

SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA WEEK

26-30 OCTOBER 2015

SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA CLUB FORUM

RESILIENCE AND FOOD SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA

**INNOVATIVE POLICY APPROACHES
IN A CONTEXT OF CHANGE**

Milan (Italy), 26-27 October 2015

Summary Record



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
KEY MESSAGES	3
1 CHANGE IN WEST AFRICA AND ITS IMPACTS ON FOOD SECURITY	4
Session 1: Urbanisation, structural change and the food system	4
Session 2: Climate change, adaptation and food security	6
2 EXPERIENCES IN RESILIENCE AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES	10
Session 3: Resilience and innovative policies for food security	10
Session 4: Women's empowerment, gender equality and resilience	13

STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT AND OTHER RESOURCES

Each session of the Forum is broken down into the following sections: 1) the issues at hand as raised by the presentations and insights; 2) the main points made by the audience and presenters during the discussions; and 3) the policy implications brought forward during the exchanges.

A full video of the two-day Forum along with all presentations, speeches, photos and documents, is accessible on the Sahel and West Africa Week 2015 [website](http://www.sahelwestafricaweek.org/).

A compendium of blog posts published between May and December 2015 as background to the Forum's preparations and follow-up is available [here](http://www.oecd.org/swac-expo-milano).



SWAC at Expo Milano 2015
www.oecd.org/swac-expo-milano

INTRODUCTION

The Sahel and West Africa Club ([SWAC/OECD](http://www.sahelwestafricaweek.org/)) Forum brought together some 100 participants from 26-27 October 2015 at the Expo 2015 European Pavilion, to kick off the [Sahel and West Africa Week](http://www.sahelwestafricaweek.org/).¹ Representatives of OECD Members and West African governments, regional organisations, civil society, professional associations, research institutions and international and multilateral agencies discussed their views and experiences relating to region-wide structural transformations, food and nutrition security and resilience.

The guiding principle of the Forum was to discuss regional priorities for development and food security with the following objectives:

- Elicit knowledge and experience-sharing within West Africa and with other regions;
- Raise awareness regarding the role of women in supporting resilience and sustainability;
- Deepen the understanding of food and nutrition security challenges within a context of change;
- Debate innovative approaches and mechanisms to strengthening resilience.

The discussions were built around four themes which are at the heart of SWAC's work on resilience and innovation in 2015: 1) the impacts of demographic growth and settlement dynamics on the food system; 2) climate change and food security : challenges and responses; 3) innovative policies and approaches to building resilience and food security; and 4) the contributions of women's empowerment and gender equality to these agendas.

These sessions combined panel presentations, short contributions from the floor (i.e. "insights") and plenary discussions. Session moderators were instrumental in encouraging lively, open and constructive exchanges.

¹ The 2015 edition of the Universal Exhibition was held between 1st May and 31st October in Milan, Italy to explore all issues related to the theme of "Feeding the Planet. Energy for life": <http://www.expo2015.org/en/>.

KEY MESSAGES

A diversity of viewpoints and interests often surfaced in the debate. However, there was an equally strong recognition of the many points of convergence between the goals and aspirations of all regional players. These underpin the following messages and issues:



Aims

- ✓ **Build** the food sovereignty and capacity for resilience of West African populations.
- ✓ **Promote** a sustainable development model that accounts for and capitalises on rural-urban linkages.
- ✓ **Tackle** inequality head-on, and work towards inclusion and social cohesion.



Priorities

- ✓ **Better integrate** settlement and climate change-related concerns into food security policies from the local to the international level.
- ✓ **Enhance** resilience for food and nutrition security through a deeper attention to regional trade and cross-border co-operation.
- ✓ **Make** women's economic empowerment and participation in decision making a priority of food security and development strategies at local, national and regional levels.
- ✓ **Promote** innovative approaches and strengthen the capacity of policymakers to take informed decisions based on the analysis of facts and data.



Actions

- ✓ **Work** toward sustainable food systems that encompass and address the political, economic, social, environmental and cultural challenges to the food economy.
- ✓ **Recognise** that practices and behaviours are changing in the food sector; understand that these dynamics are part of a complex system; and act consistently to facilitate these changes. More specifically:
 - *Apply systems approaches to development and food security, which integrate different timescales, levels of intervention, activities and instruments.*
 - *Adopt a food system approach, which considers the whole system of activities that provide food, from primary producers to final consumers including the expanding non-farm businesses.*
- ✓ **Promote** inclusive policies that strengthen social cohesion through existing multi-stakeholder, multi-sector and multi-level policy dialogue processes (for example, AGIR – Sahel and West Africa).
- ✓ **Support** knowledge creation and sharing by building stronger capacity to collect and analyse statistical information.

1 CHANGE IN WEST AFRICA AND ITS IMPACTS ON FOOD SECURITY

Two aspects of change were singled out during the Forum's first day to understand structural transformations in West Africa and their implications for food security; i.e. settlement dynamics and climate change.

Session 1: Urbanisation, structural change and the food system

Highlights from the presentations

[Demographic growth, population movements and concentration](#) have profoundly shaped West Africa since the 1960s, affecting both rural and urban areas. Total population has quadrupled and the percentage of urban dwellers has increased from 8% to 42%. Importantly, urban growth concerns old as well as newer towns, and equally affects larger cities and small and medium towns. Concerning rural populations, demographic growth and density characterise certain areas but less others; rural and urban people tend to move closer for greater proximity to markets, information, infrastructure, labour, and imports. This proximity outweighs the disadvantages of density; indeed, 80% of high density rural areas are in urban catchment areas. In these zones, local economies show a greater degree of transformation and diversification of agricultural produce.

As of today, 50% of the West African population are net food consumers and 25% of the rural population is no longer involved in farming activities. The regional food market has grown tremendously to reach USD 120 billion in 2010. This situation raises challenges in terms of adequate transport links, storing and market facilities, financing services and trade facilitation. At the same time, it indicates the potential for job creation in the post-harvest elements of the food system. This is critically important for West Africa's prospects of inclusive development, if we consider current high levels of youth unemployment.

[Over 60% of West African food demand is met through the markets](#) and processed foods represent a minimum of 39% of food consumption. For example, maize production in Sahelian countries and the north of Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo has steadily increased over the last 35 years to supply the booming markets of the Lagos-Abidjan conurbation along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea. Similarly livestock reared in the Sahel zone is traded towards coastal zones, and particularly South-Nigeria, to meet the ever-growing demand for dairy products and meat.

The increased demand for and consumption of processed, perishable and value-added food is linked to urbanisation and rural transformation, as the globalisation of food diets and habits reaches West Africa. Both the rising middle class (about 70 million people) and 75% of the population

who still live on less than 2 USD a day are time-poor and express similar needs for convenient, readily-available food to consume away from the home. This demand pattern is growing in rural and urban areas alike, driving concerns for food quality and safety, and for affordable prices.

[The response of the West African food system](#) to this rapidly growing demand is mixed, especially for perishable foods. If local producers and processors could meet this demand they would have a concrete opportunity to grow. They could improve their supply to traditional food markets that are still dominant in the region but which urgently need upgrading. Or they could strengthen their business partnerships with large-scale retailers who are present in the West African agri-business sector. Currently, agri-business firms and supermarkets tend to import staple and fresh products from outside Africa where prices are more competitive and the food supply more stable and reliable.

