, renewed in Malabo in 2014, to give full support to agricultural development;
- ✓ of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS to the partnerships they have offered us for genuine participation in the implementation of agricultural development and resilience projects;

**Reaffirm** the expectations of farmers' organisations and civil society vis-à-vis the EU, ECOWAS and TFPs (Technical and Financial Partners) concerning structural support in lieu of specific support and their alignment with the vision and priorities of the region and countries as the basis of the Global Alliance for Resilience;

### **We note with regret that:**

Despite statistics and analyses indicating its importance and potential, family farming, seen by some policymakers as unable to meet the food challenge, has not benefitted from public investment and sufficient financial resource allocation that would enable it to adapt and improve performance to meet the needs;

The lack of investment and public support has had a negative impact on the attractiveness of agro-forestry-pastoral and fishery activities, greatly limiting strategies and prospects for the inclusion of youth, which would bring about the generational handover that is indispensable to the future of family farms;

This situation makes it difficult to include young people in these activities and often condemns them to exodus and when possible, exile. Poverty, land grabbing, lack of fairness in the distribution of public resources and free trade are the ills that cause social crises, illegal migration and extremism.

The climate disturbances that have been worsening for several decades further aggravate the situation and affect the productivity of agro-forestry-pastoral and fishery systems, jeopardise job creation, fuel migration and insecurity and make food vulnerability a quasi-structural factor in the community.

Although various assessments have shown that the impacts of climate change disproportionately affect the most vulnerable, especially women and young people, very few programmes and policies take into account sufficiently issues related to unequal access to, and control of, resources.

### **In view of the above:**

**We remain convinced** that family farms, where women and young people play a major role, are able to ensure food sovereignty in our region, provided that there are public policies that support their development, complemented by adequate public funding and incentives that make agro-forestry-pastoral and fishery activities attractive;

**We remain convinced** that resilience will be strengthened if there are firm and ambitious commitments to financial incentives and inclusive and participatory agricultural research to promote agro-ecological initiatives and practices, enabling them to tackle the challenges of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition while providing benefits for climate change adaptation and the sustainable management of natural resources;

**We believe** that better consideration of climate change and the aspirations of women and young people, the incorporation of access to appropriate financing in agricultural policies, and stronger market protection remain essential for the stability and development of the region;

**We reaffirm** our vision and our initial commitment to AGIR, which we consider to be not an intervention but an initiative to strengthen the pro-resilience nature of ECOWAP, the PAU and all interventions that consolidate regional agricultural and rural development policies;

**We reaffirm our conviction and maintain that** ECOWAS and UEMOA agricultural policy and national policies and programmes are the frameworks and priorities for all interventions in the agricultural sector in our region, in accordance with the agreements that set forth the commitments from all stakeholders. These policies are the building blocks of our social capital;

**We ask** ECOWAS and UEMOA for truly coherent policies and ask the EU and TFPs, in accordance with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, for alignment and harmonisation of all their support for agricultural development and food and nutrition security in the ECOWAP and the National Agricultural Investment Programme and Regional Agricultural Investment Programme instruments;

**We urge the** regional institutions, ECOWAS and UEMOA in particular, to ensure better coordination of partner interventions that target agricultural development and resilience.

The Representatives of West African agro-forestry-pastoral and fishery organisations and networks of civil society and the private sector convey their sincere appreciation to ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS, the European Union, the Sahel and West Africa Club, TFPs, European civil society (Concord, SOS Faim, Terra Nuova...) and all the participants of the Civil Society seminar.

**Milan, 28 October 2015**

Signed by:

#### **AFRIQUE PERFORMANCE**

**APESS:** *Association for the Promotion of Livestock in the Sahel and the Savannah*

**POSCAO :** *West african Civil society Plat form*

**RBM:** *Bilital Maroobe Network*

**RECAO:** *Network of West African Chambers of Agriculture*

**RESIMAO:** *West African Market Information Systems Network*

**ROAC:** *West African Cereal Producers Network*

**ROPPA:** *West African Network of Farmer Organisations and Agricultural Producers*

**WAWA:** *West African Women Association*

This statement is also endorsed by:

- Action contre la faim
- Action solidarité tiers-monde – Luxembourg
- ActionAid

- Aide au Développement Gembloux – Belgique
- Cap-Vert Espoir et Développement – Luxembourg
- CIDSE
- CISV - Italie
- Collectif Stratégie Alimentaire – Belgique
- Comité Français pour la Solidarité Internationale – France
- CNCD 11.11.11 – Belgique
- Dierenartsen Zonder Grenzen - Vétérinaires Sans Frontières – Belgique
- Oxfam
- Solidarités – France
- SOS Faim – Belgique
- SOS Faim – Luxembourg
- Terra Nuova – Italie
- World Vision Brussels & EU Representation

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