

**WEST AFRICAN FARMER ORGANIZATIONS
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**MEMORANDUM OF ROPPA, CPF AND CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS OF BURKINA ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND
NEGOTIATIONS FOR APE**

May 2007

PREAMBULE

West Africa is progressing towards the rainy season, towards a new production cycle. We pray God (Allah) for this season to be fruitful and may peace dwell everywhere so that our agricultures may fulfil their capital missions which consist in nourishing the populations, creating the environment and transmitting the values of agrarian societies!

After 35 years of affirmation of the political will to come together as one and unique economic entity, with the setting up in January 2007 of the Economic Community of West African States Committee, the West African Regional Integration process is, at last, in a crucial phase. But the pitfalls are many and conditions are yet to be fulfilled.

What remains is to give it the chances to be strengthened and top achieve its objectives for which it has been set up: regional market, reduction of food dependence and poverty, economic and social development, welfare of its populations....

What remains also is to give it more legitimacy by strengthening dialogue opened between regional integration institutions such as ECOWAS and UEMOA and all the actors on issues concerning citizens.

An old African saying states that **"one does not shape the hat of the warthog in its absence."** That is why at the ECOWAS Committee's meeting in Ouagadougou, we, members of the West African Farmer Organizations and Producers' Network (ROPPA), of the Farmer Confederation of Faso (CPF) and the Civil Society Organizations of Burkina, have agreed to reaffirm our deep dedication to the regional integration and also to express our concerns about the present process of regional integration. It is the reason for which we adopted the present memorandum in which we reaffirm that "we cannot deceive ourselves" as our elder Mamadou Cissoko said in the preface of ROPPA's memorandum on UEMOA's Agricultural Policy (UAP) in October 2001.

Abstract of the Preface of ROPPA's Memorandum on UAP

Whatever one may say, we know that we are engaged in a fight which is already lost in advance against competitors who more powerful. This competition that the most powerful want to always harden is impossible for us. We can be deceived, that is the game, but we cannot deceive ourselves unless we want a collective suicide.

Whatever one may tell us what we eat is not at the global market. Whatever we are told, exportation products which are on the global market for hundred years did not serve the development of campaigns. They developed cities.

Defenders of free exchange prepared themselves for more than 50 years. Thanks to adapted policies and programs, they were able to create conditions which enabled the success of the actors of the public sector, private sector, socio-professional organizations or sub-regional institutions. It is important and a must that we profit from the same thing.

MEMORANDUM

Convinced that the regional economic integration remains the only way for West Africa to create favourable conditions for social and economic development, for the welfare of its people and the conquest of an honourable place in building a world of solidarity, equity and social and economic justice,

Convinced that the basis and the driving force of the regional integration is a modern agriculture focused on family farms and oriented towards the achievement of food sovereignty and the supply of dynamic regional market,

Convinced that the achievement of food sovereignty of the sub-region is the pedestal on which the unique market should be built in order to solve the cyclical food insecurity and dependence problems, problems of rural poverty, youth massive exodus, deforestation of lands and deterioration of natural resources,

Given that the regional policy of ECOWAS (ECOWAP) and the action plan of the agricultural component of NEPAD represent the vision shared by all the actors of the sub-region, for the development of the agricultural sector, food dependence reduction and the development of regional market of local agricultural and agroalimentary products,

Given the call of the regional forum of Niamey on food sovereignty of West Africa for the development of regional charter on food sovereignty,

Noting the non application of decisions and commitments taken by Heads of states at the sub-regional, and continental levels on the development of the rural sector (Maputo, 2003), Abuja 2006, Millennium Goals, NEPAD, ECOWAP)

Noting that liberal policies set up for structural adjustment programs and which are reflected in the destruction of producers' service and support unit and the adoption by UEMOA of a very low Common External Tax (CET) portrayed by increased food dependence and rural poverty;

Noting that negotiations of an Economic Partnership Agreement (APE) are also integrated in the scope of liberalization which consequences were disastrous for our national economies and for agricultural producers of West Africa,

Concerned with the application to all the ECOWAS countries of CET from UEMOA which was proven inefficient for the stimulation of agricultural production and interregional exchanges, the reduction of food dependence and the stopping of the loss of currencies for product importation,

Concerned with the disastrous consequences of the creation of a free exchange market with the European Union on the achievement of food sovereignty, the creation of a

common market and the development of our productive sectors, especially agricultural and agro-industrial sectors, at the present stage of economic development and of integration in West Africa,

Concerned with the decrease of producers' income and the worsening of poverty in rural areas and mostly by the situation of cotton producers because of the decrease of the price of cotton every year and the increase of input cost caused by unjust and unfair policies.

