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WEST AFRICAN FUTURES: SETTLEMENT, MARKET AND FOOD SECURITY

Conclusions

Working Group Meeting
OECD Conference Centre, Paris 17 March 2011

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West African Futures: settlement, market and food security

Conclusions of the Working Group Meeting Paris, 17 March 2011

The aim of this programme, co-ordinated by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC), is to provide policy options and strategies based on an analysis of the links between settlement dynamics, markets and food security. A focus on settlement and market dynamics has been chosen owing to their insufficient integration in food security policies and the uncertainties that surround them. This approach will analyse the spatial, economic and social consequences of population growth in terms of food security, analyse examine the regional characteristics of market dynamics, and provide information about the specific causes of food insecurity in Africa. A cross-analysis of these aspects and dynamics will lead to suggestions for tools and interpretations to improve medium- and long-term food security strategies.

Special emphasis will be laid on promoting dialogue and strengthening synergies among regional organisations.

The aim of this first Working Group meeting was to present and discuss the programme's working hypotheses and methodology. It was also an opportunity for participants to talk about their own initiatives in the programme's three focus areas.

The meeting was limited to the members of the Sahel and West Africa Club and certain international organizations including IFPRI, WFP, FAO, UNECA, FEWS NET and AFD (see list of participants).

This paper does not aim to summarise all the meeting presentations (which can be found online) but rather to highlight some of the remarks made during the discussions:

- *One food security challenge is that of feeding a growing urban population. What policy levers can be used to feed this population? How can availability and population dynamics be influenced? How can non-agricultural and food security policies be co-ordinated to face this challenge? Productivity alone is not enough to provide food security.*
- *The market and production determine access to food. We will focus on the market, integrating an analysis of inefficiencies and market failures. Market dynamics and the demo-economic dimension of food security will be included in the proposals for policy tools and options.*
- *Participants considered the possibility of constructing a food insecurity matrix based more on the relationship between producers and non-producers than between rural and urban populations. However, the audience still had questions on how to take account of income levels and the distinction between the formal and informal sectors in designing a consumption matrix. The formal/informal classification would better reflect West Africa's economic reality.*
- *Africa is undergoing a series of major transformations, including urbanisation. It must integrate into its development strategies such new realities as urban growth, the demographic transition and the globalisation of trade. To create an effective incentive policy framework these processes must be taken into account.*

- *While the programme is focused on a regional approach, it was noted that the international dimension of food security is, and must be, part of all analyses and results. It was also suggested that the programme examine governance and gender issues.*
- *The added value of field studies and surveys in illustrating market dynamics, trends and food habits was noted. Certain existing studies could inform this research, particularly the work on strategic corridors led by Michigan State University (MSU) in co-ordination with ECOWAS and the CILSS. This short-term approach could lead to discussions on a quantification method or tools that could be used for long-term food security policy strategies. Information on consumption habits available, for example, from the WFP household surveys (mandate extended to food security and assistance), could be used to draw up food security typologies. West African regional organisations could play an important part in establishing a data collection and long-term monitoring system (e.g. by conducting surveys and collecting information on certain corridors) in order to quantify regional flows and trade.*
- *The programme could also consider monetary issues, which are important for trade between areas that use different currencies (e.g. CFA – naira).*
- *Concerning the transformation of the agricultural sector as discussed in the presentations: the potential for increasing output by bringing more land under cultivation could reach its limit in the medium term. The transformation of agriculture and modes of production are a challenge both for producers and for the market, as is the need for regional products to be attractive and competitive compared to imports from the rest of the world. The programme should also take into account trade in inputs and services.*
- *The programme is not meant to offer projections on food security. However, it does use retrospective studies and projections, notably as concerns settlement patterns. Retrospective work on events and causes could lead to modelling. The scope of study is defined not by dates but by phases such as exhaustion of available agricultural area and completion of the demographic transition and the agricultural transformation process. This exercise could help to design analytical tools (models, for example) for use by other African regions (in collaboration with the ECA – UNECA).*

Dialogue among the various partners will be at the heart of the approach. At the end of the two-year cycle, the sustainability of the project will be determined by whether the stakeholders – West African regional organisations, development partners and governments – take ownership of the results. This could be expressed at various levels: demonstration of the usefulness of rethinking food security policy in the light of changes in settlement and market dynamics; extrapolation of the methodologies and analytical tools developed in this programme to regions outside West Africa; extension of the objectives of food security to non-agricultural policies (investment, trade, population and urban policy); stronger synergy between the food security strategies of CILSS, UEMOA and ECOWAS, taking changes in settlement dynamics and the reality of regional markets into account. The results should lead to approaches, tools and methods that take better account of settlement and market dynamics in defining and implementing food security policies in West Africa.

The members of the Working Group are involved in several studies and programmes that are valuable sources of information for this programme. These studies include:

- The AFRICAPOLIS study by the AFD;
- Discussions on the constitution of a regional commodity exchange for staple crops, an information system on the implementation of UEMOA's agricultural policy, and a watchdog system on abnormal practices (UEMOA Commission);
- Market analyses (WFP, CILSS, ECOWAS, IFPRI, FEWS NET, FAO);
- Studies on food insecurity in several countries, and household surveys (WFP, CILSS, UEMOA);
- A regional programme on the West African inputs market (ECOWAS and UEMOA commissions);
- A regional market programme (funded by USAID) and studies and surveys of the regional market (with MSU);
- Other OECD directorates (TAD).

The schedule of priority activities for this programme may be modified in the light of study results. All participants are invited to send documents they would like to share or feed into the work.

Studies already conducted in relation to this subject will be posted on the Club's website, to add to knowledge and stimulate discussion.

Information will be provided on upcoming expert meetings. The next meeting of the Working Group is scheduled for 27-28 October at the OECD Conference Centre in Paris.

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**West African Futures: settlement, market and food security
Working Group Meeting
Paris (OECD), 17 March 2011**

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