



Lomé Declaration on Fertilizers and Soil Health in West Africa and the Sahel

High-Level Round Table

Lomé, Togolese Republic, 31 May 2023

We, the Ministers of Economy and Finance, Agriculture and Food Security of the ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS Member States, meeting in Lomé, Togolese Republic on 30 and 31 May 2023 at the joint invitation of the ECOWAS Commission and the World Bank, with the support of the technical and financial partners in the region, convened for a High-Level Round Table on Fertilizers and Soil Health in West Africa and the Sahel.

Considering the Sustainable Development Goal 2, which aims by 2030 to “eliminate hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture,” and the Sustainable Development Goal 13, which aims by 2030 to “take urgent action to address climate change and its impacts,” urging stakeholders to place particular emphasis on the performance and resilience of agri-food systems and the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices that increase agricultural productivity and food production, while contributing to the preservation of ecosystems and natural resources, improving soil health and soil fertility, and enhancing the resilience of farmers and of production systems to climate change and other exogenous shocks.

Considering the African Union’s Agenda 2063, which aims in its Goal 5 for “a modern agriculture for increased productivity and production.”

Considering the 2014 Malabo Declaration on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), in which the Heads of State of the African Union commit to “accelerate the growth and transformation of agricultural products for shared prosperity and better living conditions.”

Considering the January 2023 Dakar Declaration on Food Sovereignty and Resilience aiming for the development of National Compacts for Food and Agriculture with the collaboration of country stakeholders, development partners and the private sector in order to achieve food security and self-sufficiency.

Recalling the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) as tools for continental and regional integration.

Recalling Pillar 4 of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Vision 2050 on “Transformation and Inclusive and Sustainable Development,” which is based on the structural transformation of economies through digitization of the economy, entrepreneurship, science and technology, as well as structuring investments in growth and enabling sectors, and which aims to promote the efficient management of natural resources, and strengthen the region’s resilience to climate change and exogenous shocks.

Recalling the agricultural policy for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAP), with its central objective to “contribute in a sustainable manner to meeting the food needs of the population, to economic and social development and to reducing poverty among the Member States;” taking into account the diversity of production systems and the predominance of very small land holdings, “the agricultural policy is aligned with the perspective of 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.”

Recalling the National and Regional Agricultural Investment and Food and Nutrition Security Plans (PNIA-SAN and PRIA-SAN) validated by the region in 2015 as part of the implementation of ECOWAP.

Noting:

– That, despite the investments made, the region’s striving for sustainable and resilient agri-food systems remains below expectations.

– That since the 2008 food crisis, several exogenous factors such as climate change and variability, pandemics (Ebola, COVID-19), inflation and economic crises have had a negative impact on agricultural production and productivity; that, despite the progress made, practices that devastate the quality of land, soil and natural resources in general continue, in an environment in which stakeholders in the agricultural value chains of West Africa and the Sahel are faced with enormous difficulties in accessing new, innovative, and sustainable agricultural production technologies, including access to and the appropriate and rational use of mineral or organic fertilizers.

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– That in 2022, mineral fertilizer use in Sub-Saharan Africa, with an average of 20 kilograms of nutrients per hectare of cropland, remains very low compared to (i) the Abuja Declaration target of 50 kilograms/hectare in 2006; and (ii) the global average of 146 kilograms/hectare (175 kg/ha in India and 393 kg/ha in China), and that these inputs do not compensate for the losses of soil nutrients washed away each year through agricultural production and land degradation.

– That, although continuous, the annual growth in agricultural production in West Africa and the Sahel remains insufficient to meet the needs of a rapidly growing and increasingly urbanized population; that this agricultural growth is mainly due to the expansion of land areas rather than to increases in productivity, a situation resulting in a continuous increase in the number of people who are food insecure, from 9.7 million people in the 2019 lean season to 42.5 million in the 2023 lean season, according to the results of the analysis in the “Harmonized Framework” of April 2023. This is coupled with a worsening impact on the environment, as extensive agriculture is accompanied by deforestation, thereby depriving the region of a strategic asset for carbon sequestration.

– That, since 2020, the West Africa and Sahel regions have been facing enormous difficulties in the supply of fertilizers (unavailability, price explosion), a situation that requires rapid, appropriate, and bold measures.

– That, despite the regulatory mechanisms put in place by Governments and their inter-governmental organizations, the private sector’s incentive for the development of the input sector (industrial production, marketing, logistics, research, and development, etc.) remains insufficient in view of enormous challenges and urgencies.

