List of Acronyms  5

Foreword  9

Introduction
Context And Justification of the Study  12
Purpose of the study  13
The Methodological Approach  18

Pre-CORAF Phase
The Context of the 1980s  14
Organization of Agricultural Research in the French-speaking African Countries  15
The Research Programs in Place  16
The Funding Modes And Mechanisms for Research Programs  17
Reasons And Process for Setting Up CORAF  18

Strengths And Weaknesses of Agricultural Research  18

Birth And Take-Off of CORAF
Recall of the Context  21
The Major Events  22
The Main Actors  23
The Bodies And their Methods of Operation  24
Scientific Management  25
The Funding Mechanisms And Modes  26
Strengths And Weaknesses  26
The Important Lessons  26

Africanization of CORAF
The Major Events  28
Governance And Scientific Management  30
Strengths And Weaknesses  30
The Main Lessons  30
A

AAFT, African Agriculture Technology Foundation
AARINENA, Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa
AARINENA, Association des institutions de recherche agricole du Moyen-Orient et d’Afrique du Nord
AfricaRice, Africa Rice Center
AfricaRice, Centre du riz pour l’Afrique
AISA, Association ivoirienne des sciences agronomiques
APAARI, Asia and Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
APAARI, Association des institutions de recherche agricole d’Asie et du Pacifique
ASARECA, Association for Strenghtening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
AU, African Union
UA, Union africaine

B

BASIC, Building African Capacity
BAD, Banque africaine de développement
ADB, African Development Bank

C

CACAAARI, Central Asia and Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research
CACAAARI, Association des institutions de recherche agricole d’Asie Centrale et de Caucus

CAADP, comprehensive African agricultural development Programme
PDDAA, Programme détaillé pour le développement de l’agriculture en Afrique
CAMES, Conseil africain et malgache pour l’enseignement supérieur
CAP, Common Agricultural Policy
PAC, Politique agricole commune
CAPP, Central African productivity Programme
PPAAC, Programme de productivité agricole en Afrique Centrale
CARPAB, African Research Centre for Bananas and Plantains
CARPAB, Centre africain de recherche pour bananiers et plantains
CGIAR, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
GCRAI, Groupe consultatif pour la recherche agricole internationale
CMA/WCA, Conference of Ministers of Agriculture in West and Central Africa
CMA/AOC, Conférence des ministres de l’agriculture de l’Afrique de l’Ouest et du Centre
EEC, Economic European Commission
CEE, Communauté économique européenne
ECOWAS, Economic Community of West African States
CEDEAO, Communauté économique des États de l’Afrique de l’Ouest
ECCAS, Economic Community of Central Africa States
CEEAC, Communauté économique des États de l’Afrique Centrale
CEMAC, Communauté économique et monétaire de l’Afrique Centrale
REC, Regional Economic Community
CER, Communauté économique régionale
CERAAS, Centre d’étude régional pour l’amélioration de l’adaptation à la sécheresse
CILSS, Comité inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel
IARC, International Agricultural Research Center
CIRA, Centre international de recherche agronomique
CIRAD, Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement
CIRDES, Centre international de recherche-développement sur l’élevage en zone sub-humide
CNRA, Centre national de recherche agronomique
CNRST, Centre national de recherche scientifique et technique
CORAF/WECARD, West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development
CORAF/WECARD, Conseil Ouest et Centre africain pour la recherche et le développement agricoles
CSIR, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CRA ou AGRHYMET, Centre régional de formation et d’application en agrométéorologie et en hydrologie opérationnelle
CNRADA, Centre national de recherche agronomique et de développement agricole
STC, Scientific and Technical Committee
CST, Comité scientifique et technique
CTA, Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation
CTA, Centre technique de coopération agricole et rurale

D
DAS, Department of Agricultural Science, Federal Ministry of Agricultural Research Development
DFID, Department for International Development
DGRST, Direction générale de la recherche scientifique et technique
DONATA, Dissemination of New Agricultural Technologies in Africa
DONATA, Dissémination des nouvelles technologies agricoles en Afrique

E
EFARD, European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development
EFARD, Forum européen de recherche agricole pour le développement
EU, European Union
UE, Union européenne

F
FAAP, Framework for African Agricultural Productivity
FAAP, Cadre pour la productivité agricole en Afrique
FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO, Organisation des Nations unies pour l’alimentation et l’agriculture
FARA, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
FARA, Forum pour la recherche agricole en Afrique
FOFIFA, Centre national de recherche appliquée au développement rural
FAC, Fonds d’aide et de coopération
FORAGRO, Forum for the Americas on Agricultural Research and Technology
FORAGRO, Forum pour la recherche agricole et le développement de technologies en Amériques
IFAD, International Fund for Agricultural Development
FIDA, Fonds international pour le développement agricole
FIS, Fondation internationale pour la science
CRF, Competitive Regional Fund
FCR, Fonds compétitif régional
GFAR, Global Forum for Agricultural Research
ICRAF, World Agroforestry Centre
ICRISAT, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IER, Institut d’économie rurale
IFAP, International Federation of Agricultural Producers
IFAP, Fédération internationale des producteurs agricoles
IFPRI, International Food Policy Research Institute
IITA, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
ILRI, International Livestock Research Institute
INERA, Institut de l’environnement et des recherches agricoles
INRA, Institut national de recherche agronomique
INRAN, Institut national de recherche agronomique du Niger
ITC, International Trypanotolerance Center
INSAH, Institut du Sahel
IRD, Institut de recherche pour le développement
ISRA, Institut sénégalais de recherches agricoles
INERA, Institut national pour l’étude et la recherche agronomiques
INIDA, Instituto National de Investigação e Desenvolvimento Agrário
INPA, Instituto National de Pesquisa Agraria
MDG, millennium development Goals
OMD, Objectifs du millénaire pour le développement
NARS, National Agricultural Research System
SNRA, Système national de recherche agricole
NAIP, national agricultural investment Program
PNIA, Programme national d’investissement agricole
NARI, National Agricultural Research Institute
INRA, Institut national de recherche agricole
NEPAD, New Partnership for Africa’s Development
NEPAD, Nouveau partenariat pour le développement de l’Afrique
NGO, non-Governmental Organization
ONG, Organisation non gouvernementale
OCEDC, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OCDE, Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques
PAU, Politique agricole de l’UEMOA
UAP, UEMOA agricultural Policy
PO, Producers’ Organization
OP, Organisation des producteurs
PRASAC, Pôle régional de recherche appliquée au développement des savanes d’Afrique Centrale
PROCORDEL, Programme concerté de recherche-développement sur l’élevage en Afrique de l’Ouest
PSI, Pôle régional de recherche sur les systèmes irrigués en zone soudano-sahélienne
RAIP, regional agricultural investment Program
PRIA, Programme régional d’investissement agricole
SACCAR, South African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Training
SADC, Southern African Development Community
SAFGRAD, Promotion of Agricultural Research and Development in Semi-Arid Zones in Africa
SAFGRAD, Promotion de la recherche et du développement agricoles dans les zones semi-arides d’Afrique
SRO, Sub-regional Organization
OSR, Organisation sous-régionale
USAID, United States Agency for International Development
WAAPP, West African agricultural productivity Programme
PPAAO, Programme de productivité agricole en Afrique de l’Ouest
At 24 years in 2011, CORAF/WECARD (West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development), created, on 27 March, 1987, has come of age. That is to say the extent to which CORAF/WECARD is conscious of the huge expectations in the area of policy support for the agricultural sector in the respective countries within this vast sub-region of 22 NARS (National Agricultural Research Systems), but also of its predominant role, as the sub-regional Organization (SRO) for West and Central Africa, under the continental umbrella of FARA (Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa).

In 2003, considering the importance of agriculture, the African Heads of States, through the Maputo summit, in Mozambique accorded the role of research in supporting the different countries to achieve the set agricultural growth objectives. This awareness creation and legitimacy merited compelled CORAF/WECARD to look into the best way of playing its part. Over a period of 2 years, 2006-2007, with the active participation of all stakeholders, it crafted for itself with a new vision, a new mission, new objectives, a new strategic Plan for 2007-2016, a first medium-term operational Plan for 2008-2013, and a change management Plan.

Thus, the implementation of the eight research programs, which emerged from this new dynamic process, truly requires that all agricultural stakeholders in the sub-region should have the same retreat into the past and the same glance towards the future for “moving forward is secured than casting a glance behind oneself”. From where comes the decision by the governing bodies of CORAF/WECARD to commission the publishing of this beautiful brochure on its history from 1987 to 2007, full of information.

However, to retrace the course of such an agricultural organization for scientific coordination and cooperation is not much easy, so strong is it's shaping by men and events. The different men, who have presided over its destiny, have left, indeed, its path, indelible footprints as guarantees of their work of unequalled imagination and self-sacrifice. The many political and socioeconomic changes, occurred worldwide, did not spare it either, in the internal and external processes, by taking the form of new stakeholders appeared on the scene of agricultural research systems, of globalization of agricultural research systems, of a multitude of initiatives on new technologies, etc.
That is why, firstly, we are pleased to pay a profound tribute to the pioneers who are Mr. Herve Buchat, former Director General of CIRAD (Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement), and his associates, Mr. Bernard Bachelier, the first Executive Secretary (1987-1990) of CORAF (Conférence des responsables de recherche agronomique africains et français), the forerunner of CORAF/WECARD, the different African delegates to CIRAD, such as Mr. Roland Guis, who did not spare any resource of their institution to finance the initial meetings, to host the Executive Secretariat, and to animate the associated research Networks, Base-centers, and regional research Poles.

We are pleased to pay the same tribute to the correspondents of the Research Networks operating in the sub-region, the different Directors General of the African NARIs (National Agricultural Research Institutes), particularly Dr. Dognenena Coulibaly, the former Director of Research at the Ministère de la recherche scientifique (MRS) in Côte d’Ivoire, Mr. Fatogoma Traore, the former Director General of the IER (Institut d'économie rurale) of Mali, Dr. Jean Nya NGatchou, the then number one Technical Adviser at the Ministry of Scientific and Technical Research (MINSTR) in Cameroon, Dr. Jacques Eckebil, the Director of the ex-Agronomic Research Institute (ARI) in Cameroon, Dr. Michel P. Sedogo, the former Director General of the ex-Institut d'études et de recherches agricoles (INERA) in Burkina Faso, Dr. Charles Razafindrakoto, former Director General of the Centre national de recherche appliquée au développement rural (FOFIFA) de Madagascar, etc. They helped or facilitated the transfer of the Executive Secretariat from Paris, France, to Dakar, Senegal, in 1990, as well as the establishment of scientific cooperation tools.

We include into the personalities and institutions of cooperation and development, such as Mrs. Therese Pujole of the French Cooperation who supported, right from the onset, the spirit and principles of the initiative and Mr. Alain d’Arthenuc of the EEC (Economic European Union) of the EU (European Union) who contributed, in a more determined manner, to the organization of the different Plenary Meetings.

