



**ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF CORAF (AG-14)**

**FOURTEENTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF CORAF (AG-14)**

**President of the CORAF Governing Board, 2018-2024:
Final Report
Dr Ângela M.P.B.V. MORENO**

**REPORT ON THE STATE OF CORAF AND THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 13th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(2022 - 2023)**

	REPORT ON THE STATUS OF CORAF AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 12TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY	
FOR APPROVAL		

Person responsible	Dr Ângela MORENO, President of the Governing Board
Executive Summary	This report takes stock of the overall situation of CORAF and the implementation of the recommendations of the 13th General Assembly.
Issues, risks and options	A periodic review of the implementation of the governance legislation allows the institution to monitor improvements and anticipate bottlenecks that could hinder its development.
Expected decisions	Approval of the report on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the 13th General Assembly
Author	Dr Ângela M. P. B. V. MORENO – CEO & Dr. Abdou TENKOUANO – Executive Director (Former) With the co-participation of Executive Director, Dr. Alioune FALL

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to God, to whom we all owe the success of CORAF and to my family, children and husband, Alfred Moreno for their patience and support over the years. To the Government of Cape Verde, in the person of Dr. Gilberto Silva, Minister of Agriculture and Environment, for the trust placed in me in appointing me as President of Água de Rega in Cape Verde and supporting my appointment as Chairperson of the Board of Directors of CORAF, both of which are high positions with substantial levels of responsibility, domestically in Cape Verde, and regionally in West and Central Africa.

My gratitude to the outgoing and present members of the Board of Directors, namely the eleven (11) sitting members and three (3) observer members, who currently make up the Board of Directors and the other members who have ceased their functions. Thanks to the chairmen of the committees, Mr. Vice-President and to the distinguished personalities who have been with me at the head of the Board of Directors of CORAF over these 6 years.

To the former Executive Director, Dr. Abdou TENKOUANO, my most sincere gratitude and recognition. To all the staff of CORAF, to the Administrative Director, Mme Safouratou ADARIPARE, for the opportunity to serve together. To Dr. Alioune FALL, Acting Executive Director, for the excellent support and good conduct of CORAF from January 2024 to date.

To the General Assembly, thanks for the joint efforts that have transformed CORAF into an important and strategic entity, unprecedented and unparalleled in the complex ecosystem of agricultural research and development in West and Central Africa.

My thanks to my friends and to all the members of the General Assembly and Board of Directors of CORAF who many helped us with support and advice.

2. PREAMBLE: OUR MANDATE IN CONTEXT

Agriculture remains the driving force for economic growth, poverty reduction and food and nutrition security in West and Central Africa, a region covering 12.3 million km² and home to 433.2 million people, 74% of whom are engaged in this vital sector.

However, the region continues to face major challenges, including low agricultural productivity and increasing land degradation, exacerbated by climate change, demographic trends, urbanization and changing diets.

In addition, limited access to improved varieties of key market crops and inadequate extension services contribute to low agricultural productivity. Poverty, measured as an income of less than \$1.25 per day, varies from 10% in Cameroon and Gabon to 80% in Liberia.

Although demand for food continues to grow, agricultural yields have not kept pace, resulting in a yield gap estimated at 75%. This situation has led to a growing dependence on food imports in the region, a phenomenon that can be reversed by improving the performance of smallholder farmers.

In response to these challenges, numerous response programs have been launched, involving different development agencies and implementing organizations. However, these interventions have proved inadequate, often working in isolation or even antagonistically, without synergy. It is in this context that CORAF was born, with the aim of developing coordinated and innovative approaches to sustainable food production, using science, technology and innovation.

This report summarizes the initiatives that we, the CORAF Board of Directors and the Executive Secretariat promoted, as a priority, while leading CORAF during our two mandates, which lasted 6 years (2018-2024).

During the 12th General Assembly, 10 to 12 April 2018, which led to my election, by the members of CORAF - to whom I am very grateful, I set a number of priority objectives and actions, as written in the report of my intervention at the 2018 assembly.

I've been reviewing that modest note and trying to see if we could actually come to this General Assembly today and say, 'Mission accomplished.' Now, having come to the end of my mandate, I consider it my duty to present a report on the concrete measures that have actually been taken to meet the objectives, through the implementation of CORAF's Strategic Plan (SP). The results of our actions during the implementation of the SP can be the best judges and testimonials of the fulfilment of our mission.

In all our interventions, we have made it a top priority to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of CORAF. Indeed, all the members of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director and the Executive Secretariat have worked very hard, and we have a sense and a clear conscience that our mission has been accomplished. However, despite many challenges, we also had many blessings from God, to whom we attribute the honor and glory of the successes achieved in CORAF during our mandate.

3. INTRODUCTION

CORAF is a Sub-Regional Organization (SRO) of West and Central Africa, a member of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). It was created in March 1987 and currently brings together the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) of 23 West and Central African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

During the three years of my 2nd presidency and the term of office of all the members of the Board of Directors, we have made every effort and taken a series of concrete measures.

We carried out research and development (R&D) activities in several CORAF member, providing them with support and resources to develop new products and services aimed at improving the quality of life of rural and agricultural families, in order to meet the needs of our customers.

We worked in partnership with national agricultural research systems (NARS), research institutes, universities and other higher education establishments, farmers' groups, civil society organizations, the private sector and other entities involved in the provision of research services.

I believe that progress has indeed been made, thanks to the individual and collective efforts of our members, partners, collaborators and staff of CORAF.

We are particularly grateful for the support of our partners, international funders, with whom we have achieved the credibility that allowed for mobilization of a significant amount of funding over these years.

It is obvious that much more will have to be done in the future. Performance and good governance are a constant struggle, especially in an international and multicultural institution such as ours, which is also made up of bodies with distinct and independent statutes.

CORAF has constantly made use of a lot of training and information in order to address its multiple challenges, including, in particular, the challenge of aligning the visions and objectives of its member institutions (SNRA) with those of CORAF in terms of agrarian development and its priorities.

At the same time, it needs to consolidate the good results achieved through the reforms already carried out, with the revision of all its management tools since 2020.

I hope that this report will help internal and external observers, and in particular Members of this House, to better understand the efforts made during these 6 years to leverage CORAF.

I hope that it will also contribute to motivating future leaders in their own efforts to continue to guide CORAF in their direction and vision.

