



# Taking stock of the Regional Foresight Community of Practice in West Africa for a climate resilient region

Alcade C. Segnon | Esdras Obossou | Komla Kyky Ganyo | G. Esaïe Kpadonou | Niéyidouba Lamien | Robert B. Zougmoré  
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## Info Note



## Key messages

- Given the rapid pace of change, complexity and ambiguity, responsible agricultural policies need to take account of the different possibilities of the future, and foresight analysis provides the means to achieve this.
- AICCRA through its regional partners, CORAF supported the capacity development of a group of experts on foresight analysis, which resulted in the establishment of a regional community of practice on foresight analysis.
- The training provided by the foresight experts in the region allowed the CoP members to use foresight analysis tools effectively in their regular work, enabling them to develop a clear vision for any project or initiative within their institution.
- The effective application of foresight methodology by CoP members is limited by inadequate technical, financial, and institutional support.
- Achieving successful implementation and scaling of foresight methodology necessitates increased collaboration, partnership, institutional, technical, and financial support.

## **BACKGROUND**

The West and Central African region is currently experiencing the severe effects of climate change on its predominantly rainfed agri-food systems. As the future of climate change is inherently complex and uncertain, effective responses to the impacts of climate change require anticipating as far as possible the future of the agri-food system and its impacts on economic, health, socio-cultural, environmental and institutional systems (Carr et al., 2022; Trisos et al., 2022). Anticipating climate change is particularly essential for effective and sustainable adaptation planning to transform food systems.

Foresight methodology is increasingly recognized as a valuable instrument for informing decision-making within the agri-food system. It involves an inclusive and participatory process that uses a variety of tools and methods to look at the past and the present to envision and prepare for different futures to inform strategic decisions today. Foresight activities can include scenario development, quantitative modelling, and scenario-based policy and program design.

The Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) is a World Bank-supported project that builds on the legacy of the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), which has worked for over a decade at the global and continental levels to promote climate-smart agriculture and climate information services that reach millions of smallholder farmers in Africa. Component 2 of the AICCRA project in particular focuses on enhancing the capacity of regional and national institutions in sub-Saharan Africa throughout the research and development process to anticipate climate impacts and accelerate the identification, prioritization and adoption of the best adaptation measures.

CORAF is an international not-profit association of national agricultural research systems in 23 West and Central African countries, with the primary objective of improving livelihoods in West and Central Africa through sustainable increases in agricultural production and productivity, promoting competitiveness and markets. Within its current strategic plan (2018-2027), foresight analysis and anticipation is one of the pillar activities defined. CORAF is thus using foresight process to build consensus on research priorities and to support evidence-based policy and decision making for increased investment in science, technology and innovation by identifying alternative futures for agriculture in the economies of WCA countries.

Building on historical foresight efforts linked to science and policy under CCAFS, the AICCRA West Africa Cluster collaborated with CORAF to train a group of regional foresight analysis experts to conduct foresight analysis on priority agricultural issues to support the prioritization of research and development in the urgent context of climate change (Neely et al., 2022).

From October 10 to 14, 2022, a total of 12 experts, including six women, from nine countries across West and Central Africa (WCA) gathered in Dakar, Senegal, to take part in an intensive week of foresight facilitation training. This group of experts represented a diverse range of disciplines and organizations related to policy-making, research and agriculture, and constitutes CORAF's regional foresight CoP. The foresight facilitation training was followed by a unique application workshop from 17th to 21st October 2022 in Dakar Senegal. The aim of the foresight application workshop was to undertake foresight analysis with key thematic regional pest and disease experts to contribute content towards CORAF's leadership of the development of a regional, coordinated Preparedness and Response Plan to Improve Pest and Disease Outbreaks Management in West and Central Africa.





**Picture 1:** Members of foresight CoP attending the CoP formalization event

Following the development of the plan, CORAF, in collaboration with AICCRA WA, organized a regional event on 19 June in Cotonou, Benin, to formalize the CoP on FA. The event was organized following CORAF official endorsement of the CoP through a decree. The event was also an opportunity for CoP members to share their experiences with foresight analysis and present success stories. The InfoNote draws on the experiences of CoP members in foresight analysis to provide guidelines for scaling up foresight analysis methodology in West and Central Africa.

## METHODOLOGY

Our approach to collecting data on the experiences of CoP members in foresight analysis was through structured interviews and key informant interviews with experts. The structured interviews with Community of Practice (CoP) members enabled us to collect data on the various changes observed among FA CoP members as a result of the training of trainers' sessions, as well as lessons learned and next steps for scaling up the foresight methodology in the region. The key informant interviews allowed us to discuss in depth the results achieved by the CoP members and the challenges encountered in implementing the foresight methodology. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and discourse analysis.

## KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### PROFILE OF MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Fourteen members of foresight CoP from nine different nations attended the CoP formalization event (Table 1). They represented a wide range of disciplines and organizations linked to policy-making, research and agriculture. Members of national agricultural research systems (NARS) made up more than 60% of the CoP. National NGOs and agricultural ministry representatives were also present at the event.

**Table 1:** Countries and Institutions of the CoP members

| Countries     | Institutions   | Types    |
|---------------|--|----------|
| Benin         | Institut National des Recherches Agricoles du Bénin (INRAB)                    | NARS     |
| Burkina Faso  | Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles du Burkina Faso (INERA) | NARS     |
|               | Tanager International  | NGO      |
| Cameroon      | Cameroon Youth Initiatives for Rural Development (CAMYIRD)                     | NGO      |
|               | Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development                                  | Ministry |
| Chad          | Institut Tchadien de Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (ITRAD)       | NARS     |
| Côte d'Ivoire | National Center for Agronomic Research (CNRA)                                  | NARS     |
| Ghana         | Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)                          | NARS     |
| Niger         | Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique du Niger (INRAN)                 | NARS     |
| Nigeria       | National Agricultural Seeds Council (NASC)                                     | NARS     |
|               | Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN)                                | NARS     |
| Senegal       | Institut Sénégalais de Recherches Agricoles (ISRA)                             | NARS     |

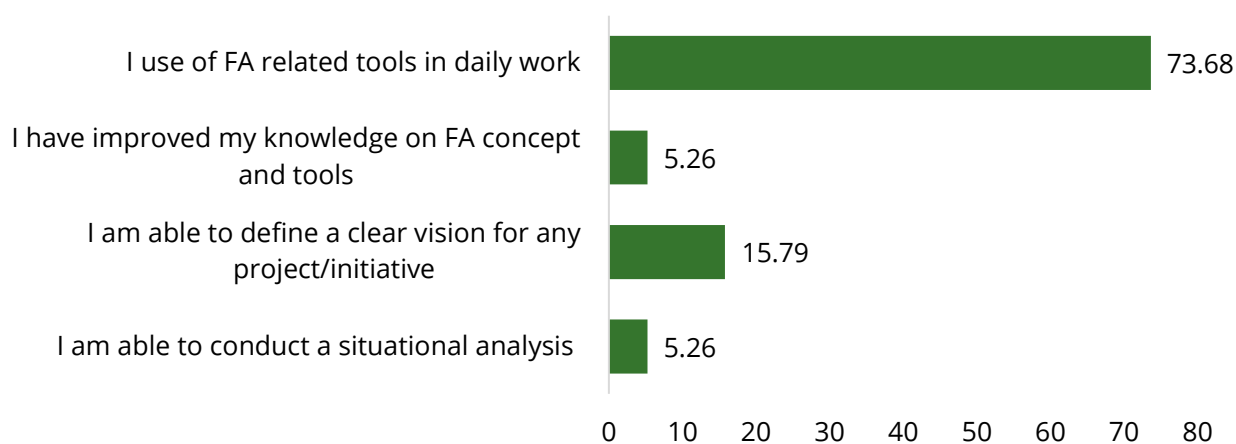
### BEHAVIORAL CHANGES OBSERVED AMONG MEMBERS OF THE FORESIGHT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Increasingly CoP members (73.68%) are applying foresight tools in their daily work as a result of the regional foresight experts' capacity building initiatives. Examples of such tools include the problem identification matrix, trend analysis, risk mapping, stakeholder engagement, as well as effective



techniques for facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues. The experiential exercise conducted during the regional capacity building enabled CoP members (15.79%) to be able to construct clear vision for any project or initiative. Visioning in foresight analysis implies developing an image of an ideal (or undesirable) future state, and working backwards to identify what steps to take (or avoid).

About 5% of the members of the CoP demonstrated ability to conduct a situational analysis. The situational analysis in which the context is articulated, and existing evidence, cross-sectoral trends and emerging trends are reviewed and analysed and then interpreted to understand what is happening and why it is happening. Also about 5% of the CoP members improved their knowledge about foresight analysis and tools.



**Figure1:** Changes observed with CoP members

## **OUTCOME STORIES FROM COP MEMBERS ON THE APPLICATION OF FORESIGHT ANALYSIS: THE CASE OF CAMFAAS IN CAMEROON**

We draw on the case of **Nestor Ngouambe**, a member of the Community of Practice and founder of the Cameroon Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (CAMFAAS) to provide evidence on the implementation of foresight analysis by members of the regional Community of Practice.



