



DECODING

# **WEST AFRICA:** NETWORKS MOBILISED TO DEFEND AGROECOLOGY



## **Coordination SUD is the national coordination body for French international solidarity NGOs (ISO).**

Founded in 1994, it now brings together almost 175 ISOs, including around one hundred of them via six umbrella organisations (CLONG-Volontariat, CNAJEP, Coordination Humanitaire et Développement, CRID, Forim, Groupe Initiatives). Their activities include emergency humanitarian aid through emergency operations, development aid, environmental protection, human rights defence among disadvantaged populations in France and internationally, as well as actions in the fields of education on citizenship, education on international solidarity, and of advocacy. Coordination SUD carries out four missions: defending and promoting ISOs, supporting and strengthening French ISOs, monitoring and analysing the international solidarity sector, and embodying shared positions to public and private institutions, in France, Europe, and around the world.

## **Coordination SUD's Agriculture and Food Commission (C2A).**

This publication is produced by Coordination SUD's Agriculture and Food Commission (C2A). As part of its mission to support the collective advocacy of its members, Coordination SUD has set up working committees. The C2A brings together international solidarity NGOs working to achieve the right to food and reinforced support for family farming in policies that have an impact on global food security: ActionAid France – Peuples Solidaires, Action Contre la Faim, AgriSud, Agter, Artisans du Monde, AVSF, CARI, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, CFSI, Commerce Équitable France, Gret, Iram, ISF Agrista, MADERA, Max Havelaar, Oxfam France, Réseau Foi et Justice Afrique Europe, Secours Catholique – Caritas France, SOL – Alternatives Agroécologiques et Solidaires, Terre et Humanisme, UNMFREO. The C2A provides Coordination SUD with representation to institutions dealing with agriculture and food such as the French Interministerial Group on Food Security (GISA) and the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) for the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

### **Agriculture and Food Commission (C2A) contact:**

Carline Mainenti, AVSF

**Email:** [c.mainenti@avsf.org](mailto:c.mainenti@avsf.org)

**Website:** [www.coordinationsud.org](http://www.coordinationsud.org)

This note was written by Lorine Azoulai (SOL) based on interviews conducted by Chantal Jacovetti (consultant).



With the contributions of the steering committee coordinated by Victoire Cailla (SOL) and in which participated: Marie Cosquer (ACF), Myriam Mackiewicz Houngue (AVSF), Jessica Pascal (CCFD-Terre Solidaire), and Leila Werem (3AO).



The C2A and the 3AO thank WADAF, AFSA, GCLWS-WA, COASP, COPAGEN, Inades-Formation, La Via Campesina - Western and Central Africa, ROPPA, and UFROAT for their cooperation.



Produced by the C2A, in collaboration with the 3AO, with financial support from the Agence Française de Développement. The points of view expressed in this document do not, in any way, represent the official standpoint of the organisations providing financial support.



Reproduction and translation are authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided the source is acknowledged and prior information is provided to Coordination SUD's Communication department.

# INTRODUCTION

The need to significantly transform food systems<sup>1</sup>, claimed by civil society, is beginning to build consensus at international level. To respond to multiple crises, States, civil society, and research all recognise that food systems must evolve in order to be able to tackle the challenges of food and nutrition security, employment, social justice, resilience and adaptation to climate change, and the preservation of natural resources. Thus, in 2019, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) published “The Ten Elements of Agroecology” to guide States and promote agroecological transition at a global level<sup>2</sup>.

For several years, many peasant and civil society organisations have been fighting for the recognition of agroecology as the most capable pathway to a paradigm shift to transform agricultural and food systems by taking into account all their cultural, social, environmental, economic, political dimensions and guaranteeing people's food sovereignty<sup>3</sup>.

Food systems in the North are closely linked to those in the South. There is a real challenge to strengthen North-South partnerships and create consistency amongst all advocacy activities in favour of the agroecological transition.

That is why Coordination SUD's Agriculture and Food Commission (C2A) and the Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa (3AO) have decided to strengthen their common knowledge, seeking to identify, understand, and value the initiatives of stakeholders who advocate for agroecology development in West Africa.

This map seeks to analyse nine peasant organisations and civil society networks within ECOWAS and aims to:

- identify the main West African advocacy networks engaged in peasant agroecology and better understand their positions, demands, and advocacy strategies;
- increase the visibility of West African networks who take actions in favour of agroecology promotion and relay their requests;
- fuel expertise and advocacy of both West African networks and Coordination SUD's member organisations, to better influence public policies;
- create or strengthen partnerships between West African and European civil society, to build common arguments capable of convincing decision-makers of the need for an agroecological transition as well as the importance to direct technical support/research and funding towards peasant agroecology, and to present a united front, especially against the agro-industrial model.

All the information presented in this note comes from interviews conducted with representatives of the various networks.