Our commitment has been to make *CORAF a carrier of the present and the future where the people and communities of West and Central Africa achieve food and nutrition security as well as economic, social and environmental prosperity*. This is captured in our vision and mission statements as follows:

VISION - Sustainable reduction of poverty and food insecurity through agriculture-based economic growth and sustainable improvement of key aspects of the agricultural research system.

MISSION - *The mission was to achieve a "sustainable improvement of productivity, competitiveness and agricultural markets in AOC (West and Central Africa).*

It is based on this mission that we anchored our mandate on the implementation of **the strategic plan (2018-2027)** divided into five-year operational plans, for the **2018-2022** and **2023-2027** periods, in alignment with the challenges of agricultural research and development for our region.

For this reason, CORAF positions itself as the technical arm of the Regional Economic Commissions (CECs) for their agricultural research and development policies within the framework of agreements signed with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS, 21 December 2005), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU, 28 February 2006), and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC, 2006, 2028).

4. OBJECTIVES OF THIS REPORT

As a major player in agricultural development in West and Central Africa, CORAF consolidated its strategic partnerships in 2023, thereby strengthening its position in the region. These partnerships, whether institutional, scientific, technical or developmental, have enabled CORAF to mobilize diversified resources and implement its strategic and operational plans. The overall objective of these partnerships is to increase agricultural productivity, improve food and nutrition security, promote social equity and strengthen climate and environmental resilience.

This report examines in detail the various initiatives and actions undertaken by CORAF through these partnerships, highlighting the progress made and the challenges that remain. It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the state of CORAF. It highlights achievements, institutional reforms, strategic positioning, resource mobilization, implementation of operational plans, management of operations, governance and it concludes with an outlook for the organization.

The report highlights CORAF's efforts and the main actions undertaken by the Board of Directors and Executive Secretariat from 2018 to 2024, in order to strengthen CORAF's institutional capacities, and create more partnerships that are strong and sustainable.

5. OUR GOVERNANCE

5.1. The General Assembly

I, Ângela M.P.B.V. Moreno, was elected in April 2018, during the 12th Assembly, as President of CORAF, replacing Dr Alioune FALL, who concluded his mandate on the same date.

According to CORAF's statutory texts, I served a first term (April 2018-April 2021) followed by a second term of the same duration (April 2021-April 2024):

- (i) The first appointment was made at the 12th ordinary session, which was held in April 2018 in Dakar, Senegal (after a gap of four years since the last ordinary session held in June 2014 in Niamey, Niger), and marked a decisive turning point with the name change to better reflect CORAF's position in the agricultural research and development environment.
- (ii) The second appointment was made at the 13th ordinary session, which was held in January 2022 in N'Djamena, Chad. It should be noted that this session should have been held in 2021 but was postponed due to the COVID19 pandemic. However, it was preceded by a virtual business meeting in April 2021, which made it possible to renew the Board of Directors and maintain strong recommendations aimed at consolidating CORAF's performance, at the heart of the international cooperation system, for agrarian development.

We are now witnessing the fourteenth (14th) ordinary session of the General Assembly, which takes place today, April 17, 2024, in Cotonou, Benin. The Regional Organizing Committee (ROC) and National Organizing Committee (NOC) of this event worked hard to ensure the full success of this edition, our thanks! The theme of this edition aims **to "harness the potential of the private sector in scaling up proven innovations in research"**.

At the time of my assumption as Chairperson of the Board of Directors of CORAF, I found Dr. Abdou TENKOUANO at the helm, as Executive Director and member of the Board of Directors, who carried out the two terms in an excellent way. A great man and excellent leader and very good professional. He entered in 2016, two years before me, **finding CORAF in a critical situation, as recorded in CORAF's 2016 Institutional Audit Report, which predicted the cessation of CORAF's operation within 18 to 24 months, if urgent**

reforms were not carried out at the triple level of governance, strategy and resource management.

This is a frame of reference that will allow the next Executive Director and the next Chairperson of the Board of Directors to immerse themselves in the CORAF environment to better understand its mission.

The Board of Directors of CORAF met at its 30th ordinary session from 13 to 15 July 2021 to assess the performance of the governance bodies, including the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, the Scientific and Technical Committee and the Executive Secretariat. At the end of this session, 66 governance acts (resolutions, decisions, recommendations) were issued. Of these, 39 have been completed and 27 are ongoing. The state of implementation of the governance acts and the items of the decisions and recommendations resulting from the 31st ordinary session of the Board of Directors of CORAF, from 18 to 20 January 2022, also recorded a good performance of the governance bodies of CORAF and improved coordination between the Executive Secretariat and the Management Board.

The 13th ordinary session of the CORAF General Assembly, held in Ndjamen, Chad, from 25 to 27 January 2022, approved the revised versions of the following governance documents: (i) CORAF Statutes, (ii) Rules of Procedure of the Board of Directors, (iii) CORAF Governance Manual, (iv) Amendments to the Strategic Plan 2018-2027 and (v) Operational Plan 2023-2027.

The General Assembly also approved the decision to renew the terms of office of the members of the Board of Directors at this 13th ordinary session in order to enable them to effectively oversee governance reforms.

5.2. The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors meets twice a year, in ordinary session and, if necessary, in extraordinary session or in the Executive Committee.

During our term of office, all ordinary sessions, a total of ten (10), were held regularly. In addition, three (3) extraordinary sessions of the Board of Directors and eight (8) sessions of the Executive Committee were held.

This intense activity of the Board of Directors reflects the intensity of the pace of the reforms undertaken to relieve CORAF of the critical situation in which it found itself before 2016, above all.

Four innovations were introduced in the conduct of the Board of Directors sessions.

1-The first is the decentralization of the sessions, with 5 (five) sessions of the Board of Directors held outside the headquarters of CORAF:

- Twice (2) in Cape Verde
- Once (1) each in Chad, Ghana, and Mauritania

It is noteworthy that the costs of organization of these decentralized sessions were largely supported by the NARS of the host country.

These decentralized sessions allowed the Board of Directors to better understand the realities of the host country and to increase the visibility and influence of the NARS and CORAF in the host country.

2- The second innovation is the holding of paperless sessions, with documents regularly submitted electronically.

3- The third innovation is the online approval of the minutes of the GC sessions, in order to allow the SE (Executive Secretariat) to implement the decisions with legitimacy and faster.

4- The last one, imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, consists of the effective organization of virtual sessions.

The last ordinary session of the Board of Directors, the 35th, was held from January 16 to 18, 2024, in Yaoundé (Cameroon).

