THIRTEENTH (13th) ORDINARY SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF CORAF

25-27 JANUARY 2022, N'Djamen, Chad

Theme: Increase the presence of CORAF in Central Africa for a better consideration of agricultural research and development needs
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Abbreviations

ACMD African cassava mosaic disease
AfDB African Development Bank
AICCRA Accelerating the Impact of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa
AIRCA Association of International Research and Development Centers for Agriculture
ANADER National Rural Development Support Agency
ASARECA Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
BoD Board of Directors
CAADP Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program
CABI Center for Agriculture and Bioscience International
CAMES African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education
CAR Central African Republic
CARI Central Agricultural Research Institute, Liberia
CEMAC Commission of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
CGIAR Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIAT Center for Agricultural and Technological Research
CILSS Permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel
CNRADA National Center for Agronomic Research and Agricultural Development, Mauritania
COPIL Steering Committee
CORAF Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles/West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development
CRDI International Development Research Center
CRE Regional Centers of Excellence
CRIFDAC Consortium on Research, Innovation, Training, And Development in Central Africa
CSIR Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Ghana
DDI Bureau for Development, Democracy, And Innovation
DGRST General Delegation for Scientific and Technical Research, Congo
DRC Democratic Republic of Congo
EACMV East African Cassava Mosaic Virus
ECCAS Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States
EU European Union
FAO Food and Agriculture Organization
FARA Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
FENOPS National Federation of Seed Producers of Chad
FIDA International Fund for Agricultural Development
GA General Assembly
GIRAV Gambia Inclusive and Resilient Agricultural Value Chain Development Project
GM General Manager
GS General Secretary
IAR4D Integrated Agricultural Research for Development
ICRA Central African Institute for Agronomic Research, Central African Republic
IER Institute of Rural Economy, Mali
IITA International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
IFAD International Fund for Agricultural Development
INIDA National Institute for Agrarian Research and Development, Cabo Verde
INPA National Institute of Agricultural Research, Guinea Bissau
INRAB National Institute of Agricultural Research of Benin
INERA Institute of Environment and Agricultural Research, Burkina Faso
INRAN National Institute of Agronomic Research of Niger
INSAH Sahel Institute
INTERFACE Network of Agro-industry Professionals in West and Central Africa
IP Innovation Platform
IRAD Agricultural Research Institute for Development, Cameroon
IRAF Agronomic and Forestry Research Institute, Gabon
IRAG Guinea Agronomic Research Institute, Guinea
ISED Livestock Research Institute for Development, Chad
ISRA Senegalese Institute of Agricultural Research
ITRA Togolese Institute of Agronomic Research
ITRAD Chadian Institute of Agricultural Research for Development
M&E Monitoring and Evaluation
NARC Nigerian Agricultural Research Council
NARI National Agricultural Research Institute, The Gambia
NARS National Agricultural Research Systems
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
OP Operational Plan
PRASAC Regional Pole of Research Applied To The Development Of Agricultural Systems In Central Africa
PROPAD Projet de renforcement de la productivité agricole et résilience au climat (Project to strengthen agricultural productivity and climate resilience)
R&D Research and Development
REC Regional Economic Communities (REC)
ROPPA Network of Farmers’ Organizations and Producers of West Africa
SDC Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG Sustainable Development Goals
SLARI Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute
STC Scientific & Technical Committee
TMC Transitional Military Council
USAID United States Agency for International Development
WAAPP West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program
WAEMU West African Economic and Monetary Union
WAVE Central and West African Virus Epidemiology
WB World Bank
WCA West and Central Africa
WFP World Food Programme
ZLECAF African Continental Free Trade Area
Ensemble pour **accroître** la **présence** du CORAF en Afrique centrale
Preface

Introduction

Pursuant to the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF) Statutes, updated in April 2018, and Article 4.2.6 of its Governance Manual, relating to the frequency of meetings of the General Assembly, the Chair of the CORAF General Assembly convened a virtual meeting on 27 and 28 April 2021. This meeting was the first component of the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly (GA) of CORAF. The second part of the GA was conducted face-to-face in N’Djamena, Chad from January 25 to 27, 2022.

The GA of CORAF is the supreme body that sovereignly assesses any question relating to the Organization. Its role is, among other things, to:

- Approve and ratify all policies, agreements, protocols, statutes, budgets, and financial plans, as well as financial statements, audit reports and sets the number of membership dues on the recommendation of the Board of Directors (BoD);
- Receive, examine, approve, and adopt the reports of the BoD;
- Elect the Chairman and all the other members of the BoD;
- Serve as a platform for identifying and discussing critical agricultural research and development issues in the West and Central Africa (WCA) subregion.

The GA is composed of delegates representing each member of the National Agricultural Research System (NARS); representatives of regional and international agricultural research organizations operating in the WCA subregion; representatives of Regional Economic Communities (REC); development and scientific partners; private sector representatives; representatives of producer organizations and NGOs.

The 12th Ordinary Session of the GA (AG-12) was held from April 10 to 12, 2018, in Dakar. During the AG-12, CORAF took important decisions relating, among other things, to:

- The approval of the Strategic Plan 2018-2027 and that of the Operational Plan 2018-2022
- The election of a female President of the BoD, which is a first for CORAF
- The adoption of the new acronym, which changes from CORAF/WECARD to CORAF
- The establishment of sustainable financing based on the NARS, with the help of the establishment of a permanent framework of dialogue with the Ministers of Finance of the countries
- The REC support, which are ECOWAS, ECCAS, UEMOA, and CEMAC.

This report highlights the outcomes of deliberations, decisions and recommendations emanating from the 13th General Assembly of CORAF.
Context

The agricultural research ecosystem in which CORAF operates is constantly changing. For example, funding for the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP) came to an end in 2019. However, in addition to USAID funding, new projects funded by the European Union and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) have been launched and started from 2020. Additionally, there is a need to draw up a new operational plan (OP 2023-2027) to succeed the Operational Plan 2018-2022. This operational plan should consider the current changes and future challenges of agricultural research and development in WCA. The implementation of this 2023-2027 Operational Plan, which enshrines the second phase of the 2018-2027 Strategic Plan, requires the mobilization of additional resources.

With this in mind, CORAF and the World Bank are in advanced negotiations around a new program that could start in 2022.

In the current context of the pandemic due to Covid-19, the Governing Board recommended organizing the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF (AG-13) in two stages; first in the form of a virtual business meeting held in April 2021 and in the classic face-to-face format with the possibility for some participants to participate virtually.

Objectives

The general objective of the convening is to endorse the decisions taken during the business meeting held in a virtual mode in April 2021, mainly the update of CORAF’s strategic orientations in a context dominated by Covid-19.

Specifically, the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly was the occasion:

- To approve the decisions taken during the business meeting concerning the documents relating to governance;
- To review the 2018-2022 Operational Plan and adopt the 2023-2027 Operational Plan;
- Validate the proposal to promote greater integration of CORAF activities in the Central African region and within ECCAS;
- To hold a high-level panel on the necessary evolution of CORAF;
- To organize a dialogue between research and non-state actors;
- To organize a national day dedicated to agricultural research in Chad under the auspices of ITRAD.

Expected results

- Decisions taken on CORAF governance documents are approved and adopted;
- The 2023-2027 Operational Plan is approved;
● The confirmation of the decision of the virtual meeting of April 2021 to extend the mandate of the BoD members is approved;
● The strategy for relaunching CORAF activities in Central Africa is adopted;
● The high-level panel met and made recommendations along the lines of supporting the evolution of CORAF towards an intergovernmental organization;
● A dialogue between agricultural research actors and non-state actors is initiated.
1- Opening session

The face-to-face part of the 13th GA was hosted by General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Transitional Military Council (TMC), President of the Republic, Head of State of Chad.

During the ceremony, we heard from:

- The General Manager of the Institut Tchadien de Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (Chadian Institute for Agronomic Research for Development, ITRAD)
- The Chair of the BoD
- The representative of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), representing Ambassador Gilberto Da Piedade VERISSIMO, President of the Commission
- The Minister of Environment, Fisheries and Sustainable Development of Chad, representing the Minister of Agricultural development of Chad
- The Minister of State representing the Head of State

Opening Remarks from ITRAD

According to its geographical size, Chad has a strong economic potential. That's why the country has developed policies and strategies to develop this potential. In this context, the government acknowledges the critical role of agricultural research in making the agricultural sector productive and reducing poverty. We hope that the reflections that will emanate from the conference will result in efficient solutions for the benefit of the two subregions.

Welcome speech by CORAF’s Chair of the BoD

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the continent’s agricultural sector was battling multiple challenges (e.g. climate change and insecurity). Even though countries have made notable progress in dealing with these challenges, they persist and are coupled with even more challenges. Additional challenges include youth unemployment, underdeveloped private sector, poorly organized regional trade, inadequate agricultural mechanization, lack of management of intellectual property rights, rapid degradation of natural resources, low competitiveness in the agriculture and livestock sectors, and weak agrarian policies.

There are no easy solutions to these challenges. However, we can overcome them if we work together. We can also tackle these challenges with good policies, governance, and leadership, as well as innovations.

Innovation and science are why we are here in this assembly because we cannot attain economic growth without a sizable investment in research and development (R&D).

We are here this week to report on the steps taken to action the last General Assembly (GA) recommendations, adopt strategic plans for our regions to leverage the fruits of our research, and
meet the challenges of agriculture. We will also revise our strategic plan to strengthen our presence in Central Africa.

Speech by the Representative of the Regional Economic Communities; Representative of ECCAS (representing Ambassador Gilberto Da Piedade VERISSIMO)

The environment and natural resources, agriculture, and rural department of ECCAS have a strategic plan, one of the axes of which is agriculture and rural development, food, and nutritional security. Research, innovation, and training are significant pillars of this strategy axis. To this end, the commission needs to rely more on agricultural research institutions. In this effort, we will operationalize the Consortium on Research, Innovation, Training, and Development in Central Africa (CRIFDAC). In this and many other initiatives to promote agricultural R&D, CORAF can play an important role. It is already the technical arm of ECCAS in agricultural research. We need to continue this momentum for the implementation of the standard agricultural policy. We invite CORAF to increase the participation and follow-up support of the NARS, especially in building the capacities of actors in the agricultural sector. We hope that this and what will come out of this conference will also help CORAF increase its presence in Central Africa.

Address by the Minister of Agricultural Development of Chad done by the Minister of the Environment, Fisheries and Sustainable Development

First of all, I would like to extend our best wishes for this New Year to you and all the guests.

I would especially like to express our warm appreciation to his Excellency General, President of the Transitional Military Council, President of the Republic, Head of State for having agreed to hold the 13th Ordinary Session of the GA of CORAF in Chad. This gesture is a testimony of your Excellency's interest in agricultural R&D. Indeed, the improvement of the production and productivity of our crops can contribute to achieving food and nutritional security in our countries.

To ECCAS and CORAF, we express our gratitude for the choice of our country for this initiative aiming to revitalize agricultural activities in Central Africa.

To you, dear participants and distinguished guests, and especially to our hosts, the Ministers of the member countries of CORAF, the members of the BoD and the entire team of the Executive Secretariat of CORAF, the Heads of Regional and International Research Institutions, the eminent researchers and the Representatives of the Producers, I wish everyone a welcome and a good stay in the country of Toumaï.

As a reminder, Chad is hosting for the third time an event organized by CORAF which brings together twenty-three (23) national agricultural research and development institutions, producers' organizations and the private sector of the West and Central Africa region. We are one of the founding members and the vice-chair of the Board of Directors is from Chad.

During the present meeting scheduled from January 25 to 27, 2022 in N'Djamena, the General Assembly themed: "Increasing the presence of CORAF in Central Africa for a better consideration
of the needs in agricultural research and development”, the strategic documents of CORAF will be examined and reviewed. Similarly, the issue of redeployment of CORAF in Central Africa and the main challenges of family farming will be discussed by the participants.

Regarding CORAF's actions in Central Africa, I believe it is important to highlight the consultations held in Kinshasa (DRC) from November 24 to 26, 2021, involving all the actors that CORAF organized in partnership with ECCAS and CEMAC. A roadmap was thus proposed for the implementation of a strategy to strengthen the presence of CORAF in our sub-region. Similarly, discussions have been initiated for the establishment of an Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture.

During this General Assembly, we would also point out that half a day is dedicated to Chad, themed around "Synergy between agricultural research and extension to address food security and nutrition challenges". The purpose of the event is for research and extension actors in Chad to get to know ITRAD and the state of play of collaboration with CORAF. Exhibitions of research results, namely scientific innovations and products resulting from the transformation of agriculture, will also be proposed.

The increase in productivity could contribute to achieving food and nutritional security in our countries. ITRAD, through the ministry of agricultural development, is the linchpin of the implementation of the government's policy in the field of agricultural development. In the current contexts of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, ITRAD is at the forefront of agricultural development. We call upon it to continue its role as an actor for the agricultural development of Chad.

We, as a country, will continue to address the major challenges facing agricultural production, such as climate change, water control, youth employment, and the health crisis.

Finally, I reiterate my thanks and while acknowledging your personal commitment and your constant support for the development of Chadian agriculture and in particular agricultural research, we will continue to work to address the major challenges facing agricultural production, such as climate change, water control, youth employment and the health crisis.

Address by HE the President of the TMC of Chad, done by the Minister of State representing the Head of State

Chad is delighted to be a founding member of CORAF and grateful for the honour given to its research institution, ITRAD, to organize this meeting in N'Djamena.

I salute the relentless efforts of research institutions in general and agricultural research organizations in particular, to support our producers. Concerning the efforts made by ITRAD, we offer our encouragement and support to assist it.

During these meetings, the GA will consider essential reforms, including revising various institutional documents, reviewing the Strategic Plan (2018-2027) and adopting the Operational Plan (2023-2027). I trust that the planned reforms will consider our populations’ priorities, including rural populations and emphasize easing the rural tasks of women and facilitating young graduates’ access to employment and self-employment through technologies developed by agricultural R&D.
For such improvement to be sustainable, let us not forget to develop marketing strategies for agricultural products. After all, the real stimulus for producers is when they can sell their products once produced.