1. Coordination SUD, The Notes of SUD n°31, "Food and Agricultural Systems: toward a radical transformation to sustainable and resilient models", 2021.

2. FAO, "The Ten Elements of Agroecology, guiding the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems", 2019. *CFS Policy recommendations on agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition*, 2021.

3. Coordination SUD, The Notes of SUD n°22, "Farmer-based Agroecology: a societal alternative for sustainable agricultural and food systems", 2020.

# 1. AGROECOLOGY CHALLENGES IN WEST AFRICA:

## A. Context

Most West African food systems rely on family farming and fishing, securing nearly 90 % of the population's<sup>4</sup> food. It is a major economic sector, employing 55 % of the population, especially women, and representing almost 30 % of the regional GDP<sup>5</sup>.

Since the 1970s, West African States have promoted agricultural intensification methods, inspired by the green revolution, by promoting access to commercial varieties with high yield potential and synthetic inputs (fertilisers and pesticides), in particular for cash crops (cotton, peanuts, coffee, cocoa, etc.) but also, in the past twenty years, for certain cash food crops (corn, rice, vegetable crops, etc.).

However, this intensification model originating from the green revolution now represents a threat, both to the health of cultivated and natural ecosystems and to the autonomy and well-being of farmer communities. If the first green revolution attempts in West Africa were a failure<sup>6</sup>, the pressure of many stakeholders (agribusiness, certain States, etc.) is becoming increasingly stronger, in particular via the promotion of biotechnology.



© SOL, Alternatives Agroécologiques et Solidaires

However, this model does not appear to be able to sustainably respond to the difficulties and challenges faced by West African family farming, namely:

- increasing pressure on resources (water, land, pastures, forests, etc.), resulting in their degradation;
- the monopolising and privatisation of resources, in particular land (urban expansion, appropriation of rural land by capital holders, etc.)<sup>7</sup>;
- biodiversity degradation and climate change threatening the resilience of food systems<sup>8</sup>;
- high population growth and urbanisation;

“

Most West African food systems rely on family farming and fishing.

”

4. 87.5 % in 2016-2018. Jacques Berthelot for SOL, “La CnuCED a propagé le mythe d’une énorme dépendance alimentaire de l’Afrique”, 1 June 2021.

5. ECOWAS, *Agriculture and Food in West Africa. Trends, Performances, and Agricultural Policies*, 2015.

6. INKOTA and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, *False promises: The Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)*, 2020.

7. Coordination SUD, The Notes of SUD n°12, “Climate Policies in Agriculture: are they coherent with the development of family and peasant farming in the South?”, 2018.



- the evolution of diets (in particular urban people seeking a more qualitative and diversified diet, but also faster and easier to prepare)<sup>9</sup>;
- weak public policy support for family farming;
- commercial pressure linked to market liberalisation: unbalanced economic partnership agreements (EPAs), insufficient common tariff protection (CET) to protect from food dumping imposed by European countries, etc. This is illustrated by the examples of the milk<sup>10</sup> and cereals industries.<sup>11</sup>

**B. Peasant agroecology: an alternative for sustainable agricultural and food systems**



*"Hunger and famine still exist, this clearly shows the failure of the dominant model. We need a radical change in food systems, via agroecology."* ROPPA<sup>12</sup>

Despite its promises, the dominant agro-industrial model, mainly promoted in public policies, has not made it possible to improve farmers' living conditions nor to overcome hunger and malnutrition, the numbers of which are constantly increasing<sup>13</sup>. Thus, in 2019, FAO estimated that 690 million people worldwide were suffering from hunger and that nearly one in ten people in the world were exposed to severe food insecurity<sup>14</sup>. In addition to failing to provide healthy, high-quality, and sufficient food to feed the world, the agro-industrial model is contributing to environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and strongly contributing to climate change acceleration: industrial agriculture is responsible for a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions<sup>15</sup>. The multiplication of economic, environmental, and food crises, up to the COVID-19 pandemic, are all warning signs demonstrating the need for an agroecological transition, adaptation, and a relocation of agricultural and food systems.

9. GRET, *The EU CAP: how coherent is it with the development of peasant agriculture in the south?*, 2019.

10. On the issue of milk, see the campaigns "Mon Lait est local" (My Milk is local) and "N'exportons pas nos problèmes" (Let's not export our problems).

11. As for cereals, see the project "Valoriser les céréales locales" (Promoting local cereals) led in Senegal by FONGS-Action Paysanne and SOL, Alternatives Agroécologiques et Solidaires.

12. All quotes are from the interviews conducted with representatives of the analysed networks.

13. FAO, *The state of food security and nutrition in the world. Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets*, 2020.