We are very pleased, too, to express our profound acknowledgement to the member NARS, through their representatives on the SRO bodies, the Scientific and Technical Partners, past and new Financial Partners, whose constant support largely contributed, over the years, to CORAF/WECARD’s consolidation and take-off.

We add to these, the members of the Executive Secretariat, particularly Dr. Ndiaga M’baye, the first Executive Secretary (1990-2003), who established it in Dakar, negotiated and signed the Headquarters agreement of the institution with the Senegalese authorities, obtained its political recognition and institutional legitimacy and to Mrs. Binetou Niasse Ndir affectionately called “maman CORAF”, for her loyal assistance, who has become, nowadays, the “home-living memory.”

We thank Dr. Michel P. Sedogo, the Director of Research at INERA became (Institut de l’environnement et des recherches agricoles) and of CNRST (Centre national de recherche scientifique et technologique) in Burkina Faso. Dr. Sedogo was the former Chairman of the STC (Scientific and Technical
Committee) of CORAF/WECARD, a privileged witness and actor in the institution’s evolution; we thank him for his remarkable contribution to the conduct and coordination of this current study.

Our gratitude also goes to several personalities, for being available, having witnessed and given their opinion, having facilitated the coherent “traceability” of speeches, actions, and gestures broadened the road made. Here, we can mention, amongst them, Dr. Moctar Toure, the Board Chairman of Africa Harvest, Dr. Jean Sibiri Zoundi, the Chief Administrator at the Secretariat of the Club du Sahel of the OCEDC (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), and Dr. Yo Tiemoko, Director General of the CNRA, Côte d’Ivoire.

Finally, it is our supreme duty and the sign of honor to dedicate this work to the memory of our very dear ones, Prof. Maurice Onanga, the President of our institution from 1992-1998 and former Director General of the DGRST (Direction générale de la recherche scientifique et technique) of Congo, Dr. Koffi Sie, the President from 2002 to 2005 and former Director General of the CNRA of Côte d’Ivoire, who passed away during their terms of office, the former on 28 March 1998, and the latter on March 28, 2005, Mr. Mahamoudou Fatogoma Traoré, a founding member and former Director General of IER in Mali, passed away in June 2007. The three of them, played memorable roles, at critical moments in the history of CORAF/WECARD.

Prof. Abubakar B. Yusuf Dr. Paco Sereme
Chairman of the Governing Board Executive Director
of CORAF/Wecard of CORAF/Wecard
The Context And Justification of the Study

From 28 to 31 May, 2007, in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, the CORAF/WECARD (West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development) celebrated its twentieth anniversary. On this solemn occasion, an extraordinary General Assembly organized adopted the new strategic Plan for the period 2007-2016 and, for the first phase of its implementation, adopted a medium-term operational Plan for 2008-2013.

The planning process that led to the elaboration of these two plans, integrated the orientations of the CAADP (comprehensive African agricultural development Programme) of the NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development) and the AU (African Union), the objectives of the CAP (common agricultural Policies) of the RECs (Regional Economic Communities) as well as the principles of FAAP (Framework for African Agricultural Productivity) managed by FARA (Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa).

It ended with a revision of the texts of the various organs of the SRO (Sub-regional Organization) by taking into consideration the new management mechanisms adopted and the role to be played henceforth by the different agricultural stakeholders concerned in the West and Central African sub-region. Today, CORAF/WECARD’s base has once again broadened to 22 NARS (National Agricultural Research Systems) which necessarily need, in a momentum of “common will of common life” to have the same retrospect of their common past to look ahead towards the same future.

That is why we hope that this brochure, walking back CORAF/WECARD history, will help.

Purpose of the study

The study had two main objectives. The first was to retrace the history of CORAF/WECARD, so as to learn from lessons rich in knowledge and experience. There is, consequently, a need to draw again major phases, from 1987 to 2007, to identify the main stakeholders having influenced them, the strategic orientations, the mechanisms and modes of funding research programs, the mechanisms serving them as support, the weaknesses and gains.

The second is to establish the link between these phases and the key developments which occurred at the political, economic, and institutional stages, both at the world level and Africa, particularly in West and Central Africa.
The Methodological Approach

The method that the study used was based on documentary research, interviews of the different agricultural stakeholders having good knowledge of CORAF and its history, and a questionnaire sent to key agricultural stakeholders.

The documentary research involved collecting and analyzing all the relevant documents produced at the level of the Executive Secretariat, INERA, the Executive Secretariat of CILSS (Comité inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel) in Burkina Faso, INSAH (Institut du Sahel) in Bamako, the SYGENTA (agro-industry seed and plant protection company) unit and the IER (Institut d'économie rurale) in Mali, the CNRA (Centre national de recherche agronomique) in Côte d'Ivoire, ISRA (Institut sénégalais de recherches agricoles) and different resource persons.

The interviews targeting different stakeholders having good knowledge of CORAF and its history were conducted with persons representing or not the organizations visited.

The questionnaire was sent to the key agricultural stakeholders, such as former Executive Committee members, old and new Executive Secretaries, former Coordinators or animators of Operational Units.

The information gathered helped to distinguish the five major constituent phases of the institution’s history. The pre-CORAF phase is an appraisal of the former agricultural research stations in the sub-region. The phase of the birth and take-off shows the ups and downs marking out the period of the creation of the institution, within a difficult socioeconomic context. The phase of the Africanization of CORAF marks the arrival of the African Heads and especially the search for legitimacy from African political authorities. The last phase draws again on the involvement of CORAF, then CORAF/WECARD in the process of globalization and integration of research systems at the national, sub-regional, regional, continental, and international levels.

Michel Papaoba Sédogo
The Author of the Study
Since the 1970s, several African countries have been confronted with food and environmental crisis. Those in the Sahel fringe (see first insert) have particularly tackled the recurrent cycles of drought that did not spare either the populations, or the animals, or the environment: endemic famine, significant internal and trans-border migratory influx from the dry zones towards the more favourable ones, high degradation of the environment in the form of worsening of the desertification and of a high loss of the biodiversity.

Those of Central Africa (see first insert) have been hit by the same problems, in the Northern part of the sub-region, of which the most expressive manifestation is the high degradation of the forest range of the Congo Basin considered as “the second lung of the world”.

As it was expected, this tragic situation affected mostly the most deprived populations, made up, in the majority, of the small-scale farmers, women, and children.

At that time, in most of the countries, the economies depended highly on agriculture which, itself, depended on the climate vagaries. What was more normal then was to witness frequent successive droughts with catastrophic repercussions on agricultural production, particularly on staple crops. One could only assist strongly in mobilizing energy – an all hands on deck struggle – to deal with the disaster at all fronts, including that of agricultural research.

As such, different initiatives were taken to re-launch agriculture through the dissemination of new agricultural techniques. Among those for regional integration, we can count the creation in 1975, of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) that aims at promoting, in the 15 member States, regional cooperation and the development of the economic sectors, including agriculture and natural resource management (see first insert).

We also capture the Economic Community of Central Africa States (ECCAS), created, in October, 1983, by eleven countries being willing to promote regional cooperation (see first insert).

As for the initiatives for coordination and capacity building of regional research, we capture the CILSS since its creation in 1973, besides involvement in food security. Its objective is to ensure, in the 9 member countries (see first insert), a new ecological balance, particularly in Chad, Northern Cameroon, and the Central African Republic, thanks to INSAG in charge of coordinating agricultural research in the Sahel and the CRA or AGRHYMET (Centre régional de formation et d’application en agrométéorologie et en hydrologie opérationnelle).

They also count SAFGRAD (Promotion of Agricultural Research and Development in Semi-Arid Zones in Africa), that has been promoting
agricultural research and development activities, since its setting up, in 1975, in 27 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (see first insert), through partnership with the CIRAs (International Agricultural Research Centers) and the NARIs (National Agricultural Research Institutes), supported by the USAID (United States Agency for International Development).

They also capture the contribution made up of WARDA (West Africa Rice Development Association), set up, in 1971, later re-baptized as AfricaRice (Africa Rice Center), initially grouping together 11, which later became 24 (see first insert) and affiliates to the CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research).

They finally capture CIRDES (Centre international de recherche-développement sur l’élevage en zone sub-humide) which has been contributing, since its creation, in 1991, towards resolving health problems in livestock, in the 7 member countries (see first insert).

Organization of Agricultural Research in the French-speaking African Countries

In the period after the independence of certain African countries in the 1960s, the majority of the French-speaking countries, because of the non-existence at that time of competent national scientists, entrusted the management of their research systems to France through cooperation agreements.

This is the reason why, the research programs were conceived and put in place by French-specialized institutions in existence at that period: IRAT (Institut de recherches agronomiques tropicales et des cultures vivrières), IRCT (Institut de recherche du coton et des textiles exotiques), IRHO (Institut de recherches pour les huiles et les oléagineux), IRFA (Institut de recherches sur les fruits et agrumes), CTFT (Centre technique forestier tropical), IEMVT (Institut d’élevage et de médecine vétérinaire des pays tropicaux), grouped later within the GERDAT (Groupement d’études et de réflexion sur le développement de l’agriculture tropicale), ORSTOM (Office de recherche scientifique des territoires d’Outre-Mer, then Institut français de recherche scientifique pour le développement en coopération that is, later more, changed to the IRD (Institut de recherche pour le développement).

Ten years later, from 1970, certain countries established their own research structures. That was the case in Senegal with ISRA, in Côte d’Ivoire with IDESSA (Institut des savanes) and IDEFOR (Institut de recherches des forêts), in Cameroon with IRA (Agricultural Research Institute), and in Mali with IER. But, they served not only as receptacles in so far, as the majority of the researchers were French. Thus, to use the example of Côte d’Ivoire, Cameroon, and Senegal, about 120 researchers from CIRAD (Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement) were at post, in each of these countries, in 1986. In the others, their member of staff was higher than that of the national researchers.

Gradually, the management of agricultural research was taken over by the national structures. It has been possible, in many countries as
well, thanks not only to the training and recruitment of national researchers, but also to investments supported by the World Bank, in backing up strategic plans for research elaborated and the assistance by the former ISNAR (International Service for National Agricultural Research) to Senegal and Burkina Faso. On top of this, is added, we must not forget it, the change in legal status of GERDAT.

The present CIRAD, set up in France, in 1984, in replacement of GERDAT, has been endowed with the legal status of public corporation of industrial and commercial dimension, which, already, compelled it to generate 40% of its budget. This new element also changed its partnership relations, since its researchers were in part either transferred to Montpellier or redeployed to integration zones and to themes considered as priority. From then on, everything was prepared and quite ready for CIRAD to change from a “partnership of substitution” to a “partnership of reason” based on strategic choices and priorities.

The emergence of the NARIs was also fostered, without any doubt, by the adoption of new programs aiming at building the capacities of countries in the area of research on staple crops and the control of the effects of drought, within CILSS and INS AH, such as the Project on millet, sorghum, cowpea, and maize, in 1986, financed by the EEC (European Economic Community) and the formation of the R3S Network (Réseau de recherche sur la résistance à la sécheresse), under the auspices of INS AH. Likewise, the new programs of SAFGRAD were to consolidate these dynamics and grant them a wider scope to manoeuvre.

