

Briefing Paper

Climate, Food, Trade: Linkages in West Africa

Summary

West Africa is characterised by some of the most variable climates on the planet, which have been partly responsible for important food shortages in the region. Further, the hunger situation has been worsened by the inefficiency of regional trade that hinders efficient food supply to climate-hit areas. This briefing paper explores these linkages between Climate, Food and Trade in West Africa, and to what extent they are taken into account by regional and national stakeholders when implementing policies and programmes.

Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to face above average global warming, leading to more droughts, less agricultural and food production, and changes in patterns of production as the conditions will be less supportive of the production of current staple food crops. As always the poor and marginalised, including subsistence farmers in rural areas and the poor consumers in urban areas are expected to face the worst consequences.¹

The purpose of this paper is to analyse and learn more about the interlinkages of Climate-Food-Trade in West Africa, and if regional and national stakeholders are able to effectively take into account those interlinkages when implementing policies and programmes.

The sub-regional organisation responsible for managing climate change issues, as well as trade and food security issues is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established in 1975. The community counts 15 members states:

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo. The main objectives of the ECOWAS are the promotion of trade, free movement of people and goods, a monetary union, development cooperation and development of agriculture towards self-sufficiency. The ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development, more often called The Fund are two main institutions designed to implement policies, pursue a number of programmes and carry out development projects in each of the ECOWAS member states.

State of Climate Change, Food Security and Trade in West Africa

Climate Change

West Africa is characterised by some of the most variable climates on the planet. For some years now, there have been signs that the climate is changing significantly in the region. Observed temperatures

have indicated a warming trend since the 1960s. Between 1961 and 2000, the number of warm spells over southern and western Africa increased, and the number of extremely cold days decreased.² Moreover, almost every country in the region has experienced a year-by-year reduction in rainfall. The whole water cycle was affected, with serious consequences for agriculture and food security. Conscious of the challenges they (will) face due to climate change, all of West African countries signed and ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)³. Countries part of the Convention have to provide a detailed description of adopted or planned measures aiming at implementing the Convention, including an estimation of these measures' effects, in their National Communications Document (NCD). Moreover, at ECOWAS level, a common environmental policy has been developed. The overall objective of the policy is to reverse environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources, ameliorate the quality of the living environment, conserve biological diversity, with a view to ensuring a healthy and productive environment; thereby improving the well-being of the ecosystem and the population of the sub region⁴.

Trade

ECOWAS trade volume has increased on average by 18% per year between 2005 and 2010.⁵ But the economic community is dominated by Nigeria, which represented 77% of community's exports (all products concerned) in 2012.⁶ Overall trade in West Africa is still marked by a deficit in trade in goods, even if their exports increased by 44.61% between 2009 and 2010. The main trade partner of the region for exports is the United States of America, that accounts for 29% of its exports. The European Union is the second main partner taking 25% of the exports of the region. The main trade partner of West Africa for imports is the European Union (27%), following by China (17%).⁷ Looking at the food trade, West African region imports more food (14% of total imports) than it exports (6% of total

exports).⁸

Trade in West Africa relies to a large extent on agriculture. Agriculture is the main source of employment for the 290 million people who live in the region, employing 60 percent of the workforce, and accounts for 35 percent of the region's gross domestic product (GDP). The fishing industry employs 7 million people and contributes up to 15 per cent to GDP in some of the coastal countries. Fishery exports represent 86 per cent and 46.9 per cent of agricultural exports in Senegal and Mauritania respectively. The Saloum delta generates some US\$ 400 million in revenue annually and is an important source of foreign investment through negotiated fishing agreements with foreign fleets, mainly from China, the European Union and Japan⁹.

The other main regional organisation the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)¹⁰ has already a common trade policy. This policy aims at implementing a common market and a customs union, and managing trade relations with other countries at regional level, as well as the regional aid for trade strategy. However, there is no common trade policy at the ECOWAS level as of now. Nevertheless, the ECOWAS revised treaty of 1993 indicates that establishing a common trade policy is part of the basis to create a common market (article 3)¹¹. Moreover, ECOWAS member states established the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) to ensure free movement of goods within the region. The ETLS adopted in 1979, initially focused on facilitating trade in agricultural products, handicrafts and crude products only. Since then, the ETLS has been progressively adapted to include industrial products (1990) and afterward, in 2003 to address WTO rules of origin criteria. However, ECOWAS' members have not implemented the ETLS uniformly. While some progress has been made in reducing tariffs, most countries are unwilling to adopt measures to fully eliminate tariff barriers. There is even less