Indeed, the downstream actors of local value chains, and particularly [processors among whom many are female entrepreneurs](#), face challenges and bottlenecks to market access, including: their own limited technical and managerial capacities; an inadequate policy and business environment; insufficient financing and advisory services; and poor local and regional energy and transport infrastructure. This situation hampers the ability of local processing to grow and meet local demand, let alone reaching out to national, regional and international markets. The top priorities identified by these actors are the need for tailored financial instruments and the capacity to build opportunities for entrepreneurship.

The case of the [tomato sector](#) in Ghana highlights the role of traders in linking farmers to urban consumers through markets. It shows the importance of good relationships between different actors in the value chain, built on a clear understanding of their respective needs, interests and contributions to economic development and food security. This includes the role of regulatory bodies and NGOs who facilitate interactions between economic actors and networks. Assessing the added value of all actors along the chain would be important for policymakers, for example, to ensure fair prices for both local producers and urban consumers, to support local production and to increase the productivity and competitiveness of the tomato sector.

Discussion

High and volatile food prices hinder the transformation and competitiveness of the food economy

[Food prices tend to be higher in West Africa than elsewhere](#) relative to their level of development. However, this has not generally led to higher incomes or greater well-being for

food producers, nor has it led to increased investment to boost productivity or stimulate economic diversification. Agricultural producers point to the high costs of productive resources and inputs, and of energy, transport and trade services to explain this situation. Prices are volatile over short periods of time, which is why farmers find it difficult to plan what they will cultivate in a way that maximises profit, promotes agricultural transformation and builds resilience. For some Forum participants, this situation calls for greater mobilisation of resources by regional and national institutions to invest in agriculture and infrastructure (energy, roads, irrigation etc.), and for protection measures to prioritise national production vis-à-vis imports. They welcome policy interventions that can stabilise prices and ensure fairness vis-à-vis producers and consumers, as necessary to increase the competitiveness of regional products on local markets. Other participants believed that addressing land tenure issues would be a more effective way to mobilise investment in agricultural production by local producers and the private sector.



« L'Afrique n'est pas l'Asie mais l'Asie est dans le monde et l'Afrique aussi. Dans un monde inter-connecté, il est très difficile de s'isoler, de ne pas se comparer [...] L'alimentation est une cause relevant de la souveraineté régionale qui demande à ce titre d'encourager les échanges au niveau de la région.² »

Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa)

The need to fully implement the agricultural policies of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Union Économique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine (UEMOA) was mentioned time and again. A functioning regional market with no barriers to the free circulation of food products, economic actors, consumers and services is the key to West Africa's competitiveness and greater insertion in global markets. Attempts to protect national economies may bear short-term benefits, but are also unlikely to be viable in the long run.

"What is important is political will, which we have. We are investing to increase agricultural production, productivity and to lower prices."

Ibrahima Dieme, UEMOA Commissioner, Department of Food Security, Agriculture, Mining and Environment



West Africa's development and food security prospects depend on rural-urban linkages

Demographic growth, greater population density, including in rural areas, intensive urbanisation of the largest cities and the rise of a network of medium and small-sized urban centres have been powerful catalysts for agricultural transformation, economic diversification and increased market opportunities. They ultimately shape the regional prospects for development.

Against this backdrop, some participants observed that West African cities and towns have been growing too rapidly and chaotically to fully play a positive role as the engine of regional economic development. The economic transition from agriculture towards manufacturing and services does not appear to have followed the same pattern as in Europe and in Asia. This development model is increasingly under scrutiny due to its incapacity to deliver equality and sustainability.

West Africa's urban dwellers tend to have little purchase capacity; they devote a high proportion of their income to food-related expenses. Keeping prices low on urban markets via imports is important to contain discontent and instability. West African urban centres are home to many poor and vulnerable people, including many jobless youth. This situation also highlights that food producers and food net consumers may have different interests. Policymakers cannot overlook this situation in the formulation of policies for more balanced urban and rural development.

Diverging interests and perspectives held by food producers, processors, intermediaries, consumers and policymakers on the potentials and risks of urbanisation for development are only one side of the issue. The Forum debate also showed how the development patterns and challenges faced by agricultural and non-agricultural populations in rural and urban areas can be similar or complementary. The case of a small town was presented to describe how urban demand, which drives change in consumption, needs strong connections with its hinterlands to satisfy the high demand for perishable food and other natural resources such as water and fuelwood. Rural-urban linkages describe flows of people, goods, information, finance and social relations across space. Above all, they highlight the functional links between production, transformation and services across contiguous geographical zones. Looking at rural-urban linkages from a systems perspective enables us to better assess their influence on the creation of an increasingly diversified and resilient economy.

[The Urban Food Policy Pact](#), presented at Expo Milano 2015, was signed by some 100 cities around the world, including Abidjan, Dakar and Niamey. Signatories committed to the development of food systems based on the principles of sustainability and social justice. The Pact translates the food system approach to development into a policy approach which links towns and their rural surroundings into an integrated and territorialised vision of inclusive sustainable development. This approach connects actors, sectors, and key steps of the value chain and the policy-making processes. It enables all actors in the food system to participate in decisions and actions so as to build the system's effectiveness, sustainability, and resilience. This approach puts local governments centre-stage, but it also emphasises the importance of feedback loops between the local, national, regional and international levels of policy and action.

² Authors' translation: "Africa is not Asia but both are part of a connected world where it is very difficult to remain isolated or to avoid comparisons... Food is an issue of regional sovereignty and thus it is important that trade within regions is encouraged".

Data, information and communication are essential for decision making

The use of technology has grown rapidly in both urban and rural areas. However, making relevant and usable information available to all actors remains challenging. Farmers in the countryside may not be fully aware of decisions taken in capitals that concern prices, investments and priorities in agriculture. Decision makers, on the other hand, cannot always take complex decisions due to a lack of accurate, reliable and sufficiently disaggregated data (e.g. by regions, rural/urban, gender, age-set, etc.). The need for better collection and better use of data to inform all levels of decision making was one of the Forum's leitmotifs. Improving data quality, homogenisation and comparability is key to improving both decision making and measuring impact. As a newly published comprehensive data set on urbanisation in West Africa, [Africapolis](#) demonstrates the value added of this type of comparable information.

Future prospects and policy implications

Settlement dynamics, characterised by high demographic growth, mobility, urbanisation and rural-urban linkages, drive the food security and development prospects of West Africa. They generate opportunities for agriculture transformation, economic diversification and greater market access. Urban markets that offer increasing opportunities to food producers, however, are also highly competitive considering the rise of global food value chains. **Policy choices are therefore critical to anticipate these transformations and to maximise their development potential.**

Policies that address sustainability and food sovereignty concerns are likely to stimulate local food supply chains and strengthen rural-urban linkages.

These policies support better access to a range of goods and services, including food and essential items, clean water, raw materials, energy, health and education, networks and information, etc., for both rural and urban populations. In the same vein, policies that favour inclusive and sustainable urbanisation processes, improve the connectivity of rural and urban areas, accompany rather than obstruct mobility, and build the capacities of an increasingly young population, are fundamental to ensure that the majority can benefit from these greater market and economic opportunities.

Full policy implementation is equally important. This is all the more relevant for existing regional agricultural and food security policies where achieving greater productivity and effective agro-processing are priorities. Questions were raised about what aspects of the regional food economy already have competitive advantages and which need strengthening, and how can we best attract and combine public and private investment in the region's food system to achieve food security and greater competitiveness all at once.