During the three days of the GA, there will be exhibition stands that showcase research results from the whole NARS in Chad and innovations from researchers and other inventors. In addition, you will be able to see other products resulting from the transformation of Chadian agriculture in the challenging contexts of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a new international context shaped by climate change and emerging human, animal and plant diseases, our entire WCA subregions need to pool their efforts. I am convinced that great strategies will come out of this conference and will be implemented to meet our expectations.

For our Central African countries, the opportunity has come, through this gathering, to identify the problems that are holding us back compared to other subregions. It also involves clearly defining the strategies that we should adopt to facilitate the mobilization of resources to enhance the capacities of our scientists in generating knowledge and technologies that will contribute to the sustainable development of our subregion.

Regarding CORAF, I am convinced that this GA is the foundation for a sustainable improvement of its presence in Central Africa for the greater benefit of our populations.

I would like to appreciate the presence at this GA of the Ministers and all representatives of the member countries of CORAF.

I would also like to congratulate ITRAD and the Local Organizing Committee for making all arrangements made to organize this international event in N'Djamena in the Republic of Chad.

While wishing successful deliberations, I declare open the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF.
2- Introductory conference

Introduction

Dr Paco Sereme, President of the 13th GA

Twenty-five years ago, CORAF celebrated its 10th anniversary in Chad, and in 2012, held the 10th GA here as well. The recurrence of events in this country demonstrates the unwavering support of ITRAD and Chad to CORAF.

We will make many decisions here, and most of the key ones are about how CORAF will reinforce its presence in Central Africa to meet the region’s actors’ expectations.

I am excited that there are many political actors gathered at this panel. They can tell us how CORAF can better collaborate with them.

I am looking forward to Dr. Alioune Fall’s introduction of this panel because he is familiar with CORAF, having been the Chair of the BoD. He is similarly familiar with agricultural research and development (R&D), as he was the General Manager of the Senegalese Institute of Agricultural Research (ISRA) and now is the President of Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA).

Abdourahmane Dicko, Representative of CORAF’s Financial/Technical partners

During the last four years, the number of constant partners around CORAF increased from three to eight partners. This increase is proof of the progress and efficiency of the organization in its implementation of strategies for the development of NARS and the mobilization of resources to enable this development.

We salute CORAF’s proactivity between the two GAs, which was evident through the active participation in the design and implementation of the various programs and the excellent execution of the projects entrusted to them. They also knew to leverage the support partners offered. We also applaud the organization’s flexibility during the pandemic, especially in the execution of programs, the approach with stakeholders (e.g. beneficiaries), the involvement of technical and financial partners. We also appreciate the increasingly good quality of reports.

We are satisfied with the regular, proper, and timely holding of CORAF’s governance events and the submission of quality deliverables.

The primary requests from technical and financial partners are:

- To CORAF member organizations:
  - We encourage you to make your membership payments. These payments promote good governance and contribute to the solidity of the organization and the increase in its sovereignty.

- To CORAF:
  - We encourage CORAF to improve the systems that will impact the organization’s efficiency to improve its institutional image (e.g. monitoring and evaluation, M&E, systems). These systems will help manage the workload, which will increase from
now. Therefore, it would be good to have a good view of the progress of the different projects under CORAF’s responsibility.

b. We also recommend that CORAF revisits its accounts to increase its awareness of the fees to the organization.

We want to appeal to our Central African colleagues through ECCAS to structure technical and financial partnerships in this subregion to build the bridge between WCA and increase the size of this group of donors and partners.

Dr. Alioune Fall, Chairperson of FARA, former Chair of BoD of CORAF, and former DG of ISRA

We are in Central Africa, and CORAF is developing strategies to establish its presence in Central Africa. This choice in location is intentional yet powerful.

CORAF has evolved and made changes. This willingness to adapt to situations is essential to keeping up with an important sector. “You do not joke with food.” We are putting agriculture at its fair value.

Agriculture and agricultural research go hand in hand. CORAF’s strength and efficiency depends on National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS). Therefore, I would like to call on ministers to strengthen research institutions to generate useful results for their countries and CORAF. This reinforcement would allow CORAF to carry out its mission to support agricultural development through the diffusion and dissemination of agricultural technologies so that our agriculture can feed our people. This way, we can cover our own needs (e.g. financial). So, ministers here can advocate for CORAF to their states to make them understand that the entity is an essential instrument.

We benefit from ECOWAS’s championship but are missing our government’s. We do receive contributions from NARS, but, beyond that, we want states to take ownership of CORAF. This ownership will allow CORAF to be more financially sustainable and visible, especially in politics. This visibility will enable CORAF to play its role as an interstate tool for agricultural research. CORAF is working on food empowerment of countries in West and Central Africa (WCA), so why would states not join in this mission?

CORAF, through the member NARS, has practical tools in agricultural research, but they only need support to carry out the mandates assigned to them.

Panel questions

Secretary General of the Ministry of Agricultural Development of Chad: What are the highlights of the collaboration between CORAF and Chad?

There were several activities and successes under this collaboration.

We introduced six maize varieties through a regional project to improve corn productivity and dissemination. This improvement was possible by promoting integrated management technologies in the savannah zone of Cameroon, Nigeria, and Chad.
"Introgression" was another project. Its objective was to improve and sustain the biodiversity of local cattle breeds. This project had a sizable positive impact on Chad, as its economy relies heavily on livestock and products derived for this activity.

Another project was the global intensification of the integrated agriculture and livestock system to increase agropastoral productivity and food security in WCA.

We also carried out the DONATA project, whose objective was to set up a multi-stakeholder innovation platform around cassava and create two entry points for a mosaic-resistant variety.

CORAF also supported ITRAD through PROPAD and the following activities:

- Integration of Chad into the existing network of national centres of specialization networks
- Facilitation of Chad's participation in regional exchanges on R&D
- Facilitation of short-term training and technical exchanges between CORAF member countries and ITRAD
- Sharing of experience and knowledge of CORAF in terms of training.

Chad benefits from CORAF in many ways, including the creation of crop varieties and agro-food processing technologies, the dissemination of technical itineraries, the characterization of production systems, the recommendation of dosages for the use of fertilizers, the production of crop, and the formulation of operating advice to family farmers.

88 technical sheets of plant species and varieties were popularized in Chad and made available to partners.

We encountered a few difficulties in the context of the dissemination of technologies produced by the NARS:

- Absence of relay (extension services) between research and supervision of use of technologies/Innovations by beneficiaries
- Rules of Procedure should create exchange frameworks for actors to meet and share their experiences.

Minister of Agriculture Niger: What is needed for CORAF to be an interstate organization?

I was amazed by the number of projects Niger undertook with CORAF, 20 projects in a decade. I was then surprised by the backlogs in payments to the organization, given that the organization needs them to operate.

Of the projects conducted, the one that aimed to produce seeds on demand caught my attention. It prompted me to do a SWOT analysis of the organization.

Strengths

CORAF has developed competencies in the coordination of research practice in the subregion and the implementation of REC policies. These competencies are helpful, as it is essential to developing relationships with regional structures. CORAF has also shown strength in generating and disseminating research results.
Weaknesses

CORAF does not always link its projects to countries' economic interests and does not seem to have close relationships with ministries such as the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy. The organization also exhibits weaknesses related to finances and human resources and seems to prioritize domain-specific projects.

Opportunities

A common currency (e.g. in UEMOA) facilitates trade, and with the African Continental Free Trade Area (ZLECAF), exchanges between countries and regions will intensify. There are also significant investments and requests for investment in all fields. Countries (e.g. China, Russia, Europe, USA, Canada) turn to Africa for investment because they are aware of the continent’s potential. However, is the continent aware of its potential? When we decide to tap into this potential, agriculture will have a significant role to play.

Threat

There are a couple of threats we need to keep in mind. The business climate in our countries is not welcoming, as barriers to business creation make it difficult for the private sector to develop. Other threats include inadequate mechanization, inefficient use of agricultural technologies, climate change, and land degradation. These threats lead to a lack of competitiveness and slow development of the agricultural and private sectors.

After this SWOT analysis, I concluded that CORAF needs strategic solutions to be an interstate tool for cooperation. For this to happen, CORAF must show what it offers.

CORAF should have objectives to meet the constraints mentioned above (e.g., the efficiency of agricultural trade, regional trade, the increase in the competitiveness of sectors, the development of markets based on demand, the encouragement of investments, the promotion of the private sector in agriculture).

CORAF should call on scientists to direct their research towards topics with economic yield. An example of such a research topic is “How can a country, such as Niger, produce quality onion and sell it at competitive prices?”.

Actors of the agricultural R&D sector should orient their strategies and activities towards demand, i.e., what the market/producer wants. They should switch their strategy from a push to a pull strategy. We must see CORAF’s usefulness so that states are willing to invest in its development.
for the organization and make ministers think of CORAF when attributing funds to projects, thus contributing to CORAF’s financial sustainability.

Hearing about the successes of such collaborations in West Africa, we will undoubtedly be inspired to create more fruitful partnerships, as we can benefit from CORAF’s advisory and technical support.

Our country has experienced repeated crises that have destroyed almost all our R&D infrastructure. Now, we are rebuilding them to meet the needs of our populations. For example, we need to make basic seeds (e.g., cotton) available to farmers. This is an instance where a partnership with CORAF may be beneficial.

However, the first focus of this partnership would be to boost subsistence agriculture to fight against nutritional and food insecurity. The second focus would be to support family agriculture through industrialization and mechanization (e.g., producing seeds with high productivity, as cultivable areas are small).

SG of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Guinea: How can we build strong national research institutions that can constitute a strong basis for CORAF?

We must address this issue from an advocacy perspective.

Guinea is a country rich in resources but with a low growth index. This growth rate is low because it is driven by the mining sector, in which product transformation is minimal.

With the Covid-19 crisis, we realized that we needed to switch our investment priorities and focus on agriculture. However, there was no infrastructure to transform agricultural production.

It is good that CORAF wants to develop its interstate character, but it also needs to focus on individual states and mobilize political will, which manifests itself in budget allocation.

On the other hand, the private sector, which remains the engine of growth, should also invest in agricultural research, as it is the first link in the agricultural value chain.

It is also essential to think about the capacity building of the R&D sector to make sure its growth is sustainable.

I am confident that CORAF is a great regional integration actor and will continue to achieve great things, but only with the support of states. At the same time, states should make agriculture and agricultural research a priority and invest in it.

Representative of the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and DG INERA in Burkina Faso: How is research evolving in Burkina and how has CORAF and can it contribute to strengthening these elements of research?

CORAF has carried out many activities in Burkina Faso. However, these efforts must also be directed towards governmental actors to ensure that the efforts are sustainable.
Turnover in government is high, and, as an institute, we have to go to each government and explain the role of CORAF on the organization’s behalf. However, CORAF needs to advocate for itself and for countries to increase the budget allocated to research.

That being said, we are thankful for CORAF’s support. Burkina Faso has a national centre of specialization in fruits and vegetables, thanks to the support of CORAF. This centre will generate efficient and useful technologies and benefit all members of CORAF, hence the importance of having systems that allow the exchange of technologies. In the same vein, it is also vital to mutualize the means and results of agricultural R&D.

Training is crucial in this sector, as it is the only way we can renew generations of researchers (e.g., through Master’s and PhD programs). In the contexts of agricultural research and training, it is relatively simple to address unemployment challenges. We just need to hire these students in university centres and agricultural research structures. Training, along with infrastructure, is one of the priorities of Burkina Faso when it comes to the food systems resilience program.

In general, CORAF is doing well on many fronts, such as pooling results and resources, building capacity, and scaling up technologies (e.g., creating innovation parks).

Situations evolve quickly, and we face significant challenges and opportunities. To adapt, we need to:

- Mechanize processes to ease the workload of farmers, especially women
- Increase our transformation capacities. To be considered an industrialized country, a country must transform 25 to 30% of national production. We still have some way to go. Therefore, CORAF could work on supporting countries in becoming industrialized countries.
- Fight against bio aggressors
- Make efforts in:
  - Gender policy to create jobs for young people and women
  - Animal genetic improvement
  - Sustainable land management
  - Knowledge management
  - M&E
  - CORAF, in collaboration with the governments, can aim to strengthen NARS in these capacities and areas
- Conduct and capitalize on market and impact studies. They could be advocacy tools during policy briefs.
- Generalize multi-actor platforms to prioritize a value chain approach. Burkina Faso has set up 40 multi-actor innovation platforms. However, not all of them are functional, so we need to revitalize them.
Representative of ECCAS, Mr. Mbassi, also in charge of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) communication: How can a regional institution like ECCAS support CORAF in this ambition to become an interstate organization?

RECs’ objective is to facilitate regional and eventually continental integration. One of the flagship programs of the African RECs is CAADP. It is a pan-African program adopted by heads of state. Its objective is to sustainably transform the African agricultural system, to create research, food, and nutritional security to ensure economic growth and prosperity. The 4th pillar of this program is research. In that sense, CORAF has a role to play in this project.

Moreover, one of our departments has a whole axis dealing with agriculture. One of the priorities of this axis is research and innovation for the development of the agro-pastoral economy.

We invited CORAF to approach the two RECs of Central Africa to re-read the partnerships that bind us to CORAF and widen the scope of collaboration.

For ECCAS, an opportunity for collaboration with CORAF is that the RCE has undergone a reform and has gone from a general secretariat to a commission, giving it more significant opportunities for action. For CORAF, this is an opportunity to reinforce existing partnerships.

There is also a fund for agricultural R&D set up by the heads of state, whose objective is to strengthen agricultural development. ECCAS manages this fund and intends to significantly invest in agricultural research.

ECCAS is ready to support CORAF in making research in Central Africa productive and impactful. CORAF should reach out to increase collaboration.