We worked on key issues such as the termination of the terms of office of the majority of the Board members and the transition to the new statutory composition of the Board.

In order to avoid the breakdown of institutional memory in compliance with the Statutes, it is our recommendation to maintain one of the members of the NARS representatives in the Board of Directors in the role of Chairman of the Board (in particular, of an NARS/country that has never provided a Chair to the CORAF Board), and to replace all others in accordance with the current provisions of the Statutes.

5.3. The Scientific and Technical Committee

During our mandate, we worked side-by-side with the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC), a technical advisory structure of the Council, composed of 12 (twelve) experts from the different components of CORAF.

This body met once a year in ordinary session. The last (13th) session of the STC before I took office was held in October 2015. The first session (the 14th) of my mandate was held in October 2018, after the Council renewed the members of the STC, with a perfect parity of six women and six men. In the meantime, the Board of Directors had appointed Prof.

Mamadou SANGARE as the sole member of the STC. A vibrant tribute was paid to him at the 12th ordinary session of the General Assembly.

In addition to its statutory meetings, the STC met seven (7) times to review essential operational matters. Care should be taken to preserve the nature of the STC as a scientific audit body of CORAF programs by playing a role at the governance level, as stipulated in Article 16 of the CORAF Statutes, and to avoid engaging the STC at the operational level.

5.4. The Executive Secretariat

The Executive Secretariat is the body responsible for implementing the decisions of the General Assembly and the Board of Directors and it plays a central role in the implementation of CORAF's strategic plan.

The Executive Secretariat is headquartered in Dakar, Senegal, where CORAF has benefited from a headquarters agreement with the Government of the Republic of Senegal since 1997.

However, this agreement had been in a state of non-renewal since 2010, despite various approaches from CORAF. In the meantime, the State of Senegal had carried out reforms since 2011, with the adoption of a new regulatory framework in 2015, the requirements of which, once understood in 2018, were gradually complied with by CORAF, leading to the signing of a new headquarters agreement on 11 February 2020. This agreement allows CORAF and its expatriate staff to enjoy the diplomatic privileges and immunities associated with their status.

In addition to the headquarters agreement, CORAF is approved as an international NGO based in Senegal and listed under No 010211/MINT/DAGAT/DEL/ONG of 26 September 2011. As such, in accordance with the legal provisions in force, it is subject to the submission and validation of a biennial investment program. One program was introduced in April 2023, when the one signed in March 2021 expired. However, it takes time to be finalized due to the administrative procedure related to signing the document.

The implementation of the approved investment program is subject to the submission of an activity report, which until now was done on a quarterly basis. With the signing of Decree No. 2022-1676, which establishes the modalities of intervention of NGOs in Senegal, the periodicity was extended to 06 (six) months.

5.5. Research Leaders Forum

Outside of the General Assembly, CORAF did not have a consultation framework that brought together all the heads of national (and multinational) agricultural research institutions in the region to take stock of the progress of agricultural research in order to decide on emerging issues, and to produce guidelines to facilitate decision-making by governments and their development partners.

This is how the Research Leaders Forum (CORAF FORUM) was created.

- The first edition was held in Yaoundé (Cameroon) in October 2022 and
- The second in Praia (Cape Verde) in October 2023.

The latter made it possible to make strong recommendations on the reorganization of NARS to equip itself with showcases and counters to interface with the private sector for the expansion of technologies.

It is recommended that the CORAF FORUM be held together with the Agricultural Innovations and Technologies Market (MITA) and the Symposium on Scientific and Technological Research (SYMPO CORAF) as part of an Annual CORAF Week, which will provide a regular and unmissable event with a strong media, political and economic impact.

6. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

6.1. Financial management

The Strategic Plan (SP) 2018-2027 is divided into two Operational Plans (OP):

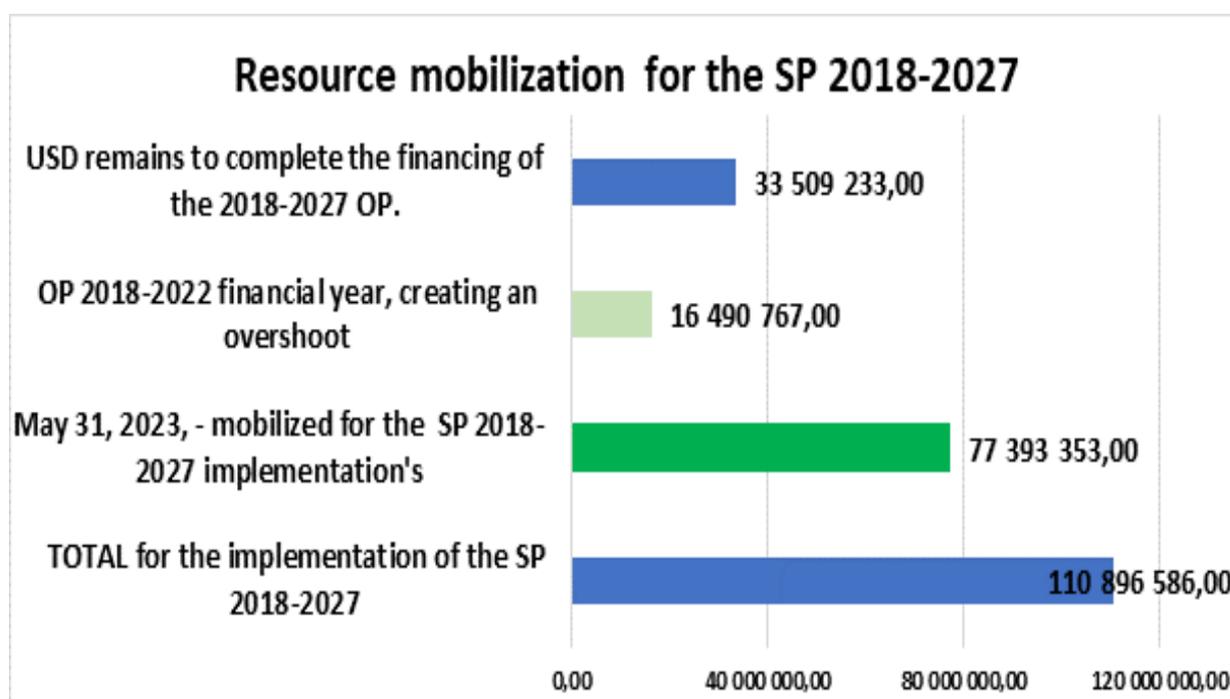
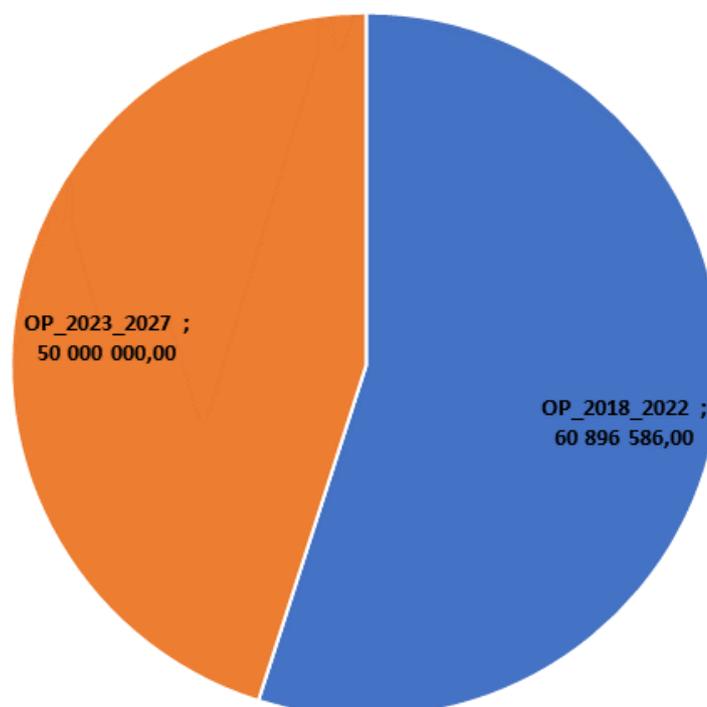
- OP 2018-2022 (adopted by GA 12 in April 2018) and
 - OP 2023-2027 (adopted by GA13 in January 2022).
- ✓ budget for the 2018-2022 OP was USD 60,896,586
 - ✓ budget for the 2023-2027 OP was approximately USD 50,000,000
 - ✓ i.e. a total of approximately USD 110,896,586 for the 2018-2027 EP.