To this, finally, contributed other programs on sorghum, millet, and groundnuts, building of national capacities in fostering partnerships with American Universities and especially with the IARCs for the establishment of the IITA (International Institute of tropical Agriculture) in Ibadan, Nigeria, of the setting up of ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) at Sadore, Niger, at Kamboinse, Burkina Faso, at Samanko, Mali, and at Zaria, Nigeria, and of the support of ISNAR.

However, all these NARIs were experiencing quite a number of difficulties in their growth, the narrowness of the dimension of the States for the scientific community due to the “political and administrative balkanization” inherited from colonialism and their weak positioning in the sight of governments and donors especially during the crucial period of the structural adjustment policies. Added to that was the insatiable need of the new generation of researchers to work in a context of expression, professionalism, and unanimity around the idea of thinking of agricultural research at the regional scale.

The Research Programs in Place

At that time, were in operation two types of research programs. The implementation of the first, jointly managed by the NARIs or the ser-
vices of the Ministries of Rural Development and the French Agricultural Research Institutes, respected the scheme defined by common accord, generally under the auspices of a national Committee on agricultural research which defined the research orientations and focal areas. The second, emanating both from initiatives or from the IARCs, was done with the involvement of researchers designated by their institutes but whose management eluded the coordination.

Based on disciplinary approach to the implementation of activities, majority of these research programs concerned the production of staple crops, such as variety selection, agronomy and crop protection. The adoption of this classic approach was justified in part by the success of the green revolution that was being practiced, in Asia, where the dissemination of high-yielding varieties helped to end the ravaging hunger. By so doing, many aimed at disseminating “miracle varieties to boost” food production, in order to achieve food self-sufficiency in the countries.

As part of this mechanism, specific agreements, such as Projects of the FAC (Fonds d’aide et de coopération) enabled to support, over several years, programs of common interest.

As for the initiatives, they had specific funding, from the EEC, through the DG8 (Directorate General 8) or DG12 (Directorate General 12) for CILSS programs; the USAID for SAFGRAD and CILSS; the IARCs and FAC for the R3S Network research Projects.

Reasons And Process for Setting Up CORAF

It was against the background above that the specialized institutes from France gathered a critical mass of researchers, exchanged genetic materials, information, and even researchers with African Francophone countries.

However, for several reasons, thanks to both the Africans and the French persons, this system of partnership could no longer endure. Indeed, the setting up of CIRAD, as a French public establishment, no longer permitted to give adequate space to the African partners, in its governing bodies, while the Governing Boards of the institutes of GERDAT included representatives from foreign countries. Consequently, a new way for dialogue was to be explored.
Moreover, CIRAD’s new status was doubtlessly going to lead it to review its operational scheme and its priorities in Africa. *A priori*, the French Cooperation, at its side, did not wish to continue to structurally manage research in the African countries.

Similarly, these latter could not stand idling by. They gradually established the NARIs, but they hardly provided sufficient capacities themselves to take up the management as well as their programs. Even those, in full booming, also needed to review their mode of cooperation with France, passing from a unipolar partnership of substitution to a more open partnership accompanied with consensual rules based and by sowing partnerships between the States, in view of the trans-border character of certain issues they were confronted with.

Consequently, consultations, supported by CIRAD and encouraged by France’s Ministry of Cooperation, were engaged. For its part, CIRAD brought together, in Paris, in March 1986, the authorities of agricultural research in Francophone African countries and Madagascar to share views on research priorities peculiar to each NARI (see second insert).

On that occasion, several decisions were made. All the participants adopted a list of common research priorities on rice, corn, cassava, and groundnuts as well as the “network approach” that could help to resolve these issues of regional interest. Finally, meeting behind closed doors, the representatives of the NARIs recommended the institutionalization of this meeting in official address.

But without much difficulty, seven months later, they held a second meeting, at the same venue, in October 1986, and paved the way for the creation of a formal framework for cooperation between them.

This was done, a year later, month by month, with the third consultation, held from 24 to 27 March, 1987, in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, that marked the baptism of the Conférence des responsables de la recherche agronomique africains et français (CORAF).

**Strengths And Weaknesses of Agricultural Research**

As we have just seen, the youthful age predisposed such an agricultural research organization to weaknesses and also strengths. The strengths manifested themselves by the existence of a wide range of experimental networks covering all the agro-ecological zones and permitting the mobility of researchers, exchange of genetic materials and information, by harmonization of approaches; by a strong support from the French Cooperation to the scientific animation scheme...
and by the existence of many initiatives aimed at building national capacities.

The weaknesses, mainly concerned the organizational weakness, the low scientific potential in terms of personnel, infrastructure, and equipment; lack of coordination and synergic initiatives mechanisms, low funding, highly dependent more on donors mainly from France, the high presence of the French specialized institutes in the countries and the sub-region.

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**First Insert**

**The CILSS Member Countries**

They are nine in number: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal.

**The ECOWAS Member Countries**

They are 15 in number: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

**The ECCAS Member Countries**

They were 11 in number, now reduced to 9: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, with the withdrawal of Burundi and Rwanda which now belong to the East African zone.

**The SAFGRAD Member Countries**

They were 27 in number in sub-Saharan Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Eritrea, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia.

**The AfricaRice Member Countries**


**The CIRDES Member Countries**

They are 7 in number from West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, and Togo.
### Major Priorities of Research in Staple Crops (Established in 1986): Viewpoint of African Research Structures

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Recall of the Context

The creation of the CORAF, as we have seen, took place at a time of serious food crisis and adjustment in the agricultural sectors, in West and Central Africa. Yet, the majority of the NARIs were disorganized and weak; a host of actors, without any ties between them, were spread over the sectors; formal ties with the IARCs were lacking. The only adjustment programs led to the dismantling of the traditional advisory backup structures in the rural areas, the establishment of multi-donor agricultural research projects — the World Bank as the lead partner — development of new systems of approach, training, and visits, etc.

Consequently, the setting up of CORAF must be considered as an original response to a crisis in agricultural research in French-speaking Africa at that time. CORAF, without beating about the bush, was, indeed, the concrete to bring to an end the divisions existing between the French-speaking countries after gaining independence and to propose by themselves and for themselves, an original and pertinent response to the challenges of the time.

This will be also in favour of the NARIs that, even though they were in the process of being established, had a confirmed uniqueness, that of occupying a key position in the African agricultural scene, stemming from their deep-rootedness in the field, and, at the same time, being the origin of the questions and the target of the responses from the common action covering the development of the rural area. It is of the national heads of policy development, non-

African national or international research institutions of oriented development or not, national public or private players, associations as “clients” of research, bilateral or multilateral donors...

From this uniqueness, thus results the very originality of an upward approach, based on a grouping of researchers on adopted national programs on priority themes within the framework of common objectives and the implementation of joint research projects (see third insert).

As such, the mission assigned to CORAF by its promoters was to strengthen the national agricultural research programs through the best consultation possible capable to develop a true “African scientific community” called to be the instrument to strengthen its roots in its environment, through the creation of an African arena for collaborative research.

The Major Events

From its inception to its take-off, the distance covered by CORAF is strewn with concrete achievements. The Monitoring Committee, the highest decision-making and orientation body, was set up by the first Plenary Meeting, held in
Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 29-30 November, 1987, which decided to broaden its activities, through the recognition of the R3S Network still running for the services of INSAH and CILSS.

Right from this time, the reflections raised by the Africanization of CORAF, gave it an African character marked by the transfer of the Executive Secretariat and opening up to the English- and Portuguese-speaking countries, that were initiated during the second Plenary Meeting, held in Dakar, Senegal, from 20 to 24 March, 1989, and continued in Antananarivo in Madagascar from 20 to 24 March 1990.

They were followed by the standardization of the mechanisms governing the life of the institution, through texts on the bye-laws of the Monitoring Committee and the charter of the research associative Networks and Base-centers adopted at the Antananarivo third Plenary Meeting, held from 20 to 24 March, 1990, as well as the establishment of the principle for scientific presentations at future Plenary Meetings.

Just like the fateful moment arrived for the elaboration and adoption of the first strategic Plan for the scientific, training, and information project, its adoption by the authorized body, the international political recognition, and the approval of the scientific and technical Policy. This was respectively on the occasion of the fourth Plenary Meeting, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 24 to 28 June, 1991; of the fifth organized in Dakar, Senegal, from 20 to 23 March, 1992; of the Conference of Ministers in charge of Agricultural Research in West and Central Africa and Madagascar, held almost at the same time, from 16 to 19 March; of the seventh that was held, in Banjul, The Gambia, from 17 to 19 March, 1994; of the workshop on the regionalization of agricultural research in West and Central Africa, organized, in 1994, with the support of SPAAR and USAID.

Finally, came the consultations between CORAF and the IITA for the take-off of the West and Central African Network for research on maize (WECAMAN) and the cassava Network, created in 1987, negotiations with SAFGRAD for the distribution of tasks in the area of research on maize, the joint supervision of the R3S Network with INSAH and the discussions with WARDAG, ILCA (International Livestock Center for Africa) the present ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute), ICRAF (International Centre for Agroforestry Research, presently World Agroforestry Centre) for a better understanding of the respective activities.

The Main Actors

Those, who were in the forefront of the onset of CORAF, were the Heads of 14 NARIs (see fourth insert), associate members made up of CIRAD, INRA, and ORSTOM, players from different initiatives, such as INSAH, CILSS, SAFGRAD,
CIRDES, WARDA (now AfricaRice), etc., donors, such as the States, World Bank, French Cooperation, EEC, USAID.

The Bodies And their Methods of Operation

At its inception, CORAF operated in an informal manner, somehow like a club of African Heads of Agricultural Research. It did not seem necessary to give it a well-defined status or search for political recognition or legitimacy.

Such a situation had certain advantages but it also had disadvantages, particularly, when comes the time of playing a role on the international scene. Also, the third Plenary Meeting held in Antananarivo adopted the principle of the organization of a Conference of Ministers in charge of Agricultural Research, with the aim of giving CORAF a little more formal nature and political backing. In view of that, it was planned to prepare a set of texts, governing the organization and functioning of the association.

CIRAD proposed to host the Executive Secretariat and appointed one of its executives, Bernard Bachelier, as the Executive Secretary. This was done in Paris, under its legal context. But with the events, that you are already aware, CORAF seriously needed its own appropriate legal framework that would enable it to be operational from Africa. It was as such that drawing inspiration from the unfortunate experiences of similar structures, was accorded to it the status of association of national agricultural research institutions, capable to confer on it greater flexibility in operation, permit it to avoid high general costs and bureaucratic procedures, and also to facilitate the intervention of aid agencies that would increasingly prefer to intervene in such organizations.

They also set up four organs for CORAF.