Address by The Minister of Agriculture and Environment of Cape Verde, Dr. Gilberto Silva (online)

His Excellency General, President of the Transitional Military Council, President of the Republic of Chad; His Excellency the Prime Minister of Chad and members of the Chadian Government; Honorable Ministers and representatives of West and Central Africa, Representatives of the ECOWAS and ECCAS; Distinguished guests.

First of all thanks to our Chadian hosts for welcoming this 13th Assembly General and all the guests. I am really happy to be part of the General Assembly even remotely and online.

This event is happening while the world is adjusting to the Covid 19 crisis and recovering from this pandemic. The mere fact that it is taking place is a sign that CORAF recognizes the importance of joint efforts to deal with the impact of this pandemic.

The presence of Ministers and Agricultural sector Directors in this Assembly demonstrates the recognition of the important role played by Agricultural Research in the development of strategic policies and the transformation of agriculture in our member states.
During the past months, CORAF has done a lot to evaluate the socio-economic impact of Covid 19 in the countries to develop concrete response mechanisms. This effort must continue and be fully supported.

However, we must do more. We need our partners to overcome the effects of the pandemic on Agriculture and Food Security in West and Central Africa.

In 2020, FAO published “the state of food security and nutrition in the world” report. The report reveals that hunger is still relevant in Africa and that hundreds of millions of Africans still can’t access healthy food. This report also highlights that a preliminary assessment suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic may add millions of people to the total number of undernourished in the world.

Agricultural Research to solve food security issues and to increase agricultural productivity in CORAF’s member states should be one of CORAF’s priorities. The usage of improved and adapted seeds, the enhancement of agro-ecological zones, the recovery of neglected food, and access to drinking water are still challenges (among others) for our countries.

Agricultural Research for the transformation of our agriculture is a clear pathway to reach the SDGs and the objectives of Agenda 2063. We must all understand that the challenges are complex and multidimensional, as such, they require a coherent, coordinated, complete, and holistic response. We are convinced that the joint recommendations that will come out of this Assembly will help with a strategic and coordinated approach by CORAF.

The Agricultural Transformation Agenda requires the commitment of multiple stakeholders. CORAF depends on many of the actors. As such, in the coming years, CORAF should review its objectives and goals to provide a strong foundation of scientific and technical guidance to the Councils of Ministers within ECOWAS and ECCAS.

Increasing agricultural productivity and competitiveness of agro-businesses is the only way towards a secure, sustainable, affordable, and healthy diet for a majority of Africans. Without strengthening agricultural research, we will not sustainably reach these objectives. Hence, productivity and competitiveness challenges must remain priorities for CORAF and National Research Systems in the Member States.

CORAF must invest in innovation and digitalization of Agriculture. Through the implementation of its operational plan 2022-2027, CORAF must focus on the priority areas such as food security and nutrition, socio-economic inclusion especially in rural areas to reduce poverty, adaptation to climate change, and resilience of small holder farmers for the post-Covid recovery.

To conclude, we must take audacious steps, look for innovative and original scientific approaches to help decision-makers in the Member States in the transformation of agricultural and food systems to boost progress towards the SDGs in our region.

Cape Verde holds the presidency of CORAF since 2018 with Dr. Angela Moreno who is also President of INIDA in Cape Verde. We are convinced that in the coming years, Dr. Moreno and her teams will work tirelessly to implement the recommendations coming from this Assembly.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you fruitful discussions.
Ensemble pour accroître la présence du CORAF en Afrique centrale

Science et recherche = Sécurité alimentaire et durabilité environnementale
3- Leaders’ Forum

Theme

The theme of this forum was “Agriculture in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic: Central Africa’s response”. It was chosen because, like other parts of the world, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on WCA, a region already experiencing food and nutritional insecurity. Indeed, the succession of natural disasters, conflicts and epidemics that affect the region have weakened the ability of people to obtain rich, nutritious and diversified foods to meet their nutritional needs. The impact of Covid-19 would thus add to the pre-existing situation to aggravate food and nutritional insecurity in the region.

To curb this scourge, the governments of African countries and the world have taken measures to limit the spread of the virus, which have consequences on almost all sectors of people’s lives. These measures include the partial or total containment of populations, the limitation of people’s mobility, the closure of borders, the closure of urban, peri-urban and rural markets which structure the relationship between supply and demand. While acknowledging the positive effects of these measures in slowing the spread of the Coronavirus, governments noted early negative impacts on food and nutrition security, including increased prices of basic necessities, low access to food for vulnerable people, drastic drop in the marketing of perishable fruit and vegetable products, increase in transport costs, etc.

These measures have not spared the agricultural sector. Therefore, the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF would like to examine the impacts of the measures taken on agriculture in Central Africa. The GA also wanted to get acquainted with the specific responses the agricultural sector of Central African countries has brought to the pandemic due to Covid-19.

The objective of this forum was to identify the types of responses provided by the agricultural sector in order to minimize the impact of Covid 19 on populations but also on agricultural research and development activities in Central African countries.

Introduction by Dr. Angela Moreno, Chair of the BoD

The negative impact of Covid-19 on food and nutrition security is tangible, as the number of families that live in extreme hunger has been exacerbated by the pandemic. However, there are other challenges that the agricultural sector and populations are facing, such as crop diseases, climate change, and conflicts.

Thankfully, agricultural R&D and agricultural products transformation are tools that will contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

We need to feed the growing population of the continent and research will be key in succeeding in this endeavor.

To deal with the consequences of the above-mentioned challenges, exacerbated by the pandemic, we need to adopt a multi-dimensional and multi-actor approach, and I am excited that we will explore such an approach.
Professor Rodrigue Mintsa Nguema, IRAF Gabon

Covid-19 in Gabon: what response strategy

Response strategies of countries, including confinement and closing of borders, had an impact on savings, shook health systems and threatened food security.

Gabon put in place the Order No 000008/PM on February 25, 2020 and established the Steering Committee (COPIL) of the Monitoring and Response Plan against the Coronavirus pandemic.

The missions of COPIL coronavirus GABON were the following:

- Epidemiological surveillance at airports, ports and borders;
- Confinement in the appropriate medical structures of people likely to have contracted the disease;
- Execution of the response plan.

COPIL coronavirus GABON achieved significant results, including the equipment of 15 laboratories and 60 sampling centres, the establishment of the Gahouma Laboratory, and the testing of individuals per day.

Response of Gabonese agriculture to the Covid-19 crisis

The global population is supposed to reach 9.3 billion by 2050 (FAOSTAT), and we have to make sure we can feed them despite the decrease in arable land and the quantity of water. To address this discordance, we need to improve agricultural production.

Gabon’s response to this trend and to the Covid-19 crisis was to establish a food emergency plan. The objective of this plan is to provide quality inputs and agricultural equipment (Graine/PAPG1) and create two large plantations (1000 ha of banana and 2000 ha of cassava).

The vision of this plan is to improve the standard of living of all citizens in one generation, leveraging the country’s resources and skills. Its mission is to enhance Gabon’s agricultural potential to guarantee its food security. This potential consists of 2 million ha of forest and more than 5 million cultivable ha and 800km of coastline. The strategy of the plan is to establish a program for the development of agricultural and agro-industrial sectors, as well as fisheries and aquaculture. The Minister of Agriculture has initiated the establishment on the Avorbam site of a pole of 5 laboratories, including one on food safety and that of WAVE-Gabon already functional.

Focus on WAVE project activities in Gabon

The WAVE program is a shared technical platform based on a network of 13 research institutions. It is also a network of 12 Central and West African (WCA) countries. Its objective is to sustainably increase the production of root and tuber crops, including cassava.

The main viral threats to cassava are mosaic and brown streak. Mosaic is a viral disease marked by the deformation of the leaves and alternating yellow or light green spots. It can lead to yield losses of 20 to 70%. Brown streak is a viral disease manifested by dry rot and necrosis that can
reach 100% of the tuberous roots. It is a very damaging disease-causing yield losses of 90 to 100%.

The main activities of WAVE fell under three categories, field monitoring, planting of collected cassava cuttings, and laboratory activities. Field monitoring includes activities such as sensitizing cassava producers, assessing the distribution of cassava virus diseases, collecting whiteflies and locally grown cassava varieties. Under the planting category, we established two experimental stations, one in Avorbam and another in Ntoum. These stations are used to plant the cuttings of the different varieties of cassava in Gabon to make pre-collections, clean them up, multiply them, and distribute them to producers. Laboratory activities include amplification (PCR), agarose gel electrophoresis, and DNA extraction.

WAVE has prospected the following provinces:

- Woleu Ntem
- Middle Ogooue
- Ogooué-Invindo
- Ogooue-Lolo
- Haut-Ogooue
- Ogooué-Maritime
- Nyanga
- Ngounie

**Distribution of prospected fields throughout the country**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces</th>
<th>Number of fields prospected</th>
<th># of samples collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estuary</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Ogooue</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Ogooue</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngounie</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyanga</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogooue-Lolo</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogooue-Ivindo</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogooue-Maritime</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woleu-Ntem</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>203</strong></td>
<td><strong>657</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of the 80 samples obtained in Ngounie leaves analyzed, 9 were positive for ACMD, 16 were positive for EACMV, 5 had co-infections (ACMD+EACMV)

The main lessons learned from WAVE’s experience were the following:

- Set up a cassava pest and disease coordination committee
- Effectively coordinate related data collection and dissemination activities
- Strengthen the management capacities of viral diseases and increase the technical level of expertise of the various players in the cassava sector
- Intensify research and accelerate the publication of results for effective communication on the evolution of cassava viruses
- Enforce phytosanitary regulations regarding the movement of planting materials
- Propose a national plan for the prevention and response to cassava viral diseases
- Advocate for the allocation of a substantial budget line for the effectiveness of the national plan for the prevention and response to viral diseases of cassava
- Set up an operational strategic alert and quarantine system
- Equip agents with effective diagnostic equipment in the field to intensify surveillance and control
- Enforce phytosanitary regulations regarding the movement of planting materials

Forum Questions

Examples of measures that have been taken as part of the response to Covid-19, Prof Kankolongo MBUYA - Director General of The National Agricultural Study and Research Institute, INERA, DRC

Our first reaction to the pandemic was to panic. After the initial panic, we entered the problem-solving mode and looked for solutions. We recalled the lessons learned from the epidemics we went through (e.g., cholera and Ebola).

The main measure we adopted to manage these health crises was social distancing. This measure was hard for people to respect because the average individual lived with many family members.

The negative impact of the pandemic on agriculture was palpable. With increasing death rates, especially in rural areas, came a decrease in agricultural productivity and an increased risk for populations to experience famine.

These risks called for urgent interventions. With social distancing, some farmers did not have agricultural inputs (e.g., seeds and tools) and were not able to go to the field. Therefore, the state turned to INERA, asking “You who generate technologies, what can you do in this situation?”.
So, we developed a contingency plan for seed production and distribution to farmers who could not work during the 2020 agricultural season. We emphasized biofortified crops (e.g., maize, cassava, beans) according to the ecological zones of the country. We also made available to people poultry brood stock, in case the harvest was not sufficient. We also provided input other than seeds (e.g. fertilizer and seed transport vehicles). Lastly, we popularized extra early and early genotypes which can grow fast, so that farmers could harvest and consume the foods quickly.

We are in the process of setting up other projects to further support small producers.

Overall, INERA has focused on providing a rapid response through early, extra early and biofortified foods that provide timely and enriched nutrition to populations.

**Measures taken by Chad in the context of the response to Covid-19, Mr. Abdelkhadir Koiboro, Secretary General of the Ministry of Agricultural Development of Chad**

The pandemic began before the agricultural and rainy season in 2020. To address the challenges that came with the sanitary crisis, the government took measures to strengthen the resilience of the agricultural sector. We developed an emergency response plan to strengthen the agricultural production system through the following measures:

- Acquisition of improved seed for the benefits of populations
- Acquisition of appropriate equipment for the production of market gardening
- Acquisition of inputs (e.g., phytosanitary products in the context of plant protection)
- Capacity building for agents working with producers - short-term training on e.g. recycling

The National Food Security Office also replenished the national food security stock to mitigate the risks of a food crisis. On the other hand, the government through the Ministry of Agriculture took measures aimed at prohibiting the export of agricultural products. In addition, our Ministry and the Ministry of Health and National Solidarity implemented a measure, which consisted in providing vulnerable households food kits (e.g., oil, sugar, cereals, rice).

All in all, these measures ensured that activities aligned with agricultural production took place properly to avoid breaks in the production chain.

The financial support from the government to ITRAD and other institutions (e.g. National Rural Development Support Agency: ANADER) provided much-needed assistance to producers and those involved in agro-pastoral activities. Despite restrictions in people’s mobility, ITRAD and other institutions had to establish solid M&E frameworks to make sure funds were used efficiently.

In summary, the Chadian government’s response was to empower institutions (e.g. ITRAD and ANADER) to continue to support producers and fight against a drop in agricultural productivity. The government also issued measures that revolve around the reconstitution of stock and the distribution of food kits, which was an emergency response to the food crisis.
How ITRAD adjusted its strategy in the context of the pandemic crisis due to Covid-19, Mr. Yassine DOUDOUA - ITRAD Director General

Some changes in our strategy and activities were Covid-19-specific. For example, we included Covid-19 awareness sessions as part of the research conducted in the field with producers. We also allocated part of our budget to the purchase of masks and hydro alcoholic gel to use during activities in the field.

Other changes were geared towards supporting producers through the rough patch Covid-19 pandemic created. With partners, we provided producers with inputs (e.g. basic seeds). We also acquired foundation seeds from partners to allow our seed producers to produce R1 and R2 seeds.

We reorganized the mechanisms researchers use in the field to navigate measures taken by the government that restricted mobility and efficiently implement our activities.

Agriculture requires movement, so we requested exemptions for our researchers and producers so that they can go about their business and not be penalized during the agricultural campaign.

The pandemic also improved our collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, as it enabled us to mobilize a lot of resources from the Ministry.

