



NIAMEY CALL FOR WEST AFRICAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Preamble

A. At the initiative of ROPPA (Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa) a dialogue concerning the food sovereignty of the sub-region took place in Niamey from 7 to 10 November among farmer organization leaders,, members of parliament, officials of agriculture and trade ministries, and researchers from 13 countries¹ of West Africa, together with the authorities of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS, technical and financial partners, farmers' organizations from the North and NGOs.

In the course of this dialogue, the participants analysed the food situation in West Africa. From this analysis, the following points emerged:

- Despite the significant natural resources of which it disposes and the know-how of the millions of men and women peasant farmers and agricultural producers who live and work in their family farms, the sub-region is highly dependent on the outside for its food.
- This contradiction is the result of national agricultural policies which are still insufficiently adapted to the West African situation and of inadequate social mobilization and organization on the part of farmers and agricultural producers. It also reflects the ineffectiveness of forums and mechanisms of dialogue among national actors.
- These factors have rendered West African countries and populations increasingly vulnerable to natural dangers (drought, locusts, etc.)
- They have also engendered a deeper and more massive poverty of farmers and agricultural producers, making them the first victims of food insecurity.
- The poverty and the food insecurity in which West Africa vegetates can be overcome by adopting policies based on food sovereignty, that is the "*right of every country or group of countries to define their agricultural policies in the interests of their populations, to develop and protect their productive activities and their markets so that they can satisfy the populations' demand for sufficient healthy food which is culturally and religiously acceptable and, at the same time, constitute the basis for fair remuneration of the labour of family farms*";

¹ Bénin, Burkina-Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra-Leone, Togo.

Conscious of their roles and responsibilities with regard to the populations they represent, support, and accompany in their daily efforts, the Forum's participants adopted the present document which they entitled " **THE NIAMEY CALL FOR THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY OF WEST AFRICA** ".

- Considering that the agricultural sector of the sub-region is the basis of the well-being of the majority of the population, the wealth of the region, the conservation of its natural resources, the future of its young people, of its societies and social peace;
- Considering that the agricultural development of the sub-region depends on taking advantage of the complementarities among its agro-ecological zones;
- Considering that the national and sub-regional agricultural policies recognize the multi-functionality of family farming and the necessity of modernizing it;
- Considering that the agricultural development of the sub-region provides a significant opportunity to ensure employment for young people by supplying them with revenues and appropriate living situations within their territories; thus promoting social peace and attenuating migration;
- Concerned by the importations of agricultural and food products which aggravate the food dependence and weaken the economy and the social tissue of West Africa;
- Worried by the inadequacy of public investments in agriculture;
- Convinced that West Africa has the potentialities and the capacities to be less dependent and more autonomous in feeding its populations ;
- Convinced that our agriculture is the basis of industrial and economic promotion through its multiple sectors: crop production, livestock, fishing, forestry development;
- Convinced that the achievement of the sub-region's food sovereignty is the pedestal on which to build the internal market that will solve the recurring problems of food insecurity, rural poverty, massive exodus of young people, the desertification of soils and degradation of natural resources ;
- Convinced that the sub-regional agricultural policy of West Africa (ECOWAP), which aims at the achievement of food sovereignty, is an opportunity to be seized in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals and those of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of NEPAD,
- Convinced that food sovereignty will not be attained without an adequate protection of sub-regional products and markets against unfair competition by other countries and regions

The leaders of the farmers' organizations and their networks, the members of parliament, the public officials of the agricultural and trade sectors are resolved and committed to work for:

A). the continuation of the process of multi-actor dialogue initiated at Niamey around food sovereignty and agricultural development in West Africa

The dialogue among all the actors showed that the Forum of Niamey will have to continue at national level and consolidate the parallel exchanges which the actors of each country have had separately. This objective must be promoted by the national platforms of ROPPA.

ROPPA's initiative in organizing the Forum was appreciated by the actors. It testifies to the maturity of the farmers' organizations, their sense of responsibility and their willingness to build, both in their countries and at sub-regional level, a coalition of actors for the economic, social, cultural and political progress of the populations.

This commitment to work towards the creation of forums of multi-actor dialogue has to continue and to be supported by the national and regional authorities. It is, after all, the foundation of a sustainable and virtuous dynamic for the development of West Africa.

B). the participatory formulation and implementation of a sub-regional charter of food sovereignty, under the aegis of ECOWAS and with the cooperation of UEMOA and CILSS.

This charter should clarify the implications of food sovereignty so far as policies are concerned, as well as the roles, the responsibilities and the commitments of all the actors. The charter will also define the means and the mechanism of a collective monitoring of its implementation.

The Forum takes note of the commitment of the farmers' organizations and their sub-regional networks to mobilize their members, to sensitize and train them in order to promote the widest appropriation of food sovereignty and of the charter. This is the only way to ensure that all the stakeholders take the objectives of food sovereignty into account and proceed to the implementation of actions which concretize their commitments.

C). the definition and the application of a trade policy and protection measures corresponding to the objectives of the food sovereignty

1. ROPPA undertakes to rapidly mobilize all its networks of collaboration in order to prepare, before February 2007, proposals which would enable the application of food sovereignty within the framework of the Common External Tariff (CET).
2. ROPPA undertakes to mobilize the National Platforms of Farmers' Organizations so that they work with the national administrative officials to make them the real promoters and defenders of a CET which does not condemn thousands of family farms to ruin.
3. The farmers' organizations and their networks - ROPPA and the RECAO - are determined, if their concerns to protect the region's agricultural products and its market are taken into account first by the States and then by ECOWAS, to organize social and peaceful mobilization of family farmers to support the legitimate decisions of the States and ECOWAS aimed at the harmonious development of the sub-region of West Africa

D). The adaptation and the effective application of the principles of food sovereignty and the charter to agricultural and trade policies and measures of protection

To do so, the participants in the Forum engage the States, ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS to:

- Open dialogue and negotiations, at national level with the National Platforms of farmers' organizations, at the sub-regional level with the ROPPA and the RECAO, with a view to defining and adopting a CET which can serve as a strong instrument for the protection of our products and the development of our regional market. The intention must be brought to bear on the negotiation and conclusion of trade agreements with the European Union, China, Brazil, etc....

E). Respect for the commitments freely assumed by the African Heads of State in Maputo to direct at least 10 % of the national budget to financing agriculture (including livestock, fishing and forestry) and to implement programs agreed upon with the concerned actors in order to achieve an equitably distributed agriculture growth rate of at least 6 %.

Niamey, November 10th, 2006

THE FORUM