Convinced:

– That, without quality and quantity of inputs, agricultural producers in West Africa and the Sahel will be increasingly unable to meet the food needs of a rapidly growing and urbanized population;¹ that such developments require far-reaching

¹ OECD analyzes show that in 1950 ten (10) agricultural producers in West Africa were expected to produce for their own needs and generate a surplus for one (1) non-agricultural consumer, whereas by 2030 one (1) agricultural producer will have to generate sufficient surplus to meet the needs of two (2) urban, non-agricultural consumers.

changes in practices towards sustainable agro-ecological intensification based in particular on the optimal use of organic and mineral fertilizers for improved soil health through the adoption of the 4Rs principle (right source, right time, right quantity, and right place), taking into account the use of integrated soil fertility management within cropping systems (improved seed varieties and irrigation), while considering climatic conditions and environmental impacts.

– That Integrated Soil Fertility Management and the maintenance and restoration of soil health in ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS Member States are the means to ensure the resilience of food systems, and thus an essential pathway for achieving Food Sovereignty and other Sustainable Development Goals; and that any effort to reduce hunger in West Africa and the Sahel, to contribute to the achievement of food sovereignty in West Africa and the Sahel, must involve (a) preserving soil fertility, (b) restoring degraded soils and their fertility, and (c) soil nutrition and soil health.

Aware of the need and urgency to act individually and collectively to significantly change the trajectories of agri-food production systems towards **a more sustainable and resilient agricultural productivity status**; where soil health is a cornerstone, and therefore calls for the urgent need to: (i) create a sufficiently incentivized environment, both at national and regional levels, that is favorable/conducive to optimizing the contribution of the private sector, to the development of public-private, multi-stakeholder partnerships, etc., for the benefit of increasing the competitiveness of the fertilizer (organic and mineral) sectors in the region; (ii) develop a strategic investment program to increase availability, accessibility and the efficient use of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs, particularly certified seeds in ECOWAS, WAEMU and CILSS Member States, to boost agricultural production and productivity.

In light of the above, **WE:**

1. **Declare fertilizer**, both mineral and organic, **as a strategic product without borders, free to move without hindrance, in the ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS Member states** in accordance with the regional regulatory arrangements in force or to be improved.

2. **Declare soil health as a critical pillar of food security and a sustainable agricultural model**; therefore, programs for its preservation/restoration must be funded by development partners and state budgets.

3. **Make the commitment** that all ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS Member States will support the implementation of the Roadmap on Fertilizers and Soil Health in West Africa and the Sahel adopted at Lomé and accelerate: (i) the creation of an enabling environment for effective access to fertilizers and other agricultural inputs by men and women farmers; and (ii) the implementation of strategies and plans for integrated soil fertility management and soil health.

4. Therefore, ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS Member States commit to: (i) triple nutrient consumption and double agricultural productivity by 2035 with an approach that entails integrated soil fertility management and maintenance and restoration of soil health; (ii) reverse land degradation and restore soil health on at least 30% of degraded soils; and (iii) disseminate to at least 70% of smallholder farmers in the region recommendations on good practices for efficient application of nutrients through adoption of the 4Rs principle.

More specifically:

1. With immediate effect, the Member States of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS, with the support of their technical, financial and private sector partners, commit to **urgently improve access to mineral and organic fertilizers for smallholder agricultural producers (farmers)**, with an emphasis on crops that ensure food security and sovereignty for the population, particularly through targeted public intervention programs (smart subsidies, budget support for the acquisition of fertilizers, etc.).

2. ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS Member States and the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions (together in a concerted manner) commit to take, by the end of 2026, adequate and appropriate public policy measures to facilitate availability and access of fertilizers at the national and regional levels, in particular through harmonization of policies and regulations, promoting better and free movement (duty-free/tax-free) of fertilizers among Member States, thus promoting transparency and developing the capacity for quality control and traceability. **To this end, and as an immediate measure, States undertake and commit themselves** to progressively phase out customs duties and taxes on fertilizers and other fertilizing raw materials.

They also undertake to simplify customs and administrative formalities for imports to reduce the time required to admit products and consequently minimize costs.

3. Take an immediate decision to set up the **West African Fertilizer Quality Control Committee** to assist the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions and the CILSS Executive Secretariat and their Member States in the joint implementation of Regulation C/REG.13/12/12 relating to the quality control of fertilizers in the community area, and to provide it with the human, material and financial resources necessary for the sustainability of its interventions.