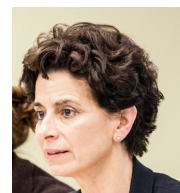
As policies are implemented, the challenges of **policy coherence and policy co-ordination** surface. Food policies, in particular, need to go beyond the mandate of ministries of agriculture, and be placed under a unifying leadership that facilitates co-operation between individual ministries, economic sectors and wider sections of civil society. A case in point is setting fair prices for food producers and consumers. This would be better achieved through a portfolio of interventions that simultaneously: improve agricultural productivity; foster opportunities for job creation in non-agricultural sectors; address complex land tenure issues; promote women's economic empowerment and better nutrition; and provide social protection.

The growth of value chains has brought some benefits to West African consumers who enjoy increased access to transformed goods. For West African stakeholders to fully harness these benefits they need to address the **governance of value chains**, and especially: a) the degree of inclusiveness of all actors in decision making and changes made to the chain's structure, with a particular emphasis on women; b) its environmental sustainability; and c) its effects on nutrition.

A food system approach and perspective to understanding and addressing structural change and its impacts on food and nutrition security are critical for reaping the benefits of evolving food value chains and settlement dynamics in the region. However, by showing that "everything is linked to everything", these approaches and perspectives may seem difficult to operationalise. This challenge can be overcome if we analyse the specific problems and opportunities inherent to different contexts with a view to identifying and prioritising the most pressing solutions and actions that apply in any given setting. The ability of decision makers to prioritise and develop tailored responses, based on an inclusive policy dialogue and through a coherent and integrated set of interventions, that are also reciprocally reinforcing, is the key for successful systems approaches.

« Nous avons besoin 'd'un changement de mentalités' en commençant par les enfants, de faire des lois une réalité, de s'attaquer à tous les facteurs structurants de l'inégalité. Nous avons aussi besoin de données.³ »

Carla Montesi, Director, Directorate for Development Coordination - West and Central Africa, European Commission



³ Authors' translation: "We need 'a change in mentalities' - beginning with children - in order to make legislation a reality and to address all the structural factors of inequality. We also need data."

Session 2: Climate change, adaptation and food security

Highlights from the presentations

Africa is responsible for only 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet it disproportionately suffers from the effects of climate change. Two particular variables influence food security via their impacts on agriculture: temperature rise, rainfall variability and uncertainty.



"By 2090, with a 4°C temperature increase the length of the growing season in most areas of the Sahel will be reduced by more than 20%. By then, we may no longer be able to grow rice, millet or sorghum."

Robert Zougmore, Regional Program Leader, West Africa, CCAFS, CGIAR

« À 2°C d'augmentation, l'Afrique de l'Ouest subira les pertes agricoles les plus élevées dans le monde, entre 2 et 4 % de son PIB.⁴ »

Maguette Kaïre, forestry expert, Agrhyment/CILSS



The use of irrigation and fertilisers has made worldwide agriculture less dependent on weather; however this is not the case in the Sahel where livelihood still depends a great deal on rain-fed agriculture and transhumant livestock rearing. Current rainfall projection models seem unable to agree on the basic features of [climate variability in the Sahel](#). However, existing climate models provide robust projections for other parameters such as temperature trends. Predictions indicate that the Sahel will continue to get warmer. This information is important for policymakers and producers, for example in relation to temperature thresholds for cultivating wheat, millet, sorghum and other crops, which determine changes in yields. There is a clear connection between climate change, variability and food security, albeit we cannot trace a linear link of causation in all circumstances. Different variables need to be factored in to understand all of the interactions at work. This requires adopting a systems approach to understanding the food security-climate change nexus.

The research programme of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) on [Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security](#) in West Africa, notably, supports the adoption of a systems approach. First of all, it shows the utility of including users in all steps of developing and delivering climate information to encourage local take-up and use. The systems approach identifies knowledge gaps and promotes knowledge integration of scientific and indigenous forecasting methods and adaptive measures. This combination helps build the resilience of communities and ecosystems. Second, this approach needs climate scientists and decision makers to collaborate in

support of the poorest and most marginalised groups, who display lower adaptive capacity and whose livelihoods highly depend on agriculture.

However, adaptation by itself may not be sufficient to tackle the climate change-food security nexus, and particularly the interactions between agricultural performance and increased temperatures, more frequent droughts and flooding, unpredictable rainfalls and coastal erosion. This situation provides a [framework for climate-smart agriculture](#) (CSA) introduced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2010 and resting on three pillars: 1) food security: sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and smallholders' incomes; 2) adaptation: building resilience and adapting to climate change; and 3) mitigation: developing opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions where possible. These pillars should be achieved simultaneously at the farm, community, national, regional and global levels. In practice it is necessary to prioritise; which pillar takes priority over the others will vary according to context.

CSA experiences in Senegal reinforce the point about relevant, timely and accessible climate information to help farmers make effective decisions about what crops to plant, when to do so, and when to harvest. CSA programmes in Malawi, Vietnam and Zambia have also demonstrated that to better influence policy and programming, it is important to build a national evidence base as well as to promote knowledge-sharing and regional co-ordination of country programmes.

Concerning [climate finance](#) in West Africa, it is imperative to provide appropriate funding to scale-up adaptation interventions that build resilience, for example by investing more in sustainable land use. West African countries have made adaptation a priority in their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions ([INDCs](#)) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)) in view of [COP21](#). The Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) reports that converting 10% of cultivated land to climate-smart techniques would require an investment between 50 and 170 million USD per year, and the return on investment could range between 50 and 70% for different countries. However, to achieve this result, additional long-term and predictable funding is needed by mobilising resources from multilateral financial institutions on top of existing climate finance mechanisms. The climate finance architecture is very complex indeed; it is based on multiple funds whose coverage and scope overlap, and who tend to have limited resources. Funding is often difficult to disburse under these mechanisms, even if it has already been approved.

In this framework, we need to look at UNFCCC COP negotiations as a highly political process. Africa has an interest in shaping the post-COP21 international climate regime. To do so, the [African Union developed a common position](#) with the following priorities: 1) increase adaptation capacity by supporting National Adaptation Programmes (NAPAs);

4 Authors' translation: "With a 2°C increase, West Africa will suffer the highest loss of crops worldwide between 2 and 4% of GDP."

2) mobilise additional financial resources for climate-friendly technologies to meet Africa's adaptation and mitigation needs; 3) participate in market-based mechanisms to address climate change through strengthened capacity in carbon trade and climate negotiations; and 4) pay special attention to gender specific needs and the voice of women in decision making concerning adaptation and mitigation.

Building on this position, African states sought the following outcomes at COP21:

- An agreement that is applicable to all countries and reflects common but differentiated responsibilities based on capabilities and historic contributions to climate change;
- A rule-based and legally binding agreement;
- An ambitious goal to keep global temperature increase below 1.5°C;
- Clarification about climate change finance in Africa, in particular regarding the capitalisation of the Green Climate Fund;
- Equal legal recognition for mitigation and adaptation issues in the agreement; and
- A reaffirmation of multilateralism and country ownership in the governance of climate change.

Africa is seeking a leading role in bringing about a low-carbon, more equitable and sustainable future for the world. Beyond Paris, African institutions will continue to promote high-level political co-ordination of climate change policies and strategies on the continent, stronger policy coherence and full integration of agriculture issues into climate change negotiations.



"Our actions and decisions today are impacting young people and women; but we are optimistic that we can have a positive impact."