The Plenary Meeting, the highest decision-making and orientation body, brought together the directors of member NARIs and partners as associate members. It held an ordinary session, once a year, in principle in the third week of March, and an extraordinary session, when necessary, in an African country.

The Monitoring Committee, the monitoring and evaluation body between two Plenary Meetings, was made up of 10 members, 6 of whom were Directors from the NARIs and 4 were Directors from the associate institutions, elected for three years by the Plenary Meeting, met three times a year, before, during and after this latter.

The Executive Secretariat, under the direction of the Executive Secretary, and the supervision of the Monitoring Committee, implements decisions and resolutions of the Plenary Meeting, follows the scientific activities, and organizes meetings, for which it officiates as a rapporteur.

The research associative Networks, that animated the scientific life, through the implementation of research projects in the areas considered...
as priorities, were headed by a Coordinator appointed from an African structure and a Corresponding Member from a French institution.

Scientific Management

The originality of CORAF’s approach resides in seeking to develop synergies between the African research institutions, on one hand, and between them and their French or European partners, on the other hand. One of the concerns was thus to identify the priority domains and concentrate all their efforts there: in March, 1986, the national priorities were defined and their synthesis helped to bring out those of regional scale.

In this way, all the countries expressed an interest for basic staple crops—maize, rice, groundnuts, cassava—for cotton cultivation and for drought resistance. For the occasion, the Networks, formed to take responsibility for each of the themes, were aimed at strengthening and making the NARS more dynamic in order to give them a regional and international dimension; at promoting the acquisition of scientific knowledge and the utilization of results; at fostering exchanges between the different national research teams and the consultations with the IARCs and the regional organizations; at preparing and submitting research projects for external funding; and, finally, at encouraging the formation of multidisciplinary teams, training, and supervision of researchers.

To do that, a Network could have one or many Base-centers that, located in one institution (or more national research institutions) open to regional and international cooperation, gathering adequate human, financial, and material resources, were conceived as centers of excellence or poles for agronomic research with results applicable or adoptable in other countries with similar development concerns. That is how, within the ISRA, the CERAAS (Centre d’étude régional pour l’amélioration de l’adaptation à la sécheresse) was created and run by the R3S Network.

According to their charter, a Network is a group of researchers who work together on a research theme that is acknowledged by CORAF to be a priority. Its organs are the General Assembly, Steering Committee, Coordination, External Correspondent, and National Correspondents. That was the case of the Réseau Ouest et Centre africain de recherche sur le sorgho (ROCARS), formed in 1984, the R3S Network, in 1985, the Network on groundnuts, the cotton Network, the WECAMAN, the rice Network (became the West and Central African rice research Network), and the cassava Network, in 1987, the livestock Network, in 1989, etc. The results generated were published, in the Newsletter of each Network, with the aim of making them known, guaranteeing the quality of the research carried out, and giving credibility to CORAF. In this respect, administrative, financial, and scientific evaluations of the Networks were envisaged.
Moreover, CORAF tackled another front, that of defining the main guiding orientations for the regional coordination. Its main focus was outlined to serve as guide for preparing medium-term plans, which, in their turn, should lead to the annual research programs. It defined, therefore, three main thrust, where it was evident that the actions, carried out at the regional level, will have a cost-effective report more clearly favorable than the actions, carried out at the national level: the definition and implementation of joint scientific projects; the training of researchers, technical experts, and managers of research; the dissemination of scientific and research information among member institutions.

As such, the process for the preparation of the first strategic Plan was launched, in 1989, with the aim of getting it to be validated by the Ministers in charge of Research in West and Central Africa.

The Funding Mechanisms And Modes

At that time, the sources of funding CORAF were limited to the countries which, through the NARIs, bore part of the costs related to the functioning of the Networks; CIRAD was in charge of that of the Executive Secretariat, the activities of the Correspondents and Networks; the French Cooperation was in charge of that of the Networks and statutory meetings; the EEC took care of the Networks and their coordination; the World Bank supported the NARIs through their agricultural research Projects’ capacity building, training, equipment, infrastructure, institutional reform, etc.; USAID supported the activities of various Initiatives in collaboration with the NARIs.

Strengths And Weaknesses

In such a walk, CORAF recorded gains but also some shortcomings. One witnessed the birth of a truly dynamic scientific process encouraged by the activities of the Networks, with the different authorities of the NARIs taking ownership of the Initiative, the development of a keen interest in the policy of openness materialized by the contacts tied and maintained by the Monitoring Committee with the research institutions evolving on the African and European continents and funding obtained as a result of the calls for research projects launched mainly by European aid Agencies.

Likewise, CORAF suffered from many ills, namely the lack of executives at the NARIs, their very rapid rotation at the level of the governing bodies, as well as the research teams at the base, lack of own resources, such as an autonomous permanent budget, lack of evaluation procedures of the activities of the operational Units, the truncated or extroverted perception of the club’s image of the national institutions without
any constitutions, nor clearly defined mandate, without political backing up and the negative opinion of being considered as an appendix of French research.

The Important Lessons

It is undeniable that the NARIs had great need for an arena for activity, dialogue and consultation. However, right from the first few years,

Third Insert

Account by Dr. Bernard Bachelier, First Executive Secretary of CORAF

We were a small group of 15 Heads of Agricultural Research who conceived CORAF. I can mention a few of them: Dr. Dognenena Coulibaly, ex-Director of Research at the Ministère de recherche scientifique (MRS) in Côte d’Ivoire; Mr. Fatogoma Traoré, former Director General of the Institut d’économie rurale (IER) in Mali; Dr. Jean Nya Ngatchou, then Technical Adviser number one at the Ministry of Scientific and Technical Research (MINREST) in Cameroon; Dr. Jacques Eckebil, Director of the ex-Agricultural Research Institute (IRA) in Cameroon; Dr. Michel P. Sedogo, former Director General of the Institut d’études et de recherches agricoles (INERA) which became Institut de l’environnement et des recherches agricoles (INERA), still under the auspices of the Centre national de recherche scientifique et technique (CNRST) in Burkina Faso; Dr. Charles Razafindrakoto, then Director General of the Centre national de recherche appliquée au développement rural (FOFIFA) in Madagascar, etc. They assisted and facilitated the transfer of the Executive Secretariat from Paris, France, to Dakar, Senegal, in 1990, as well as the setting up of the tools for scientific cooperation.

On the side of France, I represented CIRAD. Harry Palmier represented ORSTOM. It is this group that prepared the basic elements of

Fourth Insert

The Representatives of the African NARIs

They were from 14 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.
appeared serious strategic limitations. In fact, one could not run an African initiative from Paris, with solely French funding and in the absence of any support from African political authorities. One could not also promote it, without fulfilling the pressing need to open up the structures to other English- and Portuguese-speaking communities in the sub-region, nor capitalize the other ongoing initiatives in the region.

CORAF: statutes, logo, working principles, strategy, and animation of meetings.

There was much confidence among us and the freedom of discussion which was based on shared convictions.

On the side of France, Jacques Poly, who was the President of INRA and CIRAD, greatly supported and encouraged this Initiative. He understood its meaning. He attended the meetings, until 1990. He supported me and shared with the authorities of CORAF his experience, vision, and human warmth. Dr. Herve Bichat, the Director General of CIRAD, also supported this project. He had confidence in us. He made us understand what was at stake. Dr. Rene Billaz, the Scientific Director of CIRAD, contributed to the scientific organization of CORAF. Also worth mentioning from the involved French Ministries are Emmanuel Salomon Legagneur and especially Therese Pujolle.

To support the establishment of CORAF, I obtained the release of funds from the Ministry in charge of Research and the Ministry in charge of Cooperation. This funding played a very important role, since it helped to finance the Networks and especially to initiate cooperative projects within the Networks proposed by teams from many countries.

The financial set-up was decisive. We had to make the French donors to understand that there was the need to finance research projects as well as the functioning of the structure, the basic support for the Networks and the Base-centers, something that the donors never liked. I succeeded in getting these principles accepted which ensured the smooth take-off of CORAF under good conditions.
The Major Events

The pathway of the 1990-1996 period, which marks the beginning of the Africanization process, the great openness towards other linguistic zones and the search for political legitimacy of CORAF, is tied up with major ups and downs.

It was during its second Plenary Meeting, held in Dakar, Senegal, from 20 to 24 March, 1989, that CORAF decided to transfer the Executive Secretariat and the appointment of a Senior Executive from Africa to head it. As such, the Headquarters, transferred from Paris, France, will be based in an African country to be decided by the Plenary Meeting upon the proposal of the Monitoring Committee.

It was towards its Plenary Meeting of Antananarivo, held the following year that it decided to set up a three-member selection committee made up of Dr. Koffi Goli, Director General of the Institut des savanes (IDESSA) in Cote d’Ivoire, Dr. Mohamadou El Habib Ly, Director General of ISRA in Senegal, and Dr. Bernard Bachelier, Africa Delegate of CIRAD of France, giving it the power to recruit a permanent Executive Secretary.

The selection committee advertised for candidates from the countries in the region covered by CORAF. The different responses, reaching the Executive Secretariat in Paris, were made up as follows: responses from 3 countries accompanied by 5 candidacies; responses from 7 countries without any candidate; no response from 5 countries (see fifth insert).

With hand-carried dossiers, the selection committee members, meeting in Dakar, Senegal, on 27 and 28 February, 1990, a month before Antananarivo, adopted a system for evaluating the candidates and prepared the terms of reference. They were tied, on one hand, to the location of the Executive Secretariat and to the recruitment of the candidates, on the other hand.

The location of the Executive Secretariat should, in particular, satisfy the country’s commitment to host it, by offering settlement facilities and adequate logistical means, the provision of the basic salary of the Executive Secretary by his institution of origin, the easy access of the country, and the offer of communication facilities and the cultural, hospitality, and educational services.

After having analyzed the dossiers, line by line, on the basis of the criteria defined, the Selection Committee retained the candidacy of Doctor Ndiaga Mbaye, researcher at ISRA of Senegal.

For that purpose, ISRA pledged once more to pay the basic salary in question, something that prevailed until the departure of the first Executive Secretary in June 2003, to place at his disposal a Personal Secretary who became his...
Saly Portudal, Senegal, had created, in the same vein, the Forum of Scientific Partners, the Donors Club, and the Scientific and Technical Committee, at the end of its deliberations on 21, 22, and 23 November, 1995.

From that moment, the Monitoring Committee was made up solely of African members and the Networks managed by researchers from the NARIs. So what was then naturally and logically to occur was the change of the name, from the Conférence des responsables de recherche agronomique africains et français (CORAF) to the Conférence des responsables de recherche agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre (CORAF), effected by this extraordinary Plenary Meeting.

