



RESEAU DES ORGANISATIONS PAYSANNES ET DES PRODUCTEURS AGRICOLES DE L'AFRIQUE DE  
L'OUEST (ROPPA)

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## Declaration of FO platforms members of ROPPA

1. The present declaration follows the workshop organized by ROPPA from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of April in Ouagadougou in order to examine the regional studies on land policies in West Africa conducted in the scope of the initiative on the issue from the African Union (AU), the Economic Commission for Africa (CEA), the African Development Bank (AFDB). For this workshop, ROPPA benefited from the financial support of FAO and the technical support of researchers of LANDNET, CILSS and HUBRURAL.
2. After having learned about the content of AU-ECA-AFDB initiative, the participants called for the definition of a frame for securing land rights, improving productivity and preservation of livelihoods
3. ROPPA and its members are pleased with the interest that African Union has for the issue of seeds, building of the African market and land policies. It is certainly about three important dimensions, but that are bound intrinsically to life and the future of family farms and their environment.
4. The importance of the rural activities, mainly of family farmers and their contribution in the constitution of national and regional riches need not to be pointed out anymore. In West Africa and within ECOWAS, farmers represent about 60% of the population and participate for 33% to the regional GDP. For 25 years, life deteriorates however in rural areas and the hope for a possible start crumbles to the point that the youth prefer the worse (to take the dugouts of death in for clandestine migration ") than remaining at the " bottom ", in the village.
5. The present situation of poverty, of precariousness, of insecurity, of tensions around the access to productive natural resources is the consequence of the choices of development policies that the States and Region operated for two decades. Certainly, it cannot be ignored, that in the present context of demographic pressure and accelerated urbanization, land and natural resources that it contains, of tension or even of conflict between different social strata: between farmers and breeders, migrants and natives, public administration and populations, urban and rural people, neighboring communities and even in the same country.
6. However, for us members of ROPPA, our main concern is the agricultural policies and land policies developed external pressure in the name of a liberalization give more room to agro-business and multinationals, at the expenses of our communities, our agricultural markets and our family farms.

7. Our concern is the present tendency to question the collective and communal property of land rights of multiple use multiples on natural resources that this earth carries again. The argument put forward would be that these forms of exploitation are incapable of generating a productive and competitive agriculture. It is of course, to ignore the economic and social reality of our countries for which family farms provide an important part of export income of export and the essential of jobs.
8. Our concern is the present tendency of selling land which questions some of our values on land and farm management. This selling combined with some mode of sharing the heritage leads to the spreading of property and reduction of family productive capacity.
9. For us farmers, pastoralists, fishermen, pickers and hunters, land, water and biological resources of which they conceal, are our only heritage. Like every citizen, we should have the right to protect them, to keep, to valorize and to transmit them to our descendants.
10. It also implies that it is eradicated from legislations and present social practices, any provision capable of going against the exercise of this right. It implies the creation of a favorable environment for the structuring of investments that allows family farms to valorize and keep this heritage for a long time.
11. While trying to defend the rights of family farms, agricultural professional organizations are aware that among them, they must also debate some issues as delicate as the equitable access to property and use of land and natural resources to different family members (women and youth and non emancipated households), to the pastoralists and migrants, to farmers or migrant fishermen, to pickers and hunters, in other words, to all components of our communal and farming life.
12. The land issue is complex. It has the social, political, economic, cultural or even cultural worship that vary according to countries, peoples and history. It is for this matter that it cannot be managed or even in its entirety at sub-regional or even continental scale.
13. However, the African Union African and Regional Economic Communities like ECOWAS can have an important role in the setting up of a convergence system for States concerning guarantee and respect of land rights of family farms and the different socio-professional groups living on natural resources.

It is for this matter that, we, farmer organizations and agricultural producers of West Africa,

**Commit ourselves to:**

- Get mobilized to carry the debate on land policies to our villages, our municipalities, our central structures and our frames of dialogue or national platforms,
- Organize spaces of dialogue between groups of users of natural resources, customary chiefs, local, national, religious, political, parliamentary, and elected decision-makers on the issue of land fundamental security and rights of property and access to resources for women, youth and other socio-professional groups of the agricultural community
- Conduct studies and activities of research-action, in relation to the national systems of research, in order to identify alternative solutions to some land insecurity problems that our members encounter,
- Participate, through our own efforts, to the prevention and management of the conflicts around natural resources.

**We invite:**

- The States of the sub-region to define coherent agricultural policies that put the agricultural family exploitation and family agriculture at the center of their concerns;
- The States of the sub-region to create an environment conducive for securing and modernizing our agricultural and rural professions for an equitable access for all the actors, especially women and youth to be able to have quality land for the development of our family farms;
- The States of the sub-region to put policies for soil regenerations in place facing the consequences of climate changes that reduce the potentialities of productions in our States and are sources of conflicts on land;
- The States of the sub-region implement consensual policies defined for the agricultural guiding laws, through the implementation of decrees;

**We encourage**

- AU, ECA, AFDB, and FAO to facilitate the appropriation of the process on land policies in the different countries of the region;
- The African Union to sensitize the States of the sub-region more on the need to take into account the global dimension of the future of family farms
- AU, ECA, AFDB and FAO to support the land charter development process for West Africa coordinated by CILSS and to which all the actors of the region are associated.

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