Estherine Fotabong, Director, Program Implementation and Coordination, NEPAD Agency

Discussion

The nature and potential of climate-smart agriculture (CSA)

Participants agreed on the need to better integrate agriculture, and thus food security, in climate change adaptation and mitigation. They recalled the work of the CILSS/AGRHYMET centre and national weather forecast services to support farmers and local communities in the fight against desertification and droughts over the last forty years. Some regretted that we have not sufficiently capitalised on the lessons gathered from experience in the drylands. On the one hand, the [strategies of local](#)

[communities](#), including the relationship of conflict and co-operation among farmers and herders, are still poorly understood and documented in debates on resilience. On the other hand, regional and national institutions have insufficient resources for advice, training and capacity-building that can help communities to adapt.

Against this backdrop, CSA is described as innovative in two ways. First of all, it seeks to build on past experiences to ensure more sustainable results going forward. This is done: 1) by improving dissemination techniques of agriculture and climate-related information (e.g. through a wider use of rural radios); 2) through greater ownership and participation of all climate and agriculture key players (i.e. farmers, mobile livestock herders, communities, consumers, etc.) by deciding what information and interventions are most appropriate in specific contexts (i.e. "[climate-smart villages](#)"); 3) by focusing on building institutional and individual capacity; and 4) through knowledge management and learning to scale up experiences that work.

Second, CSA supports efforts to link global, regional, national and local issues and solutions. Take for example the availability of better seeds and inputs that we observe today at the global level. For these seeds and inputs to truly increase food and nutrition security at the local level, we need ways to reach and engage with local communities so that they are empowered to use these seeds and inputs more effectively through training, facilitation and inclusive dialogue.

CSA as an approach has an international, continental and regional dimension, i.e. the ECOWAS/UEMOA/CILSS Climate-Smart Agricultural West African Alliance (Bamako, June 2015), and informs programmes at all levels of intervention. The New Partnership for Africa's Development Agency (NEPAD) works with local and international NGOs in twelve African countries to implement CSA-related activities. It also collaborates with the FAO to translate the CSA research approach and principles into clear practices that communities can use. On the other hand, through a dedicated regional platform, ECOWAS funds eight of its member countries for CSA-related work.

CSA instruments hold the promise of better integrating climate change concerns into regional and national programmes for agricultural investments. This should make it easier to reach local communities with interventions that are straightforward to fund and implement, building synergies among them at the same time.

It was reminded that the [Malabo Declaration](#) on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods (African Union, June 2014) sets a number of concrete agriculture goals by 2025, which are people-centred and encompass CSA pillars.



"We should move from a climate smart agriculture to a climate smart society."

Carlo Buontempo, senior climate scientist, Met Office Hadley Centre

Why is the post-COP21 climate change framework important for Africa?

Representatives of civil society and producer associations questioned why African people should expect the solution to come from a global conference like COP21, when local action is needed on the ground by the people who experience the effects of climate change on their daily lives. This spurred an animated debate with the representatives of African institutions. Research and local mobilisation are critical, but the consequences of climate change on food security, development and migration have no borders and are visible to all. These demand bold and urgent action globally at the same time as in countries. Not only are the issues discussed at COP 21 global in nature but they are already affecting the African continent. The outcomes of COP21 will also determine the scope of international co-operation between Africa and bilateral and multilateral partners for years to come. It was in Africa's strategic interest to take an active role in the political negotiations to ensure that African voices were heard and their messages captured in the outcome agreement.⁵

The West African region mobilised [some of the largest country delegations](#) to COP21. West African regional organisations also organised [activities and side-events](#) to showcase their long experience in the field of climate change and promote AGIR's contributions to strengthening capacity for adaptation, in particular of the most vulnerable populations.

What climate finance mechanisms does Africa want?

Africa's ambitions for the new climate regime and the mixed experience of current climate finance instruments (carbon trading, climate funds, etc.) prompted a question during the debate as to whether the principles governing the current climate finance regime are tenable, coherent and effective.

All players should buy into the creation of a low-carbon economy where there are fewer incentives to pollute and offset emissions and more incentives to cut emissions and integrate greater sustainability into business and devel-

opment models. This goal underlies the climate change policy debate and African players are at the forefront, emphasising issues of fairness and equity, for example through the establishment and operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund.

At the same time, the African Union and regional organisations are ready to create their own climate finance instruments to support policy coherence and actions at the local level and to promote concrete adaptation measures. Ways to scale up these funds in order to widen support to more member countries are currently being sought.

Future prospects and policy implications

Polymakers have expressed a sense of urgency to act on climate change. At the same time they are called to better collaborate with climate scientists. **There is a need for stronger links between technical tools and the decision making process**, so that policy choices and priorities can be assessed and determined in a more informed way.

Avoiding duplication and looking for synergies directly relates to the overhaul of the climate finance regime and the strengthening of partnerships and co-operation between regional science institutions, like CILSS/[AGRHYMET](#), and other agricultural research institutions across Africa and internationally.

Agriculture needs to be more clearly considered in policy debates and decisions on climate change, and vice-versa. The COP21 negotiations and the Malabo Declaration have generated expectations in this respect. The creation of the Africa and West African Alliances on climate-smart agriculture also joins this momentum.

There is a tenuous link between the international, regional and national levels on one hand, and the local level, on the other. If this link is strengthened it will be possible for local populations, organisations and institutions to more actively contribute to food security and climate change adaptation. One step towards ensuring greater local participation and engagement for effective solutions resides in a **renewed priority for, and greater investment in, appropriate support and advisory services, training and capacity building**. These should combine the latest agricultural and climate change research with a better understanding and integration of indigenous knowledge and practices. Agricultural producers that are becoming more professionalised and market integrated have a clear role to play in these efforts.

⁵ The African Union adopted a common position on climate change for the first time in 2009 in view of COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

2 EXPERIENCES IN RESILIENCE AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Food and nutrition security results from a complex set of intermingling factors, highlighting the need for a systems approach and a better understanding of networks. The Forum's second day focused on innovative approaches that can help to better tackle the systemic nature of food issues. Building resilience lies at the core of current discussions on improved thinking, approaches and strategies for food security. It relates to policies and programmes with a strong potential for application in the region, for example local governance and cross-border co-operation. It also relates to key players in the West African food economy and social system, and particularly the role of women's empowerment and gender equality.

Session 3: Resilience and innovative policies for food security

Highlights from the presentations



"We need a paradigm shift from crisis management to risk management."

Mariam Soumaré, Principal Program Officer, Program Implementation and Coordination, NEPAD Agency

Attempts to tackle food price volatility for improved resilience and food security prompted the NEPAD Agency and the FAO to set up the [Agricultural and Food Insecurity Risk Management](#) (AFIRM) Programme in 2011. This programme takes stability as an entry point for resilience to address the other dimensions of food security: availability, access and utilisation. It applies specific **risk management** tools and policy instruments to suit diverse contexts and situations drawing from a portfolio of interventions that is in the process of being developed. These tools look at agricultural-related risks from multiple perspectives through a holistic approach that encompasses agricultural production, markets, institutions, policies, and consumption.

Two types of levers are activated: 1) mitigating and transferring risks from producers to other actors, (i.e. insurance companies); and 2) protecting, adapting, promoting and, where possible, transforming the assets held by small-holder producers. Ultimately, AFIRM seeks to enhance farmers' capacity to take calculated risks on producing and selling for profit on the basis of correct and timely information.

« Le développement est local ou n'est pas. »⁶

Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi

⁶ Authors' translation: "There is no development outside local development".