The state empowered institutions around it to distribute seeds and other inputs and increase national agricultural production in the context of the closure of borders. Besides this support from the state of Chad, ITRAD also received support from other financial and technical partners to support producers during the pandemic.

How the health crisis due to Covid-19 was experienced by small producers and how they had to alter their activities to adapt, Dr. Kpawilina-Namkoïsse, Director General of the Central African Institute for Agricultural Research, ICRA

Restrictive measures, such as border closure and travel restrictions between cities, negatively impacted small producers and agricultural production.

Small producers could barely access agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds and fertilizers) and labour. The size of their cultivable plots shrank. They could not transport their products to markets, and merchants of weekly markets could not move their products because of the travel restrictions. Farmers also faced difficulties feeding their cattle and keeping them alive and healthy. There was serious revenue deficit all around the country, as agricultural production in 2020 was reduced compared to previous years.

To face these challenges, the government and its R&D partners such as ICRA took several measures. The government, with the support of technical and financial partners, made food aid available to the populations in the form of monetary transfers. The government also set up an emergency response project to the food crisis, with the support of the World Bank, which consisted in providing seeds, food, agricultural and pastoral kits.

The activities of R&D partners of the government revolved around seed production and ecological agricultural production programs, as well as training. Our seed production program led us to import pre-basic and basic seeds, although a good portion of them arrived late and not in the
expected conditions. We implemented an ecological agricultural production program (i.e. agroforestry) to increase soil fertility and productivity and resistance to shocks (e.g. climatic and biological) and improve the quality and productivity of certain production factors. We also conducted online training for researchers allowing them to be more operational with producers when we resume on-the-ground activities.

Conclusion
This pandemic is not going away soon, so we must learn to live with it, maintain our productivity and ensure the development of our agricultural systems despite the pandemic. The different countries represented here have managed to build systems for this purpose.

Q&A and Comments from the audience

1. **Covid-19 has had adverse health, economic, psychological effects, with a rapid and imposed change in behaviour, kindly elaborate on the psychological dimension. How have states managed this dimension and the way we interact with each other?**

   a. *Prof Mbuya*: It depends on the social strata you interact with. From a psychological and social point of view, there is a strong division in terms of social classes, with people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds believing many myths around the disease (e.g., that it only affects rich people and people with political power).

   b. *Dr Kpawilina-Namkoïsse*: The public (e.g., producers) are in high spirits. They even encourage us to continue our activities with them. For them, Covid-19 is like a traditional flu, and they have learned to live with it.

2. **Why did the State choose to work on cassava?**

   a. *Prof Mintsa Nguema*: WAVE is funded by the UK government with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The objectives clearly were defined to ensure food security in Africa by targeting root crops and tubers, including cassava. We consume large amounts of cassava in Gabon. So, it made sense to do some research on the diseases that attack cassava in Gabon.

3. **Has WAVE capitalized on the work done by Regional Pole of Applied Research To The Development Of Agricultural Systems In Central Africa (PRASAC) in this regard?**

   a. *Prof Mintsa Nguema*: PRASAC was present in Gabon, and the project was even hosted by the Institute of Agronomic and Forestry Research of Gabon (IRAF). So, we were aware of the activities carried out by PRASAC. Unfortunately, a transfer of results, from PRASAC to WAVE, did not take place. In general, people who have been part of previous research projects are not solicited or do not feel the need to contribute to subsequent research projects, even if the projects are carried out in the same institute. However, we hope that there soon will be solutions that allow us to improve the integration of previous research results to newer projects.
4. Almost all the interventions mentioned on this panel include the production and distribution of seeds. However, research should not only play the role of a firefighter.

   a. The agricultural R&D sector needs to think further than emergency plans. A good example of this long-term reflection is the creation of two large banana plantations by WAVE. Beyond the emergency, we need to elaborate a plan to resolve the same situation in the medium and long term. The role of research is to build the resilience of countries to prevent crises at best and if not to limit the negative impact of these crises on populations and improve food availability in the longer term.

5. Was there a difference between the rigor of the restrictive measures taken in the face of the pandemic and the reality of the disease in our countries?

   a. **Prof Mintsa Nguema**: In Gabon, the measures were tough and persisted over time. Our health systems were not ready to face this situation, and we were scared. Fear skewed the measures we took. It is now hard to scale back on or remove certain restrictions even though on-the-ground observations tell us to do so. It is up to us Africans to ask this question to the world: “Why has Africa been able to resist the crisis of the pandemic?” We must have the courage to adapt our strategies to realities on the ground. “Are all the measures that we demand of our populations really worth it compared to the losses and the discomfort they cause?”

   b. **Dr Mbuya**: We focused on biofortified crops to strengthen immune systems for those who live in rural areas when they claim to have a strong immune system. Because of their cultural context, they also do not like wearing masks. If you wear one, they think that you are sick. So, individuals will not wear a mask for their social security.

   c. **SG of Guinea**: The pandemic has been an opportunity for Africa to measure its capacity for resilience but also to become aware of the challenges we need to address. Children suffered a lot and were deprived of their rights (e.g., to schooling) because we do not have the infrastructure to do remote learning. Digitization is becoming an eminent challenge for the continent. We also forget to highlight and congratulate the role of women during the pandemic (e.g., the making of masks). It is women who hold the market.

   d. **Former Minister of Health of Chad**: We have formed a scientific committee in the crisis committee. We had a dedicated hospital and quarantined people who snuck through borders. There was also rigorous contact tracing and quarantining. This rigor helped contain the virus. When collective immunity was reached, the government decided to open the market and allow people to move. The speech from the leadership was encouraging and gave us the courage to face the pandemic and live with it. We adapted and learned new ways of doing things, especially virtually.
Closing remarks by Mr. Yassine DOUDOUA, ITRAD Director General

Covid-19 was a scourge, but it also allowed us to capitalize on opportunities and reflect on areas of improvement. Households were able to save money, given the limited mobility. Our countries also developed local products to support the fight against Covid-19, and researchers investigated multiple Covid-19-related themes.

Africa has been more resilient to the pandemic compared to the expectations of the international community. This resilience can be attributed to the rigor of some states in their response to the pandemic. However, the ability of states to observe this rigor has varied according to their ability to meet their population needs under the conditions the restrictions created.
An important aspect of CORAF’s General Assembly convenings is the acknowledgement and reward of the effort, accomplishments, and contributions of employees and stakeholders who have reflected the values, mission, or goals of the organization. As a result, the following people were presented with customized plaques in honor of their contributions and impact to CORAF’s work across the region:

- **Dr Famoi BEAVOGUI**
  - Member of the CORAF Board of Directors (2012 - 2018)

- **Dr Abdulai JALLOH**
  - Director of Research and Innovation (2018-2021)

- **Dr Paco SEREME**
  - President of the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF

- **Prof Daniel Franck IDIATA**
  - Member of the CORAF Board of Directors CORAF (2018 - 2019)

- **Dr Djondang KOYE**
  - Member of the CORAF Board of Directors CORAF (April 2018 – September 2018)

- **Prof Victor Kwame AGYEMAN**
  - Member of the CORAF Board of Directors CORAF (2018-2022)

### 4- Moral report of the Chair of the Board of Directors

During this GA, we will talk about aspects of governance and reflect on how to increase our presence in Central Africa. Back in April, we made edits to the statutory texts of the organization. Now, the GA will ratify the proposal approved in April in relation to governance. The assembly is open to all partners, but the decision-making power is for one delegate per NARS, who can also comment on the decisions.

The moral report will be a good starting point for the day’s schedule, as it gives us an overview of the organization’s accomplishments, including the implementation of programs.

**Introduction and objectives of the moral report**

This report is the fruit of the hard work of the members of the board and the executive committee. The organization’s mission is to develop products and services to improve the lives of families who depend on agriculture, especially in rural areas, through science.

CORAF is present in WCA because:
Agriculture is essential for economic growth, poverty reduction, and promotion achievement of food and nutrition security

The regions cover 12.3 million square kilometres

Their population represents 40% of the African population,

74% of the population in the area is engaged in some form of agricultural activity

To achieve their mission, CORAF works hand in hand with NARS, farmers organizations, the private sector, civil society, NGOs, and actors involved in agricultural R&D in WCA.

The vision from 2018 is to reduce poverty and food insecurity by boosting economic growth through agriculture and a sustainable improvement of agricultural R&D systems.

This report details the activities of CORAF to improve institutional capabilities to create sustainable partnerships in WCA.

Challenges faced by the agricultural sector in Africa

These challenges are multidimensional and complex. There is a pressure to increase food production (with less and less land, water, favorable climate) while using less hand labour, less waste, healthier and more nutritious food. All this while managing the Covid-19 crisis and its consequences on food security in the region. Agricultural R&D and transformation are a good bet when addressing these complex challenges and achieving sustainable development.
Recommendations from the previous GA

The following recommendations came from the 12th General Assembly:

- Better leverage existing human competencies within CORAF (scientific and technical)
- Implement a sustainable funding system (as the current system is based on contributions from NARS and RCEs (regional economic communities)
- Better support of the agro-sylvo-pastoral sector (eg, make technologies developed more accessible to producers of forest and non-forest products)
- Draft proposals that rethink the following areas to make them more effective
  - Governance systems
  - Partnerships with Producers’ Organizations (PO) in particular to boost job and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth and women

Actions and responses to recommendations (9 areas of intervention to bring recommendations to life)

Transition towards stability

CORAF drafted a strategy to reaffirm its role as a service provider instead of project manager. This shift in roles should contribute to the organization's financial viability through partial autonomy.

Institutional reforms

CORAF renewed its headquarters agreement with Senegal. This renewal assured the organization could be based in Dakar in the foreseeable future to impact the whole region.

The institution also canvassed the expertise available in the region to leverage it in the work the organization does.

They also revised statutory documents to remove elements that could lead to fragility. To this effect, they reviewed the 2018-2027 strategic plan to consider new variables such as Covid-19. They rethought partnerships with the private sector, youth engagement, management of harvest products and post-harvest waste, water management, post covid recovery, community immersion, alignment with RECs (with a focus on the regional without neglecting actions on the national level). Moreover, they reflected on the strategy with the lens of multiple challenges (e.g. Covid-19 pandemic, armed conflict, climate change), the need to strengthen certain partnerships, and the presence of CORAF in Central Africa. Lastly, they defined KPIs to measure and report on progress and clarify norms around the deliverables that they ask of consultants (e.g. content and frequency of reports).

Besides the review of documents, CORAF also developed an action plan to increase the presence of CORAF in Central Africa, organized a midterm review of the transition strategy, and decided to break down the 13th GA into two parts, including one online session to respect the constraints of Covid-19.
Strategic positioning and visibility

Strong positioning in the CORAF ecosystem is achieved through a more explicit definition of the organization's role in the ecosystem to be more stable and competitive. To achieve this strong positioning and establish our legitimacy, CORAF has participated in more activities. There has been more demand in the organization's participation in events around the theme of food security. We aim to collaborate with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa to not be redundant during those events. A strategic positioning also involves an increase in the organization’s presence in Central Africa to mirror the success in West Africa, which was made possible by partnerships with RCEs and states.

Institutional partnerships

CORAF is committed to creating more institutional partnerships, as the achievement of its mission depends on it. To monitor, motivate, and boost the creation of these partnerships, the BoD created a monitoring system for the implementation of these partnerships.

Resource mobilization

CORAF wants to be more intentional in bringing resources and partners together to promote agroscience, and agricultural R&D. Resources mainly come from NARS. However, many still do not pay their dues. There are XOF 220 million of backlogs to date. The salvation of CORAF’s financial situation has been that many RCEs have made the entity their technical arm. To that effect, RCEs would either give CORAF projects or put them in contact with funders with agricultural R&D-related projects to be carried out.

Implementation of the strategic and operational plans

CORAF has also been implementing its strategic and operational plans. They have mainly focused on the diversification of partnerships. They have partnered with RCEs, such as, ECOWAS, UEMOA, ECCAS, funders such as USAID, EU, FIDA, World Bank, SDC, CRDI (USAID and DDI being the most significant contributors to CORAF’s funding), as well as states. As a way to ensure financial sustainability, they have been mostly implementing projects for these partners.

Private sector engagement, gender, youth, and social equity

CORAF would like to better engage with the private sector and contribute more towards gender and youth equity. To this effect, CORAF has adopted a gender and youth equity lens through the Gender, Youth and Social Equity Program and identified the private sector’s need to access and scale solutions from the R&D sector.

Operational management

CORAF exceeded its fundraising targets by 20% and completed most projects. However, because of the pandemic, CORAF could not achieve the desired scope on many of these projects. It was also decided to implement an M&E system to be more effective and readily share project data.
Communications and marketing

CORAF has worked on tools that showcase the achievements of CORAF and highlight the successes and importance of state-region collaborations.