progress in removing non-tariff barriers.¹²

Food Security

In 2008, the Global Hunger Index found that West Africa is a region with some of the most severe hunger in the world.¹³ To attain sustainable food security in sub-Saharan Africa, a rapid growth of agricultural sector is needed. The PDDAA (Programme Détaillé de Développement de l'Agriculture Africaine (detailed development programme for African agriculture)) expects an annual growth of 6%: a rate considered as necessary according to IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute) models to reach the 1st Millennium Development Goal on poverty reduction. In consequence, agriculture is a budgetary priority, and African States have committed themselves during the Maputo Summit in 2003 to allocate 10% minimum of their budgets to agricultural development.¹⁴ In practice, a lot of countries are not implementing it. In 2005, the ECOWAS Ministerial Commission on Agriculture and Food adopted a common regional agricultural policy for West Africa (ECOWAP). This policy has a vision of “a modern and sustainable agriculture, based on the effectiveness and efficiency of family farms and the promotion of agricultural enterprises through the involvement of the private sector. Productive and competitive in the intra-Community and International markets, it must ensure food security and remunerative incomes to its workers”. Since then, ECOWAP has worked to speed up the implementation of this policy by putting in place regional reserves for food security, the “Zero Hunger” initiative and the regional rice offensive.¹⁵

Organisations Dealing with Climate-Food-Trade at West-African level

In the West African region, three sub-regional organisations have mandates and responsibilities in terms of managing climate change, trade and/or food security: West Africa Economic and Monetary

Union (WAEMU), Economic Community of West African Countries (*ECOWAS presented in the introduction*) and Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). There is another set of institutions with clear and distinct (although sometimes overlapping) mandates on climate change, food security and/or trade issues. They are shared basin organisations; scientific institutions, which are either emanations of the political institutions (AGRHYMET), or independent; research and training institutions (universities) which may be more or less independent according to their status. To these, can be added the international institutions (especially the research institutions) such as the diverse United Nations Institutions but also International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and International Research Institute for climate and society (IRI); and finally the international NGOs such as WWF, Union Internationale pour la Conservation de la Nature (UICN), Wetlands International, Oxfam, Environmental Development Action in the Third World (ENDA). Civil society is not very organised at the subregional level, with the possible exception of the *Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs d'Afrique de l'ouest* (ROPPA (Network of farmers and producers organisations of West Africa)).¹⁶

Climate, Food, Trade: Linkages in West Africa

Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, trade policies at the national and international levels have an important role to play in ensuring food security. If a country relies on imported food, food availability may depend on the country's ability to produce and export goods and services to generate enough foreign exchange to acquire food on the international markets. If a country relies greatly on trade for its food supplies, however, the stability of food supplies may be

subject to the variability of world prices.

About the interlinkages between climate change and food security, the general consensus among the literature is that agriculture is highly vulnerable to the increased frequency, severity and unpredictability of extreme weather-related events caused by climate change. However, opportunities may arise for producers in some countries as the 'carbon fertilization effect' takes hold and the expansion of potential agricultural cropland in temperate areas may produce an increase in the yields of some crops.

Finally, climate change and trade impacts each other in three different ways. Firstly, climate change may have a direct impact on agricultural trade. The total food supply of a country depends on production capacity, imports, and exports that generate income and foreign exchange to buy food. In this context, changes in the availability of food worldwide will affect prices, generating more or less capacity for a country to obtain food on the global markets.

Secondly, if economic growth 'propelled by trade' is associated with greater GHG emissions that greatly influence climate change, it may be concluded that there could be a trade-off between supporting economic development and promoting environmental integrity—which, however, is also vital for ensuring food security in both the short and long term.

Thirdly, climate change issues are affecting trade negotiations at the WTO level. The EU and U.S. have often threatened to raise border taxes on products that originate from countries with less stringent carbon emission standards.

The figure below is a summary of how trade and climate change interlinkages may impact directly on food security.

Food Security and Climate Change

Climate change and food security are impacting each other in the region. During the last century, and especially during the last fifty years, West Africa has seen its pluviometry decrease year after year. This decline of rains has led to important food crisis, for instance in 73/74 and 83/84. Crops rely essentially on rain, so these changes in rain patterns directly affect productivity in the region for more than 40 years now. The rise of temperatures (+1C° in Africa during the 20th century) plays also a role in crops' productivity¹⁷. Those scientific observations have also been confirmed by farmers that have remarked in nearly every country the decrease of rains and increase of temperatures.