As regards [local governance](#), another paradigm shift is necessary. Power legitimacy should not be conceived of as residing at the national level while decisions are executed locally. Rather, the national and the local level are both legitimate spheres of power that are equally important for the governance of public goods. Locally, two overlapping sources of legitimacy and power coexist in Africa, i.e. statutory and customary. Whenever they are not in harmony it can be difficult to engage all living forces in society in discussions and decisions about local development. Yet, development happens first and foremost at the local level. This calls for bringing back "territory" in development strategies and planning, which are currently nationally defined and assessed. For example, a territorial approach to development would take a hydro-ecological watershed as its unit of analysis, and would consider all territories. No one territory would be placed at the centre or the periphery of a country, or be considered as less or more strategic vis-à-vis national development goals. In this view, planning would be a national and a local issue at the same time. This approach urges West African regional organisations, national governments and development partners to reconsider their sector and value-chain programmes and strategies. It calls for making the local level the place where all policies are co-ordinated for better coherence, integration and ultimately effectiveness.

These ideas resonate with [Social Network Analysis](#) (SNA), an analytical approach which is still relatively new to Africa. For SNA, space matters as the place where social, economic and political actors (i.e. individuals, groups and organisations) interact in formal and informal ways. It helps describe how people connect for a given purpose and points to the opportunities, bottlenecks and implications raised. Taking the example of cross-border trade between Benin, Niger and Nigeria, SNA draws the picture of how people do business by visualising their relationships through the nodes and links that bring them together: Who are these actors? How many connections do they have, and where are these interactions taking place at the local and the regional level? Who and why are they at the periphery or at the core of a network? In this case study, SNA confirms that decentralised networks help deal with uncertainty. Doing business in West Africa is difficult for well-known reasons: poor infrastructure, partial information, pervasive red tape, etc. Brokers have a role to play in linking nationally-organised markets and traders on opposite sides of the border. This observation challenges the widely held view that borders are artificial in Africa.

"Borders matter in West Africa as resources for a small number of people who possess the skills, means and social capital required to establish transnational connections and cross-border trade."

Olivier Walther, Associate professor, University of Southern Denmark



Applied to food security, SNA can assist with tracing how producers, intermediaries and larger traders are connected. This information can help decide on where facilities and infrastructure should best be located to support the mobility of people and goods from the field to the market, and to prioritise investments accordingly. The SWAC cross-border co-operation study applies SNA to map policy networks in three distinct cross-border areas: the Senegal River Basin (Mali-Mauritania-Senegal); the Liptako-Gourma (Burkina Faso-Mali-Niger); and the Lake Chad Basin (focusing on Cameroon-Chad-Niger-Nigeria). The preliminary analysis points to the importance of co-ordination between the various actors involved who do not have full knowledge of all the other actors in the network beyond their immediate link. It also points to the need for identifying structural constraints and power issues between the actors embedded at the core of a network and those at its periphery.

Moving to **resilience**, the key features common to the approaches reviewed at the Forum are: the long term perspective; the need for taking decisions today to achieve positive outcomes without prejudice tomorrow; and [the multidimensional nature of resilience](#). The [FAO](#) uses the household as its unit of analysis and intervention; this is where most decisions that impact resilience are taken, where individuals and groups most benefit from the positive effects of policies and where they experience the worst effects of shocks. This approach does not discard the importance of family farms and local communities in providing the conditions for, or lack of, resilience which is defined in relation to different pillars: access to food, income or basic services, assets, social safety nets, sensitivity and adaptive capacity. Policymakers need to know who are the most vulnerable and where they live. Households that are presently most food secure may not be the most resilient in the longer term. Selecting the right policy choice in different circumstances is complex but key. The [BRACED](#) programme in Burkina Faso, executed by [Christian Aid](#) with [UK DfID](#) funding, reaches similar conclusions by approaching resilience through linking disaster prevention, climate change adaptation and food security. The Programme uses a set of different multi-level actions which actively involve the most vulnerable populations in generating, together with scientists and decision makers, knowledge and information on climate and food security issues, so that informed decisions can be taken that enhance adaptive capacities.

[Social protection programmes](#) offer useful insights on how to effectively build food and nutrition security and resilience. Evidence from the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Safety Nets Programmes in Ghana, for example, shows that regular and predictable cash transfers that support the productive capacity of the most vulnerable populations generate both short and long term benefits not only for their direct beneficiaries, but also for local economies. They are instrumental in promoting the diversification of on- and off-farm activities that reach out to the beneficiaries' households and communities. They strengthen and expand the social capital of those who receive social protection, with positive trickle-down

effects on their networks. While we need to better assess these multiple positive benefits, social protection makes good economic sense. The [3N Initiative](#) ("Les Nigériens nourrissent les Nigériens") conveys similar conclusions about the value of providing social protection to people in need, for free. In Niger social protection is a right guaranteed by the Constitution (art. 6) along with the right to food (art. 12). The 3N Initiative co-ordinates the Niger's National Resilience Priorities developed within the [AGIR – Sahel and West Africa](#) framework. It has evolved from focusing exclusively on agricultural production to tackling complex and interlinked issues such as vulnerability and chronic malnutrition. It prioritises protection for the most vulnerable (i.e. the 20% to 25% of rural households who are in a situation of chronic food insecurity) and multi-stakeholder dialogue between development practitioners, humanitarians and policymakers to share practical success stories that can inform effective policy formulation. The 3N Initiative looks at how benefits can be secured in the long term through greater co-ordination of multiple and multi-level activities.

The review of these promising innovative approaches and initiatives highlight once more the need for [quality data collection and analysis](#) to evaluate progress and support decision making. The effectiveness and sustainability of adopting any of these measures on a larger scale implies greater efforts to build the capacity and infrastructure of national statistical and information systems. This also concerns the AGIR national processes, i.e. the development of indicators and of effective mechanisms to monitor progress and assess outcomes, buttressed by solid data collection and analysis.

Discussion

Cross-border dynamics, a mixed picture

Through their regional organisations, West African states have established comprehensive legislation to promote regional mobility and trade, yet free movement of people, services and goods is far from being achieved. Some participants were sceptical about the real power of social capital and networks to enable business across borders given structural constraints (e.g. poor transport links and storage facilities), political and administrative difficulties and red tape. Others wondered whether the same level of interconnectedness also applied to women traders who specialise in selling fresh foods along the axis Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)-Ouidah (Benin)-Lagos (Nigeria) or in weekly markets in border areas linking Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Senegal and The Gambia. Sharing available studies on cross-border issues would add value and, for example, help to understand what difficulties and opportunities traders encounter. Do cross-border dynamics work the same way for men and women alike? The study of women's trade on the Abidjan-Lagos axis by the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre indicates that these entrepreneurs experience more administrative and other obstacles on the road than their male counterparts. The above-mentioned study indirectly confirms different experiences between

male and female traders. For example, where the study took into account businesses larger than 150 000 euros per year, it was found that no woman trader was included in it. However, some women were interviewed when the research was widened to smaller businesses. Useful information also relates to what connections appear as more profitable. Traders who are well connected with police officers seem to have more successful businesses than those who are connected with customs officials. Other connections e.g. to spiritual figures, do not seem to positively influence profit. The audience expressed interest in the final results of this study, when available. It recommended including the experiences of other, less visible, actors in these networks to complete the analysis.