Impact of actions (video available via this link)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transition towards stability</td>
<td>Improved delivery of institutional services, budget, decentralization and business processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional reforms</td>
<td>Adapting human resources to CORAF’s strategic objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The implementation of the strategy requires the mobilization of human resources to achieve the planned objectives. Human resources are fully involved in creating value in the institution.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In order to ensure that resources match needs, CORAF has put in place forward-looking management of human resources, both quantitatively (jobs) and qualitatively (skills).</td>
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<td>• The forward-looking management of jobs and skills will support the 2023-2027 strategic action.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic positioning and visibility</td>
<td>The implementation of CORAF’s 2018-2027 Strategic Plan and its 2018-2022 Operational Plan and the updated revision of the 2023-2027 OP, have succeeded in placing CORAF in a strategic position with its partners and beneficiaries, NARSs, Private Sector, Gender, Youth etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional partnerships</td>
<td>The Institutional Partnerships Officer contributes to fundraising through the development of partnerships with new institutional donors, in our region and internationally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource mobilization</td>
<td>Our work with our partners has been of great value in attracting and growing funding for agricultural research and development in the CORAF member countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of strategic and operational plans</td>
<td>Leadership means decision-making and therefore choices. Not all decisions have the same impact on the organization. Some involve the sustainability of the organization while others have less impact</td>
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<td>Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private sector engagement, gender, youth</td>
<td>CORAF has developed a strategic and operational marketing plan</td>
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<td>and social equity</td>
<td>that has been successful and focused on partnership.</td>
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<td>• Create and develop support tools that demonstrate impacts</td>
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<td>• Create and monitor a CORAF relationship program and member countries,</td>
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<td>with a marketing plan, multi-channel for private sector,</td>
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<td>farmers, NGOs, agripreneurs etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop a relational technical and scientific strategy that allows</td>
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<td>us to identify and link NARSs in our strategies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Identify and build the capacity of private sectors to transform our</td>
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<td>research and technologies and make them available to farmers and</td>
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<td>producers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operations management</td>
<td>Institutional reform has enabled CORAF’s Executive Secretariat and</td>
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<td>Board of Directors to plan, organize and oversee all activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>involved in CORAF at headquarters and in several member countries</td>
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<td>through an effective reporting culture that exists at CORAF.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training, communication, and marketing</td>
<td>Communication (marketing) training, in general, was one of the</td>
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<td>pillars of CORAF’s marketing strategy. The importance and visibility</td>
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<td>(notoriety) that CORAF enjoys today were due to the essential role</td>
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<td>of communication and training.</td>
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Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

There were many achievements to celebrate these past two years, especially the renewal of the headquarter agreement with Senegal, the overrun of the budget objective to implement the operational plan 2018-2022, the implementation of many projects despite the Covid-19 pandemic, and the establishment of strong and diversified partnerships.

However, there are a few persistent challenges. Despite a strong reputation and strong partnerships, the sources of funding to cover the operational costs of the organization are unreliable. Moreover, CORAF is still dependent on its role as a service provider as a source of financing. Lastly, the ever-increasing complexity of the agriculture ecosystem also represents a challenge.
To overcome the multiple challenges and maintain a strong position in its ecosystem, CORAF should bet on the continuous improvement of its management and governance tools.

Recommendations

CORAF should review its intervention strategies through the lens of the objectives of the Agri-Food Transformation Agenda and capitalize on the Continental Free-Trade Area to improve trade and investment in agricultural and food products. This review expands markets, creates job and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth and women, and encourages sustainability to make food systems more competitive.

Intentional investment in agricultural R&D can catalyze an increase in productivity and competitiveness of the agrifoods industry, which is a priority for our region. This investment is a way to ensure dignified and fulfilling lives for people in WCA.

Our work is not for us but to improve the quality of life of millions of people. CORAF is committed to working on this mission by addressing significant challenges and seeking partnerships.
Leads

CORAF should work towards the following:

- Achieving financial sustainability by relying less on donors to implement its action more reliably. Member-states should continue to invest in agricultural R&D and keep the agricultural sector at a high priority, as it is a significant driver of economic growth.

- Keeping SDGs in mind while developing and transferring technology that people in the agricultural sector can quickly apply to improve the quality of their lives.

- Continuing to communicate the impact of agricultural R&D on challenges such as food and nutritional insecurities, poverty and youth, and gender inequity.

Q&A and Comments from the audience

1. **There was confusion around the reason why CORAF relying on projects for funding was a problem.**
   
   **Answers:**

   - International contributions are welcome. But we cannot be dependent on them because CORAF is a WCA organization. We need to be sustainable, create our own funds, and rely more on regional and national funders. We get most of our funding through Donor projects. The challenges lay in the fact that the operational costs of the Executive Secretariat are not considered by the projects. This means that when there are no projects, we do not have the funds to run our operations. One way of promoting the sustainability of our operational budget is to establish a CORAF sovereign wealth fund. We can advocate for member states to make significant contributions to this fund.

   - Our financial situations are dependent on donors’ priorities, hence the importance of CORAF looking for ways to serve our constituents better without depending on the whims of our donors.

   We need to look inwards for funding instead of relying on international donors, as we have been speaking with the African Development Bank (AfDB).

   This funding opportunity is pivotal for CORAF, FARA, and member states, as it gives them the ability to do agricultural R&D.

   The funding model is similar to the Fontagro model, as the residual funds for executed loans at the bank will come back to the states. The big question is “How will agriculture R&D be put on the priority list of redistribution of these funds?”

2. **You talked about improving CORAF’s governance tools to ultimately improve response capacity. However, you did not talk about improving CORAF’s usefulness**
for states, as the minister of agriculture of Niger mentioned “if you are not useful to someone, they will not know you exist”.

○ Answer:

■ CORAF is useful to states because it supports them in fundraising for agricultural R&D-related projects and activities, such as the organization of an equipment and vehicle handover ceremony that took place in Burkina Faso, in September and will soon be organized in Senegal and Niger. Often, CORAF action is done with national institutions, but not all have the reflex to mention CORAF as the catalyst of the action. NARS and states should think about it in a mutual way. Whenever they mention CORAF and increase our visibility, it is their visibility that they are increasing. CORAF should also take part in events such as Chad Day to highlight achievements in the world of R&D. Co-organizing and/or taking part in such events will increase its visibility in the host countries. We also need to showcase technologies developed and allow people to use demos.

3. During this GA, we have been very focused on increasing the presence of CORAF in Central Africa when its presence in West Africa is not solid yet. West African states do not relate enough to the organization, hence its lack of visibility in certain parts of the region. Increasing the visibility of CORAF in West Africa should also be a part of the strategic plan.

4. We need to be more accommodating to Lusophone countries (e.g., in the translation of documents).

○ Answer:

■ To maximize our reach, we have been asked to translate our work in languages outside of the widely spoken administrative language, such as French, English, Portuguese and Arabic into African languages (e.g. Bambara, Wolof). However, according to the statutory documents, CORAF's official languages are French and English. Those are the languages that the GA will be conducted in.

5. CORAF plays the crucial role of federating the human and technical resources of the subregion for the benefit of agricultural development. Transfer of knowledge and mutual exchanges at the level of NARS is critical, as there are many instances where innovation is inaccessible or not known by some countries. We need to set up a strategic committee that allows NARS to exchange knowledge and practices on a regular basis.

○ Answer:

■ This will be gladly considered.

6. Scientific coordination, in terms of governance, can be a limiting factor in some NARS. CORAF must decide on a harmonized decision-making process in relation to this coordination that can be followed by all NARS.
7. Mutualizing multiple projects may be an option instead of depending on rather small projects.

8. CORAF produced good results in terms of communications, marketing, knowledge management, and M&E. How can it support NARS on these particular skills? Like CORAF, NARS have visibility issues in their countries. We can also address these visibility issues if we highlight the usefulness of research in economic and social development so that states can continue to support R&D.

   - Answer:
     - CORAF has made some headway in building a strong online community. That's why they've even been asked to do some capacity-building work in the communication component of some NARS.

9. The fact that CORAF’s work lacks visibility in CAR is one of the reasons why the country is not paying its due. Right after this gathering, I recommend CORAF speak with states to explain its role and potential support it can bring to research institutions and propose concrete actions. This advocacy should inspire people to pay their contributions.

   - Answer:
     - We tirelessly are working on improving the visibility of CORAF, progress is shown by the increase in the number of countries that are up to date in their contributions. In 2018, there was one country, there are three. However, we will still strive to do better in the future

10. At some point, CORAF had a good presence in Central Africa. The quality of the presence depends on the country and entities that managed projects. There were instances where projects were initiated by CORAF, but in the implementation, institutions responsible for the implementation did not communicate that CORAF was at the origin of the project. There is also a communication deficit by CORAF and its partners. That may be why people say CORAF is not doing much in their country.

   - Answers:
     - We know that CORAF is not present in certain Central African countries. That's why we included the topic in the strategy to be closer to each member country and research institution.
     - Most projects implemented in West Africa are carried out by countries and communities, as opposed to solely CORAF. Central Africa can get inspiration from this proactivity to develop strong agricultural R&D projects and not wait for CORAF to bring projects.

11. There are challenges that come with the merging of CEMAC and ECCAS. Some countries are members of CORAF, other members of the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA),
some are in both. There may be issues with RECs, governments and NARS having to pay contributions to both entities.

- **Answer:**
  - ASARECA, CORAF, FARA can be and have at some point been collaborators. Countries can be part of multiple entities between these. For example, the Democratic Republic of Congo is part of multiple such entities, and it has not posed a problem.

**12. CORAF should consider sharing the key indicators that it monitors.**

**13. Other remarks:**

- It is worth reminding that CORAF does not necessarily finance projects, it gives technical support, we can also do advocacy and resource mobilization.
- The topics of coordination and scientific governance of the NCoS and NCoE are still being discussed. We have not forgotten about them.
  - We are thinking about how regions can help set NCoS agendas.
- GMs of research institutes are the ambassadors of CORAF to their states.
- The BoD has elaborated strong recommendations regarding the sharing of knowledge and tools so that members of CORAF do not do redundant research
5- Review and adoption of governance documents

Summary of Changes to Governance Tools

Reviewing three primary governance documents

Process Undertaken

1. Following a literature review of governance documents for INGOs in agricultural research and development, review with the Governance and Nominations Committee the three main documents.
2. Refinements based on suggestions that were agreed by GNC.
4. Review of all French documents by CORAF Legal Counsel for alignment with legal statutes regulating the registration of the organization and under Senegalese law.
5. Presentation to the General Assembly for ratification, adoption and implementation by CORAF Board of Directors.
6. Ensure version control and logging of any future refinements for the record.
7. Continuous review of the documents every 2-3 years.

The following table summarizes the version history of the three governance tools reviewed and presented for adoption at the General Assembly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Amendment Occasion/Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} Ordinary Session of the General Assembly</td>
<td>Libreville, Gabon</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>First special session of the General Assembly</td>
<td>Dakar, Senegal</td>
<td>May 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} Ordinary Session of the Board of Directors</td>
<td>Dakar, Senegal</td>
<td>November 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>8\textsuperscript{th} Ordinary Session of the General Assembly</td>
<td>Yaoundé, Cameroon</td>
<td>June 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th} Ordinary Session of the General Assembly</td>
<td>Cotonou, Benin</td>
<td>May 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>12\textsuperscript{th} Ordinary Session of the General Assembly</td>
<td>Dakar, Senegal</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>13\textsuperscript{th} Ordinary Session of the General Assembly</td>
<td>N’Djamena, Chad</td>
<td>January 2022</td>
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</table>

The main changes in the CORAF Statutes are reflected the composition of the Board of Directors as well as the change in nomenclature from Governing Board of CORAF to Board of Directors. A key recommendation is for the General Assembly to consider the appointment of a high-level representative of the host country (Senegal) preferably from the Ministry of Agriculture (Sécretaire Général - SG). All edits are reflected in the document.
Rules of Procedure for the Board of Directors which lays out the Committee Terms of Reference, how they work, how the Chairs appointed, and specific expectations for the roles of these committees was also reviewed. It was recommended that the name of the Audit and Finance Committee be changed to include Risk and now called the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee. This is to ensure the committee performs its role to assist the Board of Directors and the Executive Secretariat in the effective management procedures for accounting, finance and risk aspects that CORAF must adopt.

Lastly, the CORAF Governance Manual which showcases the procedures intended to reassure all stakeholders and organizations supporting CORAF that the Association scrupulously applies the key governance procedures and principles, at the highest level, in the conduct of its activities. The objective of the Manual is to ensure that transparency and efficiency are respected in governance.

The section under review of the Governance Manual was to ensure that written notification of draft amendment containing all the details of the proposed amendments to be submitted to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors at least three (03) months prior to the General Assembly during which the proposal will be examined.

Q&A

1. In Central Africa, the private sector is not as active in agriculture as in other sectors such as health. I suggest that we put in the statutes the establishment of an association of private sector actors to allow them to talk to each other directly, outside of GAs, to develop solutions to boost private sector involvement in agriculture. This association would make CORAF and agricultural R&D institutes aware of the private sector’s priorities and vice versa.

   ○ Answers:

   ■ We submit this suggestion to the GA, which can vote on it.

   ■ The strategic plan considers the various changes that have occurred in the ecosystem of agricultural research and includes ways to strengthen the role of the private sector in implementing the new strategy.

   ■ There is, in the operational plan, a private sector engagement plan. We will first map the private sector in their areas of intervention (e.g. processing) and explore ways to work with them. We plan to organize technology fairs to allow the private sector to leverage these technologies. In the context of the seed industry, in which we have been more active, we have supported the private sector in setting up the seed alliance in West Africa. We do not organize groups and alliances; we provide information. It is up to the actors to organize themselves. Once they are organized, we can welcome them into CORAF.

   ■ The National Federation of Seed Producers of Chad (FENOPS) are already represented at the Board level as adherent members by PROPAC and ROPPA in the WCA regions. Agro-industries are represented on the Board
by these organizations. Therefore, you need to communicate with them, as CORAF is always opened to supporting such initiatives.

2. Why do we want a representative of the host country of a GA in the BoD? Would they participate in a deliberative way?
   ○ Answer:
     ■ The representative would participate as an observer to be aware of discussions and decisions and help us resolve local issues.

3. The article that says that countries and institutions should propose members poses a problem. It is the institutions that are part of CORAF, not the countries.
   ○ Answer:
     ■ Since we want to be under the tutelage of the states, they will have to have their say.

4. When it comes to the rules of procedure and the appointment of a replacement in case of absence, there is confusion on who carries the mandate.
   ○ Answer:
     ■ GMs of research institutes do not appoint other GMs. People come as representatives of their institutions when they should come as members of the BoD, with a detached view from their institute. As such, we should be able to delegate any other member of the Board to represent us in case of absence. However, during the Leaders Forum, when GMs will gather regularly, people can choose someone from their institutions to represent them in their absence. This type of gathering is being piloted.