Within the same period, other major events had contributed to this unprecedented evolution. Firstly, the sixth Plenary Meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, held from 15 to 20 March, 1993, that was dominated essentially by a quadruple vital reflection: how to gradually move research from a sector approach to production system approach. How to organize the institutional and scientific evolution of the NARS and new CORAF, towards the capacity building, to improve the project management, to implement the new forms of regional cooperation, and to strengthen the partnerships. How to obtain the status of Senegalese law-based international association for CORAF as well as the Headquarters agreement to be signed with Senegal. It was within a special context, shaken
by the reflections aroused by the CGIAR concerned for the setting up of an international agricultural research system and marked by the reforms begun by the World Bank in the countries concerned.

Then the eight Plenary Meeting, held in Cotonou, Benin, from 14 to 18 March, 1995 that adopts the first action Plan on scientific and technical information and increases the number of Networks to 9.

Finally, the ninth plenary Meeting of Brazzaville urged the NARSs to gradually take in charge the funding of CORAF activities, that it had requested to work closely with the Conseil africain et malgache pour l’enseignement supérieur (CAMES), solely capable to help provide a status for researchers and especially elaborating specific and harmonized criteria for this evaluation, whose application was entrusted to the CNRST of Burkina Faso.

Governance And Scientific Management

Following the cancellation of the associate member status, let us recall it, the Monitoring Committee was finally comprised of 10 African members, the operational Units, structures for scientific animation, were exclusively in charge of the conception and implementation of federated programs and research projects. On the contrary, not yet operational, the STC, in charge of the scientific quality of CORAF’s programs, still comprised non-African Scientific Partners among its 8 members.

Strengths And Weaknesses

During this period, CORAF obtained the official recognition from the Senegalese authorities that conferred on it with the status of Senegalese law-based international association, from the Ministers in charge of Agricultural Research, and from the Conference of Ministers of Agriculture in West and Central Africa (CMA/WCA) that designated it as their agricultural implementing agency; the broadening of its base to English- and Portuguese-speaking countries; diversification and participation of the NARIs in funding activities; a wider audience of CORAF on the international scene.

It could be possible that these gains would have been abundant, if CORAF had not bumped into lack of sustainable funding mechanisms for the activities and funding for first generation Networks and against the poor outcome of this Conference of Ministers in charge of Agricultural Research as compared to the expectations.

The Main Lessons

The fact of ISRA having provided the institution with Headquarters, a senior executive and a back-up staff is the perfect illustration of the will of the African NARSs to effectively express
ownership for CORAF. The same held true with the transfer of the Executive Secretariat to Dakar and the courageous decision, albeit poorly negotiated, to suppress the status of associate member initially conferred to French research institutes. The lack of preparedness of this “disconnection” has been, instantly, lethal for the operation of the first generation Networks, since they depended on CIRAD’s specialized departments on rice, maize, cotton, and groundnut. But, in any case, this Africanization of CORAF has enabled it to open up to increase its ranks and make it credible!

The Anecdote of the Moment
Dr. Maurice Onanga, Chairman of the Monitoring Committee, said, at the Plenary Meeting of Cotonou, in 1995, almost in these words: “You—the partners of the advanced institutions—must understand us. Today, the situation can be colored to that of the owner of a house with his dog, a faithful friend. In the district, everybody acknowledges that the house is well guarded. But friends are afraid to pay a visit, since the dog is reputed ferocious”.

“In order for the friends to come, the dog must be chained in the backyard. We always need you but we also want other friends to join us.”

Responses with candidates
- Cameroon: 1 candidate
- Congo: 2 candidates
- Senegal: 2 candidates

Responses without candidates
- Benin
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Côte d’Ivoire
- Guinea
- Madagascar
- Mali
- No response
- Burkina Faso
- Gabon
- Mauritania
- Niger
- Togo
Globalization of Agricultural Research

The Highlighted Events

Initiated from the 90s, the reflections, mentioned above and driven by CGIAR, the World Bank, and SPAAR would lead to deep reforms incarnated by the progressive globalization of agricultural research starting from 1995, with the ultimate goal of strengthening the partnership at all levels, namely between CGIAR and the NARS and the establishment of a global umbrella, namely the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR), within the Secretariat of FAO in Rome, Italy.

Designed as a framework for interactions between the IARCs, NARIs, non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Private Sector, and regional fora, GFAR is managed by a Steering Committee structured at regional, Organizational, and institutional levels. At the top of the Africa region is FARA; of the Latin America region is the Forum for the Americas on Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO); of the Asia and Pacific region is the Asia and Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI); of the Central Asia and Caucasus region is the Central Asia and Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI); of the Northern Africa and Middle East region, there was the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA), and of the Europe region is the European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD).

The organizations and institutions, on their side, comprise the Producers’ Organizations (PO), such as the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), IARCs, such as those of the CGIAR, NGOs, Private Sector, donors, development agencies, facilitation agencies, such as FAO, and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Moult by a sole vision of global cooperation embracing the development of a system of knowledge sharing, the promotion of scientific partnership run through natural resources management, the promotion of agro-ecology and the organization of the large animal, plant, and forest sectors, and the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the NARS and regional as well as sub-regional fora.

Naturally, to ensure a global coherence of this new mechanism, all these entities set in motion a process for the formulation of regional strategies, in this case, those operated jointly with the 3 SROs of sub-Saharan Africa—CORAF, the South African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Training (SACCAR), and the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA).

These efforts were organized under the auspices of SPAAR, since its creation in 1985, in Tokyo,
Japan, by the main donors involved in financing agricultural research and development in Africa, coordinated support and created synergies for the establishment of a regional framework of action at NARS level.

In West and Central Africa, this dynamics, insufflated by SPAAR, linked the countries in the Sahel, through the INSAAH-SPAAR Initiative for the “revitalization of agricultural research in the Sahel” and also through CORAF as a whole.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the four sub-regions concerned are Sahel, the West and Central Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa.

The various exchanges between actors enabled them to achieve remarkable milestones. Thus, in 1996, the idea of creation of a forum to federate research in the various regions of Africa was launched. In West and Central Africa, it was proposed that CORAF and INSAAH should be considered Sub-regional Organizations (SROs).

During the 17th Plenary Session of SPAAR held in Bamako, from 17 to 21, February, 1997, the consultation held between the NARIs, CILSS, and CORAF led to the designation of the latter as the SRO for West and Central Africa, with INSAAH, therefore, becoming an agro-ecological sub-entity (see seventh insert).

Thus, FARA was born in Bamako, with the first Chairman as Maurice Onanga (the position rotates among SROs) and with the mission to coordinate the activities of the SROs which are CORAF, ASARECA, and the SACCAR.

At first, the Secretariat of SPAAR served as a framework for the establishment of FARA, in Washington, then in Rome, within FAO’s Headquarters. The recruitment of the Executive Secretary were done, in 2002; the Executive Secretariat was, at the onset, hosted by the FAO regional Office for Africa in Accra, Ghana, before moving into its own premises provided by the Ghanaian government, in accordance with the Headquarters agreement between them.

These recent institutional arrangements would have repercussions on the future dynamics putting a rythm to SROs’ walk. The involvement of new actors has inexorably led to agricultural research management being seen no longer as “an affair of the State, its researchers and its directors of institutes”, but rather as “the affair of all”.

However, the arrival on the scene of the Private Sector, one insomuch absent from the consultation mechanisms with scientific research and increasingly influent in strategic orientations, the financing, and the marketing of research results, was not running without difficulty. Indeed, the Directors of the NARIs were reluctant, feeling dispossessed of their “thing”. The donors exerted pressure to speed up the process. The new actors showed signs of impatience, conscious of their organizational weaknesses and eager to benefit from the favorable income to the strengthening of their capacity.
What Were the Networks of Research Associations

In addition to the management of its own Networks, CORAF is increasingly entrusted with those of the ones from other institutions such as SAFGRAD and the CIRAD. This was as a result of USAID’s evaluation of Networks, realized in 1998. Discussions has been initiated, for that purpose, with WARDA concerning the ROCARIZ, with ICRISAT concerning the ROCAFREMI and ROCAR, and with SAFGRAD concerning the Projet protection écologiquement durable du nébé (PEDUNE).

Which Were the Regional Research Poles?

The Pole Régional de recherche sur les systèmes irrigués en zone soudano-sahélienne (PSI), was created in 1995, after the signing of the funding agreement, in July of the same year, between the French Ministry of Cooperation and CORAF. It worked on four themes: the irrigated soil degradation control hosted by IER in Mali; the diversification of irrigated crops guided by ISRA in Senegal; the intensification of irrigated rice cultivation driven by the Centre national de recherche agronomique et de développement agricole (CNAARDA) in Mauritania; the social and land management of irrigation hosted by INRAN (Institut national de recherche agronomique du Niger).

The Projet régional sur l’amélioration et la gestion de la jachère en Afrique de l’Ouest (PRASAC) is an initiative for networking researchers from scientific and training institutions of stakeholders from Central African countries, namely Cameroon, Central African Republic, and Chad. Institutions of the North, such as CIRAD and IRD are associated with a financial agreement between the French Cooperation and CORAF, signed in 1997 in N’Djamena, which facilitated the launching of activities under PRASAC.

What Were the Regional Research Projects?

The Projet régional sur l’amélioration et la gestion de la jachère en Afrique de l’Ouest, initiated in 1994 by CNRST in Burkina Faso, CIRAD, and IRD; the Project involved Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal as target countries.

The complementary Project on shortening and developing fallow periods, sustainable development in West and Central Africa brought together Mali, Cameroon, and Senegal. The funding came from the EU, as early as 1994.

What Were the Funding Modes And Mechanisms?

African countries finance field activities of the Networks, regional research Poles and Projects. CIRAD continued, on its side, supporting the Executive Secretariat.

The French Cooperation, for its part, supported the PSI, CERAAS, and Networks.
Thereof, Ms. Gisèle Lopez d’Almeida, Chairperson of INTERFACE, addressed at this memorable session, these close words with pertinence up to her high sense of humor: “The situation is similar to a wedding night, where the bride is ready, waits behind the door, and one keeps her waiting. This spouse fails of courtesy.”

Strengthened by such a status, CORAF perceived the necessity to restructure itself in order to adapt itself to the new context. Hence the pursuing of reflections by the tenth Plenary Meeting of N’Djamena, Chad, held from 17 to 22 March, 1997, and then by the eleventh Plenary Meeting of Accra, Ghana, held from 20 to 25 April, 1998, which made the resolution to develop the strategic Plan for agricultural research cooperation in West and Central Africa. This latter aimed at identifying research priorities, determining the frameworks for negotiation and dialogue between actors, and proposing a funding mechanism.

In this view, the targeted ambition emerges a genuine African scientific community for agricultural development and especially to consolidate the leadership of CORAF in the sub-region.

And the cascade of operated institutional changes gave way, at the internal and financial levels. The twelfth Plenary Meeting, held from 6 to 12 July, 1999, in Bangui, Central African Republic, recommended the implementation of the results of the institutional study commissioned, including the change of name from CORAF to West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD); change from Plenary Meeting to General Assembly (GA); from Monitoring Committee to Executive Committee (EC); the strengthening of the Executive Secretariat (ES); the representation of countries by the NARS and no longer by the NARIs; the planned opening of CORAF/WECARD to the NARS of Liberia, Sao Tome And Principe, and Equatorial Guinea; the finalization of the strategic Plan for its validation by the first GA and the bearing by the NARSs the cost of participation of their delegates in statutory meetings.