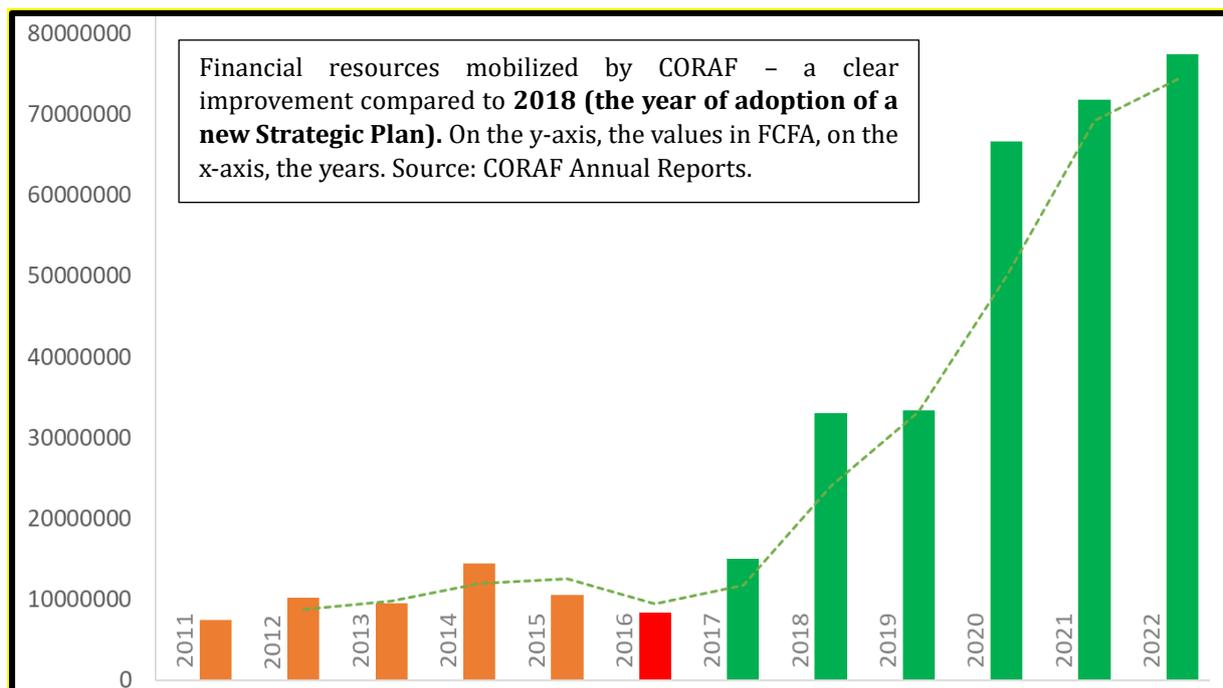
As of May 31, 2023, a total amount of USD 77,393,353 has been mobilized for the implementation of the SP 2018-2027.

It should be noted that the resource mobilization activities for these funds took place during the OP 2018-2022 financial year, creating an overshoot of approximately USD 16,490,767 (27%) compared to the funding requirement of the 2018-2022 OP that was credited to the 2023-2027 OP, but a shortfall of approximately USD 33,509,233 remains to complete the financing of the 2018-2027 OP.

In fact, CORAF's financial management has improved significantly with the financial support of the various development partners that have supported CORAF.

Resource mobilization or budget for the (\$ USA)





The biggest difficulty lies in the basic functioning of the system, as the development partners do not support this budget line and the contributions of the various constituents are not up to date.

- Therefore, it is essential to make the Institution more financially stable.
- The Institution's cash flow has undergone a significant evolution thanks to the diversification of partnerships and the consequent support of new partners, such as Swiss Cooperation, not to mention long-standing partner USAID, which supported CORAF with the implementation of PAIRED that ended in December 2022.
- The amounts advanced to the Projects and not yet justified add up to **1,092,965,422 FCFA** as of November 30, 2023. Significant progress has been made in this area, in particular with the implementation of fiduciary oversight missions, which have made it possible to absorb the significant deficit of recent years in the transmission of supporting documents to the Executive Secretariat. As a reminder, there were more than 3.6 billion CFA francs (\$7 million) outstanding by implementing partners in countries in 2016.
- As usual, the Institution's accounts are subject to certification by an external audit firm. Those for the 2022 financial year were certified without reservation by MAZARS. The financial statements will be submitted to the next meeting of the Board of Directors.

