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**DECLARATION OF WEST AFRICAIN FARMERS ORGANIZATIONS
ON AID EFFECTIVENESS**

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I. Background

After a protracted period of marginalization, agriculture seems to be regaining the attention of the international community. All the institutions seem wanting to review their finance development plans to allocate more resources to agriculture. This is mainly the case with the World Bank and the European Union Commission. While redefining its priorities, FAO has laid great emphasis on the formulation and implementation of agricultural development policies and strategies.

The Heads of States of Africa, under their own initiative have committed themselves to allocate at least 10% of the national budgets for the improvement of agricultural production, productivity and growth.

For once, and during the period of the structural adjustment programmes, development partners and national governments agreed with farmers' organizations and the civil society to again give the agricultural sector its place in public financing.

Unfortunately, the intended declarations still need to be accompanied by concrete actions. Public financing coming from national resources or official development assistance are far from being sufficient and effective in a sustainable manner to develop agriculture in West Africa as well as to ensure a veritable transformation of thousands of farmers on family holdings in West Africa.

In the absence of really ambitious and appropriate agricultural and rural development policies in the countries and at the regional level the acknowledged innovative capacity of farmers on family holdings and the agro-ecological potential of West Africa have not led to the expected development of agriculture to provide food security, reduce rural poverty and ensure regional integration.

The average value added by the agricultural workers today is \$523, where as according to the FAO, the region spends the overwhelming amount of four billion dollars each year to import food to feed its teeming populations.

Furthermore, many are the specialists who have pointed out that if co-operation to develop and support agriculture more efficiently is not re-established, African agriculture and the families who depend on it will be those who will suffer the most from climatic changes, even though they are the least to blame for the causes that generate such changes.

Again, the energy crisis, which has turned transnational companies towards the production of bio-fuels, may intensify the risk of food security in Africa, if consistent policies and programmes based on access to energy by small scale rural producers are not put in place for production and processing and the improvement of their lives.

Efforts to mobilize organize and structure family holdings in the past two decades have made it possible to establish and consolidate the new culture of dialogue among public authorities, development partners and producer organizations, particularly in the formulation and implementation of agricultural development policies, programmes and projects. Improvements in governance have resulted from this.

II. Stating the Facts of aid effectiveness

The reality is that public national finance and official development assistance have not been effective to meet the 7% growth that West Africa needs to attain the millennium development goals. The ineffectiveness of aid has been and is still recognized by all donors, the governments and civil society organizations.

Amongst the reasons raised by West African agricultural producers organized within the framework of the Network of Farmers and Agriculture Producers Organizations, know by it's French acronym as ROPPA, it can be noted:

1. The absence of a partnership between equals, based on shared responsibility:

The various development partners offer aid almost exclusively to perpetrate their own interests, vision and perception and they adopt their own methods.

In many cases this has undermined the social cohesion and the dynamic relations among the beneficiaries.

Even though there is a semblance of consultation with these beneficiaries, priorities are set by the donors according to their interests and vision, based on a unilateral analysis. They alone decide the kind of aid and the focus country or zone.

2. The lack of appropriate tools to manage development aid geared toward the agricultural sector:

The projects are always based on the perceived needs of the beneficiaries, that is, on their weaknesses, and never on the solutions suggested by these beneficiaries, which constitute their strength. This makes sustainability almost impossible.

The holistic projects of the beneficiaries are analyzed and supported through a sectoral approach, which reduces their significance and alienate them from the logic of action of the villages and family holding agricultural exploitations.

Thus, the projects become foreign bodies which no-one dares to reject but which nobody desires to support.

The logical framework and other tools of project analysis and planning, even readapted many times, remain largely based on the principle of traceability and transparency of the aid offered.

They lack the flexibility necessary for adaptation on a regular basis to the complex realities of recipients.

The activities under the "Project" are focused exclusively on the problems identified by the "Project". Often there is little room or freedom for correction.

Project assessment and evaluation criteria highlight the values and needs reflecting the donor's vision. These criteria do not share or make use of values and assessment by recipients.

