

CONTRIBUTION OF THE AGENCY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (AEDD) ON THE THEME OF THE PERMANENT FINANCE COMMITTEE FORUM: ACCELERATING CLIMATE ACTION AND RESILIENCE THROUGH THE FINANCING OF FOOD SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

After reviewing the selected themes, Mali commends the relevance of each chosen topic and proposes that the following points be considered as themes or sub-themes:

- The integration of land tenure issues in sustainable agriculture;
- The promotion of food safety and security;
- The advancement and valorization of agroecology;
- The organization of capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives on good agricultural and food practices for communities, particularly women and youth.

THE INTEGRATION OF LAND TENURE ISSUES IN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Justification:

The issue related to land tenure in sustainable agriculture in Mali is a complex and multidimensional challenge.

Unequal Access to Land:

The primary challenge concerns the unequal access to agricultural land. Despite significant land potential, the distribution of land is heavily skewed in Mali. There is a strong concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few large landowners, often to the detriment of smallholder farmers and rural communities engaged in subsistence agriculture. This situation results in a lack of land security for many farmers, who do not possess property titles or clearly established usage rights. Such precarious land tenure hinders their investments in sustainable agricultural practices and limits their access to credit. However, despite recent legislative advancements, many farmers still lack formal land titles, rendering them vulnerable to evictions and restricting their access to agricultural loans.

Conflicts Related to Land Management:

Another major issue is the contentious management of rural land, which often pits customary authorities against the state. Customary rules for collective land management coexist uneasily with the official legal framework, codified in the Domain and Land Code. These legitimacy conflicts surrounding land access are a source of instability in many regions, particularly in the context of a security crisis. They undermine the land security of family farms and compromise the investments necessary for sustainable agriculture. Moreover, land grabbing by elites, agribusiness companies, and foreign investors reduces the available space for peasant agriculture, generating land conflicts, particularly between farmers and herders. These tensions are exacerbated by deficient land governance, characterized by a complex and opaque overlap of customary and legal norms.

Weakness of the Institutional Legal Framework for Land Policies:

Despite recent progress, the land policies implemented in Mali still struggle to adequately address these issues. Although the Agricultural Land Law of 2017 has strengthened the legal framework, its application remains limited due to a lack of coordination among state institutions, local authorities, and traditional leaders. This institutional weakness hampers equitable and sustainable management of land resources. Furthermore, the absence of effective land-use planning contributes to soil degradation, deforestation, and advancing desertification, threatening long-term agricultural productivity.

Justification :

Lack of Appropriate Infrastructure:

There is a significant lack of appropriate facilities for the control and monitoring of food quality. Health infrastructure, such as quality control laboratories and certification systems, remains insufficient to ensure optimal food safety on a national scale (source: World Bank). Additionally, the capacity for monitoring and managing risks associated with food contamination is still limited, especially in rural areas.

Insufficient Awareness Among Producers and Consumers:

There is also a lack of awareness among producers and consumers regarding good practices in food safety. Producers sometimes use processing and preservation methods that do not comply with health standards, which can lead to public health risks, such as foodborne illnesses (source: FAO).

Training and Access to Information:

Access to ongoing training for stakeholders in the agricultural and food sectors, including farmers, processors, traders, and consumers, is still inadequate. Implementing training programs on food hygiene, risk management, and food handling remains a major challenge to ensuring long-term food safety (source: FAO).

Strengthening Collaboration and Public Policies:

It is also essential to strengthen collaboration among relevant ministries, international organizations, private sector actors, and local communities for a more coherent and integrated management of food safety. Establishing stricter policies and regulations regarding food safety is necessary to safeguard public health and ensure the sustainability of the food sector in Mali (source: FAO).

Regulatory and Institutional Challenges:

Mali has a legal and regulatory framework to address food safety issues, including the establishment of the National Agency for Food Safety (ANSSA). However, the implementation of this framework remains a challenge, with ANSSA facing obstacles despite its efforts. There appears to be a need to strengthen the capacities of the various structures involved in food safety control.

Public Health Issues Related to Food:

The consumption of unsafe food is responsible for over 70% of diseases in Mali. This is due to several factors, including:

- The rapid development of street food, which poses high health risks;
- Lack of access to potable water and sanitation facilities, facilitating food contamination;
- Inadequate dietary practices, particularly among children, leading to malnutrition issues.

Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities:

The high poverty rate in Mali (45.5% in 2022) exacerbates the situation, limiting access to healthy and diverse food. Adverse climatic conditions, political instability, and economic factors also undermine the country's food and health security.

Intersectoral Coordination:

To address these challenges, an intersectoral approach seems necessary, involving all relevant stakeholders (government, producers, processors, traders, consumers, etc.). The National Coordination Committee (CNC) brings these stakeholders together, but additional efforts are required for better coordination.

In summary, food safety in Mali faces complex issues affecting regulatory aspects, public health, socio-economic factors, and coordination among various sectors involved. A comprehensive and integrated approach will be essential to tackle these major challenges.

THE PROMOTION AND VALORIZATION OF AGROECOLOGY

Justification :

Challenges of Agroecology in Mali:

The insufficient promotion and valorization of agroecology in Mali is a significant issue for the country's agricultural and environmental development. Several factors can explain this situation, including economic, political, educational, and cultural aspects. Here are some key points to understand this insufficiency:

Lack of Supportive Agricultural Policies:

In Mali, agricultural policies often remain focused on conventional practices that emphasize agricultural intensification through heavy use of chemical inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. Agroecology, which prioritizes environmentally friendly practices and emphasizes biodiversity, sustainable natural resource management, and resilience to climate change, is still not widely supported at a large scale.

