

FINAL STATEMENT OF THE REGIONAL FORUM ON AGROECOLOGY, ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE IN WEST AFRICA



Final draft
ABUJA 2024

1 **The Regional Forum on Agroecology (AE), Organic Agriculture (OA) and Climate Smart Agriculture (AIC) in West Africa**, organized by the Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa (3AO), West African Organic Network (WAfrONet) and ActionAid, under the theme “Financing the transformation of sustainable food and nutrition systems for food sovereignty in West Africa through organic agriculture and agroecology: what policies, mechanisms and instruments?” was held in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria, from October 21 to 24, 2024.

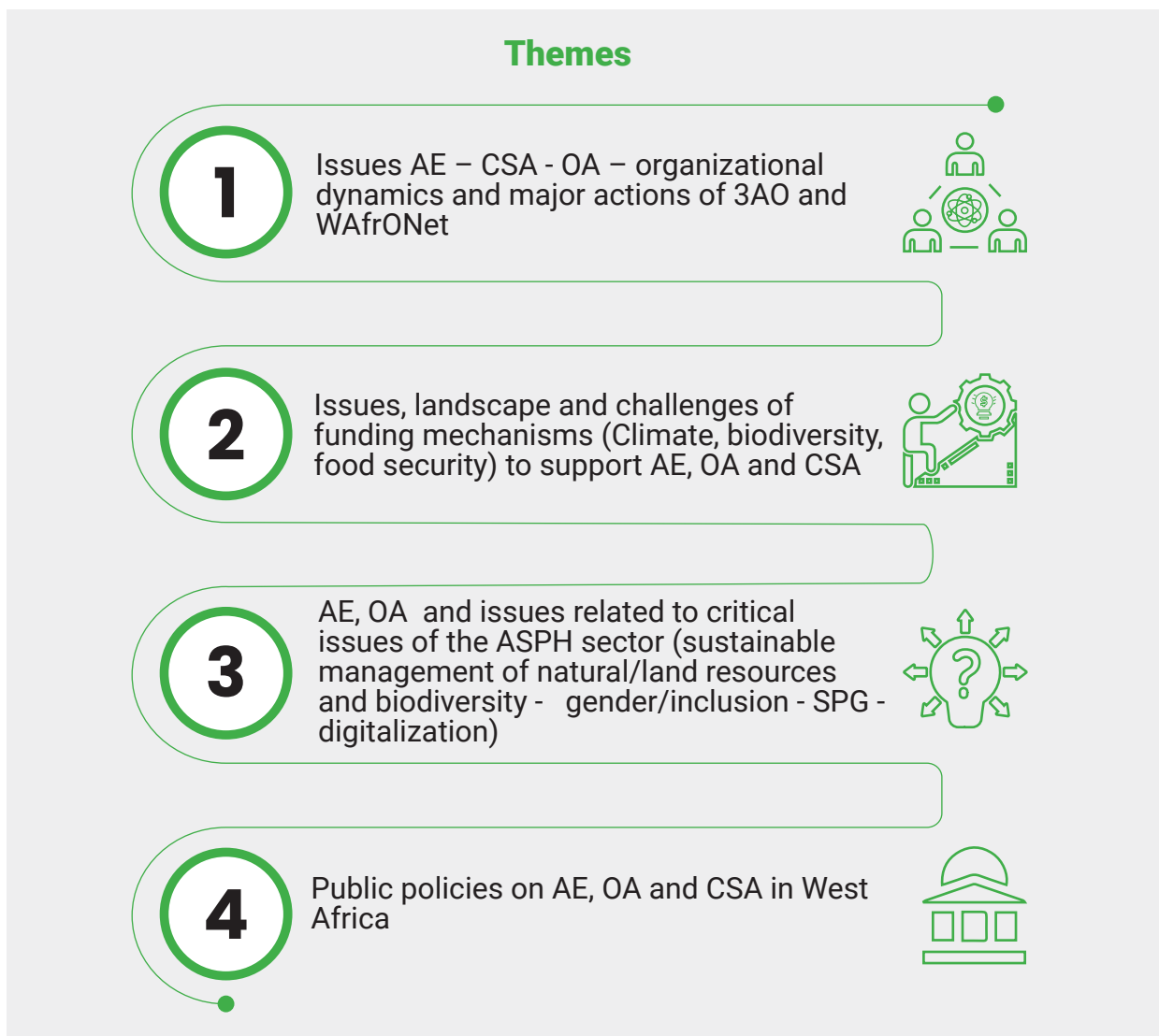
2 **The forum took place in a global context, both West African and global, marked by a greater awareness** of the various groups of development actors, producers and citizens, on the limits and weaknesses of the agro-industrial model of production, marketing and consumption of agricultural products and food. Indeed, this model generates or supports challenges such as the degradation of natural resources and biodiversity, the indebtedness of farmers... These are the root causes of growing poverty, persistent food and nutrition insecurity, rising youth unemployment, health problems, etc.

3 **In this situation, structural solutions from AE, OA and CSA are alternatives** that can reverse the trend towards developing resilient food systems and achieving food sovereignty.