3. Favoring action and not the conditions and capacities of actors.

Aid has seldom strengthened the capacity of beneficiaries to become a “counter-weight”. The process of “aid” supports the “action” and rarely the “actor”.

Thus certain development stages may be jumped. In fact, producers’ organizations, which form part of the societies where aid is sent, are often not considered.

4. Absence of a common vision with the recipients:

Public authorities and regional institutions find it difficult to make aid proposals based on a vision of policies and programmes shared with producers’ organizations and other stakeholders. This weakens their power to negotiate with development partners, reduces transparency and limits the possibility of medium and long-term evaluation of the process.

The cohesion, partnership and joint action necessary among the different groups of recipient actors are thus weakened.

III. Commitment and recommendations of producer organizations.

ROPPA remains convinced that aid to agriculture is useful for development. However, such aid needs to be reviewed, and all actors, particularly peasant and rural organisations, should be involved in such review. Therefore:

1. ROPPA, pledges to:

- ❖ Rally its forces and further mobilize its members for self-generated development, with reliance on internal resources.
- ❖ Ensure that official development aid further complements and improves national development efforts.
- ❖ Contribute towards the creation of a space for dialogue and consultation between all the actors at all the levels.
- ❖ Place a high premium on the exchange and sharing of experiences, knowledge and information related to the governance of projects and programmes, among producer organisations.
- ❖ Collaborate with public authorities, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, Northern and Southern NGOs to support participatory projects of producers’ organisations, encouraging a vigorous interaction among the actors to heighten the potential of the aid
- ❖ Demand a more active participation in the preparation of frameworks of reference and State budgets, in order to have a firm grasp of the mechanisms that determine the allocation of funds to the various sectors of the economy.
- ❖ Improve and strengthen the process of coordination, consultation and harmonization of their interventions on the ground.
- ❖ Intensify and increase advocacy and lobbying work to get the State as well as our technical and financial partners to accept and implement the recommendations made to them.

2. *We urge states and regional institutions to:*

- ❖ Recognize the central role of agriculture in development and allocate more budgetary resources to enable it to play that role meaningfully.
- ❖ Recognize the central role of family agricultural exploitations and the small farmers in the agriculture.
- ❖ Promote and popularise in advance such mechanisms as “non allocated funds”, a very positive instrument offered by some NGO’s and being used for certain official projects of local development.
- ❖ Design local tools for the development and evaluation of agricultural projects and programmes.
- ❖ Deepen the participation of producers’ organizations in the dialogue and consultations aimed at formulating and executing policies and programmes, by giving clearly defined mandates and the resources for their execution.
- ❖ Provide resources for the strategic and operational capacity-building of producers and their organisations in the areas of i) quality and quantity production ii) environmental preservation iii) governance, execution, political influence-building, development programmes.

3. *Civil societies of the North should :*

- ❖ Consider peasant and agricultural producers’ organisations as real development partners.
- ❖ Minimize their direct involvement in the execution of development projects and programmes, delegating such work to their partners of the South.
- ❖ Prepare a gentleman’s agreement between civil societies of the North and their counterparts of the South.
- ❖ Link the preoccupations of their Southern partners towards Northern decision makers.

4. *Urge the international community to :*

- ❖ Acknowledge the key role of agriculture in Africa’s development, by seeing it as the major component in any poverty- reduction strategy, especially in connection with the achievement of the millennium development goals.
- ❖ Accept and support the elaboration, validation and the application of the agricultural and food processing policies.
- ❖ Review the conditionality of aid access and execution to ensure the necessary flexibility for its effectiveness, ensuring transparency and effectiveness.
- ❖ Support the execution of aid oriented towards the needs of grassroots organisations. Process support facilitates preparation and conduct of interventions supportive of social change.

- ❖ Support the establishment of “decentralized funds” for each country or for small regions, as this will foster collaboration among the administration, local authorities, local and foreign NGO’s, producers’ organizations, etc.
- ❖ Take into account the dimension of regional integration.
- ❖ Involve directly recipients and support organizations in negotiation process to negotiate policies and model agreements.
- ❖ Determine the tools and allocation priorities with a view to restoring the capacity of farmers to reinvest, taking into consideration the effects of disasters.