The discussion re-emphasised the double nature of cross-border areas as spaces of risk and opportunity. The debate on free movement well epitomises the issue and establishes a parallel between cross-border co-operation and the free circulation of people in [Europe](#) and in West Africa. The [Association of European Border Regions](#) believes in strengthening information and experience exchange on cross-border issues between the EU and African regional organisations, who are already linked through development co-operation and humanitarian aid. Security and health concerns depict cross-border areas as dangerous zones; their remoteness from capitals may account for them being neglected in national development plans, but it may also explain how these populations have developed greater resilience having to respond to adversities with less support from the state. The words of Alpha Oumar Konare, the former Malian President and former President of the AU Commission, echoed in the room:

« Nos frontières ne pourraient-elles pas être, [...], gérées en termes de pays-frontières, points de soudure, voire de suture, lieux de partage ? Espaces de solidarité par exemple, d'expression, d'échange, de mise en commun où des notions de voisinage, de cousinage (grandes valeurs de nos cultures) prendraient tout leur sens ? »

Alpha Oumar Konare ([UNESCO, 2005, p. 31](#))⁸

Risk management and resilience

Risk management is a key factor for building resilience. Effective risk management relies on a fine understanding of different sources of shocks and risks with a view to lessening food insecurity. A versatile portfolio of tools is necessary to tackle the complex nature of risks and shocks in their different manifestations. From climate change to health-related issues, West Africa must deal simultaneously with catastrophes and a growing number of risks that are more frequent but of lower intensity. Over time the region has built a series of effective and diverse tools that can be

either public or private (e.g. insurance and storage). Both the AFIRM Programme and AGIR show that the capacity to achieve impact should be assessed over the long term. They strive to build a critical mass of experiences and lessons learned to continuously improve processes and outcomes. AFIRM is now operational in 9 countries among which Cape-Verde, Niger and Senegal. Liberia will join in 2016. The NEPAD Agency has approached AGIR national co-ordinators as well as the ECOWAS Commission that provides political leadership to the Alliance (together with the UEMOA Commission) to strengthen co-ordination. There is a strong will to build closer synergies and deepen West Africa's capacity to assess risks, promote political dialogue and identify priority risks and relevant instruments to manage these.

Local government and territorial approaches to development: The challenge of inclusiveness

The audience reacted to the presentation on this topic by recognising the relevance and value of strengthening local government and a territorial approach to development. However, they asked how these can be made inclusive considering local power dynamics. First of all, traditional and statutory sources of power and institutions that operate at the local level can either work together or against each other to protect their own vested interests to the detriment of those of other groups and the wider general interest. In this situation, how can these powers be held into account? How do we ensure that all groups can exercise their agency and have their voice heard in decisions concerning the development and wellbeing of the whole community? Second, human mobility is a pervasive feature of West African settlement dynamics. The livelihoods of some groups and individuals, particularly but not only those involved in pastoralism, entail regular movements and trajectories that cut across different areas and communities. How can local government account for mobile populations who live, work, consume and demand access to services in and out of their jurisdiction?

The panel replied that mobility and territory do not need to contradict one another. Applying the subsidiarity principle provides an initial answer. This principle governs what powers, decisions and actions are attributed respectively to local, state and regional authorities in the definition and implementation of development goals and plans. It prescribes that decision making and agency should be placed at the closest level to the primary stakeholders, while the other levels should provide support and only intervene to supplement actions and decisions as and when required.

Future prospects and policy implications

The presentations and the discussion that followed highlighted the added value of taking a **food economy perspective** to enable more integrated food policies rather than concentrating only on agriculture-related issues and policies. The concept of resilience by itself entails a systems approach to food security and encompasses a multi-sector, multi-level and multi-stakeholder perspective.

7 Authors' translation: "Couldn't our borders be (...) managed as 'border areas', areas to bond, blend and share? These would be areas of unity, of expression and exchange, where the notions of neighbour and kinship (an important value in our culture) would take on their full meaning?"

8 President Konare introduced the concept of "pays- frontières" in 2002 in two events organised by the Sahel and West Africa Club: the Preparatory Workshop on the Concept of Pays- frontières (Sikasso, Mali, 4-7 March 2002, link to [report](#)) and the Special Event "Towards a Better Regional Approach to Development in West Africa" (Accra, Ghana, 20-21 May 2002, link to [Proceedings](#)), with former President of Ghana, John Kufuor.

Considering the complex dynamics of changes that affect food security such as climate variability and population dynamics, [cross-border co-operation appears to be a key instrument for building resilience](#).

With regard to regional integration and free movement (and the role that cross-border dynamics play vis-à-vis both), there are significant similarities between the experiences of the European Union and West African regional organisations. There would be merit in further exploring these similarities **by establishing a continuous dialogue between European and West African regional entities**, and sharing information, knowledge and experiences on what works and what is problematic in building cohesion, prosperity and sustainability through cross-border co-operation. This would amount to what participants dubbed a 'virtual think-tank' with future exchanges possible not only in person but through technology.

In both Europe and West Africa, a first step would be to **gather more compelling evidence** that challenges the stereotype of border regions as peripheral, marginal and disconnected to show how strategic, important and central they are when we shift from a national to a regional viewpoint. This requires **investing in documenting cross-border realities more widely**: How many people live in those areas? How much do they contribute to the economy and public life compared to the funding they attract from outside? What opportunities for sustainable development do they generate in a national and regional perspective? In this context, the Association of European Border Regions promotes a political agenda which sees borders as opportunities to be creatively seized by combining two forces: On the one hand, **bottom-up approaches**, which engage local actors' initiative and participation to identify challenges, solutions and impacts, and on the other hand, **top-down approaches**, which provide the wider framework, and the additional capacity and support required. Linking bottom-up and top-down approaches also leads to **giving greater legitimacy to the local level and recommending territorial approach** as an appropriate level of action and knowledge co-ordination of national/regional development goals.

Awareness of how local and global issues and solutions are deeply interwoven – highlighted by the **analysis of networks** – illustrates the importance of active participation by all actors in political processes. It predicts that imbalances in the power structure at different levels need to be uncovered and addressed to achieve durable, positive transformation. These ideas help to introduce the last session's debates focusing on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Session 4: Women's empowerment, gender equality and resilience

Highlights from the presentations

Women produce up to 80% of food in sub-Saharan Africa yet they account for 50% of its undernourished population. African women and girls represent on average 60% of the agricultural workforce. However, while they are active in different segments of food value chains, women tend to be proportionally more engaged in informal employment than men; they are paid less or are not paid at all for their work.

Since the early 20th century and more prominently since the World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975, women around the world have developed an awareness of the inequality that characterises their lives in the domestic and public domains. They have mobilised and organised themselves, from the community to the global level, to advocate for their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to be fulfilled in their households, countries and internationally.

West African women consider that prosperous female entrepreneurship, particularly in the food and agriculture sector, is the key to their economic empowerment. The latter provides the basis for their fuller empowerment and for achieving a more gender-equal society. [Female entrepreneurship](#) is an incubator for economic growth and job creation. It is also a primary tool for resilience considering women's central role in ensuring that their families are food and nutrition secure and in prioritising education and health concerns over other needs.