6.1.1. NARS Contribution

CORAF members' unpaid dues amount to **223,259,229 FCFA** as of October 31, 2023. The Executive Secretariat regularly sends reminder letters to the institutions so that they can honour their commitment with an annual contribution set at 1,000,000 CFA francs.

Contributions received for the 2023 financial year total **FCFA 29,700,771** . Only four (04) members, INERA DRC, ITRA Togo, ITRAD Chad and INIDA Cabo Verde, are up to date with their dues and among them, INERA RDC has already paid its membership fee for the 2024 financial year in advance.

It is therefore necessary to establish a mechanism for the effective recovery of those contributions, which, in the long term, can contribute to mitigating, to a certain extent, the operating costs of the Institution.

It is important to highlight ROPPA's approach, which has proposed compensation for its arrears according to a phased payment. This approach is a model to be welcomed and encouraged.

6.1.2. Sovereignty Fund to guarantee the basic functioning of CORAF

The way in which CORAF is financed poses a crucial problem to ensure the sovereignty and sustainability of the Institution. Progress has been made in mobilizing CORAF's own resources, but it is clear that new mechanisms need to be identified to ensure basic functioning.

Three paths are being pursued:

- the first is through a full cost recovery policy (currently under development),
- the second is through advocacy for flexible fundraising (a process led by the NGO Non-Profit Builder (Nonprofit Builder – The Capacity Building Platform for Nonprofits) with the indirect support of the BMGF and the oversight of the Global Green Growth Institute, which accompanies CORAF for the accreditation of the Green Climate Fund),
- The third involves a mechanism for the creation of an endowment-fed endowment.

6.2. Human resources

6.2.1. Composition of the workforce

Several reforms have been carried out since 2020, whereby the Executive Secretariat has been implementing the recommendations of a study conducted in collaboration with

DELOITTE and approved by the Board of Directors. The reforms aimed to better align Human Resources with institutional objectives.

The Executive Secretariat currently has 31 permanent employees and 14 interns and consultants. This workforce is distributed among the various Departments, of which approximately 65% are in the Department of Corporate Services and 32% in the Department of Research and Innovation. This distribution reflects CORAF's strategic decision to increasingly position projects within the National Centers of Specialization (NCoS), some of which have evolved into Regional Centers of Excellence (RCoE), while others are in intermediate stages.

As part of this plan, the Executive Secretariat maintains coordination, monitoring, and evaluation functions, as well as support functions on cross-cutting issues such as communication and gender, accompanied by fiduciary and logistical support. As part of efforts to modernize management tools, including the digitization and outsourcing of certain functions, these measures should lead to a rationalization of the Secretariat's staffing, particularly within the Directorate of Corporate Services.

In addition, in order to streamline the organizational structure of the Research and Innovation Directorate, the various projects were grouped into the Priority Areas of Intervention of the Operational Plan and some senior staff were appointed to lead the teams contributing to the PIDs. This restructuring aims to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of research and innovation initiatives.

6.3. Workspace & Infrastructure

6.3.1. *Dependencies of the Executive Secretariat*

CORAF's headquarters consists of a three-storey main block, which was inaugurated in December 2009 with financial support from DFID. An annex block connected to the main block by a walkway house almost all the technical staff and was made available to CORAF by ISRA in 1990, the year in which the Association's headquarters were transferred from Paris to Dakar. However, the absence of a long-term lease could make the long-term enjoyment of these premises precarious.

The new town of Diamniadio was erected as an urban center to which various branches of the Senegalese public administration are transferred. CORAF could position itself in collaboration with the relevant authorities of the Government of the Republic of Senegal to obtain a site that can be built according to the availability of resources.

The other option to be considered would be to proceed with developments at the current location, taking into account the current position of CORAF in the continental and

international sphere. This option would make it possible, in the long term, to strengthen the CORAF's sovereignty fund with the recovery of operating costs.

7. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

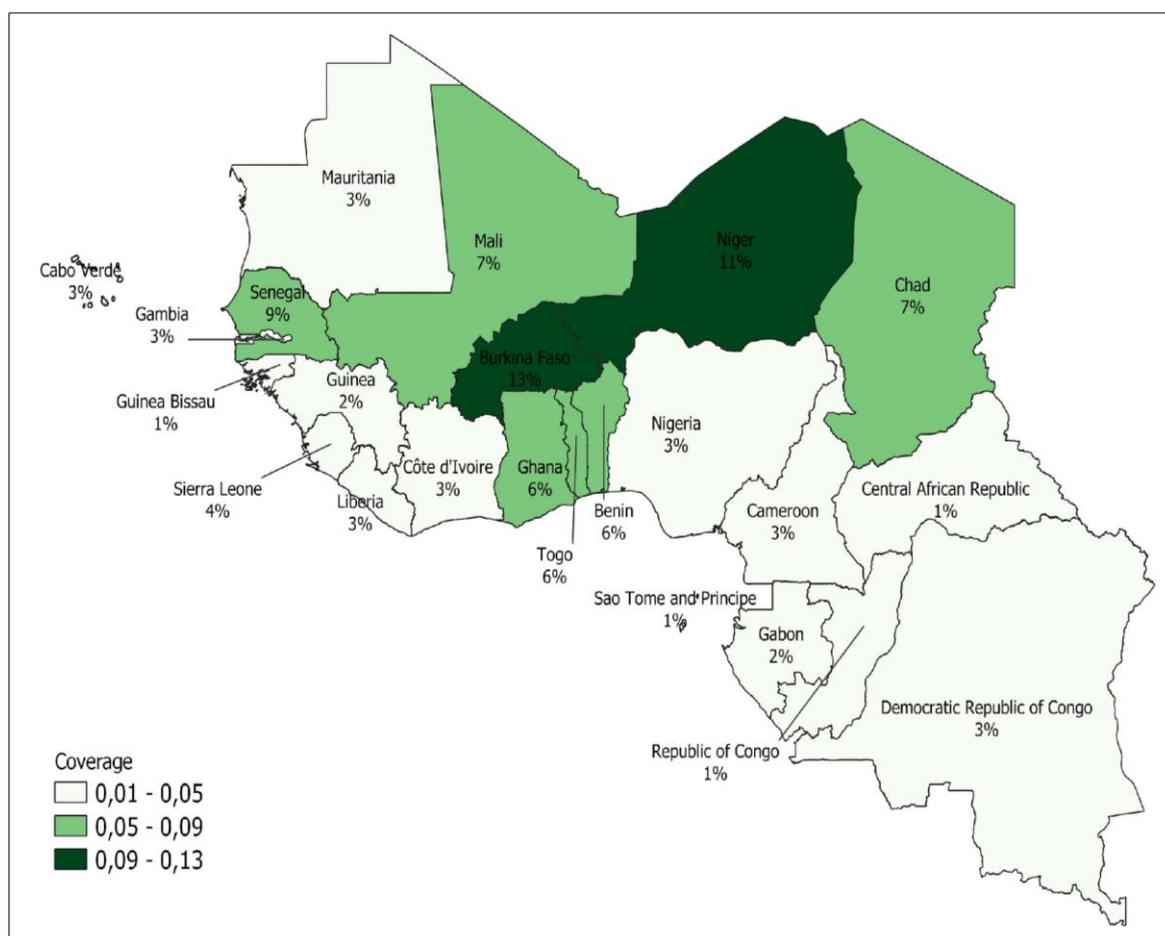
7.1. CORAF Projects/Initiatives

7.1.1. Geographical coverage of projects

Constant attention should be paid to the geographical coverage that we define by the number of activities that a site has directly benefited from in relation to the total number of activities carried out by the different projects during the reference period.

Importantly, this depends primarily on the geographical coverage of the implemented projects, as prescribed by funding sources.

The chart below shows better coverage in the Sahel and Coastal Agroecological Zones (AEZ) than in the Humid Forest AEZ of CORAF mandate region.



The 2023-2027 Operational Plan has set aside approximately USD 2,000,000 for capacity building and stakeholder engagement activities for the development and implementation of multi-country programs in the Humid Forest AEZ.

7.2. Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring & Evaluation is one of the main focuses of CORAF's performance measurement. Indeed, monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role in the implementation of CORAF's Strategic Plan and Operational Plans.

A monitoring and evaluation policy has been put in place with the participation of all stakeholders. This policy is supported by a monitoring and evaluation manual to guide its operationalization and the practice of monitoring and evaluation among the various teams.

7.3. Knowledge management

The volume of information and knowledge generated by CORAF constitutes an intellectual capital that should be valued in order to benefit stakeholders and, at the same time, promote the achievement of organizational strategic objectives.

The Institution has recruited a Knowledge Management Consultant to organize the knowledge in such a way as to ensure its significant contribution to the objectives of CORAF's strategic plan.

7.4. Assessment 2018-2022 Operational Plan

CORAF engaged in the evaluation of the 2018-2022 operational plan and appointed consultants to conduct this exercise. Their work will be presented at this 14th ordinary session of the General Assembly.

8. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are essential for the financing and successful implementation of CORAF's strategy. CORAF is today an institution recognized by a wide variety of development actors at the regional and international levels for the following reasons:

- (i) effective coordination of the community of practice of agricultural research for development in West and Central Africa;

-
- (ii) the contribution to the implementation of REC policies (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CMAC, ECCAS) for reforms, which strengthened CORAF's position as the technical arm of these RECs;
 - (iii) significant achievements in terms of coordinating the generation and diffusion of agricultural technologies and innovations;
 - (iv) transparency, integrity and accountability in the management of the resources made available to them by development partners.

Thus, **around 55 agreements** with research, development and private sector actors have been signed and implemented for the period 2016-2023.

However, this position requires a good policy for managing partnerships of interest to CORAF, with a good reading of the evolutions that are taking place in the complex ecosystem of agricultural research and development advice.

9. COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

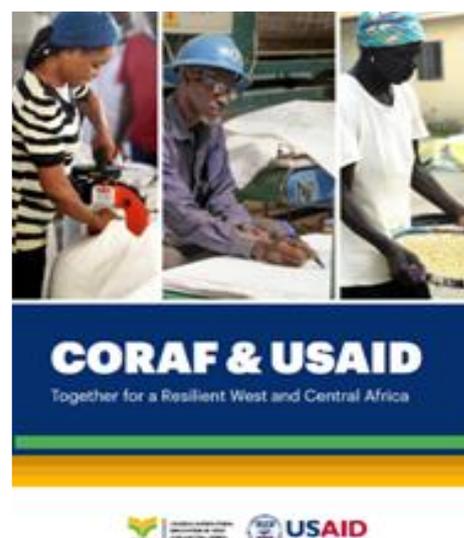
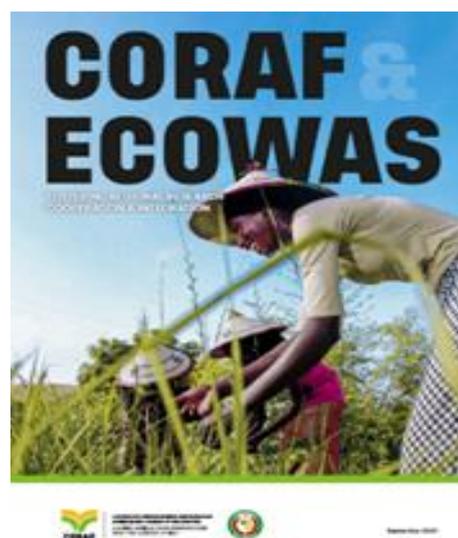
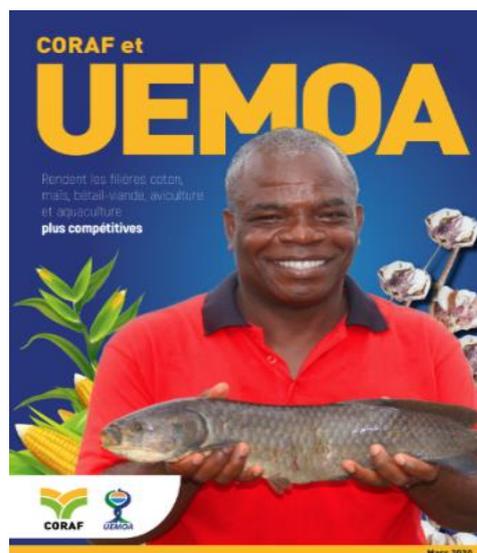
Impact communication takes precedence over event communication with some important projects, including digitalization and accountability.