We, members of the West African Farmer Organizations and Agricultural Producers' Network, of the Farmer Confederation of Faso, and of the Civil Society Organizations of Burkina,

Support,

1. The decision of Heads of States to transform ECOWAS into a real too for integration with the setting up of a Committee with powers and extended prerogatives since January 2007.

Demand from governments, ECOWAS and UEMOA,

2. The acceleration of the implementation of regional agricultural policies (ECOWAP, UAP) and of PDDA/NEPAD through the adoption of innovative funding mechanisms of structuring investments, of income stabilization, of social protection and insurance faced with natural hazards for family agricultural exploitations.
3. The adoption of protection measures at the regional borders in order to ensure the development of an agricultural and agroalimentary market especially a CET with a 5th band which rate is at least equal to customs duties notified at WTO by West African States;
4. The effective application of legal dispositions on the free movement of people and goods, the residence and settlement rights, the removal of many administrative or non structured barriers hindering the transnational exchanges within ECOWAS.

Demand from administrations and institutions responsible for negotiations on commercial agreements

5. Not to sign any agreement with the European Union as long as the following conditions are not fulfilled:

- a. The effective achievement of the regional integration through the effective and checkable setting up of all the tools such as the Customs Union, the monetary Union and;
 - b. The achievement of a real common market based on regional preferences, with an acceptable level of intraregional exchanges for the agricultural and agroalimentary products;
 - c. An asymmetrical and fair commercial system considering the imperatives of integration and regional development;
 - d. A modulated and regulated opening at a maximum of 50% of exchanges; this opening up cannot in any way include strategic products set by the region;
 - e. The postponing of the APE signing date of 3 years, as required by ECOWAS;
 - f. A period of transition long enough for strengthening the regional integration and achieving the objectives of ECOWAP especially concerning the achievement of food sovereignty;
 - g. The achievement of multilateral negotiations at WTO for Doha cycle.
6. The setting, in a participatory manner, of a list of special and strategic products to be subtracted from any commercial agreement including APE with methods accepted by consent from all the actors;
 7. The organization of real democratic debates at the local, national and regional levels on the stakes and challenges of regional integration and WTO and APE commercial rules which will have some consequences on our land, agriculture and our partnership with the rest of the world over a very long period.

Demand from governments,

8. The respect of commitments freely taken by African Heads of States in Maputo, especially to grant at least 10% of the national budget for the funding of agriculture (including livestock production, fishing, and forestry) and to implement programs agreed upon with the actors to enable the achievement of at least 6% of agriculturally growth rate fairly shared and which profits will fund the Promotion of Rural Economy.

Appeal to Regional Cooperation Organizations and States so that:

9. Food aid charter review process may be an occasion for West Africa to have a real charter for food sovereignty in which it will reaffirm its firm willingness to ensure food and nutritional security for all on the basis of agro-ecological potentialities, intraregional exchanges and cultural values of the region,

Reaffirm

10. Our solidarity and firm support to cotton producers of Burkina and of other West African countries for their just fight for the acknowledgement of their right to live with dignity from the outcome of their work;
11. Our support to the group of 4 (Benin, Burkina, Mali and Chad) for their initiative and ask African negotiators not to sign any agreement at WTO as long as the problem of cotton has not found any final and acceptable solution for producers.

Reiterate

12. Our commitment to work for transformation of our production systems in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) especially the achievement of 60% for the agricultural growth rate;
13. Our determination to mobilize ourselves, confer and dialogue with regional and national authorities and all the other groups of actors of the sub-region for the achievement of regional integration and the implementation of sectorial policies most especially agricultural and environmental policies;
14. Our determination to use all the legal means of pressure for the interests of family farms to be considered in economic policies, commercial agreements and measures related to regional integration.

Produced in Ouagadougou, on May 31, 2007