14. *Ibid.*

15. IPCC, *Climate change and land report*, summary for policymakers, 2019.



© AVSF

**a. Different definitions of agroecology:**

A large majority of the civil society agrees to defend a systemic definition of peasant agroecology, integrating its agronomic, cultural, social, economic, and environmental dimensions<sup>16</sup>. However, other stakeholders, particularly of the agro-industry, are limited to its technical aspects and are creating their own concepts of sustainable agriculture, often blurred, in order to greenwash their image, defend their activities, and maintain their dominant position. For example, this is the case of “climate-smart agriculture”<sup>17</sup> or “sustainable agriculture”<sup>18</sup> in France.

At international level, two major papers are however used today to define agroecology: FAO's ten elements of agroecology<sup>19</sup> and the report of the scientific board (HLPE) of the Committee for Food Safety<sup>20</sup> (CFS). They integrate all three technical, environmental, and social dimensions.

**b. Peasant agroecology defined by the Nyéléni Manifesto:**

In order to clarify their objectives and differentiate themselves from other approaches, including agribusiness, most farmer and civil society organisations rally behind the concept of peasant agroecology.

Established in 2017 by the Nyéléni Manifesto<sup>21</sup>, peasant agroecology is divided into seven key pillars:



This manifesto, initially resulting from the consultation of the Malian peasant movements, quickly made reference and was officially adopted during the ten-year celebration of the World Forum for Food Sovereignty in Nyéléni. 250 delegates from national and international organisations attended from 54 countries, five continents, and with a strong African presence including the following West African networks: AFSA, GCLWS-WA, COASP, COPAGEN, La Via Campesina Western and Central Africa, ROPPA.

“A large majority of the civil society agrees to defend a systemic definition of peasant agroecology.”

16. Coordination SUD, The Notes of SUD n°22, “Farmer-based Agroecology: a societal alternative for sustainable agricultural and food systems”, 2020.

17. GRAIN, *The Exxons of agriculture*, 2015.

18. Amis de la Terre France, *FARRE : l’agriculture raisonnée ou un drôle de réseau de protecteurs*, 2009.

19. FAO, *The 10 elements of agroecology: guiding the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems*, 2018.

20. HLPE, *Report on the Agroecological approaches and other innovations for sustainable and agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition*, 2019.

21. Nyéléni, *Peasant Agroecology Manifesto*, 2017.

## 2. WEST AFRICAN NETWORKS DEFENDING AGROECOLOGY

Here are nine historical networks<sup>22</sup>, which bring together millions of farmers throughout West Africa:

- **WADAF:** West African Association for the Development of Artisanal Fisheries;
- **AFSA:** Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa;
- **GCLWS-WA:** Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles in West Africa;
- **COASP:** West African Peasant Seed Committee;
- **COPAGEN:** Coalition for the Protection of African Gene Heritage;
- **Inades-Formation:** African Institute for Economic and Social Development;
- **La Via Campesina - Western and Central Africa;**
- **ROPPA:** Network of Peasant Organisations and Agricultural Producers in West Africa;
- **UFROAT:** Union of Rural Women of West Africa and Chad.

### A. Networks built in response to the context

Period	Context	Mission/network creation
1958	Independence of West African States	
1975	ECOWAS creation	<b>Inades-Formation:</b> training and coordinating the farming world so it can better structure and defend itself
1980s	Structural adjustment plans, disengagement of States and arrival of private funds	
1989	Drought, market liberalisation, and imported livestock products competition	
1992	Implementation of public policies for fishing and fisheries resources at regional level	<b>WADAF:</b> defending the interests of communities living from artisanal fishing and fighting against declining fish stock
2000	Cotonou Agreement, implementation of the Sahel peasant platform	<b>ROPPA:</b> defending the interests of family farms in public policies
2001	New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) <sup>23</sup> , the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) develops its Union's Agricultural Policy (PAU)	<b>UFROAT:</b> representing rural women in decision-making bodies and defends their rights
2003	Maputo Summit, declination of NEPAD's agricultural component, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), launch of transgenic Bt cotton in Burkina Faso	
2004		<b>COPAGEN:</b> fighting against GMOs and biopiracy <b>Via Campesina Western and Central Africa:</b> strengthening of farmer voices in West Africa, food sovereignty defence
2005	Agricultural Policy of ECOWAS States (ECOWAP)	
2006	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation investment in the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and guidance for ECOWAP towards agro-business, with very poor results	
2007	World Forum for Food Sovereignty in Nyéléni, Mali	

22. Two livestock networks also exist at sub-region level, APESS and RBM, however they could not be questioned as part of this mapping.

23. Since 2018, it is precisely called the Agency of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which will become the implementing body of the development strategy of the AU's Agenda 2063.