4. By the end of 2025, ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS Member States commit to take concrete steps to improve access to fertilizers for men and women farmers by developing and strengthening the capacity of certified input distributors and local community networks in rural areas, and by enhancing the participation and involvement of the private sector, youth, and women.

5. They also commit to:

- Take immediate steps to accelerate investments in ports, storage and transportation infrastructure.

- Establish financing and risk-sharing facilities for manufacturers, blenders, importers, and distributors of inputs at the local, national and regional levels, with the support of the World Bank Group (WBG), the Regional Investment and Development Banks (EBID, BOAD), and the African Banks (AfDB, Afreximbank), particularly for women and young entrepreneurs.

6. They therefore call for the conclusion of strategic public-private partnerships before the end of 2025, with the support of the World Bank Group (WBG), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the West African Development Bank (BOAD), the ECOWAS Investment and Development Bank (EBID), the ECOWAS and WAEMU Commissions, to jointly put in place mechanisms that secure the availability and accessibility of fertilizers for agricultural producers.

7. ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS Member States, with the support of the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions, commit themselves and undertake to implement concrete initiatives to promote local/regional production of organic and mineral fertilizers, and to boost intraregional trade in fertilizers through appropriate regional regulatory measures, with the support of private and institutional partners (WBG, AfDB/AfDB, BOAD, EBID).

8. They shall also undertake the associated implementation of accompanying actions aimed at (i) strengthening research and development systems on sustainable land management, including technologies for efficient fertilizer use; (ii) improving the access of male and female farmers to improved seed varieties, irrigation infrastructure, agricultural extension and advisory services, market information and soil analyses and soil mapping to facilitate the effective and efficient use of fertilizers (minerals and organic) while taking into account climate change, sustainability and environmental protection considerations.

9. In order to achieve the regional aspiration of development, access to and use of fertilizers, **the Member States of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS urge:**

– All stakeholders to strengthen cooperation and synergies in interventions in the region. In particular, they call on the African Development Bank to establish a form of smart cooperation with the EBID and the BOAD in order to revitalize and make more operational the “African Fertilizer Development Finance Mechanism,” for both the public and private sectors in order to respond more effectively to the immense financing needs;

– The ECOWAS Commission to take all necessary measures to ensure the monitoring, evaluation, coordination, and regular reporting to the Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Food Security on the implementation of this Declaration. This should be done in collaboration with technical partners and regional organizations in West Africa and the Sahel. The ECOWAS Commission should report regularly to the African Union Commission, the WAEMU Commission, and the CILSS Executive Secretariat as a means of providing information and updates to their decision-making bodies.

We urge:

(i) The World Bank Group to mobilize support from Development Partners and IDA resources to support countries in the West Africa and Sahel region to: (a) continue to support the mobilization of financing mechanisms and implementation of emergency programs to address the current fertilizer crisis, including facilitating access to fertilizer for smallholder farmers; and (b) develop and implement support programs for integrated fertility management and soil health, taking into consideration the reforms needed to transform and develop the fertilizer sector in the region, including consideration of local production opportunities;

(ii) the West African stakeholders, including private operators in the fertilizer sector and other agricultural inputs, agriculture, agribusiness and agro-industries sector, agricultural producers, as well as civil society organizations and financial institutions to support the implementation of the provisions of this Declaration and the accompanying Roadmap;

(iii) the regional agricultural research coordinating institutions, in particular CORAF, IFDC and FARA, to be actively involved in the implementation of this Declaration and the accompanying Roadmap, building on their national networks;

(iv) the Development Partners to strengthen and synergize their technical and financial assistance to support the implementation of this Ministerial Declaration and the accompanying Roadmap.

Done at Lomé, 31 May 2023
(the French version of the Declaration text
is the official version)

*Signed by the Ministers in charge of Agriculture
and Food Security of the ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS
Member States*

For **BENIN**

For **BURKINA FASO**

For **CAPE VERDE**

For **CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

For **THE GAMBIA**

For **GHANA**

For **GUINEA**

For **GUINEA-BISSAU**

For **LIBERIA**

For **MALI**

For **NIGER**

For **NIGERIA**

For **SENEGAL**

For **SIERRA LEONE**

For **TOGO**

For **MAURITANIA**

For **CHAD**

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