4 **The forum brought together three hundred fifty-seven (357) participants**, representing regional institutions, public ministries in charge of the Agro Sylvo- Pastoral and Fisheries sector (ASPH), development partners, networks of Peasant Organizations (PO), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the private sector, public and private media. About 50 people watched the forum's work online every day.

5 **The opening ceremony of the forum was marked by interventions from representatives of the local steering committee, ActionAid, WAfrOnet and 3AO**, who thanked ECOWAS for its support and highlighted the challenges of agroecology, Organic farming and climate-smart agriculture. Dr SY Alain TRAORE, representative of ECOWAS, welcomed the commitment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in favour of AE and stressed the role of farmers in facing climate challenges. Mr Ibrahim TAMINU, representing the Nigerian Minister of Agriculture..., affirmed his country's commitment to promoting innovative and resilient agricultural practices, while calling for creative solutions for agricultural financing. Then he proceeded to the official opening of the works.

6 The forum's work was organized around four main themes



These themes were explored through



- introductory papers that gave a panoramic view of the theme and indications on critical fields in which reflection work should be invested ;



- panels that presented specific initiatives and/or analyses of certain actors in relation to the theme ;



iii. group work that allowed for more in-depth reflections on issues and challenges related to the themes and to formulate recommendations, resolutions and/or guidelines for collective actions.

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At the end of the work, the participants adopted the following recommendations and resolutions :

7.1 To the regional institutions (ECOWAS, WAEMU, CILSS, CORAF) and governments :



Implement policies/strategies with more appropriate instruments and measures, allowing to really exploit the potential of agroecology, organic agriculture and climate-smart agriculture, for sustainable food systems and food sovereignty. This implies :

- i. Develop and promote, through a participatory and inclusive approach, a regional vision and concept of AE, OA and CSA as a reference framework that takes into account the specificities of the region's agricultural context, and allowing to better target and monitor the impact of public interventions, partners and actors (private sector, PO...);
- ii. Consider AE, OA and CSA in a more ambitious and effective way as part of the announced renewal of agricultural development policies and strategies at regional level (PAU, ECOWAP) and national, the consolidation of existing policy instruments and measures (FRDA, FRAA, ASPH National Funds...) and ongoing or in preparation projects and programmes aimed at food and nutrition security, environmental restoration...;
- iii. Revisit the Kampala process to integrate AE, OA and CSA at the heart of the position and proposals of ECOWAS and WAEMU through a more inclusive dialogue with the networks of POs and CSOs on the one hand, Be consistent with subsequent commitments by policy makers in the AU and international spaces to promote AE, OA and CSA as a lever for sustainable transformation of agriculture, and to consolidate the achievements of the strategies, projects and programmes developed by ECOWAS, WAEMU and the AU in support of the scaling up of the AE, OA and CSA, on the other hand;
- iv. Améliorer les approches Improve existing approaches and mechanisms for consultation and dialogue with PO and CSO networks in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of development policies and programmes, to ensure effective inclusion of the various groups of stakeholders concerned, to make better use of their experiences and expertise in a broad way, and to have legitimate and inclusive policies, with relevant strategic guidance and implementation instruments related to AE, OA and CSA.



Strengthen strategies and mechanisms for structural responses to the significant degradation of soil health, the development of diseases at the level of producers and consumers citizens and the increasing loss of biodiversity, related to the inappropriate use of synthetic inputs. This requires :

- i. Give greater attention and strategic priority to the current worrying situation of illicit trade and inappropriate use of synthetic inputs (pesticides and herbicides) in the region. Many adverse social, economic, health and environmental implications are increasingly acute for producers and consumers, linked to the effects of synthetic pesticides and herbicides, not approved by the competent institutions at regional and national level, or banned on their original lands, or linked to inappropriate use of these synthetic inputs. Participants call for the establishment and/or strengthening of strategies, mechanisms and instruments to control and manage their import, sale and use.
- ii. Develop and implement at national and regional level, public strategies to promote the production, sale and use of organic inputs, to preserve good soil health, all productive natural resources, producers, and consumers and also to build alternatives to the rising cost of synthetic fertilizers. These strategies should be supported by an institutional, regulatory framework, appropriate mechanisms and incentives, which would provide a framework for and support the initiatives of family farms, cooperatives and other economic structures of producers, and private market players.
- iii. Develop, strengthen and implement policies and strategies at national and regional levels that truly enable the preservation and sustainable management of animal and plant biodiversity as the foundation of diverse, nutritious and sustainable food systems, Notably through the recognition and promotion of peasant seed systems and the effective implementation of various regional and international protocols and commitments aimed at the protection and sustainable management of biodiversity ;
- iv. Develop a policy framework for Peasant Seed Systems (PSS) which account for more than 70% of the seeds used in the region's agricultural systems and are a guarantee of agroecology and resilience of farming communities. They are preferred for their taste, adaptation, nutritional qualities and for reasons related to the cultures, customs and traditions of the communities.