9.1. Digitization

Digitalization has been a key project of my mandate, and key achievements at institutional level have included:

- The implementation of a Zoom videoconferencing solution for teleworking and the holding of CORAF workshops
-
- Implementation of a state-of-the-art datacenter at CORAF's headquarters with an interactive technology called HCI (Human-Computer Interaction)
-
- Modernization of business processes via Office 365 (digitization of various HR processes, etc.)
- The implementation of TOMPRO's digital solution (for financial and cost accounting)
- The digitalization of web platforms that were obsolete.
- The digitalization of security and data access processes at the CORAF level.

Newsletters ("CORAF this month") are regularly sent to more than 7500 people to disseminate CORAF news and results. Strategic awareness and advocacy materials were deployed throughout the reporting period.



These different strategies and tools have made it possible to establish CORAF's visual identity, strengthen its visibility and reputation in West and Central Africa, thus supporting it in its positioning as a leading institution for the coordination of agricultural research and development in West and Central Africa.

10. THE IMPACTS OF THE IMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS

GA12 and GA13

Throughout our mandate many recommendations have been made, essentially summarizing 3 macro topics:

1. Strategic Planning and Guidance/Governance
2. Financial Sustainability
3. Organizational Structure/People Management/Human Resources

The actions in response to the recommendations and the impacts of the actions implemented were as follows:

Table 1: Impacts of Actions 2018-2024

Recommendations	Action	Impact
Improved delivery of institutional services, budget	Transition towards stability	Improved delivery of institutional services, budget → decentralization and business processes
Adapting human resources to CORAF's strategic objectives	Institutional reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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). • The forward-looking management of jobs and skills will support the 2023-2027 strategic action.
Implementation of CORAF's 2018-2027	Strategic positioning and visibility	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

Recommendations	Action	Impact
		and beneficiaries, NARSs, Private Sector, Gender, Youth etc
Fundraising through the development of partnerships	Institutional partnerships	The Institutional Partnerships Officer contributes to fundraising through the development of partnerships with new institutional donors, in our region and internationally
Resource mobilization	Attracting and growing funding for agricultural research and development.	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
Sustainability of the organization	Implementation of strategic and operational plans	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 on the organization. CORAF is now one organization more Sustainability than before.
Engagement all Partners	Private sector engagement, gender, youth and social equity	<p>CORAF has developed a strategic and operational marketing plan that has been successful and focused on partnership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and develop support tools that demonstrate impacts • Create and monitor a CORAF relationship program and member countries, with a marketing plan, multi-channel for private sector, farmers, NGOs, agripreneurs etc. • Develop a relational technical and scientific strategy that allows us to identify and link NARSs in our strategies • Identify and build the capacity of private sectors to transform our research and technologies and make them

Recommendations	Action	Impact
		available to farmers and producers
Institutional reform	Operations management	Institutional reform has enabled CORAF's Executive Secretariat and Board of Directors to plan, organize and oversee all activities involved in CORAF at headquarters and in several member countries through an effective reporting culture that exists at CORAF.
Training, communication, and marketing	Transforming CORAF through Communication (marketing) training,	The importance and visibility (notoriety) that CORAF enjoys today were due to the essential role of communication and training.

Table 1: Status of Implementation of the Recommendations of the 13th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly - 2013-2024

RECOMMENDATIONS	TIME	RESPONSIBILITY	STATUS	ACTIONS
MOBILIZATION OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES				
[AG13-01] Call on CORAF Member to Honor Their Financial Commitments by Paying Their Annual Dues	Immediate	PCA	Ongoing	The SE works with the various DGs and directorates to ensure the regular payment of associate membership dues by the constituents. To this end, a courtesy call was paid to the Minister of Agriculture of the Central African Republic, who promised to pay the dues of his members. ROPPA has made an innovative proposal to clear arrears by May 2024 in three instalments. Other members are encouraged to do the same.

<p>[AG13-02] Encourages CORAF to seek additional and innovative sources of financing (e.g., direct support from member, the AfDB, other regional institutions, and the private sector)</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>FROM</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>A framework for the development of country support programs has been prepared.</p>
<p>REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS BY THE H.E.O.</p>				
<p>[GA13-04] Orders the printing and distribution of the revised and approved documents to the members of the Board of Directors and their publication on the CORAF website before the end of April 2022</p>	<p>April 2022</p>	<p>FROM</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Governance documents were shared electronically with stakeholders (Bylaws to all CORAF members, Board documents to Directors only).</p>
<p>STRATEGIC POSITIONING AND VISIBILITY OF CORAF</p>				
<p>[AG13-07] Recommends that CORAF leverage its strategic positioning to mobilize the support of Central African countries in order to enhance CORAF's visibility; (b) Recommends that member (constituents of CORAF) strengthen their collaboration with CORAF to roll out a robust HR capacity building program across the agricultural value chain in the region; and (c) Urges CORAF to work closely with ECCAS and CEMAC, and to strengthen its collaboration with the African Union and other key regional and international bodies in order to achieve its</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>FROM</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The SE organized a workshop in Bangui, Central African Republic, to revitalize the Central Africa Climate Change Alliance and took the opportunity to initiate the development of a proposal. This represents a total of five major events that have been organized in Central Africa in the last two years (two in Chad, one in Cameroon, one in the Central African Republic, one in the Democratic Republic of Congo). In addition, a new funding opportunity has been materialized with the European Union on agroecology – It is planned to position the strategic coordination of this project in Central Africa.</p>

objectives and mandates				
[AG13-08] Recommends that the 14th Ordinary Session of the CORAF General Assembly be held in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, in April 2024	Immediate	FROM	In progress	Preparations are well underway, with the adoption of a media mobilization plan and the dispatch of an ES assessment mission to Benin in the first week of July 2023.

11. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Governance - it is important to ensure the transition during the renewal of the organs to preserve the institutional memory. In addition, the recent reorganization of the OneCGIAR Member Institutions gives rise to reflection on the modalities of their representation on the CORAF Board of Directors to contribute to the strengthening of the Institution and increase its visibility.

Implementation of the Programs - the great challenge is related to the low rate of budget execution that CORAF has been facing with the active collaboration of the sub-beneficiaries in justifying the expenditures. This situation could hinder CORAF's work if it continues.

Human Resources - most of the remuneration of staff is provided by funds from ongoing agreements. The financing of institutional staff remains a major challenge for sustainability, as the management of such staff is based on their contribution to the implementation of projects.

The appropriation of CORAF by its members – is an emerging challenge that manifests itself in the context of positioning for financial resources, with a tendency for some research institutions to bypass the CORAF Executive Secretariat to deal directly with specialized centers or their host institutions.

Dependence on projects for funding - One of the striking paradoxes of CORAF's operations remains its heavy reliance on projects for funding.