Thus, the General Assembly, the supreme orientation and decision-making body became responsible for appointing the Chairman, members of the EC, and the Executive Secretary, approving the programs and budgets, and validating the proposals and priorities, was made up of NARS representatives, of regional and international agricultural research institutions operating within the sub-regional level, of Development Partners (these latter stakeholders having no deliberative vote).

Every two years, it meets in an ordinary session and may also hold an extraordinary session, if necessary. For diverse reasons, however, this rule couldn’t be applied until from 2006.
The Executive Committee, the body controlling and following up on the GA’s decisions, proposes a candidate to the position of Executive Secretary, who appoints the officers of the ES on proposal from this latter; ensures the monitoring-evaluation of the ES; reviews and endorses annual programs and budgets, the annual report and balance. It is made up of 6 NARS representatives elected by the GA, 1 representative of Development Partners, 2 representatives of international and regional institutions operating in the region, 1 representative of the Private Sector, 1 representative of NGOs, and 1 representative of POs.

Their mandate lasts two years. It is renewable once for the NARS representatives whose number changes to 50%, at each ordinary session of the GA. It is non-renewable for the other representatives.

It meets twice a year in an ordinary session and can hold extraordinary sessions, if need be.

**Strengths And Weaknesses**

These institutional changes comprised both assets and limitations. Among the first ones, the establishment of a sub-regional agricultural scientific platform, the generation of technologies for agricultural growth and the sustainable management of natural resources, the creation of conducive conditions for the dissemination of knowledge and outputs from the NARIs, for which an Information and Communication Manager has been recruited and the drawing-up of a communication policy with the support of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the creation and restructuring of other SROs, such as ASARECA, created in 1993, in accordance with the action Plan for Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa.

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**Eighth Insert**

**SPAAR: This is the content of the declaration published at the 17th Plenary Session of SPAAR.**

We, Directors of NARIs in the member NARS of CORAF and CILSS, considering that INSAH is a specialized institution created through the political will of CILSS member States,

considering that CORAF is an association born from the desire of NARSs’ Directors from West and Central Africa to establish a consultation mechanism for agricultural research activities,

considering the increasingly effective globalization of agricultural research systems,

declare the following: INSAH, since corresponding to the Sahel eco-region with specific objectives, does not cover all the concerns of West and Central African countries,

consequently, sub-Saharan Africa will include, within the framework of this globalization, three Sub-regional Organizations, which are CORAF, SACCAR, and ASARECA.

Issued in Bamako, February 18, 1997.
Africa, and SACCAR, created in 1984, by SADC member States with the support of SPAAR. In addition, there was the creation of FARA by its 3 SROs, supported by their Development Partners, with SPAAR as their leader.

Among weaknesses, let’s’ counts the difficulty in mobilizing resources for the operation of the Networks and Bases-centers, namely the first generation Networks, the issues related to the coordination of sub-regional Initiatives, including those of the IARCs, the difficulties associated with the low level ownership of CORAF by the NARIs due to the rapid change of their Heads, its assimilation to its Executive Secretariat and its very reduced staff, the low-shared understanding surrounding the notion of the NARS and the insignificant place given to Universities and Extension Services, the omnipresence of a single Financial Partner, namely the European Commission.

The Main Lessons

The fact that CORAF has been successively engaged in the reflections of international fora, has inevitably conferred on it an international stature and recognition. As was the case with the changes which resulted in the involvement of the Civil Society stakeholders in the process of managing and steering agricultural research, the emergence of the notion of NARS, the recognition of CORAF as the sub-regional leader for coordination by NARS, Ministers in charge of Research, CMA/WCA, and the International Community.

Twelfth Plenary Meeting in Bangui

Here is the resolution adopted by Directors General of NARS

The NARS representatives, members of CORAF, “gathered”, at the General Assembly, in Bangui, from 5 to 12 July, 1999, have decided to bring to the attention of all that CORAF is no longer composed of “leading” national agricultural research institutions, but rather of the National Agricultural Research Systems of the countries covered. However, for the countries that have not yet established their NARS, the representatives of CORAF would like to exhort them to do so and to keep being represented by the Agricultural Research Institute involved in the activities of CORAF thus far,

have requested that the leaders of NARS stakeholders appreciate, accordingly, their participation to CORAF’s activities and the related duties.

request that the Executive Committee and the Executive Secretariat endeavor to support the NARS Directors in raising awareness among political authorities on the relevance of CORAF and the necessity to strongly support it in order to consolidate its appropriation.
The New Environment of CORAF/WECARD

Over the past ten years 1999-2007, if any major change has occurred in Africa, it is the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into an African Union (AU). This ‘radical’ approach of the African Heads of States is based on their will to confront the challenges of the 21st century, the challenges of globalization, the definition of basic principles for actions—the value addition, impact, and subsidiarity—the implementation of development policies and programs through the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

Baptized on 25 May 2002, the AU established, on October 23, 2003, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), thereby concretizing the desire of the Heads of States to deal with developmental issues through mechanisms founded on cooperation and synergy. To that effect, NEPAD identified priorities and programs, the implementation of which should rely on the RECs.

The comprehensive African agricultural development Programme (CAADP) is a materialization of this will, as it is the tool to increase productivity and production, in order to realize the 6% average growth rate required to achieve poverty alleviation and eradication of hunger, enshrined in the millennium development Goals (MDGs). Among the four major pillars which constitute the CAADP, the implementation of pillar 4 is earmarked for the improvement of agricultural research and agricultural research system in improving dissemination of new and appropriate technologies; this is assigned to the SROs.

To this end, the umbrella organization, FARA, formulated the Framework for African agricultural productivity (FAAP), fundamental guiding principles for the implementation of programs at the continental level. In West and Central Africa, there exist the UEMOA agricultural Policy (UAP), adopted in 2001, the CAP of ECOWAS, adopted on January 19, 2005 and the West African agricultural productivity Programme (WAAPP) of CORAF/WECARD. For its implementation, the latter has been divided into national agricultural investment Programs (NAIP) and in regional agricultural investment Programs (RAIP) covering the period 2009-2015.

Also in existence is the joint agricultural strategy of the Communauté économique et monétaire des Etats de l’Afrique Centrale (CEMAC) adopted in 2003 by the Council of Ministers, aimed at supporting the improvement of livelihood of producers and the increase in their incomes national budgets allocated to the agricultural sector, agricultural productivity within the context of high urbanization, development of infrastructure for access to markets and the negotiation of international agreements for the agricultural sector which will stimulate and benefit the sector.
The Major Events

Within that period of time, the rhythm of CORAF/WECARD’s life no longer slowed down and is therefore very rich in lessons. The holding of the General Assemblies was uninterrupted: the first one, from 17 to 21 July, 2000, in Dakar, Senegal; the second, from 16 to 19 June, 2001, in Libreville, Gabon; the third from 23 to 28 July, 2002, in Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire; the fourth from 24 to 27 March, 2003, in Bamako, Mali; the fifth from 13 to 16 March, 2004, in Brazzaville, Congo; the sixth from 18 to 21 May, 2005, again in Dakar; the seventh from 25 to 28 April, 2006, in Banjul, The Gambia; the extraordinary GA, from 27 May, 2007, in Abidjan, on the eve of the celebration of the 20th anniversary, held from 28 to 31 May, 2007.

Step by step, these have successively fostered the implementation of the strategic Plan for 2000-2014, the coordination of activities in the field, the establishment of mechanisms to mobilize sustainable funding, an added participation of the various stakeholders to the SRO’s life, its improved visibility through impact studies, the consolidation of NARS through information, communication, and capacity building mechanisms, its added influence through lobbying and partnership diversification.

Likewise, they fostered the selection and recruitment of a new Executive Secretary, in June 2003, Dr. Paco Sérémé, from the INERA of the CNRST in Burkina Faso, the financial audit of the various budgetary years, the strengthening of financial management with the recruitment of a Director of Administration and Finance, in November, 2004, the functioning in 2004 of the CST and the increase of its members from 8 to 12, the selection of the national Journal for the Association, ivoirienne des sciences agronomiques (AISA) to effectively become the regional agricultural journal.

They also encouraged the establishment, in 2001, of the Competitive Regional Fund (CRF) supported by the Programme d’appui à la recherche agricole en Afrique de l’Ouest (PARAO) of the EU and by the African Development Bank (ADB), following the decision by Ministers of Finance, Rural Development, Science and Technology who met in April, 1998, in Abidjan, upon the invitation of the ADB, SPAAR, and CORAF.

Finally, they fostered twelve multidisciplinary and multi-institutional research projects selected and executed in the field, the funding of the Programme concerté de recherche-développement sur l’élevage en Afrique de l’Ouest (PROCORDEL), the evaluation of operational Units (see tenth insert), etc.

This enabled the evaluation conducted in 2006, under the supervision of the STC and with the support of USAID in assessing the overall situation with respect to the effectiveness of agricultural research and to formulate proposals for revitalization. This was a genuine prospective reflection that aimed at merging the sorghum, millet, maize, and rice networks managed by CORAF/WECARD and the IARCs, which allowed the adoption of the value chain approach taken into account, later on, in the review of the strategic Plan.

At the continental level, the launching of FARA’s activities, following the transfer of competencies
from SPAAR in 2001, the recruitment of the Executive Secretary and the establishment of the Headquarters in Accra, Ghana, would consolidate the globalization process of agricultural research in Africa. The guiding principles of FAAP would serve the SROs as tools for reviewing their approach to conform to the new institutional environment and the orientations defined by NEPAD.

It is in this context that CORAF/WECARD became the main architect in the implementation of the Challenge Programme experimented in Kano and Katsina in Nigeria, and Maradi in Niger, and participated in the various meetings for the integration of programs developed within CGIAR, namely those initiated for the development of the medium term Plans (MTP) of IARCs, coordinated by the ex-WARDA and ex-CORAF in West and Central Africa.

Scientific, technical, and financial cooperation has intensified with the Foundation internationale pour la science (IFS) in order to develop programs for the benefit of young researchers; with new Financial Partners, namely the Department for International Development (DFID) of United Kingdom having supported the implementation of the research projects financed through CRF, the review of the strategic Plan and the elaboration and implementation of the 2008-2013 operational Plan.

In view of the above and of the malfunctioning observed in the advancement of the operational Units, the review of the strategic Plan should have depended on new bases. To this effect, a study was commissioned to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) on the “economic quantification and spatial analysis of existing priorities, the analysis of investment priorities by scientific discipline, agricultural commodity, zone, and by country. The study was to make projections up to 2015 of the potential economic impact and the information index on the livelihoods in each priority zone, the identification of research activities to be conducted to stimulate economic growth, the determination of the way to strengthen sub-regional cooperation and integration in West and Central Africa”.