Period	Context	Mission/network creation
2008	Surge in grain price Hunger riots	<b>AFSA:</b> tackling AGRA et defending food sovereignty in Africa
2011		<b>COASP:</b> creating a network of peasant seed advocates, defending farmers' rights to sow, multiply, exchange, and sell their own seeds
2014	Social Forum in Dakar to unite the struggles for land, water, and climate justice	
2015	ECOWAP decade review: instead of the expected 10 %, only 5 % of budgets were allocated to agriculture and mainly benefited agribusiness  International Forum on Agroecology (organised by CNOP Mali in partnership with FAO, CIP, and La Via Campesina)  1 <sup>st</sup> Pan-African symposium on agroecology that reinforced the commitments made during the Nyéléni Forum	
2016	Enforcement of the interim economic partnership agreements between the EU and Côte d'Ivoire, the EU and Ghana <sup>24</sup>	<b>GCLWS-WA and 1<sup>st</sup> West African caravan:</b> uniting the struggles for land, water, and climate justice, defending, raising awareness and mobilising around the rights to land, water, and peasant seeds
2017	Nyéleni Manifesto	
2018	Creation of the Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa (3AO)	
2020	The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the population's impoverishment and therefore malnutrition	
2021	Post-Cotonou agreement	<b>Monitoring and action committee:</b> new dialogue and advocacy framework bringing together 12 networks of producer organisations, civil society, and value chain stakeholders in West Africa in order to address the crisis and make a common advocacy


B. Complementary networks mobilised on different themes



**Family farming:**  
ROPPA, La Via Campesina  
Western and Central Africa



**Fighting against land and water grabbing:**  
GCLWS-WA, COPAGEN



**Traditional fishing:**  
WADAF



**Defending rural women**  
UFROAT



**Biodiversity protection:**  
AFSA, COPAGEN



**Valorisation of peasant seeds:**  
COASP, COPAGEN

**Transversal themes:**  
defending local food systems, promoting sustainable and eco-friendly practices, reinforcing farmer know-how and knowledge, farmer autonomy, fight against pesticides, gender, young people, etc.

24. Jacques Berthelot, *Vous avez dit libre-échange ? L'Accord de 'Partenariat' économique, Union européenne-Afrique de l'Ouest*, L'Harmattan Editions, 2018.

C. Networks that are all part of the fight for the agroecological transition<sup>25</sup>:



*"Peasant agroecology is the main path to ensure social cohesion, peace, and food sovereignty in West Africa"* Ousseini Ouedraogo, Executive Secretary at ROPPA

*"COASP's mission is to put biodiversity and seed autonomy at the heart of peasant agroecology and food."* Omer Agoligan (Benin focal point) and Anne Berson Déna (Mali focal point), COASP

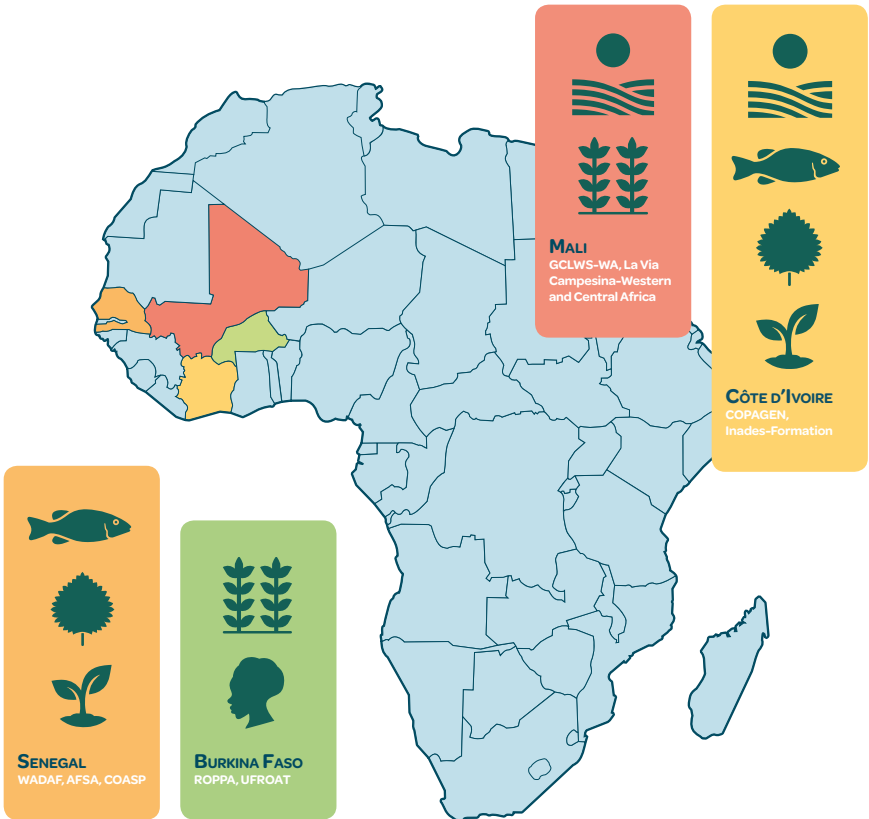
*"Peasant agroecology is one of our transversal and priority objectives"* Massa Koné, Spokesperson at GCLWS-WA