**Picture 2 :** Nestor Ngouambe, a member of the Community of Practice and founder of the Cameroon Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (CAMFAAS)

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*"We organized a workshop from Thursday April 27 to Friday April 28 in Yaoundé, on foresight analysis, to train CAMFAAS and YPARD members on foresight analysis and the restitution of knowledge acquired after the training in Dakar. A total of nineteen participants attended the workshop and were given their objectives and actions."*

*"CAMFAAS also organized a workshop on February 8, 2023, to set up a technical hub on foresight analysis in agricultural innovation in Cameroon. The hub's task will be to increase awareness of foresight analysis and advocate its use in agricultural policy-making in Cameroon. It will also provide technical expertise to support the implementation of foresight in Cameroon. Members of the platform include researchers, extension agents, supervisors, etc."*

*"At the 2022 Symposium on Smart Agriculture in Yaoundé on November 28, 2022, we also presented on the importance of foresight analysis for smart agriculture"*

*"We also applied foresight methodology to elaborate the National Gender Strategic Plan"*

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## **KEY CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING FORESIGHT ANALYSIS**

Members of the Community of Practice face various challenges when implementing foresight methodology. Four main issues were raised during the expert consultation. While conducting training



and awareness seminars on foresight methodology, the experts observed semantic misunderstandings among some stakeholders. Strategic planning and foresight analysis are often mistakenly interchanged, leading to the inappropriate use of the foresight methodology. Experts face challenges in receiving institutional support at the national level when attempting to scale out the foresight methodology beyond their home institution. There is also a lack of interest in or knowledge of foresight analysis among decision makers. As an intense participatory process involving multiple stakeholders, foresight methodology further requires the mobilization of technical and financial resources.



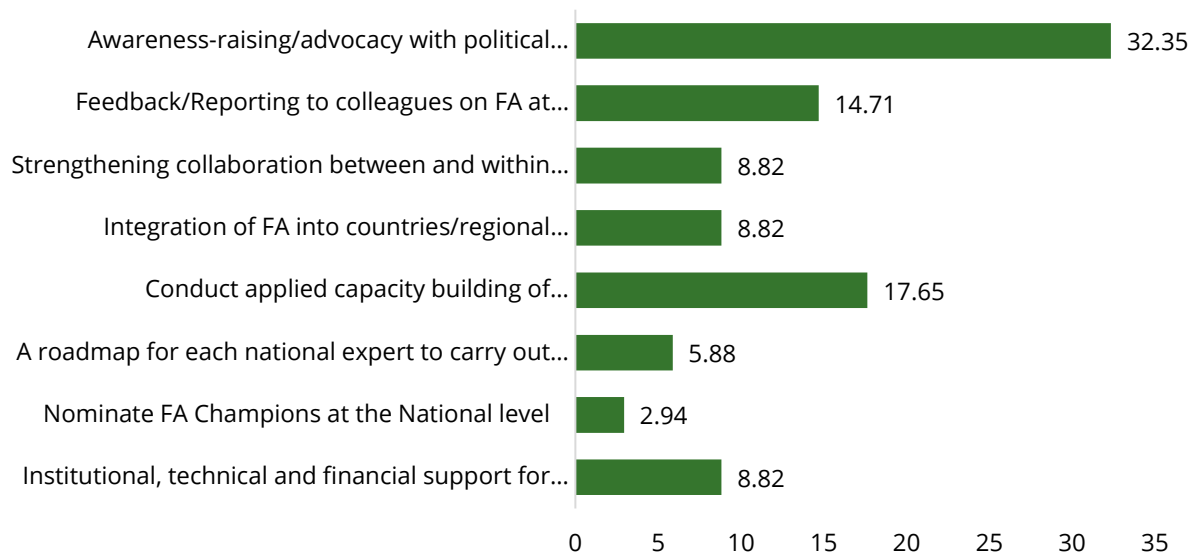
**Picture 3:** Members of foresight CoP attending the CoP formalization event

## **LESSONS LEARNT AND NEXT STEPS IN TERMS OF SUPPORTING SCALING UP OF FORESIGHT METHODOLOGY**

In order to ensure the up scaling of the foresight methodology, members of the foresight community of practice recommended a number of actions. To enhance the understanding and mainstreaming of FA into the planning and implementation of agricultural policy in countries, there is a need to improve awareness-raising initiatives aimed at policy- and decision-makers. It is also important to



disseminate the foresight methodology to NARS researchers through capacity-building activities using an experiential learning approach.



**Figure 2:** Action for scaling foresight methodology

Members of CoP, as national experts, also need to intensify training and feedback activities on FA within their institutions and beyond. Increased collaboration, partnership, institutional, technical and financial support are also needed for the implementation and scaling of foresight methodology. A roadmap should be drawn up and followed by each national expert to implement the FA. Finally, it could be appropriate to appoint a national champion for FA.

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Titles in this series aim to disseminate interim research on the scaling of climate services and climate-smart agriculture in Africa, in order to stimulate feedback from the scientific community.

## Photos

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Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) is a project that helps deliver a climate-smart African future driven by science and innovation in agriculture. It is led by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and supported by a grant from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank. Explore our work at [aiccra.cgiar.org](https://aiccra.cgiar.org)