

Ouagadougou Workshop Declaration

The International Workshop on Adaptation to Climate Change in West African Agriculture was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 27 to 30 April 2009. It was jointly sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO), the State Agency for Meteorology of Spain (AEMET), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the General Directorate of Civil Aviation and Meteorology of the Government of Burkina Faso. The workshop brought together over 70 experts and key decision-makers to discuss and recommend climate change adaptation options for the agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries sectors in West Africa.

Home to 43 per cent of the total population in sub-Saharan Africa, West Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. According to the WMO/UNEP Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report, the annual rainfall in West Africa has decreased 20 to 40 per cent from the period 1931-1960 to 1968-1990. The survival of a large population in West Africa depends on semi-subsistence agriculture and farmers are struggling to preserve their livelihoods. Future projections from IPCC indicate that Africa is very likely to warm during this century, decreasing the length of the growing season and yield potential in many parts of West Africa. In some countries, yields from rainfed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50 per cent by 2020 thereby threatening the food security and other aspects of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Workshop identified several key recommendations, knowledge gaps and opportunities for policy makers, researchers and extension systems, international organizations, and NGOs to implement programs designed to minimize short- and long-term vulnerability of the West African region to climate change. Following are the principal recommendations:

- Integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies into the national and regional development programs.
- Put forward strongly the primordial role of weather and climate services and products in developing adaptation solutions to climate change in West African agriculture in the national development policies.
- Improve water resource management and focus it primarily on enhancing food security in the region.
- Assemble, document and disseminate a comprehensive and action-oriented database of adaptation options for different farming and livelihood systems and agro ecological zones, including measures and policies, for serving the needs of smallholders.
- Mobilize necessary resources to strengthen research on the impact of climate change on agriculture in the different agro ecological zones of West Africa as empirical evidence and research results in this area remain largely insufficient.
- Collect and use accurate and proven data on carbon sequestration in biomass and soils in each agro ecological zone as a basis for the negotiation processes under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
- Facilitate better access to credit and agricultural inputs to intensify integrated production systems such as crop-livestock and aquaculture-agriculture through improved natural resource management, adapted varieties and livestock breeds.
- Initiate and strengthen cooperation among academic and research institutions, regional and international organizations, and NGOs to provide opportunities for strengthening institutions, human resource development and capacity building to deal with climate change impacts.
- Establish a West and Central African Network on Climate Change and Food Security (ROCACCSA)
- Request policy makers to help scale up technical and financial support for the adaptation efforts of the West African countries.
- Establish, as part of the implementation of the ECOWAS Sub-regional Action Programme on Climate Change, a Technical Secretariat comprising of competent institutions at the national and regional level in West Africa and such international institutions and organizations as WMO, FAO, CTA, AfDB, AEMET, the Rockefeller Foundation and the International Agricultural Research Institutes (IARCs) etc. in the spirit of implementation of ECOWAP.
- Request ECOWAS, as the lead institution, assisted by CILSS, to support the Technical Secretariat. At the national level, the Ministry of Agriculture, in coordination with the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) should support the Technical Secretariat.
- Ask the Technical Secretariat to develop a comprehensive communication plan to facilitate efficient exchange of information with regard to climate change.

The participants thank the People and Government of Burkina Faso and the General Directorate of Civil Aviation and Meteorology for hosting the workshop and for providing all the necessary facilities.

30 April 2009, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso