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THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA WEEK 2018

The government of The Gambia hosted the 2018 edition of the Sahel and West Africa Week, which took place from 3-8 December in Banjul. Organised by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD), this annual flagship event focused on food and nutrition issues in the Sahel and West Africa. It brought together some 300 food security stakeholders from every Sahelian and West African country as well as development partners. The Week was composed of a series of events, including the 34th annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA), which focused on nutrition issues. While food availability and access to food still remain key challenges, it is also essential to look more closely at food habits in a region that is experiencing a nutritional transition with dietary changes that often come with rapid urbanisation. RPCA members approved a declaration in which they called for a strong commitment to making nutrition a political and financial priority in the Sahel and West Africa in order to reverse negative and destructive nutritional trends. The Banjul meeting was also an opportunity to share the findings of the second external evaluation of the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC Charter), which assessed the effectiveness of responses to food and nutrition crises. Within the Senior Experts’ Group meeting of the Global Alliance for Resilience (SEG-AGIR), Senegal shared its achievements and its commitment to strengthening food resilience, particularly around its “New Resilient Terroirs” (NTR) approach. A special day was dedicated to The Gambia as the host of this year’s meeting. Government officials highlighted key components of The Gambia’s food security strategy, including conservation agriculture and the development of value chains. Last but not least, after over a decade of strong commitment, SWAC President François-Xavier de Donnea handed over the reins of the organisation to Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, CEO of the NEPAD Agency who became SWAC’s new president on 1 January 2019. The next Sahel and West Africa Week will take place in December 2019 in Conakry, Guinea.
NEW PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Organised on the side-lines of the 34th RPCA annual meeting, the ECOWAS-UEMOA-CILSS event marked the official launch of the project for “improving the regional governance of resilience, food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture in West Africa” (PAGR-SANAD). The project aims to build capacity within regional and national institutions to strengthen the regional governance of FNS and agricultural policies, build resilience in West Africa, and work toward achieving zero hunger by 2025. Financed by the 11th EDF of the European Union, with a budget of EUR 20.5 million over a 60-month period, the project is composed of three components: 1) capacity-building of the institutional framework; 2) strengthening of information and monitoring systems; 3) supporting effective integration. The project is being co-ordinated by CILSS under the aegis of ECOWAS and UEMOA, who hold the chairmanship and vice-chairmanship of the regional steering committee. The project team is currently being recruited. Job opportunities are available on the ECOWAS/ARAA website.

EMERGING SENEGAL PLAN BENEFITS FROM OECD ANALYSIS

It has successfully doubled its energy production since 2011, and it is implementing major infrastructure projects to meet growing transportation needs through flagship projects such as the TER regional train. On the downside, youth unemployment remains endemic and nearly 50% of the population do not have health coverage. The goal of universal primary education has not yet been achieved. A recent OECD study identified three bottlenecks: the poor outcomes of the education system, a dysfunctional tax system and administration, and the administration’s lack of capacity to create change. The OECD’s multidimensional country review is part of an analytical series that aims to design policies that promote development in a holistic sense. Drawing on the first two volumes (initial evaluations and policy recommendations), the most recent report aims to support the government of Senegal to transform policy recommendations into an action plan. It provides a dashboard to monitor the implementation of reforms and establishes a set of indicators and targets to be achieved by 2035 in order to achieve the goals of the Emerging Senegal Plan. President Macky Sall acknowledged that the report reflects “Senegal’s reality” and says he is committed to making the necessary reforms.

REGIONAL ACTION TO COMBATE FALL ARMYWORM

Detected for the first time in West Africa at the beginning of 2016, the fall armyworm mainly attacks maize but it can also attack rice and sorghum, as well as cotton and some vegetables. Fall armyworm is a serious concern to Sahelian and West African farmers as it can cause significant yield losses and can negatively affect their livelihoods and food security. Considering the transborder nature of the pest, which spreads easily across the area, the situation requires a strong, co-ordinated regional response. Several actions have been taken and the region adopted a regional action plan for the prevention, surveillance and control of plant pests and diseases in 2017. From August to October 2018, CILSS, ECOWAS and FAO conducted joint missions to monitor and evaluate the nature and extent of the damage caused by fall armyworm in high-risk countries, including Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Guinea, Nigeria and Togo. The missions worked to train farmers, identify gaps and inform policymakers. With support from the mobile application Famews, countries will be able to collect real-time data to improve fall armyworm monitoring and develop an early warning system within their individual countries and the sub-region. Some 130 trainers in the five participating countries were trained on how to use the app. Moreover, USAID and partners have developed a guide for integrated pest management. Agrhymet/CILSS is equipped to perform research activities and to train country officers on phytosanitary issues. In 2019, ECOWAS plans to organise a regional training workshop on improving fall armyworm prevalence monitoring, risk mapping, assessing impact and experience-sharing.
TOGO’S PORT OF LOMÉ BECOMES REGIONAL TRANSIT HUB

The autonomous Port of Lomé has overtaken Lagos and is now West Africa’s leading port with a capacity of 1.1 million twenty-foot containers (TEU). Thanks to modernisation reforms, the Port of Lomé tripled its capacity from 311,500 containers in 2013 to 1.1 million in 2017. This surge can be explained by several factors. With a depth of 16.60 meters, the Port of Lomé is the only deep-water port on the West African coast that can accommodate third generation ships. The port is well-connected and goods can be delivered to several West African capitals in a single day. Its success is also largely due to the commissioning of the Lomé Container Terminal (LCT), which handles about 75% of the containers shipped through the Port of Lomé. On the other hand, Nigeria’s Apapa Port in Lagos (1 million TEU) lost 30% of its container traffic over five years due to chronic congestion and the poor quality of its services. Other West African ports have stagnated. Tema in Ghana (0.95 million TEU) maintains rank 3, followed by Abidjan (0.66 million TEU) and Dakar (0.57 million TEU). According to Dynamar, the number of containers in West Africa should reach 4.3 million TEU by 2021, with 5% average annual growth rate for container cargo.

MUST READ

THE NIGER-LIBYA BORDER: SECURING WITHOUT STABILISING?

This analysis from Matthieu Pellerin at the French research institute IFRI focuses on security issues along the Niger-Libya border. Since 2011, security initiatives have been mostly externally driven, even as they responded to the government of Niger’s demands to secure its borders against jihadist attacks. Never before has the Sahel region been so highly militarised. However, the heavy presence of external security forces may be negatively affecting the interests of local communities. Most efforts are solely focused on border control without any long-term vision about how to help this fragile area develop and become more stable.

OPINION

THE ESSENTIAL ROLE PLAYED BY FARMERS’ ORGANISATION IN WEST AFRICA

The essential role played by farmers’ organisations in West Africa has been recognised, notably within the new ECOWAS Regional Agricultural Policy. However, “The omnipresence of agribusiness reminds us that the fight to be fought is not yet won,” recalls SOS Sahel in an opinion piece, which identifies several areas to address. First and foremost, it will be important to strengthen the involvement of women and young people. Women are already active in the implementation of a large number of projects. A training college within ROPPA aims to improve access to training for women, especially in the field of agricultural processing. Farmers’ organisation should aim to address generational issues, women’s integration and the role of youth within their internal organisations and, more broadly, within society. They will also need to do more advocacy and lobbying in order to defend family farmers’ interests in decision-making processes at all levels.
WHO’S WHO: CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE, WRITER

The Nigerian storyteller Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has become a famous writer worldwide. She has received numerous awards and distinctions, most recently the 2018 Action Against Hunger Humanitarian Award. Her book, “We Should All Be Feminists,” has been translated into 32 languages. In Sweden, every 16-year old child received a copy of the book in which Adichie emphasizes the need for inclusion and understanding while highlighting the value of gender equality. In her “Feminist Manifesto,” Adichie offers 15 suggestions on how to raise daughters to become empowered and independent women. Beyond feminism, Adichie writes about African history, politics and many other cultural and societal issues. Adichie’s debut novel, Purple Hibiscus, tells a story about the different meanings of freedom in the context of a military coup in Nigeria. Her book Americanah, in which she tackles many aspects of race and identity, won the National Book Critics Circle Award and was named one of The New York Times’ top 10 best books. Raised in Nigeria, Adichie divides her time between Nigeria and the United States. Her writing challenges the way people view Africa and the world.