5. Why should someone not be able to represent their institutions if they retire, even if chosen by their institution? It is when the person is no longer in the institution that they should lose their quality, not when they retire.
   ○ Answer:
     ■ In our mind, retirement is the end of the exercise of functions, not retirement in terms of reaching the age of retirement in one’s country

6. I am concerned about what was said in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), precisely on the request for a hearing that CORAF was to send to the government at CEMAC for a face-to-face meeting. There are many decisions and situations on which CEMAC would like to intervene but there are no official documents, no meeting with the government to develop strategies together (e.g. memorandum of understanding). We are always presented with the reports of activities done by CORAF. However, as long as there is no official document, the CEMAC government cannot contribute.
   ○ Answer:
CORAF has a signed cooperation agreement with CEMAC. It is perhaps a matter of revising this document. However, we are open to any additional advice that would allow us to benefit from the support of CEMAC.

7. ROPPA and PROPAC are members of CORAF and sit as producer organizations. However, research must work on the real needs of farmers to improve the situation. My suggestion would be to put in the statutes a mechanism that allows efficient feedback of our needs to NARS and RECs so that we can benefit from their support.

- **Answer:**
  - There are two opportunities:
    - The formulation of strategic and operational plans, where the circulation of documents is wider
    - The establishment of a dialogue between research and non-state actors, which we intend to institutionalize from now on
6- Presentation and validation of the updated Strategic Plan and the 2023-2027 Operational Plan

Introduction and Background of the OP 2023-2027

The 2023-2027 Operational Plan is the second 5-year term plan elaborated to implement the Strategic Plan (2018-2027) which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2018. This second Operational Plan (2023-2027) is built on:

- Achievements from the implementation of CORAF’s first OP (2018-2022)
- Continuation of projects and activities initiated during the 2018-2022 period
- Newly financed projects in the pipeline.

The context of CORAF has changed significantly since the SP 2018-2027 was adopted by the General assembly of CORAF in 2018. New emerging challenges include

- Deceleration in economic growth in the WCA regions and also a decline in gross domestic product.
- Climate change experienced throughout WCA, which negatively affects agricultural production and domestic growth.
- Increased armed conflicts in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa region, giving rise to the insecurity of the populations.

These issues (challenges, trends, opportunities...) are dynamic, thus necessitating a review/refresh of the OP.

Objectives

The objectives of this revision are to provide technical assistance in the area of Strategic Planning to assist CORAF in its effort of updating its Operational Plan and to develop a resource mobilization strategy to accompany the Operational Plan.

Methodology

The team used a mixed methodology that included some desktop research (e.g., CORAF annual reports, project reports, evaluation reports) and discussions (e.g. within the Refresh task force, with CORAF’s STC, with members of CORAF’s Board of Directors, with CORAF’s Governing Board).

Identification of CORAF's key challenges

This refreshed OP 2023-2027 tackles new emerging themes, such as:
• Anticipating shocks (e.g., climate change, sanitary crises, disasters, insecurity in conflict zones) and developing resilient strategies

• Restructuring agricultural systems during and after Covid 19 by investigating the impact of government responses to Covid 19 on agricultural activities, food prices, and vulnerable groups, especially women and youths and identifying best practices that can be adopted by other countries

• Developing projects that respond to emergencies with measures that have positive short and long-term impact

• Improving the efficiencies of irrigation systems and the use of renewable energy technology

• Disseminating T&I (recycling, organic matter, etc.) to tackle challenges in national food systems and promote eco-agriculture.

• Managing emergency foreign invasive pests (surveillance and risk analysis)

• Promoting soil fertility and conservation (soil fertility maps, conservative tillage, use of agro-ecology inputs, etc.)

• Reflecting on regional value addition, food processing, value chains and commercialization of high-value non-staple products

• Reflecting on gender and youth equity in food systems by investigating gender-transformative technologies and digital tools

There are several challenges that persist in the WCA region. Some are internal to CORAF and others are external.

Among the internal challenges:

• The perception of low inclusion of Portuguese-speaking countries in CORAF’s programs

• CORAF’s weak presence in Central Africa

• The low visibility of CORAF among politicians and decision-makers in member countries

• The low involvement of the NARS in the financing of CORAF

Among the external challenges:

• A high youth unemployment,

• A lack of consideration of the vulnerable in conflict zones

• A low engagement of the private sector and market access in regional product trade,

• A timid modernization of agriculture in the WCA region

• A weak management of intellectual property

• A degradation of the productive basins of agriculture in WCA region
A generalized crisis of food systems with increasing losses/waste

To tackle the above-challenges, CORAF needs to:

- Be more effectively involved in supporting NCoS and RCoE
- Strengthen regional governance between the NCoS and RCoE
- Promote Inter-Regionality among RCoE
- Scale up strategic communications and dissemination of technologies
- Be actively involved in the development and implementation of foresight studies (forecasting and anticipation)

Identification of key emerging opportunities

With all the challenges mentioned above come opportunities that CORAF should capitalize on. The entity should:

- Implement the CAADP-agenda and prepare their entry into the African Continental Free-Trade Area (ZELCAF)
- Be active in the fusion process of ECCAS and Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC)
- Explore/connect with GGW programs/projects (funded by many donors for sustainable agroforestry development strategies to face climate change in SSA)
- Be an active partner of G5 Sahel Alliance (mission is to end armed conflicts)
- Target the special needs of women farmers, youths and vulnerable groups
- Make greater use of the human resources of the NARS
- Develop a Partnership Engagement Protocol
- Organize suppliers of the markets into Production Platforms
- Establish Social Responsibility of Organization policy
- Include environmental impact assessment in all projects
- Exploit best practices/strategies implemented by stakeholders in the agricultural sector in some countries
- Learn from Covid-19 by developing risk-focused strategies for research organizations eg:
  - Improving the communication of results to facilitate access to scientific knowledge and proven T&I
  - Promoting a productive and resilient agriculture
Operationalizing the research units (NCoS, RCoS, RCoE, etc) to play their proximity in disseminating T&I

- Actively participating in all food self-sufficiency programs implemented in the WCA region
- Increasing focus on the establishment of an anticipation, forecasting and monitoring mechanism

- Re-deploy in Central Africa by:
  - Actively being involved in the fusion process of ECCAS and CEMAC, responding to the African Union's wish for a single economic community per region
  - Being more engaged with the NARS of ECCAS countries
  - Actively supporting the two RCoEs (PRASAC and CARBAP)
  - Strengthening scientific cooperation with regional economic communities (ECCAS, CEMAC)
  - Opening of a permanent liaison office in the region
  - Creating technology parks within research units in the region
  - Organizing regional agric. fairs to disseminate technologies

Identification of gaps

We identified a few gaps and recommendations in our analysis of past evaluation reports. These gaps include:

- Insufficient visibility of CORAF's achievements/impact
- Insufficient use of demand-driven market-based Technologies and Innovations for sustainable development

We also identified gaps based on CORAF's vision and objectives, such as

- Improving food security: is not predominantly dependent on food production alone. The four pillars of this outcome (food availability, food accessibility, food utilization and food stability) should be given equal attention
- Improving nutrition and health: Projects related to this such as, food safety, empirical evidence/prevalence of malnutrition, especially micro-nutrient deficiencies in the Regions should also be given priority during concept development and calls for project proposals by CORAF.
- Reducing post-harvest losses. This includes loss in quantity and quality of harvested agricultural products. Empirical evidence, developing and promoting efficient post-harvest technologies should also be encouraged.
Improving value chains. This encompasses bio-fortification, enrichment, food processing, etc. Related projects addressing these issues should also be given priority.

From our reading of past evaluation reports, we recommend CORAF to:

- Leave the Farm Academy Model Enterprise (FAME) as a permanent intellectual property of CORAF
- Subject all programs to an initial Environment Evaluation.
- Subject all subgrants to CORAF partners for implementation to a satisfactory environmental review form
- Identify and adopt models, tools and best practices for increased efficiency of interventions
- Develop a Private Sector Partnership Strategy to promote partnership with other organizations
- Identify relevant indigenous technologies/innovations and draw inspiration from them.

Resource mobilization strategy

Currently, CORAF’s main sources of funding are:

- Contributions from the members of the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS)
- Grants for operation and investment from Economic Communities (such as ECOWAS, ECCAS, UEMOA, CEMAC) and technical and financial partners
- Income from interests of the funds made available to CORAF
- Management fees (overhead)
- Donations and bequests received and
- Services provided by the experts of CORAF

CORAF counts on the resources from programs and projects to be implemented during the OP 2023-2027. For the time being, the following ongoing projects are listed:

- TARSPro until October 2024
- FSRP 5-year project phase 1
- PRAPS-II until September 2024
- i-REACH 4-year project pilot phase
- CAADP-XP4 until December 2023
- ABEE 5-year project, until September 2024
- BioRisks until December 2024
Some points that CORAF must integrate into its current resource mobilization strategy (external and internal sustainability strategies):

- Develop a strong and articulated scientific partnership with the One-CGIAR and associated institutions
- Establish an operational partnership with technical partners (FAO, WFP, OXFAM, etc)
- Get involved in the implementation of regional programs and projects in ECOWAS/ECCAS regions
- Develop a strategy to be informed of any project being initiated at the regional level (RECs, UEMOA, CEMAC)
- Look for grants for capacity building in agricultural development from donors: WB, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), USAID
- Sign internship or immersion agreements (MOUs) with universities or professional schools in the WCA region that would organize paid practical courses (bench fees).
- Collaborate with the Centers engaged in the Regional Integrated Initiative (RII) aiming to Transforming AgriFood Systems in West and Central Africa (TAFS-WCA) and also with Centers engaged in similar specific thematic intervention areas (AfricaRice, IITA, AATF, CIAT, ASTI/IFPRI, CIMMYT).
- Maintain its scientific partnership with ICRISAT, ICRAF and CIFOR
- Explore opportunities existing in the TAAT Program which is an integral part of the AfDB Feed Africa Strategy to the horizon 2025.
- NCoS/RCoE as “delivery engines”:
  - CORAF must develop a sound strategy to use Regional Centers of Excellence (RCoE), National Centers of Specialization (NCoS) and Base-center units (PRASAC and CARBAB) as Entry Points for the implementation of incoming programs and projects
  - CORAF, through NCoS and RCoE must support private individuals to expand their markets and process agricultural products. A CORAF label on the products will increase the market value and benefit CORAF
  - Through NCoS and RCoE, CORAF must be able to conduct consultancies at the national, subregional, regional levels.
- Continue to seek financial autonomy
  - CORAF can look for ways to establish an endowment fund to create a permanent source of funding
  - CORAF must perform better on Indirect Cost Recovery
  - Control the level of operating expenses at the Executive Secretariat
○ CORAF needs to develop a Partnership Engagement Protocol, extending to use of Non-Residential Expertise (e.g. from NARS) for consultancies

○ As part of the implementation of the CAADP-XP4 project, review the cost-sharing strategy initiated with FARA.

- Build an accountability framework
  ○ Identify one or two high-level African scientific personalities to advocate for the organization
  ○ CORAF can use its network as a service provider in the organization of international, regional and national seminars or workshops in the WCA region.
  ○ CORAF needs to organize an annual international conference: "the CORAF Agricultural Rendez-vous " on one or more scientific topics. -participants will be required to pay a registration fee to attend. Financial resources can be mobilized from donors, sponsors, agri-business, commercials, etc.

Financial resources already mobilized for CORAF’s OP 2023-2027

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Project title and Status</th>
<th>Implementing period</th>
<th>Total Budget (US$)</th>
<th>Budget for 2023 to End of project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CAADP ex-pillar IV Africa Regional and Sub-regional Organizations for Agricultural Research and Innovation-CAADP-XP4: European Union</td>
<td>2019-2023</td>
<td>6,557,000</td>
<td>1,671,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Strengthening climate resilience and sustainable agricultural productivity in Chad (ProPAD): World Bank</td>
<td>2018-2023</td>
<td>770,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fostering breeding networks and institutional breeding capacity in West Africa to develop climate resilient crops for African smallholder farmers (ABEE): European Union</td>
<td>2019-2024</td>
<td>9,968 102.3</td>
<td>3,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Anticipating and managing bio-risks to boost farmers’ resilience to climate change in WCA (WAVE): European Union</td>
<td>2020-2024</td>
<td>5,681,818.2</td>
<td>2,770,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Deployment of Agricultural Technologies and Innovations to Increase the Resilience of Production Systems and Family Farms in West and Central Africa (TARSPRO): Swiss cooperation</td>
<td>2020-2024</td>
<td>10,146,428.6</td>
<td>4,894,127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subtotal 1                                                                                      13,085,593
### About to start in 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Projects about to take-off</th>
<th>Implementing period</th>
<th>Total Budget (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Food Systems Resilience Program (FSRP): <em>World Bank</em></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Support to FSRP: <em>Netherland cooperation</em></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Accelerating Impact of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA): <em>World Bank</em></td>
<td>2020-2024</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gambia Inclusive and Resilient Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (GIRAV): <em>World Bank</em></td>
<td>2021-2026</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ECOWAS-Youth employment: <em>ECOWAS</em></td>
<td>2022-2024</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subtotal 2**

16,500,000

**Total secured funds for OP 2023-2027 (60% of funds (50 USD) required)**

29,585,593

### Financial resources to be mobilized during the next 5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Projects about to take-off</th>
<th>Implementing period</th>
<th>Total Budget (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Swiss Cooperation support to implementation of CORAF strategic Plan</td>
<td>2020-2027</td>
<td>19,317,857.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Transforming Agrifood Systems in W&amp;CA (TAFS-WCA) in partnership with One CGIAR</td>
<td>2022-2025</td>
<td>30M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BAORULA project on development of two tree species, Baobab (<em>A. digitata</em>) and Marula (<em>S. birrea</em>) value chains: Horizon Europe Call</td>
<td>2023-2027</td>
<td>€7m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Development and Scaling of Sustainable Feeds for Resilient Aquatic Food Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (FASA) in partnership with Worldfish</td>
<td>2023-2027</td>
<td>472,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhancing safety, competitiveness and marketing of vegetables for improving smallholder in W&amp;CA in partnership with WorldVeg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Excellence in Breeding (EiB) in partnership with CIMMYT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Accelerated Breeding Initiative (ABI) of One CGIAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions/recommendations

Trends, challenges, and opportunities keep evolving with time in WCA. Therefore, emerging thematic areas, opportunities, challenges, and gaps identified in this report should be given due consideration in refreshing the OP for CORAF’s Strategic Plan to be more impactful in WCA.