« Du champ à la table, nous sommes au centre du dispositif alimentaire. »⁹

Khady Fall Tall, Regional President, AFAO/WAWA

The [example of Burkina Faso](#) shows that promoting female entrepreneurship as part of a national development strategy relies on two actions: upholding women's central role in development and bolstering women's participation in decision making. Ad hoc programmes and initiatives have been established since the late 1980s, yet to date female economic activities across sectors concentrate on small and medium sized enterprises. Depending on the size of their enterprise, women face specific constraints that keep them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis men. Women at the head of small enterprises find it hard to exit the informal sector as their businesses lack structure. They have competing demands on their time and multiple caring obligations due to their social and cultural status, which hinder their capacity to prioritise income-generating activities over other household or community tasks and duties. They are often without support in their business endeavours. Girls in

⁹ Authors' translation: "From field to fork, we [women] are at the forefront of the food system".

particular are disproportionally exposed to abuses to their bodily integrity, a factor that undermines their ability to fulfil their life projects. Women who head middle-size enterprises, on the other hand, often lack the necessary connections and social capital to access relevant information that can make their businesses thrive. Their access to financial capital and technology is problematic, their managerial skills and capacities limited. Women's organisations such as the *Fédération des Industries de l'Agroalimentaire et de la Transformation du Burkina Faso* – FIAB, provide important services to their members in terms of capacity building, lobbying, representation and business facilitation. They provide training, skill development and business and legal advice. According to the leaders of these organisations, more of everything is required, and particularly better-tailored and targeted credit instruments, greater capacity-building in management and leadership skills and more adapted information-sharing and support to turn business opportunities into real accomplishments.

On the other hand, West African [NGOs](#) who have been [promoting women's agency and voice in Africa-wide policy processes](#) and initiatives believe that awareness-raising on women issues should also lead to concrete action. While there is wide consensus on the level of change necessary to achieve a more gender-equal society, gender policies and issues are not yet sufficiently embedded and mainstreamed into strategic policies on food security and resilience, i.e. in the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP+10). These organisations therefore prioritise policy advocacy and influence to change the situation.



« L'égalité est un droit consacré et reconnu par une multitude d'instruments juridiques et politique au niveau national et dans l'espace CEDEAO.¹⁰ »
Kafui Kuwonu, Head of Programme, WILDAF

An array of international, pan-African and West African [legal instruments](#) ban all forms of gender discrimination and inequality, as shown below.

These texts prescribe state obligations to provide adequate policy, legislation, programming and resources to reduce obstacles to women's inclusion and participation in the political and economic arenas, and to improve women's socioeconomic and cultural conditions. Accordingly, agricultural, family and property laws are progressively

more gender-sensitive in the majority of West African countries. In practice, structural constraints persist for women to enjoy these rights on an equal footing with men. The implementation of many pieces of legislation is incomplete. Many women are not fully aware of their rights, and so cannot mobilise to enforce them. In addition, long standing sociocultural practices and unbalanced power relations between men and women are still widespread, especially at the local level. Insufficient funding is earmarked in national and regional agricultural investment plans to promote women's economic empowerment. A set of reliable and effective indicators to assess outcomes of all these measures is also lacking.

[Nutrition](#) is a case in point. The Sahel has one of the highest malnutrition rates in the world and women are at the centre of it. Progress is undeniable in terms of policies and instruments that are now available in these countries to combat malnutrition, but this has not translated into improving women's nutrition situation on the ground due to a lack of empowerment and continued control over what women regularly eat. When a woman cooks and serves, first men eat, then visitors, then children, and then she eats last, even though she may be expecting a child. Maternal death remains high due to iron deficiency. This situation demonstrates that gender-sensitive nutrition policies and tools can work effectively only if men play a bigger role, starting from within the household through to the policy level, to bring about change.

Against this backdrop, the NEPAD Agency and ECOWAS, through its [Gender Development Centre](#), have multiplied their efforts to promote women's empowerment and gender equality within their visions and strategies for development. These approaches try to empower women in what they already do, in other words create the enabling conditions for women to increase their contributions to, and obtain more benefits from, the regional food system.

The NEPAD Agency's programme promotes policy consistency and coherence, looking in particular at its Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme – [CAADP](#) national investment plans, the strengthening of ministries that are responsible for women's affairs and the development of indicators and information databases. It fosters the creation of women's platforms to engage in policy discussions and applies a gender lens to all interventions (e.g. the Climate Fund). At the same time, the

Legal instruments	Year
UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW	1979
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	1995
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	2003
Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004); and the Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development within the ECOWAS Region	2015

¹⁰ Authors' translation: "The quest for [gender] equality is a right enshrined in and recognised by a host of legal and political instruments at national level and within ECOWAS".

ECOWAS Gender Development Centre sustains partnerships with West African women's organisations and national ad hoc ministries to promote women's agency and voice in the regional economic system and decision making processes. Priorities include: individual, institutional and organisational capacity development beyond the agricultural sector to encompass access to basic services, reproductive health and peace and security issues. Importantly, the Centre presently focuses on women's empowerment only, but recognises that gender equality requires tackling men's issues as well, and particularly those affecting youth. The ECOWAS Cross-Border Initiative Programme – CIP established in 2006 operates along similar lines. It seeks to increase the involvement of women and youth in the formulation and implementation of multiple interventions on trade and agriculture, infrastructure development, the environment, social affairs and peace and security.

Among West Africa's financial partners, the International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD supports [women's economic empowerment](#) in different ways. It promotes food crops (e.g. sorghum, millet, corn) that were traditionally cultivated by women for auto-consumption and now display increasing market potential; it valorises sought-after (e.g. bissap, sesame or black eyed peas) or traditionally feminine (e.g. poultry, vegetables) products, which were previously seen as marginal. It takes a value chain approach and focuses on those activities in which women are already involved, or could be more involved in the future, for a more equitable sharing of market benefits. Best practices in gender empowerment that help to protect livelihoods under pressure from environmental degradation and fulfil the potential for sustainable production are also emerging across West Africa. These programmes have shown the importance of improving women's access to productive resources and securing their land rights.



« L'autonomisation des femmes a un impact direct et visible sur les conditions de vie des populations rurales notamment les exploitations familiales et les ménages ruraux.¹¹ »

Khadija Doucouré, Regional Gender Co-ordinator for West and Central Africa, IFAD

Discussion

Women's empowerment will be short-lived if gender relations remain unequal.

Focusing merely on women's empowerment in policy and programming can overshadow the importance of [considering gender relations as a whole](#).



"As we observe significant improvements in the way we count and include women, we have lost sight of gender relations [...] we risk missing more than half of the real economy."

Cecilia Tacoli, Principal Researcher, IIED

¹¹ Authors' translation: "Empowering women has a direct and visible impact on the living conditions of the rural population including family farms and rural households".

Our current assessment of the economy tends to neglect non-cash activities that are fundamental for the well-being of individuals and households. These activities are part of the "caring economy" and include looking after children and sick relatives; cleaning and making sure that there is food on the table; carrying out a whole set of domestic and community chores, e.g. fetching water. Providing this care impinges heavily on the time of those who are responsible for it, yet the caring economy goes largely unaccounted for.¹² Under unequal gender relations, women and girls are primarily responsible for care. Their insertion in the cash economy when their caring roles are not recognised from an economic viewpoint means that they work double burdens or shifts. This constitutes a threat to resilience, especially in situations where natural disasters or other shocks create a greater demand for health care but these responsibilities are not redistributed fairly among household or community members. In this light, can we consider women's greater participation in the cash economy as true empowerment?