Presented at the first workshop of the planning process, held from 14 to 15 November, 2006, in Saly Portudal, Senegal, the study showed that research has an impact on agricultural growth, thus opening to CORAF/WECARD the way to define priority thrust of its planned intervention.

**Governance**

Up to the adoption of this new strategic Plan by the extraordinary GA of Abidjan, CORAF/WECARD was governed by the Constitution adopted by the 2nd GA of Libreville, amended, in 2005, by the 6th GA of Dakar. The new institutional organization, introduced by the adoption of the operational Plan, first of its kind, effected real changes. The GA and Governing Board (GB) remained sovereign. However, the composition and responsibilities of the latter have changed and increased. The STC has also been promoted, playing its intended role as its technical arm. The Executive Secretariat, henceforth directed by an Executive Director, has seen
the scientific and technical potential strengthened, following the establishment of the 8 programs (see eleventh insert). Around him, there is now the Director of Programmes supported by the Programme Managers, the Director of Administration and Finance, the Information and Communication Manager.

Programs Management

After the evaluation of operational Units that led to the review of the charter on Networks and Base-centers, the review of the former strategic Plan that resulted in the development of the new strategic Plan for 2007-2016 well matched by the first operational Plan, the stakeholders in the agricultural sector having gone through 7 marathon workshops, submitted to CORAF/WECARD deep structural innovations.

For the first structural innovation, the new vision targets “a sustainable reduction in poverty and food insecurity in West and Central Africa through an increase in agricultural led economic growth and sustainable improvement of key aspects of the agricultural research system.”

For the second one, the mission intends achieving “sustainable improvements to the competitiveness, productivity, and markets of the agricultural system in West and Central Africa by meeting the key demands of the sub-regional research system as expressed by target groups.”

For the third one, the global objective aims at a “high broad-based agricultural growth and food security sustainably established in West and Central Africa.”

For the fourth one, the specific objective seeks to achieve “broad-based agricultural productivity, competitiveness and markets sustainably improved for target groups in West and Central Africa.”

For the fifth one, the expected outcomes, require appropriate technologies and innovations developed; strategic options for policy, institutions and markets developed; sub-regional agricultural research system strengthened and coordinated demand for agricultural innovation from target groups facilitated and met.

The sixth one involves the new scientific dynamics that the new Directorate for Programmes would like to instill. Each program is managed by a Programme Manager and has a steering committee or technical advisory group in charge of its transparent oversight. This committee is made up of partners and the STC’s members concerned. Their implementation is set up through research projects. The latter are executed at the NARS level.

The new dynamics should also be supported by a number of principles and bases. First, the new “program approach” paradigm; which replaces the “network approach”, is chosen to ensure integrated research that encompasses the entire production chain and targeted at sub-regional strategy clearly structured according to priorities, in order to offer excellent opportunities for interactions between these programs, a better planning of activities, more efficiency in monitoring-evaluation
and training, streamlining of knowledge and information channels, strengthening of cohesion, sustained emphasis on the marshalling of Development Partners and resources.

Then, the new appropriate cooperation and partnership tools, which complete the institutional mechanism were identified on the basis of an innovative strategic choice ensuring a more general and integrated approach of activities, for efficient coordination and collaboration with the RECs, NARS, public authorities, FARA, Financial Partners, POs, and the private Sector.

Regarding the new regional research mechanism, the program approach, on which its strategy is based, is completed by the networking mechanism including mainly the research Networks, the regional Centers of excellence and the research Poles. The regional Centers of excellence, established on the basis of a framework agreement between CORAF/WECARD and the umbrella institutions, have the mission of conducting research commissioned on the basis of regional interest themes. To achieve this, they are able to participate through the mobilization of the competencies available in the sub-region, to bid for the funding from the CRF and to be labeled in the process already envisaged.

Finally, the CRF, serving to finance the research projects, competitively selected, helps definitely, to direct the activities towards the social demand, to contribute, in turn, to improving their quality and to ensure the promotion of excellence.

The Funding Mechanisms

During that period, the resources of CORAF/WECARD originated from the annual contributions made by the NARIs representing the NARS, regional funds from the EU, funding from ADB, USAID, and DFID which replaced the EU funding following the interruption of PARAO.

Strengths And Weaknesses

Important achievements were gathered among which is worth quoting, the mobilization of the funds from PARAO of up to 12 million euros having helped to significantly increase the competencies of the Executive Secretariat in administrative and financial management matters, the emergence of a new funding mode by countries through the West African Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP), the start of the CRF which benefited several countries, such as Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal, and Mali, to quote their case, which in the process helped set up the national agricultural and agro-alimentary research Funds (FNRAA).

Adding to strengthening the Executive Secretariat, were the appropriation of the NARS concept by members, the creation of other Networks, the recognition as Bases-centers, the service of the livestock Network of the International Trypanotolerance Center (ITC), based in Banjul, The Gambia, and of the CIRDES, based in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, the evaluation of operational Units and internal reforms after 1999, the quest and granting of
political recognition to the RECs, such as UEMOA, ECOWAS, CEMAC and ECCAS. In the same vein, two candidacies were received for recognition as Base-centers, namely the Laboratoire de recherches vétérinaires et zootéchniques de Farcha (LRVZ) at the Institut tchadien de recherche agricole pour le développement (ITRAD), and the African Research Centre for Bananas and Plantains (CARBAP) based in Njombe, Cameroon, are knocking at the door of adhesion.

On the other hand, the weaknesses appeared in the fact that 90% of the financial resources were provided only by PARAO, the unsustainability of the funding, and the low involvement of Central Africa in the dynamics.

The Main Lessons

The alignment of the strategy with the priorities of the two economic zones of West and Central Africa, based on the principles of FAAP and CAADP, has lifted CORAF/WECARD to the scale of technical arm of their RECs in the matter of agricultural research. This situation enables it, indeed, to mobilize all the technical and financial potential necessary for the implementation of the new programs of the first operational Plan.

Thereof, its regional scope is consolidated through the national and technical diversity of the staff; the signing of the cooperation agreement on the implementation of innovative research in the domains of agriculture and agro-food sectors with ECOWAS, on November 21, 2005 in Abuja; the cooperation agreement on the implementation of innovative research in the domains of agriculture and agro-food sectors and the contribution to the achievement of the millennium development Goals (MDGs) with UEMOA, on February 18, 2006, in Ouagadougou; and lastly, the cooperation agreement on the implementation of innovative research in the domains of agriculture and agro-food sectors, the identification and satisfaction of the food needs of the populations and the economic and social development, the reduction of poverty in the sub-region with CEMAC on July 20, 2007, in Bangui.

Tenth Insert

Technical Research

Integrated approach based on the systems and commodities using new holistic and participative methodologies, it includes the following five programs: livestock, fisheries, and aquaculture; staple crops; non-staple crops; natural resources management; biotechnology and biosafety.

Research Approach on Policies

Serving to identify and meet the challenges hindering the success of improved market systems, competitiveness, and productivity through research, this is a new area of engagement for CORAF/WECARD which regroups the following programs: policy, markets, trade, institutions, and socio-economy.

Effective Production Approach of Research

Concerned with the improvement of information, access and knowledge management and also using research in the mechanisms and methodologies, it includes the following two programs: knowledge management and capacity strengthening and coordination.
Eleventh Insert

The Research Associative Networks

Réseau Ouest et Centre africain de recherche sur le sorgho (ROCARS), 1984
Réseau de recherche sur la résistance à la sécheresse (R3S), 1985
Réseau Ouest et Centre africain de recherche sur le mil (ROCAFREMI), 1986
Rice Network, 1987, which became Réseau Ouest et Centre africain de recherche sur le riz (ROCA-RIZ), 1999
West and Central African Network for research on maize (WECAMAN), 1987
Groundnut Network, 1987
Cassava Network, 1987
Cotton Network, 1987
Livestock Network, 1989
Market gardening Network, 1994
Forest and agroforestry Network, 1995
Banana and plantain Network (MUSACO), 1997
Genetic resources Network for West and Central Africa (GRENEWEC), 1998
Roots and tubers Network, 1998
West Africa seed Network (WASNET), 2001

The Regional Research Poles

Pôle régional de recherche sur les systèmes irrigués en zone soudano-sahélienne (PSI), 1996
Pôle régional de recherche appliquée au développement des savanes d’Afrique Centrale (PRA-SAC), 1998.

The Regional Research Projects

Projet régional d’amélioration et de gestion de la jachère en Afrique de l’Ouest (Projet jachère), 1994
Yam Project, 1995
Groundnut germplasm Project (GGP), 1997

The Base-centers

International Trypanotolerance Center (ITC), 1982
Centre d’étude régional pour l’amélioration de l’adaptation à la sécheresse (CERAAS), 1989
Centre international de recherche-développement sur l’élevage en zone sub-humide (CIRDES), 1991
Prior to the creation of CORAF on March 27, 1987 in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, agricultural research in the former French colonies was essentially managed by French institutes. The cooperation agreements signed authorized France to fill the gap of lack of executives in the newly independent African countries. Represented in all the countries, CIRAD, for example, puts in place real teams working as network.

The evolution, in this context, essentially characterized by the creation of NARIs, the change in status of CIRAD and its modes of intervention, the initiatives such as CILSS’s INSAH and the SAFGRAD, as well as the activities of IARCs in the sub-region would bring the African and French leaders of agricultural research together to put in place a framework for expression and sharing, backing up and mainly based on their linguistic identity thereof. This is the common will that gave birth to CORAF.

From the onset, CORAF, with its Executive Secretariat hosted by CIRAD in Paris, had established the first generation Networks of research associations, by working on commonly identified priorities. CORAF was then perceived as a club of Directors with allegiance to France, whereas the primary concern of these pioneers was to establish a framework for sharing and consultations, enabling it to serve steer its mutual agricultural development components.

This crucial period was followed by the one, when CORAF was driven by the concern to open up to the other English- and Portuguese-speaking countries and to seek an institutional and political legitimacy with the institutions representing the West and Central African countries, such as CMA/WCA which will make it its implementing agency in the domain of agricultural research. This was done at a cost it paid by cancelling the status of associated members conferred to French institutes and by changing once again its name: Conference des responsables de recherche agricole en Afrique de l’Ouest et du Centre, while maintaining the acronym.

Meanwhile, globalization of agricultural research was strolling the creeping, which CORAF was rapidly caught up with, welcoming, in its bosom, the new stakeholders of the civil society by associating itself with the two other sister-SROs with the aim of founding the continental umbrella, FARA in 1997.