*"We want to promote artisanal fishing that respects ecosystems as well as sustainable and agroecological fishing"* Lucie Tétégan, President of WADAF

*"AFSA is a continental alliance born to counter AGRA and provide a common response with agroecology"* Famara Diédhiou, Programme Officer at AFSA

*"To mitigate global warming, it is crucial to protect farmer family farming by moving away from intensive and polluting agro-food systems, and being in favour of sustainable, reterritorialised systems, founded on agroecology"* Sena Adessou, General Secretary at Inades-Formation

D. The networks' headquarters are gathered in four French-speaking countries



25. All verbatim reports are from interviews conducted with the networks' representatives.

A farmer, community, and citizen force: the nine regional networks analysed represent 67 national platforms and associations spread throughout ECOWAS as well as other African countries, and are also associated with international representatives.

A mobilising force: counter-summits, caravans, and campaigns launched by these networks bring together thousands of people.

### **E. Links with other networks, platforms, research, and the private sector**

The present study did not allow the networks to deepen their relationships with each other, nor did it identify and qualify their links with research and the private sector. This is a topic that would deserve closer analysis in a future step of the C2A work process.



© Julien Deconinck pour le CCFD-Terre Solidaire



---

### 3. ADVOCACY FOR AGROECOLOGY IN WEST AFRICA

---

#### A. Advocacy spaces

##### a. At international scale

Although West African networks have relatively low commitments at this level, the main negotiating and advocacy spaces in which they participate are the World Committee for Food Security (CFS) via its civil society college called “Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism” (CSM)<sup>26</sup> and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

The ROPPA and La Via Campesina are the farmers’ voices within the FAO and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). There, ROPPA denounced unfair economic partnership agreements, especially around African cotton.

Since 2015, COASP has been participating in consultations on farmers' rights during the ITPGRFA negotiations in order to defend the implementation of seed rights and gain recognition of peasant seed systems (varieties, practices, knowledge, rights). It should be noted that COASP has shown willingness to further follow the political processes related to the Nagoya Protocol (on access as well as fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the exploitation of genetic resources) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Is this an advocacy level to focus on? Is it a priority for West African networks to invest more in this advocacy level, if so how can they be supported? These questions have still to be examined and discussed.

##### b. At continental scale (African Union)

This is yet another area with little investment. Understanding more about how the African Union (AU) operates and how it can act as a lever to advance the advocacy for peasant agroecology in West Africa appears to be a challenge.

Since its creation, COPAGEN has been working to ensure that the AU laws and policies inspire legislative developments at ECOWAS and West African countries' levels. In the early 2000s, the AU adopted two legislations – one on biosafety and the other on the protection of genetic resources and farmers' rights in Africa – which are model laws therefore not legally binding. These laws effectively protect the rights of rural communities, farmers, and consumers.

The GCLWS-WA wrote articles in the context of civil society consultations on the next European Union/African Union strategy. As a result, the GCLWS-WA intends to take part and have a forum at the next EU/AU summit scheduled for October 2021. It should be noted that the GCLWS-WA has also written contributions around the consultations on the European Union strategy in the Sahel.

AFSA is invested in land legislation (via its ally CICODEV-Africa<sup>27</sup>) and plant variety protection. More generally, AFSA's advocacy with the AU aims to develop an African food policy based on agroecology.

##### c. At regional scale (West Africa)

So far, the regional level is the main level of advocacy for the analysed West African networks. ECOWAS, to a lesser extent the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel

---

26. See [csm4cfs.org](http://csm4cfs.org)

27. The Pan-African Institute for Citizenship, Consumers and Development.



© ROPPA

(CILSS), are their main advocacy targets. For many of these networks, the priority seems to be to invest in these spaces and strengthen their understanding of how these institutions function to optimise influence strategies.

ROPPA sits on the ECOWAS West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development and participated in the development of ECOWAP<sup>28</sup>. It ensures the coherence of agricultural investment programmes (PRIA-SAN) so that public and private funding supports peasant agroecology, rather than agro-industry.

ROPPA and COPAGEN have won seats on ECOWAS, WAEMU, CILSS, West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF) commissions.

Since 2004, COPAGEN has been working on influencing the community regulation of WAEMU/ECOWAS/CILSS (which applies directly to States) biosafety, in order to include:

1. the inalienable right of communities to live in GMO-free territories;
2. traceability and labelling of all GMO products and derivatives;
3. the imprescriptibility of lawsuits for damages related to the use of GMOs in West Africa.

It also began working on identifying banned pesticides by West African States (which in fact continue to circulate) and is aiming to write a memorandum to demand the prohibition to be respected.

