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**CALL OF FARMERS AND PRODUCERS OF WEST AFRICA
MEMBERS OF ROPPA**

**TO HEADS OF STATES
AND
HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF NATIONAL AND ECOWAS
PARLIAMENTS**

At one month from the beginning of 2008 – 2009 agricultural campaign, annual hope for millions of family farms, a great anxiety prevails in villages, rural communities and townships of ECOWAS territory: « How to secure food for families and animals as well as the costs of agricultural inputs? »

The poor results of 2007 – 2008 agricultural campaign and the increase of staple food prices everywhere within the region threaten the small local savings and economies. While appreciating the various efforts and initiatives implemented in all our countries, we wish to see a greater political will in order to motivate the mobilization of farmers and producers for them to face the challenge of an abundant and quality production of cereals, tubers, meat, diary products and fish which are the staple food.

Yes, it is possible and we should believe and get committed to it.

Our region has an arable land of more than 197 000 000 hectares, of which only 54 millions hectares are exploited, with 120 000 000 hectares of pastures. We receive 1 000 billions cubic meters of water per year and have a tremendous irrigation potential and abundant sea and forest resources.

All these assets did not lead to an agricultural boom. We do not exceed an average of 523 U\$ in added value per worker and we import for our food the value of more than 4 billions U\$ per year ([FAO Source](#)).

Based on the forecast reviewed within ECOWAS, Chad and Mauritania (except Liberia), cereal production is estimated at 47.2 millions of tons, according to FAO. In all the ECOWAS countries, there is no food security stock of 2.5% from harvest yields.

While Africa has 80% of phosphate resources, (average use of 9 kg/ha), input costs and agricultural loan rate are among the highest in the world (except Senegal).

The generalized increase of world prices of agricultural and food products linked to the search for new sources of energy and to the slowness in the building of our regional market well protected and secured worsen the risks of an intense insecurity and limit our possibilities.

Unfortunately this situation can persist if the measures continue to be taken by individual States with very selective and inefficient effects.

Considering the importance of decapitalization of family farms these recent years, emergency measures only are not enough to face the challenge of a sustainable agricultural growth in order to efficiently eradicate food insecurity and alleviate poverty. They should be inserted in a mid and long term strategy for West Africa's agricultural development and food dependency alleviation.

Today, let us all acknowledge that we have wasted time in errors, hesitations and we are afraid of "fake powers".

To date, the agricultural promotion everywhere in the world is sustained by:

- the development of efficient agricultural and food services,
- the functionality of a co-managed agricultural and rural counselling between public and private actors,

- The organization of markets and infrastructures,
- the capacity building for structuring FO and interprofessions,
- The building of improved funding mechanisms,
- The public funding,
- the support to income,

On the eve of the agricultural campaign, the situation is serious.

That is why we urge you to favourably give an answer to the very urgent proposals by:

- Supporting rural families with food commodities where need be and by supporting farmers' strategies to ensure in villages, an availability of cereal stocks accessible to rural families,
- supplying family farms with seeds,
- granting fertilizers and plant treatment products at 50%,
- Improving the loan rate and bringing it to 6%,
- Foreseeing food security stocks in all the States at a level of 3% of national consumption needs in 2009.
- Accelerating the building of the regional market with a CET and all the appropriate protection tools,
- Accelerating the implementation of ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP).

These measures should be taken for this agricultural campaign and also enable the preparation of the next campaign from today.

ROPPA and its members are convinced that what no developed country did not want to do, we cannot do it.

We demand of the international community to:

enable us according to our means and resources to do what powerful agricultural States do and will continue doing by supporting their agriculture with grants and which productions compete with those of our brave farmers, breeders, fishermen and foresters.

Also, we urge our heads of States to show a strong political will and concrete actions, and more specifically to:

- ***Support more vigorously the development of local production by:***
 - Strengthening public research and agricultural counselling institutions.
 - Supporting the production and dissemination of plants and seeds for food production, improvement of animal and fish species and their dissemination among farmers.
 - Setting up community measures for a sustainable trans-border management of natural resources.

- Respecting commitments of States to implement land reforms conducive for securing family farms, vulnerable or specific groups (women, breeders...).
- Strengthening the irrigation sector by revitalizing hydrographical basins management organizations, supporting the small scale irrigation.
- Developing and strengthening management initiatives of water resources and soil defence and restoration for an improvement of rain-fed productions.
- Strengthening the public funding to agriculture, livestock production, fishing and forestry for the modernisation of farms and development of productions, through more ambitious and efficient rural investment mechanisms, the allocation of at least 10% of the national budget to the agricultural sector according the decision of Heads of States in Maputo.
- **Facilitate a rapid development of local and regional markets of agricultural and food products by:**
 - Adopting an offer management policy and protection measures appropriate to the import of products competing with local production
 - Setting up road and market infrastructures in rural areas to enable the storage and distribution of agricultural and food products.
 - Developing more appropriate policies and mechanisms for the promotion of traditional and semi-industrial processing of agricultural products in production areas for a better dissemination and the creation of an added value.
 - Strengthening agricultural information and food and agricultural products' markets tools and their access to farmers.
- **Develop agricultural activity and family farm security policies by:**
 - Defining sustainable funding tools and mechanisms for the management of specific hazards and crises (locust invasion, floods, drought, unforeseen events...) which agricultural activities and family farms face.
 - Implementing appropriate land development policies in order to develop tremendous existing potentialities and develop productive complementarities
 - Supporting the access of villages to energy in order to increase the productivity and improve the environment.

We accept and acknowledge our weaknesses in some technical and economic areas but we think that we are at the same level as those States as far as the sense of honour, dignity are concerned and that we serve those who trust us.

ROPPA commits itself to support you to take up the collective challenge of food sovereignty within the States of the sub-region.

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