In such a context characterized with such new challenges, just like NEPAD and its CAADP program, CORAF was forced to adapt to the new global trends. Thus, a series of activities were started, leading to the elaboration of the 2000-2014 strategic Plan; the second change in name with, this time, a new acronym, CORAF/WECARD; its consecration as SRO for West and Central Africa and its role as the technical arm of the RECs; the review, starting in 2006, of this strategic Plan delivering the new strategic Plan for 2007-2016 and its first mid-term operational Plan for 2008-2013. Within a period of twenty years, CORAF has matured considerably, legitimizing its role as the privileged tool for sub-regional agricultural scientific cooperation. From the CORAF of the NARIs, it has become the CORAF/WECARD of the NARS that puts “producers and end-users at the center of agricultural research’. Its current management augurs its capacity to contribute to achieving CAADP’s objective, on condition that it mobilizes, in timeliness, the necessary resources for the implementation of its operational Plan and develops an ultimate strategy to mobilize the stakeholders in Central Africa, following the steps of West Africa.
1987 (27 March), the creation of the Conférence des desponsables de recherche agronomique africains et français (CORAF), in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, by the Directors of 14 agricultural research institutions from West Africa and Madagascar and the leaders of the French agricultural research institutions—CIO-CIRAD, INRA, and ORSTOM (currently IRD). Creation of Networks of research associations for groundnut, maize, cassava, and rice.

Mr. Dognenena Coulibaly from Côte d’Ivoire becomes the first President (1987-1988).

1988 (29-30 November), the first Plenary Meeting in Yaounde: establishes the Steering Committee; confers the status of member to the R3S Network of the Institute of Sahel; notes the commitment of the French Cooperation to support CORAF.

Mr. Mamadou Fatogoma Traoré from Mali becomes the second President (1988-1989).

1989 (20-24 March), the second Plenary Meeting in Dakar: decides the elaboration of the first organizational texts—Constitution, bye-laws of the Monitoring Committee and the charter of the Networks and Bases-centers—; establishes the principle of scientific reporting by the Networks during the Plenary Meeting, and creates the cotton Network.

Mr. Charles Razafindraokoto becomes the third President (1989-1990).

1990 (20-24 March), the third Plenary Meeting in Antananarivo: applauds the transfer of the Headquarters from Paris to Dakar, the recruitment of an African executive as a new Executive Secretary, in the person of Dr. Ndiaga Mbaye, in replacement of the first one, Dr. Bernard Bachelier from CIRAD (1987-1990); decides to open up to English- and Portuguese-speaking countries; accepts INERA in representing the NARS in Zaire (currently DRC), thus increasing the number of members from 15 to 16.

Mr. Jean Nya Ngatchou from Cameroon becomes the fourth President (1990-1993).

1991 (24-28 June), the fourth Plenary Meeting in Yaounde: materializes the policy of openness by accepting the INIDA and INPA respectively representing the NARS in the Portuguese-speaking countries of Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau; adopts the strategic Plan on the scientific Project, training, and information.

1992 (20-24 March), the fifth Plenary Meeting in Dakar: admits the NARI representing the NARS of Gambia; registers the political recognition of CORAF as well as the adoption of its strategic Plan by the Conference of Ministers in charge of Agricultural Research in West and Central Africa and in Madagascar (16-19 March, 1992, in Dakar).

1993 (15-20 March), the sixth Plenary Meeting of Ouagadougou: is dominated by a double reflection: how to progressively shift the approach of research from sector production approach to a production system approach? How to organize the scientific and institutional change of the NARS and CORAF, in order to improve project management, implement the new forms of regional cooperation and develop the partnerships?

Mr. Maurice Onanga from Congo becomes the fifth President (1993-1998).

1994 (17-19 March), the seventh Plenary Meeting in Banjul: endorses the scientific and technical
policy and applauds the international recognition of CORAF, which was obtained in 1994, at the workshop on regionalization of agricultural research in West and Central Africa, with the support of SPAAR and USAID.

1995 (17-19 March), the eighth Plenary Meeting in Cotonou: adopts the action Plan on scientific and technical information; abolishes the status of associate members, therefore, the members of the Monitoring Committee are exclusively African; decides to reform the Constitution; accepts as a full member the CSIR in representing the NARS in Ghana (1994) and the DAS as an observer representing the NARS in Nigeria; increases the number of Networks to 9.

1995 (21-23 November), the extraordinary Plenary Meeting in Saly Portudal, Senegal: transforms CORAF into exclusively an African institution already endowed with the Forum of Scientific Partners and a Donors’ Club; decides to create a fifth body, the STC; registers the recognition of CORAF as a Senegalese’s law-based international association by the authorities of the host country; adopts the amended Constitution and the initiation of scientific evolution in the agro-ecological zones: identifies the priority themes for cooperation; changes the name of CORAF into the Conférence des responsables de recherche agricole de l’Afrique de l’Ouest et du Centre (still CORAF).

1996 (18-22 March), the ninth Plenary Meeting in Brazzaville: invites the NARS to progressively take charge of financing activities; recommends the linkage with CAMES capable in helping with the formulation of a status for researchers; adopts the organizational texts of the operational Units with the cancellation of the status of Network correspondent.

1997 (17-18 February), the seventeenth Plenary Session of SPAAR in Bamako: CORAF, ASARECA, and SACCAR adopt the protocol for the creation of FARA, elects its Chairman and its Executive Committee.

Mr. Maurice Onanga, the third President of CORAF, becomes the first Chairman of FARA (February 1997-March 1998).

1997 (17-22 March), the tenth Plenary Meeting in N’Djamena: records the participation, for the first time, of male and female agricultural producers’ professional organizations; encourages the researchers to work more closely with them to find the best solutions to their problems; takes note of the joint signing of the Headquarters agreement by the Senegalese authorities and CORAF, on March 13, 1997; admits as a full member the DAS representing the NARS in Nigeria; confirms the recruitment of the Scientific and Technical Coordinator; decides to establish the STC; decides on the establishment of a validation mechanism for regional programs and projects and the formulation of an action plan on the management of research; adopts the protocol for the creation of FARA.

1998 (20-25 April), the eleventh Plenary Meeting in Accra: commits to fully own CORAF; registers the commitment of Financial Partners to continue their support; adopts the action Plan on the institutional reform and strategic planning; processes a new formulation: engages CORAF in a new strategic reflection, particularly on the draft for restructuring (in line of an action Plan) on the diversification of
funding sources, the strengthening of NARS’ capacity in order for them to fully own CORAF, on the Sub-regional Organizations, FARA, and their contribution to the building of GFAR.

*Mr. Moïse Houssou from Benin becomes the fourth President (1998-1999), following the death of Pr. Maurice Onanga (March 18, 1998).*

1999 (6-12 July), the twelfth and last Plenary Meeting in Bangui: adopts the strategic Plan and the recommendations of the institutional study; adopts the vision on agricultural research for sub-Saharan Africa; changes the name of CORAF which becomes the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD).

*Mr. Adama Traoré from Mali becomes the fifth President (1999-2002).*

2000 (17-21 July), the first General Assembly in Dakar: adopts a strategic Plan and an action Plan and recommends the development of new Statutes.

2001 (16-19 June), the second General Assembly in Libreville: devoted to the opening-up of CORAF/WECARD to the representatives of Producers’ Professional Organizations (PPOs), NGOs, and the Private Sector.

2001 (April), the meeting of FARA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: revives the continental organization.

2001 (September), the first General Assembly of FARA in Maputo, Mozambique.

*Mr. Joseph Mukibi from ASARECA is re-elected as Chairman of FARA.*

2002, the establishment of the Executive Secretariat of FARA in Accra within the FAO regional Office for Africa and the recruitment of Dr. Patrick Monty Jones as Executive Secretary.

2002 (23-28 July), the third General Assembly in Yamoussoukro: renews the Executive Committee on the basis of the new Constitution.

*Mr. Koffi Sié from Cote d’Ivoire becomes the sixth President of CORAF/WECARD (2002-2005).*

2003 (24-27 May), the fourth General Assembly in Bamako: endorses the selection of Dr. Paco Sérémé as Executive Secretary and renews the mandate of the Scientific Coordinator.

2004 (January), the establishment of the STC, the FCR-based selection of initial research projects, and the financial auditing of CORAF/WECARD with the support of USAID.

2004 (13-16 March), the fifth General Assembly in Brazzaville: requests the improvement of calls for research project proposals addressed to the CRF and the continuation of negotiations with FIS for the establishment of the research fund for young researchers in the sub-region; recommends the institution of financial audit prior each GA and the institutional auditing, every four or five years, to provide a mid-term budget to the Executive Committee, to review and apply the Manual for financial and accounting procedures; requests the recruitment of a high-level Administrative and Financial Director and to consider the recruitment of a new personnel taking into account the financial difficulties; to make moves towards the financial partners to guarantee the restoration of the difficult financial situation, to increase the number of STC members from 8 to 12, to provide
it with bye-laws, a manual for proposal evaluation procedure, to allow it to submit to each GA a report on its activities; to equip the SRO with bye-laws, to review its Constitution and to hold the first workshop on capacity building for the NARS in armed post-conflict situation.

2005 (18-21 May), the fifth General Assembly in Dakar: adopts the Programme on biotechnology and biosafety in West and Central Africa; congratulates itself about its recognition by ECOWAS and exhorts the other Intergovernmental Organizations to follow the example of the latter; it is satisfied with the elaboration of the action Plan for the implementation of the CAADP of NEPAD; encourages the pursuit and development of the partnership with ECCAS and CEMAC for obtaining from the NARS of Central Africa to their increased participation in its activities; approves the initiatives on genetic resources management, the analysis of strategic knowledge and the support for the extension of development strategies, the Challenge Programme, the Programme for the dissemination of new agricultural technologies in Africa (DONATA), the biotechnology and biodiversity Programme (MAPP), the Building African Capacity Programme (BASIC), etc.; instructs to strengthen the dialogue between private operators, researchers, policy makers, and users for a research driven by social demand, to strengthen the partnership within NARS and between them and the information systems of Western countries for the application of the road map; adopts the new Constitution and bye-laws; encourages the involving of a partnership with the African Agriculture Technology Foundation (AATF); enjoys the commitment of the World Bank to mobilize back up funds for MAPP.

Mr. Emmanuel Owusu-Bennoah from Ghana becomes the seventh President (2005-2008).

2006 (25-28 April), the sixth General Assembly in Banjul: appreciates the orientations adopted for the preparation of WAAPP and of the Central African agricultural productivity Programme (CAAPP); requires CORAF to endeavor to ensure that all NARS are connected to the Internet; approves the initiative to evaluate the GB, STC, and ES, keeping with the process of reinforcing the transparency and excellence; approves and recommends the implementation of proposals derived from the studies and analyses related to the establishment of nodal Centers of excellence for genetic resources; request the continuation of the feasibility study for the creation of the finance research foundation in West and Central Africa; entrusts the GB to review the demand by the Institut national de recherches agricoles du Bénin (INRAB) to raise its research center on perennial crops to a nodal Center of excellence; decides on the celebration of the 20th anniversary in Abidjan definitely, in 2007; welcomes the reflections and encouragements of partners for the progress made and the improvement of the scientific quality of activities; requests for the maintenance of dialogue with the EU, RECs, and other actors, in order to harmonize actions.

2007 (28-31 May), the celebration of the 20th anniversary hosting the extraordinary General Assembly in Abidjan (27 May) which adopts the new strategic and operational Plans.