Participants agreed that to redress unbalanced gender relations that drive the way we value the care economy requires time, awareness and political mobilisation by men and women alike, and together. This puts forward the importance of legal and gender training and information. Evidence from Senegal shows that when legal tools and rights are understood and owned by local communities and judiciary institutions, obstacles to transform unequal social and cultural practices are lessened, and a more equal gender balance is struck with regards to shaping decisions and access to resources. Gender training, which starts in school and continues in advanced education, the workplace, the civil service, etc., is necessary for perceptions, attitudes and behaviours to evolve, and for gender roles to change in society.

At the policy level, representatives of national and regional bodies consider that more can be done to ensure coherence and consistency among different policy tools. For example, land management and redistribution programmes at the local level should take gender concerns in greater consideration to ensure that women and men can access the best land on an equal basis. However, for women and men to truly enjoy these opportunities on an equal footing, gender-sensitive policies need to actively engage with issues related to unpaid care work including access to adequate housing, water, sanitation and basic services.

Effective policy reforms rely on accurate data collection and analysis. If these activities involve women and men alike, there is a better chance that the resulting picture will be more complete to inform priorities and funding. This means that women's individual and institutional capacities for data gathering, processing and policy advice should be

¹² Except for time budget surveys by the EU and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa that record how differently men and women spend their time. The [Human Development Report 2015](#) also uses time-use surveys to show how many minutes per day women and men respectively spend doing paid and unpaid work in 63 countries including Benin, Ghana and Mali.

strengthened. In this vein, the Burkina Faso Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Gender is now associated with the formulation of the national agricultural investment plan.

"It is not about doing a favour to women, it is about what is politically right and what is good for social cohesion"

Estherine Fotabong

Organising beyond economic empowerment objectives

West African women prioritise economic empowerment as a way to gain control over their own lives and aspirations and to increase power and influence in the political and social systems. To level the playing field so that men and women can compete for business on an equal footing, it is necessary to invest in human development for women and girls, particularly access to high-quality health and education services. It is also important to go beyond microcredit to sustain their economic activities; promote sustainable and equitable access to productive resources and business and investment opportunities; and support them to build versatile skill-sets and capacities to stay flexible and ready in an ever-changing economy.

If economic empowerment is the stepping stone to achieve all other forms of empowerment, then women's associations and organisations are essential. A multitude of experiences from the whole of Africa were evoked to describe the range of services and support related to economic insertion that these organisations offer to their members.

Professional and other organisations also play a very active role in enabling women's voice, representation and participation in decision making in ways that national or local political parties are presently unable to do. These political roles can have strong and effective positive impacts on whole communities, i.e. by putting forward policy concerns for issues linked to food safety, nutrition, waste disposal, environmental problems, etc. that might be overlooked otherwise. Effective organisations, especially those formed by grassroots movements; however, need time to build their capacity to influence policy circles. They also need predictable resources to become sustainable and maintain independence from their initial sponsors.

Considering other areas and experiences of empowerment

The multiple and complex roles and challenges women have in food security, nutrition and sustainability have been a strong focus of Expo Milano and diverse initiatives co-ordinated by [We-Women for Expo](#). This project has been successful in demonstrating how women and gender issues are at the heart of the analysis and action needed to achieve sustainable development. We-Women for Expo will become a permanent feature of future Universal Exhibitions to promote knowledge and information sharing about, and greater awareness of, women's and girls' conditions in our world. With regard to Africa, We-Women for Expo has

established partnerships with international NGOs such as Action Aid, Save the Children and Oxfam to better understand migration routes between the continent and Europe in particular. This initiative joins those of the EU and ECOWAS Commissions. Both intend to explore the linkages between gender and migration issues further with a view to developing more appropriate policy responses that accompany positive dynamics and better manage security-related risks.

Finally, from ongoing experiences in Mali to past lessons from Senegal and Mano River countries (i.e. Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), the interconnected role of women and gender policies with regards to [crisis and conflict situations](#), provide a reminder of the strategic points to consider in food security, sustainability and resilience issues. First of all, these experiences call for a multidimensional approach to security that emphasises its human-related aspects, brings forward the notions of power, entitlements and capabilities, and considers the disproportionate impacts of crises, insecurity and shocks on women and girls. Second, they promote women as agents of change, both individually as decision makers, mediators, etc., and collectively as women's groups, associations and grassroots organisations. Third, they show the value of women's inclusion at the core of political processes, for example through a greater presence in executive positions and through policy dialogue, planning and implementation of gender-sensitive strategies that involve women's groups at all levels. Finally, these examples illustrate the importance of linking the national and regional dimensions of gender mainstreaming for greater policy coherence.

Future prospects and policy implications

The conclusions of this session summarise the messages that emerged throughout the two-day discussion and put forward the need for regional, national and local decision makers to act on multiple fronts in a consistent and structured way, taking a systems perspective.

Policy coherence and co-ordination are essential to achieve impact. **Huge and sustained investments** are required to build the enabling infrastructure (hard as well as soft) West African countries need to realise food security, resilience and sustainable development. **Long term and inclusive** efforts must be embraced in order to succeed.

With regards to women's empowerment, priorities refer to **promoting the economic endeavours and entrepreneurship** of actors with great but untapped potential, such as women and youth, by identifying and supporting their competitive advantages in different segments of the regional food value chains.

Education, training and capacity building are absolutely essential. They should come in flexible forms to adapt to the life patterns of different actors and to respond to diverse needs. Knowledge, information and education services are important for those women who are seeking a

place in the economic and political system today, but they are also critical for those girls and boys who will make up tomorrow's West African workforce and citizens.

Effective and equal access to productive resources, in particular land, continues to be paramount. Policies have been progressively adopted in most West African countries to secure rights and entitlements, including of the least powerful groups. The challenge to achieve equality has now shifted to ensure thorough policy implementation (even in the most remote areas), assess policy outcomes and implications, and introduce corrective measures as required.

Unequal access to credit is a specific constraint for female entrepreneurs who wish to improve their business structure and growth. Microcredit is helpful but does not provide an adequate response to these situations. Difficult access to appropriate credit opportunities and resources is currently one of the most prominent obstacles to women's economic empowerment. It is linked to societal and cultural factors that limit women's autonomy and agency inside and outside the household. Creative credit instruments and facilities tailored to women's needs and conditions are a necessary first measure to tackle this problem. However, in the longer term these instruments will not be sufficient in the absence of deeper societal transformations that change perceptions of what women and men are expected to do in both the cash and the caring economy.

While the Forum mainly focused on the economic dimension of women's empowerment to combat hunger and malnutrition, **strengthening women's rights, political participation and voice** were seen as underlying conditions to bring about sustainable and inclusive development. Some participants suggested that regional policy platforms such as the RPCA (including [AGIR](#)) include a review of the state of women's empowerment and gender equality vis-à-vis food security and resilience goals in their yearly sessions. More generally, others pointed to the importance of policies that actively promote women and men's equal participation in all steps and roles of policymaking.

All these points show **that women's empowerment and gender equality largely depend on changes in mentalities, attitudes and behaviours** which value "equal enjoyment by women and men of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards"¹³. This requires long-term changes underpinned by equality laws, policies, education and sensitisation of all stakeholders, starting with younger generations.

In the words of the SWAC President, Francois-Xavier de Donnea, "these policies need to be inclusive and not leave anyone behind." **Food security and resilience policies that seek to achieve sustainable development and gender equality can only be accomplished through multi-sector and multi-disciplinary formulation.** There are as many special interests and positions as there are actors and it can be very difficult to identify common or shared goals and ways forward without this multi-level, multi-stakeholder approach.

¹³ See: <http://web.unfpa.org/>



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