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**HOW TO DEVELOP A PRODUCTIVE AND
RESPONSIBLE AGRICULTURE IN WEST AFRICA ?**

LE DÉBAT DE WATHI

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Introductory note

HOW TO DEVELOP A PRODUCTIVE AND RESPONSIBLE AGRICULTURE IN WEST AFRICA ?

1. Why this theme?

- **Because** 60% of the unexploited cropland in the world is found in Africa. In 2015, only 25% of the arable lands were cultivated in West Africa. The region's agricultural performance is very low compared to the increasing demand in West African countries. In fact, West African population is projected to rise from 290 million to more than 400 million in 2020, and 500 million in 2030.
- **Because** 95% of the African agriculture is rain-fed (Source). Water management is a key element in agriculture. Agricultural yield is essentially dependent on water control and irrigation techniques. West Africa owns 28 cross borders watersheds (Source).
- **Because** land is the peasant's primary wealth and securing land is a major challenge in the region. Territories of West African States held with a proof of ownership were estimated to be between just 1 and 3 per cent in 2002. (Source)
- **Because** family exploitation is highly dependent on women's participation. In rural areas, they play a key role in food production and households' financial stability. They are deprived from a complete access to resources and basic social services. According to the United Nations, agricultural performance could increase from 20 to 30% if the allocation system of productive resources had not been discriminatory towards women.

- **Because** fighting poverty and food insecurity remain major challenges for West African countries. 54% of people in the region live below the poverty line. The region has experienced many famines and food crisis since independence.
- **Because** agriculture fully participates in a country's economic growth. A performing agriculture allows the formation and development of many other productive sectors (an expansion of the services sector, infrastructures, commercial and bank networks). Higher agricultural income result in the opening of local and regional markets, which will be suitable for the creation of industrial units, and the increase of exportations towards foreign markets.
- **Because** the agricultural sector has a strong potential in terms of wealth and employment creation. 1 in 3 African works more or less directly in the agricultural sector. It concerns 60% of the active population in West Africa. Foreign partners and investors, financial institutions support the region's agricultural sector. The agriculture's development is part of the 5 new top priorities of the African Development Bank, directed by a former Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- **Because** the industrial transformation of agricultural products remains a weakness for the region's economy. The improvement of agricultural yield requires the implementation of performing agro-value chains and the development of the food industry in the region. Africa's high urbanization will correlate to an increase in the demand of high-quality agricultural products, which are not very present on the local market at the moment.
- **Because** the ratio of national budget invested by West African States in agriculture seems too low to face the challenge of a sufficient production. In average, African countries only dedicate 4% of their budget expenditure to agriculture, compared to 14% in Asia (<http://bit.ly/2sy3hxu>). The 2003 Declaration of Maputo (Mozambique) engaged all member States of the African Union to increase their investments in the agricultural sector, up to 10% at least of their national budget.

2. What are the main topics to be explored?

Factors of production

- Agriculture and land policy
- Agriculture and women's participation
- Water economy in Agriculture
- irrigated agriculture
- rain-fed agriculture
- Agriculture and manpower training
- Types of agricultural production in West Africa
- Agricultural tools and techniques in West Africa
- The role of research and popularization of agricultural techniques
- Technological innovations in agricultural production (eg. Role of Information and communication technologies)
- Agriculture and saving the environment
- Urban agriculture
- Agriculture and adjustment to climate change
- Rural and agricultural finance

Transformation of agriculture

- Transformation of West African agriculture and the role of family exploitations
- Food Industry
- Agriculture and entrepreneurship

- Agriculture and youth employment
- Finances and private, public and foreign investments in Agriculture

The trade of agricultural products and markets diversification

- Intra-regional trade
- Agricultural imports and exports
- Using information and communication technologies in trading
- The promotion of local products abroad

National and regional agricultural policies

- National policies and strategies for agricultural development
- Rural infrastructures and agricultural development
- Agriculture, food security and public health
- The protection of domestic markets of agricultural products
- Specialization and agricultural industry in West African countries
- Involvement of regional organizations in the agricultural sector
- Agriculture and conflicts around natural resources
- Harmonizing agricultural policies in West Africa
- WAEMU and ECOWAS agricultural policies
- Agriculture as a tool of regional integration

3. How to participate in the debate?

- Contributions by experts in the issues discussed are welcome. So are observations, accounts, opinions, and recommendations from all citizens.
- We particularly welcome articles that refer to one or more specific countries, are based on concrete examples and include recommendations for action and reform.
- You can submit short articles (500–1000 words) or longer ones (1500–2000 words). Although the maximum length of a contribution is 2000 words, short articles are more likely to be selected and published by WATHI. All articles must be accessible to the general public, well written and structured.
- Without having to write a structured article, you can send your comments, observations, and recommendations to infowathi@wathi.org. The most relevant contributions will be published on the website.
- You can also submit a short audio or video recording to share your experiences and concrete reform proposals.
- We invite you to send your article with a 50–word biography and preferably a good picture of yourself.

CONTACTS

www.wathi.org

Please send your articles and contributions at: infowathi@wathi.org

The debate is also taking place on WATHI's Facebook and Twitter accounts:

Link to Facebook : <http://on.fb.me/1L2kOSk>

Link to Twitter : https://twitter.com/WATHI_Africa