WADAF is part of the ECOWAS sub-regional Fisheries Commission and the Gulf of Guinea Regional Fisheries Commission. It advocates better participation of small-scale fishing communities in fisheries policies and advocates to stop all types of industries that target endangered species.

28. ROPPA, *Note Exploitation of the ROPPA report, evaluation Ecowap*, [www.roppa-afrique.org/IMG/pdf/note\\_exploitation\\_du\\_rapport\\_du\\_roppa\\_-\\_evaluation\\_ecowap.pdf](http://www.roppa-afrique.org/IMG/pdf/note_exploitation_du_rapport_du_roppa_-_evaluation_ecowap.pdf)

Since 2016, the GCLWS-WA has participated in the organisation of West African caravans that aim to challenge decision-makers. Organised on average every other year, they conclude by submitting a *Green book of convergence* to the national and regional authorities, aiming at improving public policies on land, water, peasant seeds, pastoralism, and fisheries.

INSTITUTIONAL SPACES OF POLITICAL  
INFLUENCE AND POLITICAL MOBILISATION AT REGIONAL LEVEL:

ROPPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ECOWAS Agriculture and Food Advisory Committee</li><li>• Regional framework for the development and implementation of convergent land policies in space</li><li>• RAAF/PATAE Steering Committee</li><li>• CILSS/CORAF</li><li>• WAEMU High Advisory Council</li><li>• IPC (International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty)/CSM/FAO</li><li>• 10 years of Nyéléni</li></ul>
Via Campesina Western and Central Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Member of the civil society mechanism of the FAO's CFS and the IPC</li><li>• FAO/Via Campesina direct partnership</li><li>• 10 years of Nyéléni</li></ul>
COASP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FAO/IPC/ITPGRFA</li><li>• Regional peasant seed fairs</li></ul>
GCLWS-WA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• North/South platform: Our land is our life (CIDSE)</li><li>• West African Caravans</li><li>• Counter-summits (COP, etc.)</li><li>• 10 years of Nyéléni</li></ul>
WADAF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ecowas Fisheries Commission</li><li>• Gulf of Guinea CPCEAO</li><li>• Cohamat</li><li>• FAO/IPC</li><li>• Co-management framework</li></ul>
AFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Through its members, at ECOWAS/COPAGEN</li><li>• AU/CICODEV-Africa</li><li>• Academic conferences on food systems every two years</li><li>• 10 years of Nyéléni</li></ul>
COPAGEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ministries (environment, agriculture) of the COPAGEN Coalitions</li><li>• Observer member of the steering and monitoring committees of ECOWAS, WAEMU, CILSS within the framework of the biosafety process</li><li>• COPAGEN annual forum</li><li>• 10 years of Nyéléni</li></ul>
UFROAT	Missing information
Inades-Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technical assistance of PATAE/AARA/ECOWAS</li><li>• National Committees for family farming</li></ul>

d. National and local scale

Most of the West African networks examined in this study consist of national platforms, coalitions, or focal points (ROPPA, GCLWS-WA, COPAGEN, COASP) or rely on their members' dynamism at national level, to articulate their advocacy actions at regional level with advocacy at national level.



As such, for example, the advocacy for the recognition of collective land rights and peasant seed systems of the GCLWS-WA or COASP members in Mali was used as a case study and is now used in their reflections to inspire and push advocacy at regional level.

At the launch of the international year of family farming in 2014, Inades-Formation set up National committees on Family Farming in the member countries of its network.



*"We are convinced that the battle for agroecological transition is played out at territorial level, through local authorities" ROPPA<sup>29</sup>*

## B. Advocacy challenges for peasant agroecology in West Africa

### a. Advocacy themes needing consolidation

To present a united front on agroecology, the networks must look in more detail at several more or less recent advocacy themes.

Deferral of subsidies from chemical inputs to organic fertilisers would, amongst other decisions, limit support for income crops, which are based on an agro-industrial model. However, particular attention must be given to these fertilisers' production and marketing methods, to promote farmers' autonomy, in addition to the challenges in terms of climate and biodiversity. As an example, it will be necessary to avoid raw material grabbing by industries, such as water hyacinths, already used by farmers to produce organic fertilisers.

In line with this, the question of biopesticides also deserves a consolidated common positioning. For example, the establishment of the Éléphant Vert<sup>30</sup> company in Senegal raises the question of large-scale biopesticides production that risks keeping farmers in a logic of economic dependence.

Despite existing agreements on the usage of peasant seeds, the use of hybrid seeds is still largely funded, in particular by private actors (the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, amongst others), and limits the development and access to a diversified supply of peasant seeds, especially for market gardening.

Overall, these networks seek to consolidate their arguments to leave the technological package, which benefits only income crops and whose ecological consequences are important.