We congratulate CORAF for already securing more than 60% of funds needed to execute the second OP (2023-2027). However, we need to mobilize more funds (using strategies proposed).

Q&A

1. CORAF does not relate to country-level politics. Its members are NARS but do all countries have them? Even the ones that do, do they have good ones. We should take Benin, where the government champions the NARS, as an example. This championship allows for better visibility of the NARS and CORAF. My first recommendation is that states recognize and champion their NARS for them to be functional. My second recommendation is that CORAF supports the NARS to set up an agricultural research program and advocate for governments to back up the programs. Because the government will put money where its interest is. And this way, governments will know about CORAF.

   ▪ **Answer:**

   - CORAF cannot impose states to have a NARS but can support the formation of one and federate the actors if they are committed. We can for example create a multi-actor platform that allows actors in a country to coordinate

2. A. CORAF wants to take money from funders and distribute it to regional or national centers. But, what is the legal status of these centers? We should make sure that these entities are legit before we lose our money.

   B. Centers of excellence and centers of specialization are supposed to provide capacity building. However, CORAF should double-check what these centers have become because some are not in a good state to receive funds. In that sense, CORAF needs to get more acquainted with country realities.

   ▪ **Answer:**
We will vet these vocational centers, before giving them money. We will develop criteria for which institutions can receive funds (e.g. the strength of their accountability system). CORAF will also monitor the coordination of the projects.

We will also monitor the scope and activities of the projects we give to the vocational centers, using M&E and knowledge management tools.

3. CORAF is ECOWAS’s technical arm in terms of agricultural R&D. But, what does that mean when ARAA’s mission is very similar to CORAF’s? Can CORAF move from technical arm status to something clearly defined?

   ○ Answer:

   ■ Becoming a technical arm of a REC means that we achieved visibility at a regional level, and we are thankful for that. We take lessons learned from collaboration with ECOWAS to the negotiations with ECCAS. We may consider altering the wording of “technical arm”.

   ■ We know ARAA was created within ECOWAS to manage agricultural development projects. However, they are an executing agency, not an operational institution. It all boils down to being in dialogue and deciding who does what. There is even some strategic knowledge sharing between the two entities.

4. I have not heard much about capacity building, a mechanization park, animal health, health safety, good quality food, and the dissemination of endogenous technologies. We should think about utilizing multi-actor innovation platforms, developed by CORAF and FARA

   ○ Answer:

   ■ The topic of capacity building is of high importance, we are even talking about revitalizing North-South relationships for doctoral training and are developing training programs in vocational centers. Training is a constant in all projects. We want to create consortia around the NCoS and have a consortium agreement that commits all those working around the NCoS. In any project, the research activity is accompanied by a training action usually managed by the vocational center.

   ■ Mechanization, One Health denomination, and agricultural innovation systems are all mentioned in the document we sent as a pre-reading.

5. In about 10 years, a free trade zone in Africa will bring down taxes. CORAF should think about putting small taxes on the results of its work which would go to the CORAF fund.

6. We need to emphasize the importance of the market so that this is taken into account at the national level. Any value chain that is not taken from the market is not a commercial value chain. Can we also think about how our funders get their
money and get it that way? This way of thinking should spark longer-term planning to gather resources.

7. As NARS, we should take on the responsibility to take care of our own problems so that we are influenced to pursue priorities that are not our own.

8. CORAF should focus more on activities and themes that bring together the regions and facilitate the mobilization of resources for such activities and themes.
   ○ Answer:
     ■ The BoD must approve the establishment of country-specific programs, then NARS become implementing agents. During the implementation, CORAF contracts experts through their institutions.

9. The way a NARS is perceived in their country varies according to the utility of the results produced by the NARS agricultural research tool.

10. Countries should also feel responsible to implement the new operation plan and for projects.
Ensemble pour **accroître la présence** du CORAF en Afrique centrale
7- Research and Non-State Actors Meeting

Theme

The theme of this dialogue was “Dialogue between research and non-state actors: Scaling up agricultural technologies and innovations”.

Many agricultural research results focusing on technologies or innovations are generated by researchers in their laboratories, their experimental plots or even in the field. Most often, these technologies and innovations are not disseminated widely enough to reach the greatest number of potential users. Indeed, the work of Researchers and Teacher-Researchers is more particularly known by their peers through their scientific publications (articles in specialized journals, books, fact sheets, posters, oral presentations in scientific meetings, etc.). Their developed technologies and innovations struggle to reach the public, more specifically, the end users for whom they are, in principle, intended.

Scaling up technologies and innovations is crucial for agricultural research to have impact. However, it is a difficult task because it requires the support of several categories of actors, ranging from researchers to producers, including extension agents, producers’ organizations, NGOs, the private sector and increasingly community leaders.

CORAF, as part of its strategy focused on Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D), has developed the concept of Innovation Platform – IP – which makes it possible to put, very early, technologies and innovations in development to the knowledge of all players in the same value chain. IP is a range of dialogue and exchanges on a subject of common interest, which makes it easy for technologies or innovations, proven and proposed by research, to reach their targets.

It is aware of these issues that CORAF, during the 13th Ordinary Session of its General Assembly, is organizing a dialogue between research and non-state actors for scaling up, in other words, wide dissemination of technologies and agricultural innovations.

The main objective is to find ways and means to make available to end users relevant technologies and innovations for agriculture that are resilient to climate change and provides jobs for young people.

Structure and methodology

Participants were put in pairs then in groups of 6 and were asking to think about the following questions:

● Why is large-scale technology dissemination important to your group?
● What good practices does your group have in relation to the theme?
● What are the challenges your group faces in working on the theme?
They were then asked to think about interventions that can be implemented to facilitate and enhance the dissemination of technologies on a large scale. They did this exercise individually, in pairs, then in groups of 6.

Recommendations

Four main recommendations came out of the brainstorming sessions:

- Creation of platform that brings together actors (researchers, farmers, state, private sector) - Understand the needs of beneficiaries and incorporate them into the research process.
- Use of ICTs to communicate and disseminate technologies (e.g. community radio)
- Industrialization of innovation...how to ensure that innovations are ready to go/can be used right after release
- Training of beneficiaries and agents who will help farmers to use these technologies (ensure that everyone knows how to use these technologies)
8- Final Statements

Statements

CORAF held its General Assembly (GA) from January 25 to 27, 2022 in N'Djamena, Chad. The GA brought together the Directors of the National Agricultural Research Institutes from the member National Agricultural Research Systems (NARSs); representatives of regional producer organizations; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); academia; the private sector; development partners; scientific and technical partners, plus representatives of the Regional Economic Communities (ECCAS, CEMAC). Were also in attendance: members of the Board of Directors; members of the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC); the staff of the CORAF Executive Secretariat; and other staff from the host institution, the Chadian Institute of Agricultural Research for Development (ITRAD).

The General Assembly formally expresses its gratitude to General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Transitional Military Council (TMC), President of the Republic, Head of State of Chad for having offered acceptance to host the 13th Ordinary Session in N'Djamena, Chad. The General Assembly also extends its appreciation to the government and people of Chad for hosting the General Assembly twice in ten year, i.e. in 2012 and in 2022, demonstrating the strong commitment of the Government of Chad to support CORAF.

The participants of the General Assembly, representing WCA countries, hereby release this Communiqué on the strengthening of CORAF’s activities in Central Africa to our member Governments, NARSs, technical and financial partners and other stakeholders.

**Congratulating** the Ministers of Agriculture of Chad, Niger, Central African Republic and Cabo Verde; and the representatives of the Ministers in charge of research in Burkina Faso and in charge of Agriculture in Guinea;

**Further congratulating** the Director General of ITRAD, the Chairperson of the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly, the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of FARA; the Chairperson of the Board of Directors and the Executive Director of CORAF as well as the regional and local organizing committees for the successful holding of the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF;

**Recognizing** the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the health system, food security and agricultural productivity of countries;

**Further recognizing** that the restrictions due to Covid-19 resulted in the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly being held in two parts: the first part being held virtually in April 2021 and the second part in a hybrid (in-person and virtual) format from January 25 to 27, 2022;

**Appreciating** the robustness of the responses of WCA countries to mitigate the effects of Covid-19 on agriculture, focusing, inter alia, on the supply of improved seeds; the acquisition of equipment and tools for farmers; the introduction of sound phytosanitary measures; and capacity building across the wide range of participants in the agricultural value chain;

**Acknowledging** the financial support of CORAF’s technical and financial partners, notably USAID, the EU, IFAD, the World Bank, SDC and IDRC;
Appreciating the firm support to CORAF voiced by funding partners at the opening ceremony regarding CORAF’s flexibility in project implementation, which indicated that even during the Covid-19 pandemic period, the organization has been working hard to deliver on some of its project implementation targets;

Convinced that CORAF has had a significant impact in West Africa and believing that similar impact is needed in Central Africa;

Valuing CORAF’s efforts towards revitalizing the National Centers of Specialization (NCoS) and the Regional Centers of Excellence (RCoE) with respect to the implementation of cutting-edge scientific and technological areas relevant to national and regional priorities.

After cordial, transparent, interactive and exhaustive deliberations, the General Assembly makes the following recommendations and resolutions:

**Mobilization of financial resources**

Calls on CORAF member countries to fulfil their commitment to pay their annual dues.

Encourages CORAF to seek additional and innovative funding sources, including direct support from member countries; the AfDB; other regional financial institutions; and the private sector.

**Review of documents by the General Assembly**

Approves the revised versions of the following governance documents:

i. CORAF’s Statutes

ii. Rules of Procedures of the Board of Directors

iii. CORAF’s Governance Manual

Orders the printing and the circulation of the approved CORAF’s revised documents to the members of the Board of Directors and their posting on the CORAF website by end of April 2022.

**Approval of strategic documents**

Approves the updated Strategic Plan (2018-2027) and the Operational Plan (2023-2027).

**Extension of the mandate of the Board of Directors**

Endorses the decision of the April 2021 virtual meeting (Part 1 of the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly) to extend the mandate of the members of the current Board of Directors through to the beginning of the 14th Ordinary Session of the GA for the purpose of effective oversight of the governance reforms initiated by the Board of Directors.

**Strategic Positioning and Visibility of CORAF**

Recommends that CORAF uses its strategic positioning to leverage the support from Central African countries to improve CORAF’s visibility. In this regard, the Board and the Executive Secretariat should step up their advocacy activities.

**Human Capacity Building in the Central African Region**

Recommends that member countries strengthen their collaboration with CORAF to implement a strong human capacity building program across the agricultural value chain in the region.
Institutional Partnerships

Recognizing that CEMAC and ECCAS have embarked on merger efforts, CORAF is to work closely with both organizations. To this end, CORAF should strengthen its collaboration with the African Union (AU) and other regional and international bodies to achieve its objectives and mandates.

Place and venue of the next Assembly

The General Assembly duly noted the bid to hold its 14th ordinary session in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, in April 2024.

Conclusion

The General Assembly is appreciative of the facilities and support provided by the government of Chad and the level of commitment of the regional and local organizing committees that contributed to the successful holding of the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly. The high-level commitment of the participants in the General Assembly is also appreciated.

Done in N'Djamena, Chad on January 27, 2022

Q&A

1. You wrote that the “AG recommends CORAF to…” while the AG is the supreme decision-making body. How come it recommends?
   ○ The GA makes decisions for CORAF, but it can also make recommendations. It also depends on who the statement is for. If it is to members of CORAF, we recommend it. If it is to CORAF, we take it as a resolution.

2. The GAs go from West to Central Africa, but they must also go from the Sahelian zones to the coastal zones. The past 2 GAs were done in the Sahelian zone (Chad and Senegal). We suggest that this GA approves Benin’s candidacy to host the next GA.

3. Benin’s candidacy was approved. The next GA will be held in Cotonou in April 2024.
9- Chad Half Day

The Chad Day was introduced by Madam the Minister of Agricultural Development of Chad with the following words.

Minister of Agricultural Development of Chad

It is a great honor and a real pleasure for me to speak on the occasion of the day dedicated to Chad, the theme of which is "Synergy between agricultural research and extension services to meet the challenges of food and nutritional security".

First of all, I would like to fulfill a duty of thanking the Transitional Government under the foresight of General MAHAMAT IDRISS DEBY ITNO, President of the Transitional Military Council, President of the Republic, Head of State, for having expressed its agreement and financial support for the organization of this meeting in Chad.

Also, I salute the commitment and determination of the member countries, our partners and our national institutions in favor of our common association which is CORAF and thank them for the unceasing efforts made.

Indeed, my thanks also go to the President of the Board of Directors, to the Executive Secretary and to the entire CORAF team, for having offered this opportunity to Chadian research, for presenting some research results, showcase technologies and innovations and many ongoing initiatives in the agricultural sector.

On the sidelines of the 13th General Assembly, this half-day which is dedicated to agricultural research in Chad. As announced during the opening ceremony, this half-day dedicated to Chad has the theme "Synergy between agricultural research and extension to meet the challenges of food and nutritional security".

In Chad, the policies and various strategies in the agricultural sector have given the National Agricultural Research System a prominent place in the fight to improve food security and reduce poverty. Also, the agricultural research system should contribute to improving agricultural production by providing solutions through the technologies generated.