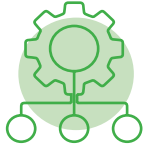
Develop greater capacity to mobilize green funds for family farms, POs and grassroots communities for scaling up AE, OA and CSA to support the building of EF resilience and the achievement of food sovereignty. This implies :

- i. Support capacity building and effectiveness of the BDI and BOAD, as well as national agricultural banks and other already accredited organizations in the region, to mobilize more Green Funds and improve access to POs/CSOs. This requires inclusive dialogue frameworks to inform POs and ensure appropriate strategic directions for the use of these funds. The participants also ask ECOWAS and WAEMU to restore and reinvent mechanisms for mobilizing endogenous financing, taking into account, among other things, withdrawals made on the channels, the reconversion of the external debt service, etc ;
- ii. Implement more efficient and inclusive evaluation monitoring systems, such as accountability tools that inform POs and citizens about the financing dedicated to agriculture and especially agroecology, organic farming and climate-smart agriculture ;
- iii. Develop strategies and mechanisms for capacity building of different stakeholder groups, including OP and CSO networks to develop projects eligible for climate funds, ensure their implementation, monitor and document their impacts.



Increase investments to develop viable and profitable territorial, national and regional markets for agricultural products and foodstuffs resulting from resilient production practices based on agroecology, Organic farming and climate-smart agriculture. It will be :

- i. Promote and support the implementation of harmonized national policies and strategies for certification of agro-ecological and organic products, with the development of appropriate systems including participatory guarantee systems, to improve their access to markets ;
- ii. Implement, within the framework of regional and national agricultural and trade policies, strategies, instruments and measures to support stakeholder initiatives aimed at developing inclusive value chains based on agro-based ecology and organic farming, fair trade and other approaches to marketing agricultural products and commodities that are respectful of the sustainable management of the environment, natural resources and biodiversity.



Implement tools for the promotion and development of knowledge management, training and learning mechanisms and devices to strengthen the scaling up of AE, OA and CSA. What requires :

- i. Implement financial facilities for the benefit of different groups of actors (public structures, research institutions, PO and CSO networks, women's and youth associations...) to support the capitalisation of structural solutions generated by agro-foodecology, organic farming and climate-smart agriculture, to build a critical mass of evidence to support the development of relevant AE-friendly policies, the OA and CSA, to contribute to the development of appropriate policy implementation instruments and measures and to support learning and training processes for agro-food playersecology, organic farming and climate-smart agriculture ;
- ii. Develop and strengthen the instruments and mechanisms for financing universities, public and private training centres to develop curricula and training sessions, with a view to developing more and better expertise, to support actors in agro-ecology, organic farming and climate-smart agriculture ;
- iii. Establish, within the framework of regional and national agricultural policies, instruments to finance the promotion and strengthening of training and learning arrangements set up by OP and CSO networks, enabling the development and strengthening of capacities of endogenous facilitators providing services in proximity to the EF for scaling up agroecology, organic farming and climate-smart agriculture.



Support the exploitation of their potential in scaling up agroecology, organic farming and climate-smart agriculture for sustainable transformation of food systems and food sovereignty. This requires :

- i. Implement consistent support for women and young people recognized as at the heart of the transition of food systems in West Africa, giving them priority for access to financing, including green funds, technologies, productive natural resources, to strengthen their adoption of agroecology, organic farming and climate-smart agriculture, and to consolidate their place and role within the EF, communities and POs for the implementation of these practices.

7.2 Commitment of PO and CSO networks for scaling up agroecology, organic farming, and climate-smart agriculture

Building on the encouraging results of the regional forum, the 3 structures (Action Aid, WAfrOnet and 3AO) Adopted the following resolutions to develop collective strategies and actions to create favourable conditions and develop actions for scaling up agroecology, organic farming and climate-smart agriculture. The 3 structures (Action Aid, WAfrOnet and 3 AO) have committed to :

- i. Strengthen their collaboration, with a view to creating a real collective capacity to support and consolidate their operational actions and political advocacy for the scaling up of agroecology, Organic farming and climate-smart agriculture. This collaboration should be based mainly on the concertation and synergies of actions of their members in the different countries of the region. They commit to work together in this perspective for the follow-up and implementation of the forum's recommendations ;
- ii. Implement policy dialogue actions at the local, national, regional and continental levels to ensure that AE, OA and CSA are taken into account in local, national, regional sectoral policies and strategies (PAU, ECOWAP...), and continental in particular in the Kampala process. They commit themselves to this advocacy perspective to give priority to the issue of synthetic pesticides; sustainable management of biodiversity; management of fisheries and forestry resources and the issue of agricultural and pastoral land resources ;
- iii. Invest in the establishment of a support fund for EFs and OPs to deal with claims and support their community-level initiatives for scaling up AE, OA and CSA, managed by PO and CSO networks ;
- iv. Commit to institutionalization with annual or biennial meetings of the
- v. regional forum for sessions to review their activities, share initiatives and forward-looking reflections involving AE, OA, CSA, regional institutions (ECOWAS, WAEMU, CILSS, CORAF), national public structures and development partners. The different editions of this forum will take place alternately in person and online.

Done at Abuja, October 24, 2024

The forum