But while some populations of the region experienced the lack of rainfall, other are facing floods. It was for instance the case in 2010, and led to major crop losses. Nigeria had an approximate loss of 180,000 hectares of crops due to inundation, while Benin experienced a total loss of approximately 140,000 hectares of crops. In addition, Chad lost approximately 110,000 hectares; the Gambia lost 15,000 hectares; and Burkina Faso lost some 20,000 hectares¹⁸. Such loss has led to food insecurity in the region, in combination with volatile global commodity markets, exchange rate fluctuations and availability of food aid. Moreover such drops in production compounded the rise in the price of staples such as rice, corn and wheat. Rises in food prices affected the poorest and most vulnerable population groups the most.

Trade and Climate Change

Trade is both a contributor to and a « victim » of climate change in West Africa. Trade in agricultural products and trade policies are a major driver of changes in land-use and agricultural practices in the region. While trade offers many opportunities, land use changes, farming and mining practices that lead to a loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services can have immediate impacts on human well-being.

Price volatility of agriculture product on the international market leads to a change in agricultural production system at regional level. Farm's produce more export or cash crops to the detriment of food crops (cereal crops, root and tuber crops). Moreover, in a continent dependent on its natural resources to achieve growth, current patterns of extraction of non-renewable resources such as gold, diamonds and crude oil have had an untold impact on the environment. Nevertheless, trade has the potential to have positive effects on climate change in the region. Developing trade in bioproducts, and/or developing intraregional exchanges instead of international trade can result in less emissions of gas, and moderate the negative impacts of climate change in the region.

Trade and Food Security

Trade does not only impacts climate change in the region, but also impacts food security. The important food shortages that strike West Africa are often due to droughts and bad crops. But the inefficiency of regional trade impedes correct supply of provisions and accentuates hunger issues. Poor conditions of roads and railways, high transaction costs, lack of sufficient information on the markets, incoherency of trade policies implemented by governments and their bureaucratic barriers are just many obstacles to trade in West Africa.

According to experts, imports and exports procedures are more costly and take more time in West Africa than in any other region of the world. Thus, according to a study in 2010 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, there are 47 checkpoints all along the 500 km of roads that separate Douala from Bertua, in Cameroon, 19 on the 910 kms between Ouagadougou and Bamako, and 34 on the 1036 kms of highway between Cotonou and Niamey. Moreover, there is no reliable bank transaction in West Africa, which makes trade in the region highly dependent of personal relationships that have been developed

over years. Hence good production in part of the region does not lead to trade with another part with less production. In 2012, in Niger there was a very good production of onions, its second source of revenue after uranium exports, that made prices drop from 60% to 80% due to lack of timely exports. If West-African countries manage to develop trade at international and regional level, this will enhance their capacities, opportunities to buy other products and improve food availability in the region.

State of Climate, Food and Trade Linkages in West-African Knowledge

In the region, different stakeholders have understood the linkages between two of these issues. Al Hassan Cissé of the NGO Oxfam in West Africa made clear statements on the impacts of trade on food security in the region. « Even within the same country, despite the availability of food products, food security remains an issue. The transport from a surplus zone to a zone in deficit within the same country is very difficult and it is worst at the regional level », he said to IRIN in the beginning of 2014. He further explained that « if intra-regional trade had worked well, the surplus could (in the region) have been sold in other West Africa markets and would have contributed to food security by increasing producers' revenues ».¹⁹

Aziz Elbehri, lead economist at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), also underscored the linkages between these two issues in the region. He affirmed that « informal trade networks are presenting a lack of sufficient flexibility to convey important quantities of products to address demand and market conditions' changes ». According to him, only three per cent of maize produced in West Africa was exchanged within the ECOWAS.

State of Linkages in West-African Networks, Programmes and Practice

The ECOWAS region is taking some steps to put into practice the interlinkages between two of the three issues. A Forum of national and regional stakeholders on Climate-Smart Agriculture in West Africa, facilitated by Hub Rural (the platform for rural development and food security support in West and Central Africa) took place over four days at the end of May 2014. This gathered national, regional and international level representatives of basin organisation, scientific and technical organisations, private sector, regional integration organisations, donors and civil society organisations. The objective of the Forum was to facilitate a collective reflection on opportunities, issues, challenges and strategic choices for the development of a climate-smart agriculture (CSA) in West Africa, in order to define the ECOWAS framework for intervention, funding, monitoring and evaluation on CSA, and to operationalize its implementation through the establishment of an Alliance for consistency and coordination of initiatives on CSA in West Africa.²⁰

Moreover, there are some more permanent structures also in the region that can potentially deal with climate, food and trade. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) manages a number of programmes and projects in six thematic areas that include agriculture and food security, climate change, regional integration and infrastructure, economic and corporate governance, etc. Within its programmes, NEPAD manages these three cross-cutting issues. For instance, its agriculture section or PDDAA aims at ensuring food security of the region population by prioritising the production and exchange potential of the region, ensuring decent revenue to producers and allowing an efficient structuring of agribusiness sector, while relying on sustainable production systems. However, no clear mention is made by

NEPAD on the linkages between Climate-Food-Trade.

