



CORAF/WECARD and ICRISAT

*Together we increase incomes
and improve livelihoods*



Introduction

The Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles/West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD) was established in 1987 to coordinate and facilitate sub-regional agricultural research for development in West and Central Africa. It is presently constituted by the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) and their partners of 22 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.



**International Crops Research Institute
for the Semi-Arid Tropics**

CORAF/WECARD's vision is to contribute to sustainable reduction of poverty and food insecurity in the West and Central African sub-region through an increase in agriculture led economic growth and sustainable improvement of key aspects of the agricultural research system of the sub-region. It is mandated to implement the West and Central African sub-regional agricultural research policies defined by the Regional Economic Communities (ECOWAS¹, ECCAS², UEMOA³ and CEMAC⁴).

CORAF/WECARD promotes cooperation among member institutions, defines regional agricultural research for development priorities, facilitates the development of joint agricultural research programs, and serves as an advisory body for regional and international organization in the sub-region working in the agricultural sector.

ICRISAT and CORAF/WECARD have maintained a long-term relationship, initiated since the creation of CORAF/WECARD in 1987. The missions and objectives of the two organizations are similar and aligned towards improving food and nutritional security, reducing poverty, and protecting the environment in the poor rural areas of Africa and Asia. In 2008 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to promote and facilitate collaboration based on similar and complementary interests, capacities, and willingness to work together to improve the well-being of the poor of the semi-arid tropics (SAT) in West and Central Africa. The MoU could be considered as an indicator of the growing strength of the ICRISAT and CORAF/WECARD collaboration.

¹ Economic Community of West African States

² Economic Community of Central African States

³ Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine

⁴ Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale

ICRISAT's new strategic plan to 2020 follows an inclusive market-oriented development (IMOD) approach to enable the poor to go beyond subsistence farming and pave the way to prosperity in the drylands. It believes that a combination of agricultural research with effective extension services, suitable market linkages, and incentives, can increase agricultural productivity. This, in turn, can increase income and the capacity to buy better or more nutritious food, which will lead to good health and a better grip on life for the poorest farmers. This is a belief also strongly shared by CORAF/WECARD, which is translated in its specific objective of a sustainable improvement of agricultural productivity, competitiveness and markets to transform subsistence agriculture into entrepreneurial agriculture.

Collaborative projects

The collaboration between ICRISAT and CORAF/WECARD involves the implementation of several regional projects with NARS in the region. These projects involve training and research activities, which deliver regional public goods that add value to national priorities and ensure a brighter future for poor farmers and their families in West and Central Africa. Key projects, which demonstrate the collaboration between these two institutions, are highlighted as follows:

Improving groundnut breeding systems for drought tolerance and disease tolerance (between 1987 and 2007)

Several projects addressing regional priorities identified by CORAF/WECARD, implemented by NARS in collaboration with ICRISAT resulted in the delivery of groundnut varieties resistant to drought and aflatoxin and enhanced knowledge of stakeholders to manage aflatoxin infection.



The CerLiveTrees project integrates trees with crop-livestock systems so as to increase the productivity of farming systems and provide better feed for livestock.



and groundnut, which provide farmers with a reliable supply and a range of quality seeds, well adapted to local conditions. The project uses a multi-institutional, multi-scale and inter-disciplinary approach in close partnership with farmers, government and non-governmental organizations, scientists and other stakeholders. Through the establishment of innovation platforms and a value chain approach, the project strives to understand and address major constraints to sustainable seed and input systems in West and Central Africa. This project is implemented in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, and Mali and will strengthen the capacity of farmer groups on seed production techniques, seed quality monitoring, demand prediction, and marketing. Synergies with complementary projects are being established, which will allow countries to share experiences across the sub-region while minimizing duplication of efforts between programs. ICRISAT's main role in the project is to provide support to NARS in strengthening capacities in the areas mentioned and designing and implementing research methodologies, which take into consideration landscapes transcending national boundaries.

CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) (2010-2020)

The CGIAR Consortium in partnership with Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP) developed the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). This Program, funded by multiple donors and scheduled to run for a period of 10 years, has an overall goal to overcome threats posed by a changing climate on attaining food security, enhancing livelihoods and improving environmental management. One of the projects within this Program, which was implemented in partnership with CORAF/WECARD, aimed to generate knowledge on agricultural vulnerability to climate change in 12 countries in West Africa – Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Togo – and strategic options for decision makers related to policies and institutions.

Unlocking the opportunities to enhance sustainable seed systems of staple crops to improve food security and agricultural projection in West and Central Africa (2011-2013)

This project focuses on establishing efficient and sustainable seed systems for major staple crops such as sorghum, millet, maize, cowpea



A CCAFS workshop in progress.



The PROMISO team is all smiles after their meeting.

An integrated cereal-livestock-tree system for sustainable land use and improved livelihoods of smallholder farmers in the Sahel (CerLiveTrees) – (2011-2013)

Mixed farming system is common to the region but is characterized by very low productivity. It is hypothesized that crops, trees, and livestock are not well integrated in most of these systems, which results in inefficient nutrient management. Improved integration of trees with crop-livestock systems will not only increase productivity of the farming systems, but will also complement crop residues, thereby enabling better feeding of livestock. This is necessary to harness the complementary benefits inherent in mixed farming systems, enhance efficient nutrient management as well as foster integrated natural resources management. This is the goal that the CerLiveTrees project seeks to attain. ICRISAT is providing support to NARS to implement this project, which is being coordinated by CORAF/WECARD.

Food Facility Program (PROMISO 2) – (2010-2011) (International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD]/European Commission [EC])

The Food Facility Program for West Africa was initiated to respond to the critical food security issues resulting from low rainfall, which drastically reduced the sorghum and millet harvest in 2009. Coordinated by ISRA, this project focused on efforts to increase the production of sorghum and millet throughout the West African region. The project's objective is to strengthen farmers' skills and capacities in testing,

adapting and scaling up crop management options as well as new varieties of sorghum and pearl millet in West Africa. CORAF/WECARD provided support to this project by contributing its expertise in a training to facilitate understanding of the underlying principles of the Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D) approach and the application of its regional M&E tools by NARS involved in the project.

Other activities with CORAF/WECARD

- Eva Weltzien of ICRISAT is a member of the Scientific and Technical Committee of CORAF/WECARD since October 2009, and has contributed her expertise in plant breeding, genetic resources and seed system development.
- Bonny Ntare of ICRISAT provides technical backstopping in the development and implementation of regional seed projects facilitated by CORAF/WECARD, such as "Unlocking opportunities for sustainable seed systems for staple crops in West and Central Africa" executed in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Cameroon and Mali and in the recently initiated West Africa Seed Program (WASP).

In conclusion

Poor dryland farmers in West and Central Africa are risk-averse and highly vulnerable to a wide range of shocks (drought, disease, market prices, etc.) that inhibit their ability to invest in and benefit from IMOD. ICRISAT in partnership with CORAF/WECARD will continue to help them improve their livelihood capital reserves (social, human, natural, physical, and financial) that act as buffers and safety nets against shocks. This will involve improving policies, institutions, natural resource management, crop varieties/systems, income diversification, social networks and aid programs, community-based strategies and other interventions relevant to dryland farming. ICRISAT and CORAF/WECARD continues to be committed to building resilient partnerships along with other partners, which will grow stronger as smallholder farming progresses along the IMOD pathway.