Finally, there are economic arguments to be strengthened in order to direct subsidies towards equipment and inputs adapted to peasant agroecology: organic, based on farmer know-how and research, produced by local small units, etc., and to fight against the logic of private investments that finance the agro-industrial model, such as AGRA, whose negative externalities are very costly for States.

### b. The challenge of shared positioning

Since 2007, FAO's agroecology symposia have helped to structure collective and political reflection within West African movements and networks. This has fed the positioning and advocacy of French and European partners, and improved the work in which they participate (CIDSE, C2A, HLPE, etc.).

These networks seek to consolidate their arguments to leave the technological package.

29. This quote is from interviews conducted with ROPPA representatives.

30. Éléphant Vert is a French-Swiss agro-industrial group.

However, the affirmation of a position on peasant agroecology, common to all West African movements and networks, remains a major challenge. The Nyéléni Manifesto is an important step, but there are still points of difference that continue to crystallise debates, including:

- maintaining the use of chemical inputs;
- the coexistence – possible or not – of certified seeds with peasant seeds;
- the use of biopesticides and industrial organic fertilisers, which strengthens the economic power of agribusiness at the expense of the producers’ autonomy.

More generally, the question arises of the coexistence of agroecological and agro-industrial models, and the path we wish to give to the transition towards peasant agroecology. For West African networks, collective reflection on these issues and defining their own shared vision remains a challenge. Getting rid of the reasoning of exogenous beliefs is indeed difficult, given the risks of influence and asymmetry induced by the development aid and partnership system.

**c. Challenges related to financing peasant agroecology**

Despite encouraging speeches, investments in peasant agroecology remain largely insufficient compared to the agro-industrial model. For example, between 2015 and 2016, only 0.2 % of the budget provided by ECOWAS<sup>31</sup> to strengthen food and nutrition security, was assigned to the agroecological transition programme<sup>32</sup>. Thus, agroecology is outweighed by other issues, such as the development of public-private partnerships like the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA). While agroecology is an international consensus, most financing for agricultural development in West Africa continues to promote an agro-industrial model, resulting from the green revolution<sup>33</sup>. One example is the support for climate-smart agriculture<sup>34</sup>, or the AGRA and DeSIRA programmes, the EU provided €300 million<sup>35</sup> in funding, poles apart from the solutions brought by the West African peasant movements.



France is following the same dynamics: while it has shown a growing interest in the agroecological model for the past decade and is integrating it into international development laws, a recent study<sup>36</sup> pointed out that only 13.3 % of the French financial support over the past ten years has been oriented towards agroecology.

31. 2025 key policy document adopted by the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and Water resources, Abuja, Nigeria, 12 December 2016.

32. ECOWAS website on 28/04/2020.

33. Use of chemical inputs, hybrid seeds and equipment, development of public-private partnerships.

34. GRAIN, *The Exxons of agriculture*, 2015.

35. CCFD-Terre Solidaire, *DeSIRA : l'indésirable ? Quand des financements publics se mettent au service d'initiatives agricoles opaques*, 2021.

36. Action contre la Faim, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, Oxfam France, *Une recette à la française : une pincée d'agroécologie pour une louche d'agro-industrie*, 2021.

37. World Bank, European Union, AFD, and other bilateral agencies.

The lack of coordination and coherence of donors contributes to dividing and dispersing actions, with a considerable loss of energy. Despite the involvement of peasant movements in their development process, the financing by a multitude of external donors<sup>37</sup> with differing agendas and priorities, regional policies such as ECOWAP, have resulted in a damaging lack of legibility and coherence.

Orienting the funding towards agroecology and support for family farms, in line with the policy frameworks co-built with farmers, is necessary to change the model. In this sense, institutional donors are one of the priority advocacy targets for West African networks.

The networks therefore have a dual challenge: ensuring a better information flow to connect their various partners as well as consolidating their arguments and diversifying their advocacy tools, to address both institutions and their members. Moreover, the unequal balance of power between States and the private sector is reinforced by the lack of visibility of these issues at the general public level. In that respect, strengthening communication and mobilisation around agroecology remains a major challenge to encourage States to support this model.



© AVSF

**d. A consultation or even a leadership challenge?**

The great diversity of West African stakeholders engaged in agroecology, especially advocacy ones, makes their coordination difficult. Most networks are intertwined and share the same members. Each one was formed in response to a political issue, with missions that have gradually expanded to respond to the changing context and challenges of the agroecological transition, its rise in power on the international scene, and in the positioning of donors. The risk of confusion and competition between networks or between initiatives (for visibility and funding) is by no means insignificant. For example, this can be seen with the establishment of networks promoting organic agriculture, in parallel with agroecology, which nevertheless share many common characteristics. The "leadership problem" stressed by COASP can find a favourable outcome through better network organisation, consultation, and coordination so that everyone finds their place in the fight for the development of agroecology.