Another interesting project is the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC). This is a project of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, funded by Canada, through the Canada Fund for Africa, which links trade and climate change issues.

Yet, another example is a project dealing with coastal erosion: one of the major problems of West Africa, and the subject of a regional conference initiated by the Senegalese Republic President himself in 2009. The adaptation to climate change in coastal areas of West Africa project is a tentative response to the problem of coastal erosion. It involves 5 countries: Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. National components develop pilot activities in selected sites with the aim of reducing the threat of coastal erosion, while increasing biodiversity and strengthening the adaptive capacities of local communities and ecosystems. The project also tries to include climate change consideration in development plans, such as tourism strategy and master plans for coastal towns. The inclusion of stakeholders through sensitisation campaigns and activity integration is an important aspect of the project.²¹

Importantly, the interlinkages between trade-climate change-food security are not really highlighted within these projects, even if two of these issues are tackled within the same programme.

State of Linkages in West-African Policies

As developed in the first part of this paper, policies at national, regional and international levels on agriculture, industry, climate, trade, food security have been developed by ECOWAS members, and they engaged themselves through conventions to respect environment, human rights, etc. But the

issue is whether these policies and engagements are conscious of the interlinkages between climate change, food security and trade. According to a FAO report published this year on 10 African countries, of which 4 are West-African countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria), despite all the efforts made at regional and national level, it appears that current agricultural policies do not effectively prioritise the improvement of population food security²²

Moreover, demands have emerged within the region from the private sector, the civil society, and the citizens to effectively take into account those linkages in the different policies and effectively implement them. During the 4th edition of the West-African Peasant Seed Fair on the 28th of March 2014, the Committee noted some policies' deficits that need to be tackled by governments and regional organisations. The participants in the Djimini Declaration underlined the lack and insufficient nature of consultation with peasant communities in defining the agricultural and seed programs, as well as the lack of consultation in the formation of the laws and restrictions related to seeds or research conducted on seeds²³.

Other stakeholders in West Africa are advocating more policy coordination and interlinked CCFST policies. Led by the Dakar-based organisation Environment and Development Action in the Third World (ENDA), the project "Adapting Fishing Policy to Climate Change in West Africa" (which goes by the French acronym APPECCAO) aims to integrate an improved understanding of climate change's potential impacts and options for adaptation into plans and policies governing fisheries.²⁴

These demands indicate the current lack of coherence among policies dealing with trade, climate change and food security in the West African region.

Recommendations

Three key recommendations emerge from the mapping and analysis undertaken in this briefing paper, namely: (i) finding ways to enhance policy coordination amongst a multitude of players and areas; (ii) the need for better implementation of existing regional policies at the ECOWAS level; and (iii) the opportunity for private and public stakeholders to advocate for an ECOWAS Common Trade Policy conscious of the Climate-Food-Trade interlinkages.

Food security policies, Climate change policies and Trade policies are already in place at national and regional level. Coordination mechanisms are needed to coordinate the different stakeholders at all levels to avoid contradictions and duplication of measures and efforts. In West Africa, the duplication of monetary and trade policies impacting ECOWAS member states, that are also members of the WAEMU, further complicates the policy implementation and effective coordination concerning CCFST issues in the region. A coordination mechanism could possibly be implemented with the aim to establish relationships between political institutions, research institutions and the grass roots level (civil society, NGOs, etc.) but also to ensure coordination and exchanges on different subjects. These could include one or more formal organisations, which could be housed by one of the institutions in the sub-region, but could also include developing more informal exchange networks and making them operational²⁵. The three different areas of Climate-Food-Trade need to be coordinated with each other also. This requires more research, advocacy and training on CCFST linkages in the region that will allow more policy coherency and effective implementation of measures already adopted at all levels. A project similar to the PACT EAC (Promoting Agriculture, Climate and Trade linkages in the East African Community) developed by CUTS Geneva in the East Africa region could be relevant for the West

African region also.

As stated, number of policies on climate change, food security and trade are already in place in the region. Nevertheless, the ECOWAS Common Trade Policy is still under discussion. This might be an opportunity for public and private stakeholders

to influence, and to advocate at national and regional level for a policy conscious of the interlinkages between Climate-Food-Trade.

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