Regarding ITRAD, it is a question of generating and transferring technologies and innovations to the end users of research products through the National Agency for Rural Development Support. This technology transfer in favor of producers and small farmers is one of the important links in the improvement of agricultural production. However, to date, the adoption rates of these technologies and innovations are quite low and there is an urgent need to address this with appropriate actions.
Allow me here to congratulate all the exhibitors on the stands for their courage and above all their ingenuity in the creation and manufacture of agricultural machinery and in the processing of our agricultural products.

In our countries, institutions suffer from a lack of financial resources for the implementation of research activities. However, the results of research will boost economic development, contribute to achieving food security and the well-being of populations.

In addition to public funding, it is a question for us of setting up a sustainable funding mechanism but also of exploiting other opportunities for mobilizing funding from technical and financial partners.

Admittedly, the challenges of agricultural research are numerous and very varied, but there is hope. To succeed, it would be desirable, in addition to the efforts that our States must bring to us, to establish and consolidate partnerships with other regional and international institutions such as CORAF, which has solid experience.

Thank you for your attention.

Presentations

After a brief presentation of the Chadian Institute of Agronomic Research for Development (ITRAD) and of the state of play of the collaboration between ITRAD and CORAF by Mr. Yassine DOUDOUMA - ITRAD Director General, four presentations were be made during the half day:

- Presentation of a study of agro-morphological variability of sorghum accessions (Sorghum bicolor L. Moench) of southern Chad - Dr. GAPILI NAOURA, ITRAD geneticist
- Presentation of Sustainable Food Systems and Food Security in Chad - Pr. ABDELSALAM TIDJANI, PhD, PT
- Presentation of Agrobiodiversity and sustainability of oasis agro-systems in the palm groves of the Sahara and Sahel in Chad - ABBA MAHMOUD OUMAR HISSEIN, Master of Science Research Assistant at ITRAD/PhD at UYI
- Presentation of Post Doctoral work on nickel oxide (npsnio) and active carbon (ac) nanoparticle electrode materials derived from agricultural biomasses for energy storage applications as hybrid supercapacitors – Dr NGARMOUNDOU NGARGOTO (MA / CAMS)
Q&A

1. Contribution of the Chadian State to research
   ○ Answer:
   - Data available in a World Bank report

2. Human resources (mass of researchers, linked to the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education, CAMES)
   ○ Answer:
   - ITRAD is aligned with the evaluation of the CAMES system. A number of our researchers are registered with CAMES
     - 8 PhDs out of 64
     - 11 are writing their theses currently

3. State of research infrastructures
   ○ Answer:
   - We have an adequate infrastructure with high attentiveness from the Minister of Agricultural Development, who places research in high regard.

4. Collaboration between research and institutions that popularize research results
We work in close collaboration with ANADER (in charge of diffusion of technologies and the training of producers). There is also a department at ITRAD responsible for research and development, specifically to strengthen research-popularization relations.

5. Absence of content on animal production in the programs

○ Answer:

■ ITRAD is under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and everything related to livestock comes under the domain of the Livestock Research and Development Institute, under the supervision of the Ministry of Livestock.

6. The stay-green aspect allows the plant that has it to keep its green leaves until the end of the development of the plant. This aspect is very important both for production and for fodder.

7. ITRAD has asked CORAF to facilitate exchanges and the mobility of researchers. This request was done to draw inspiration from the experience of others and to share ours within the framework of the NCoS, which will soon become RCoE.

8. Can we do something to shorten the cycle of sorghum?

○ Answer:

■ It would be difficult to shorten because sorghum blooms during cold weather, which starts in December. From establishment, through the rainy season, to flowering, it's going to be difficult to shorten this cycle. On the contrary, this time allows good vegetative development and contributes to good productivity.

9. As we talked about a sustainable agricultural system, we should also have mentioned products endemic to Chad (e.g. sesame, gum arabic). How can CORAF help to value these products as a lever for development?

○ Answer:

■ We have conducted research in relation to many endemic products such as moringa. When we talk about a sustainable food system, it goes without saying that we must emphasize local products that are nutritious and easily preserved.

10. Will we engage with the results of this research? Will the research team prioritize the implementation of their results?

○ Answer:

■ The implementation of these results is a priority, and I am looking for funding to support an implementation in Chad.
11. There is a strong team of researchers in Cameroon working on sorghum. An interaction between the teams of Chadian and Cameroonian researchers would be productive so as not to do duplicate work and leverage each other’s knowledge.

- **Answer:**
  - I had contact with some researchers from Cameroon as part of my research but it did not continue. So, the intervention of ITRAD would be welcome to create lasting relationships between the two research communities.
10- Closing session

Reading the recommendations (Prof Justin Pita)

The 13th CORAF GA, attended by national agricultural research institutions, member NARS, representatives of regional producer organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, universities, the private sector, development partners, and scientific and technical partners, as well as representatives of RECs (ECCAS, CEMAC), members of the BoD, members of the scientific and technical committee, staff of the executive secretariat of CORAF, and other members of ITRAD, was held in Chad from January 25 to 27, 2022. The GA expresses its gratitude to General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Transitional Military Council, President of the Republic, Head of State and the people of Chad for hosting the event.

We acknowledge the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on countries' health systems, food security, and agricultural productivity.

We appreciate the robust responses of WCA countries to mitigate the negative impact of the health crisis on agriculture. These responses revolved around distributing improved seeds, equipment, and tools, introducing robust phytosanitary measures, and offering capacity building opportunities to the wide range of participants in agricultural value chains.

We also appreciate the financial support of our partners (e.g. USAID, EU, IFAD, World Bank, CRBI) and the strong support expressed by the financial partners to CORAF at the start of this event.

We are convinced that CORAF has had a positive impact in West Africa and are eager to replicate this impact in Central Africa.

We also appreciate CORAF’s efforts to boost the efforts of the National Centers of Specialization (NCoS) and the Regional Centers of Excellence (RCoE) for the implementation of cutting-edge scientific and technological fields relevant to national and regional properties.

After cordial, transparent, interactive, and exhaustive deliberations, the GA formulates the following recommendations and resolutions:

1. Mobilization of financial resources
   a. Call on CORAF member countries to honor their financial commitments by paying their annual dues
   b. Encourage CORAF to seek additional and innovative sources of funding (e.g. direct support from member countries, AfDB, other regional institutions and the private sector)

2. Review of documents by the GA
   a. Approve the revisions made to the following documents
      i. Statute of CORAF
      ii. Rules of procedure of the board of directors
iii. CORAF governance manual

b. Direct that the revised and approved documents be printed and distributed to Board members and posted on the CORAF website by the end of April 2022

3. Approval of strategic documents

a. Approve the update of the strategic plan 2018-2027 and the operational plan 2023-2027

4. Extension of the Board of Directors

a. Confirm the decision of the virtual meeting of April 2021 (part 1 of the 13th GA) to renew the mandate of the present members of the Board to enable them to effectively supervise the governance reforms initiated

5. Strategic positioning and visibility of CORAF

a. Recommend that CORAF utilizes its strategic positioning to leverage support from Central African countries to enhance CORAF’s visibility

i. The organizing committee and the secretariat should strengthen their advocacy

6. Capacity building of human resources in Central Africa

a. Recommend to member countries to strengthen their collaboration with CORAF to implement a strong HR capacity building program across the agricultural value chain in the region

7. Institutional partnerships

a. Recognize the efforts to merge CEMAC and ECCAS

b. Urge CORAF to work closely with both institutions

i. Strengthen its collaboration with the African Union and other regional and international bodies to achieve its objectives and mandates

8. Place and date of the next GA

a. Cotonou, Republic of Benin

b. April 2024

We appreciate the facilities and support provided by the Government of Chad and the level of commitment of the regional and local organizing committees and that of the participants.
Reading of the series of thanks

Motion of thanks to the President of the Transitional Military Council, President of the Republic and Head of State of Chad (Mrs. Khady Fall Tall)

The 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF expresses its sincere gratitude to General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Military Transitional Council, President of the Republic and Head of State of Chad, for having accepted that the agricultural scientific community of WCA and its partners meet in N'Djamena and also for its firm commitment to agricultural research for development in Chad and the subregion, and welcomes its manifest willingness to make agriculture a lever for development. The General Assembly also expresses its gratitude to General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Transitional Military Council, President of the Republic and Head of State of Chad for having presided over the solemn opening ceremony of the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF.

Motion of thanks to the Minister of Agricultural Development of Chad (Prof Adolphe Adjanohoune)

The 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF expresses its gratitude to the Minister of Agricultural Development of Chad, Mrs. Kamougue née Dene-Assoum Mayanan, for her commitment to the organization and success of this event, which allowed the CORAF Community and its partners to exchange views on the future of CORAF in the ever-changing
regional and international environments and to agree on the modalities of an increased presence of CORAF in Central Africa.

Motion of thanks to the Technical and Financial Partners of CORAF (Prof Florence Fonte)

The 13th Ordinary Session of the CORAF General Assembly expresses its deep thanks to the Technical and Financial Partners of CORAF for their support in the execution of the main functions of CORAF and the implementation of its Strategic Plan and Operational Plan for Climate Resilient Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security in West and Central Africa.

Motion of thanks to the Chadian Institute of Agricultural Research for Development - ITRAD (Prof Mbuya)

The 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF congratulates the Chadian Institute of Agricultural Research for Development (ITRAD) for all the efforts made to organize this meeting in support of the Executive Secretariat of CORAF.

Motion of thanks to the Regional Organization Committee and the Local Organization Committee (CRO/CLO) (Prof Mbuya)

The 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of CORAF wishes to express its gratitude to all members of the two Organizing Committees, the CRO and the CLO, for their dedication and selflessness during the preparation and holding of the General Assembly and expresses its deep thanks to them for the success of the event.

Congratulations Motion of Director of FARA (Prof Alioune Fall)

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) congratulates CORAF and all its partners for the successful organization of the 13th General Assembly of CORAF in N'Djamena, Chad. FARA and CORAF are two organizations with common concerns, albeit at different scales, around the coordination of Agricultural Research for Development, respectively in WCA for CORAF, and the whole African Continent for FARA our two organizations are highly dependent on the institutional and financial support of the Heads of State who participated in the High-Level Dialogue - Feeding Africa, organized on April 29, 2021 by the AfDB and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), in partnership with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and the CGIAR System Organization (point 6 of the general resolution), the support of the Regional Economic Communities (ECOWAS, UEMOA, ECCAS, CEMAC) as well as the support of the African Union Commission (CAADP, S3A) to carry out their mission. This support should enable our two organizations to set up an endowment fund to ensure the functioning of our organizations, and thus have a certain autonomy with respect to the donors we keep thanking. We ask our ministers present at this 13th General Assembly of CORAF to advocate for CORAF with their colleagues and with state, community (ECOWAS and ECCAS) and regional (AUC) authorities to improve the visibility of CORAF and FARA. Agricultural research, through the dissemination of technologies and productive innovations, allows agriculture to be the engine of growth and of the achievement of food sovereignty in Africa. Thanks again to CORAF for allowing FARA to share its vision of partnership in agricultural research for development.
Word from Chair of BoD

We had stimulating and productive debates. They will help us consolidate and strengthen the management of our organization. The gathering gained a lot from our individual and organizational contributions to face global challenges of agricultural R&D in Africa. Therefore, this GA can be considered successful.

We mentioned five points during deliberations:

- Agriculture will continue to be vital in supporting regional economic growth, which under normal circumstances should stay robust.
- However, we are observing challenging patterns in food dynamics nowadays, especially with climate change and Covid-19.
- There is a need for additional investments in our NARS, especially institutional capacity building.
- Agricultural research will have a significant role to play in supporting the fight against these significant challenges. This potential positive impact will demand a timely and comprehensive global response.
- Substantial investments will be needed to provide agricultural technologies and innovations to allow the sector to live up to this potential.

CORAF has made considerable progress in the last year. But, there is still a lot to do. We will continue to initiate and conduct more dialogues and collaborations and bring together agricultural sector actors.

Thank you to everyone present at the GA. Your individual and organizational contributions made this event successful. Special thanks to the ladies present, as women contribute most significantly to the agricultural value chain. They go to the field to cultivate crops and come back home to feed those crops to their families. Because of this incredible role, I want to see many more women join CORAF to impact the agricultural sector on this front as well.

Chairperson of the 13th GA of CORAF

During this GA, we had Interactive, transparent and exhaustive discussions that allowed us to deliberate on all the points on the session’s agenda. The final statement enlightened us on the organization’s issues and highlighted the progress made since the 12th GA in 2018. The approval of the moral report is CORAF’s recognition of this progress.

We approved and adopted the proposals of the 12th GA and the first part of the 13th GA to amend the governance documents. This approval allowed CORAF to extend the terms of the current members of the BoD to enable them to follow the transition until 2024. We adopted an updated 2023-2027 operational plan, taking into account the major changes that have occurred in the agricultural R&D ecosystem.

With this review and approval work, the GA provided CORAF with the tools and means to play its role in agricultural transformation in the WCA regions.
The significant advances of CORAF during these 3 years would not be possible without the mobilization of several stakeholders (e.g., NARS, financial and technical partners, and RECs).

I am honored to play the role of ambassador until the next general assembly.

Minister of Agricultural Development of Chad, representing the Head of State

Throughout the three days, scientists and their partners combed through the activities carried out by CORAF since the 12th GA. Productive discussions led to essential recommendations and resolutions to strengthen CORAF’s presence in Central Africa and consolidate its presence in West Africa to develop and exchange technologies and innovations efficiently.

The GA also addressed the alleviation of women’s work in the fields, processing activities, and their businesses. The same is true of young people’s interest in agriculture, a sector with great potential for employment and entrepreneurship. The exhibitions prove that agricultural research is on the way to modernization in the WCA regions.

The presence of many plant species that are resilient to climate change proves the commitment of agricultural research to support producers. However, our researchers need to be vigilant because recurring challenges and unpredictable epidemics could come our way. We need to anticipate hazards to continue to support farmers in their resilience.

We also learned that some of our countries fail to pay their contributions to CORAF. Therefore, I would like to make a strong appeal to the member countries of CORAF to spare no effort in honoring their commitment to the organization.