Limited Funding and Technical Support:

Agroecology requires investments in research, producer training, and the development of suitable techniques. However, access to funding remains limited for agroecological projects. Additionally, training and extension programs that could support farmers in adopting these practices are not sufficiently developed.

Lack of Knowledge and Resistance Among Farmers:

Many Malian farmers, especially those in rural areas, do not have a deep understanding of the benefits of agroecology. Conventional agriculture is often perceived as more productive in the short term, making it difficult to transition to more sustainable practices, even if the latter offer long-term benefits for soils and the environment.

Pressure from Industrial Agriculture and Large Agricultural Projects:

Investments in large agricultural infrastructures, sometimes at an industrial scale, tend to dominate the agricultural agenda. These projects are often focused on exporting products and using farming methods that are incompatible with agroecological principles, which can discourage the adoption of more environmentally friendly agricultural practices.

Addressing the Effects of Climate Change:

Agroecology represents a promising response to the effects of climate change, which is a growing concern in Mali. However, challenges related to drought, soil degradation, and fluctuating yields require an integrated approach that often lacks visibility or attention in agricultural policies.

Role of Civil Society and International Organizations:

Some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international initiatives actively promote agroecology in Mali. However, their efforts often remain fragmented and lack coordination with national policies, limiting their reach.

Access to Land and Resource Issues:

Access to land and natural resources remains a central issue in Mali, particularly for youth and women. Agroecology, which often requires more diversified and localized land management approaches, could benefit from improved land governance and greater land security to enable stakeholders to engage in sustainable agricultural practices.

Need for Valorization of Agroecological Products:

There is a lack of structures and marketing mechanisms for agroecological products, which sometimes have higher production costs. Without adequate support for the sale and valorization of these products in local and international markets, it is challenging to encourage farmers to adopt these practices.

Food and Nutritional Vulnerability of the Population:

An increasing percentage of the Sahelian population, including in Mali, has become chronically vulnerable to food and nutritional insecurity. This is largely due to the degradation of climatic conditions and intense agricultural pressure.

Climate Change and Desertification:

Mali is highly sensitive to the effects of climate change, with a 20% decrease in rainfall over 40 years. The country faces successive episodes of drought that threaten the balance of ecosystems and agricultural production. Desertification affects approximately 51% of Malian territory.

Difficulties in Accessing Water:

The issue of water is critical in Mali, often being the main limiting factor for effective agricultural production. Access to irrigation water remains a crucial challenge, especially for vegetable growers who may have to cease their activities for several months each year due to lack of irrigation.

Weak Public Policies in Favor of Agroecology:

Stakeholders identify a challenge in mobilizing the state around public policies that favor the development of agroecology. Current policies do not seem adequately oriented toward this sustainable agricultural model.

Socio-Economic Obstacles:

In addition to environmental challenges, the adoption of agroecological practices faces socio-economic obstacles. The pursuit of profitability drives some producers to overuse chemical products, undermining more sustainable practices. Changes in agricultural production, including land abandonment, are also observed.

Insecurity and Conflicts:

The surge of violence in the north and east of the country, particularly in Mali, constitutes a major barrier to rural and agricultural development, including agroecological initiatives. In summary, Mali faces numerous challenges to the development of agroecology, ranging from environmental constraints (climate change, access to water) to socio-economic and political obstacles. Food and nutritional vulnerability of the population, along with insecurity, also represent significant barriers.

ORGANIZATION OF CAPACITY BUILDING AND AWARENESS RAISING ACTIONS ON GOOD AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITIES (WOMEN AND YOUTH)

Justification :

It would be beneficial to consider actions for capacity building and awareness-raising regarding good agricultural and food practices targeted at vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth living in rural areas.

Limited Access to Training and Capacity Building:

Documents indicate that rural women and youth often have limited access to training and capacity-building programs on good agricultural and food practices. This is attributed to several factors:

- Lack of financial and material resources among rural development organizations to adequately reach these target groups.
- Insufficient consideration of the specific needs of women and youth in the design and implementation of training programs.
- Physical accessibility challenges to training sites, particularly for women with family responsibilities.
- Lower levels of education and literacy among women and youth, making it more difficult to access technical information.

Inadequacy of Training Content:

Even when training is provided, documents reveal that the content is not always suited to the specific realities and needs of women and youth. Specifically:

- Programs tend to be too general, insufficiently addressing the constraints and priorities of different groups.
- A lack of recognition of the traditional knowledge and practices of communities, particularly among women.
- Insufficient integration of gender equality and women's empowerment issues.
- A greater emphasis on technical aspects rather than on organizational, management, and marketing dimensions.

Weak Knowledge Dissemination Within Communities:

Even when training is conducted, documents highlight challenges in the dissemination and sharing of knowledge and best practices within communities:

- Lack of effective mechanisms for sharing information and skills between direct beneficiaries and the broader community.
- Low involvement of local authorities and community organizations in disseminating training outcomes.
- Insufficient recognition and valorization of the skills acquired by trained women and youth.

Insufficient Means for Implementing Good Practices:

Finally, documents indicate that even when communities have access to knowledge, they face constraints in effectively implementing good agricultural and food practices:

- Lack of access to financing, inputs, equipment, and necessary infrastructure.
- Weak public policy support to facilitate the adoption of new practices by small producers.
- Challenges in accessing profitable markets to sell products resulting from these good practices.

The main challenges related to knowledge and the adoption of good agricultural and food practices by communities, particularly women and youth, include limited access to training and capacity-building, inadequacy of training content, weak knowledge dissemination within communities, and insufficient means for effectively implementing these good practices. A more inclusive, integrated, and locally adapted approach is necessary to address these challenges and enable better knowledge appropriation by these vulnerable groups.