While CORAF's reputation is once again firmly established and the mobilization of resources for program implementation is successful, the financing of the operating costs of the Executive Secretariat and governance bodies in support of the programs remains uncertain.

The challenge of the pandemic in 2019 - However, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, CORAF has firmly established itself as a much stronger and more powerful organization in our geographic and transactional space.

Financing of the 2018-2022 Operational Plan completed - For example, the financing of the 2018-2022 Operational Plan is completed, strong and diversified strategic partnerships have been established.

The complexity of the ecosystem of actors - The increasing complexity of the ecosystem of actors in agricultural development remains a concern, with the risk of telescoping of activities, which can lead to competition for financial and human resources. It is therefore important that CORAF continues to strengthen its management and governance tools in order to preserve its strategic position in this ecosystem.

12. PERSPECTIVES

1. CORAF should urgently find sustainable mechanisms to implement its actions and be less dependent on donors;

2. CORAF will continue to implement its 2018-2027 SP and 2023-2027 OP.

3. All Member NARS should continue to invest more in the development of agricultural research, in their research centers, in higher education and in science.

3. Emphasize, at the level of the member, the importance of agriculture and its contribution to economic growth. Strengthen science and knowledge in all our research institutions, because knowledge to generate resources is more important than resources today.

4. Follow the path of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs).

5. **Resilience** will be **developed through a high-level technical and scientific approach**, and we will also make it comprehensive, holistic capable of bringing dignity to people, for the recovery and building of dignified and better lives, in Central and West Africa.

6. We will invest more in **innovation and technology transfer** that can indeed quickly benefit our African farmers, our agro-industrialists and lift millions of families out of poverty.

7. Consequently, CORAF will continue to promote initiatives, develop innovative platforms, showing the impact of agricultural research and development, in **the fight against hunger and malnutrition, poverty, youth unemployment and opportunities for men and women.**

8. CORAF is also committed and will continue to connect the **power of science and technology generated**, to strengthen **its advocacy in the mobilization of** multisectoral partnerships **and resources**, in collaboration with the public and private sectors, at the regional and international levels.

13. CONCLUSION

I have presented above an overview of the actions we have undertaken as members of the Board of Directors for the priority objectives that we identified and announced at the beginning of our mandate with a focus on the implementation of CORAF's strategic plan, 2018-2027.

We consider it a matter of responsibility to be accountable for these efforts, both to our fellow members of this Assembly, the leaders of the member NARS present here, our strategic development partners, as well as to the stakeholders of CORAF and the international community who elected us as Chair and members of the Board of Directors.

While I have focused this report on explaining what we have done and why, it is clear that the institutional development of CORAF is a collective effort of many, including members, NARS, CORAF staff, partners and States in the host countries of the member institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, and others.

This is also one of the main reasons why I have repeatedly underlined that alignment of vision, cohesion and coordination of action are key to strengthening CORAF's role and improving its WCA performance in the coming years.

In conclusion, CORAF has made significant progress in its efforts to strengthen agricultural development in West and Central Africa through its strategic partnerships, diversification of funding sources and effective implementation of its strategic and operational plans.

However, challenges remain, particularly in the areas of resource management, private sector involvement and social equity. To meet these challenges and effectively pursue its mission, CORAF must continue to strengthen its partnerships, diversify its funding sources and invest in innovative and inclusive initiatives that respond to the needs and challenges of the region's evolving agricultural sector.

The organization remains firmly committed to its mission of promoting agricultural research and sustainable development in West and Central Africa and is well positioned to meet the challenges ahead.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

I think that some important progress has been made in increasing the speed and quality of CORAF's actions, as well as in strengthening the coordination between NARS, which was sometimes a challenge in the processes, as well as in increasing the coordination of the homologous and partner institutions in terms of Research, Innovation and Agricultural Technology. All of this has been a challenge in the past and yet crucial to improving CORAF's performance.

While carefully safeguarding the independent mandates of each body, the promotion of close coordination on administrative matters and strategic institutional issues is essential for the proper management of programs and projects and their efficient implementation with farmers and stakeholders.

Sufficient unity and alignment of vision at the Africa level (FARA) is also essential to promote wider acceptance and support of CORAF's actions in the African community in a 'general' way. Progress in both areas requires continuous, persistent and proactive efforts on the part of future CORAF leaders.

In the short term, we hope in particular that efforts will continue, in line with the initiatives underway and implemented during our mandate, to achieve the CORAF objectives.

Harmonization of procedures for private sector participation in agricultural research and development in west and central Africa.

It is crucial to continue to review processes through collective discussions between researchers and the private sector and NGOs in order to identify best practices and harmonize processes where possible, not only to accelerate development but also to increase their predictability and impacts on the agriculture sector.

There is now an expectation from internal and external observers, and members, that CORAF will continue to expand to encompass other countries and also have a headquarters in the West Africa, including, in particular, issues related to CORAF's legal representation in that region, its scope of participation, closer collaboration with ECCAS and other partners in Central Africa. CORAF members, continue with this approach initiated by us since 2021, as a matter of priority.

During our three-year mandate, a system of performance indicators was set up and data on the implementation of the OP began to be collected. As indicated in the last CORAF report, in the 13th GA, the collection of detailed data on the selected indicators should continue so that future CORAF reports, regarding the implementation of OP 2023-2027, can illustrate more and better the performance of CORAF over time.

I hope that the future CORAF board will review, on the basis of an exercise in mapping existing standards and statutes that CORAF recently completed, whether there is a need to improve or amend the safeguards that CORAF has in place to ensure that CORAF officials and staff maintain the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in the performance of their duties.

That our partners build at a fixed management fee in each project or program, so that CORAF can implement the projects not with its own funds but with funds previously agreed between the partners.

Women and Youth. Efforts to increase women's participation in science and technology must continue. Great efforts have been made across CORAF to reach out women among staff and these efforts are bearing fruit. The recent figures are indeed encouraging in that they show

an increase between the sexes in CORAF professional posts and in science, although there is still much to be done to ensure parity at higher levels.

Young people and the need to create unemployment are still in front of all of us in the region. As President of CORAF, I encouraged all these efforts and stressed the importance of the youth initiative in all social spheres, particularly in agriculture and livestock.

It is clear that much more needs to be done to ensure and maintain equality between men and women and the opportunity for young people, both in senior staff and in middle positions and other profitable agricultural production chains.

Cotonou April 17, 2023



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