*"It is necessary for farmer and civil society organisation networks to act in a coordinated and synergistic way in the short, medium, and long term." ROPPA<sup>38</sup>*

“

The risk of confusion and competition between networks (...) is by no means insignificant.

”

38. This quote is from interviews conducted with ROPPA representatives.



## 4. CONCLUSION

Several difficulties were encountered in conducting the study: beyond the lack of availability of some actors, the articulation of the mapping objectives with the network reality was not easy. The information we wanted to collect and analyse is indeed part of an advocacy logic that does not exist in the same terms in West Africa.

These networks are relatively young, and for the most part, still developing. They face many challenges in terms of means and organisation, and do not always have an advocacy strategy as conceived by European organisations. They depend on European and/or international donors to deploy their actions, and on limited resources to structure, consult, and collectively develop long-term strategies. This is certainly the main challenge for these networks, which should give us – NGOs and French collectives – cause for reflection on our partner and support position.

As a whole, developing and consolidating inter-network partnerships to promote agroecology in public policies remains a major challenge. European organisations can help their West African counterparts in becoming more involved in international and UN advocacy spaces to promote the peasant agroecology model they defend. It is essential that they are present and that a united front is built with our European organisations, to create an awareness of the agroecology challenges, both in the North and South. Placing peasant agroecology as a common foundation for our positions, by rejecting the concept according to regional specificities and the themes carried by each organisation, could strengthen the weight of civil society and farmer voices in the fight for more just and sustainable agricultural and food systems.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1

Supporting West African network advocacy, by supporting the organisation of reflection and internal debates, at national and regional levels, to reach common positions and an agroecological transition policy project of their own.
- 2

Encouraging Northern partners, donors, and institutions to consult and further coordinate their policy in order to **redirect massive and long-term financing and aid in favour of actions and solutions supported by West African networks** in accordance with their agroecological transition project<sup>39</sup>.
- 3

Supporting knowledge sharing, capitalisation studies, campaigns, and their diffusion.
- 4

Creating and supporting a **regional multi-stakeholder dialogue space initiated by networks**, in order to promote action synergy and complementarity, to simultaneously tackle all the topics and targets of advocacy, and thus strengthen the coherence as well as the political and citizen leverage of West African networks in favour of an agroecological transition.
- 5

Supporting the creation of a **common North/South front** against the offensives of the private sector and agro-industry (AGRA, “false solutions”, among others), made up of civil society and West African and European peasant organisations.

39. Action contre la Faim, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, Oxfam France, *Une recette à la française : une pincée d'agroécologie pour une louche d'agro-industrie*, 2021.

---

## NETWORK DIRECTORY WITH UP-TO-DATE CONTACTS

---

**WADAF:** Moussa MBENGUE, Executive Secretary  
[mbenguepeche@yahoo.fr](mailto:mbenguepeche@yahoo.fr)

**AFSA:** Famara DIEDHIOU, West Africa Programme Officer  
[famara.diedhiou@afsafrica.org](mailto:famara.diedhiou@afsafrica.org)

**GCLWS-WA:** Massa KONE, Spokesperson  
[kmassa26@gmail.com](mailto:kmassa26@gmail.com), [infoscmat@gmail.com](mailto:infoscmat@gmail.com)

**COASP** is coordinated by three organisations: ASPSP in Senegal, ORAD in Benin, and COFERSA in Mali  
[aspsp2003@yahoo.fr](mailto:aspsp2003@yahoo.fr), [orad.benin@gmail.com](mailto:orad.benin@gmail.com), [cofersamali@gmail.com](mailto:cofersamali@gmail.com)

**COPAGEN:** Jean-Paul SIKELI, Executive Secretary  
[sikelijeanpaul3@gmail.com](mailto:sikelijeanpaul3@gmail.com)

**Inades-Formation:** Sena ADESSOU, General Secretary  
[sena.adessou@inadesfo.net](mailto:sena.adessou@inadesfo.net)

**La Via Campesina – West and Central Africa:** Lamine COULIBALY, coordinator  
[laminezie@gmail.com](mailto:laminezie@gmail.com)

**ROPPIA:** Ousseini OUEDRAOGO, Executive Secretary  
[coouedraogo@yahoo.fr](mailto:coouedraogo@yahoo.fr), [roppa2000@yahoo.fr](mailto:roppa2000@yahoo.fr)

**UFROAT:** Alimata TRAORE, Subregional Secretary for Information  
[alimaatou@yahoo.fr](mailto:alimaatou@yahoo.fr)

Cover photograph: Julien Deconinck  
Graphic design: Benjamin Madelainne  
Page layout: Benjamin Courtault  
Proofreading: Bénédicte Bimoko  
Translation from French to English: Anna Savage



# **Gathering & taking action for international solidarity**

14, passage Dubail 75010 Paris  
Tél. : +33 1 44 72 93 72  
[www.coordinationsud.org](http://www.coordinationsud.org)