



LEADER DE L'INNOVATION AGRICOLE EN  
AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST ET DU CENTRE  
LEADING AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION IN  
WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA



## Foire des Technologies de l'Afrique de l'Ouest : Soutenir l'Élan vers la Transformation de l'Agriculture

West Africa Technology Fair:  
Sustaining Momentum towards Agricultural Transformation

### The West Africa Agricultural Technology Fair: A Call to Action

The West Africa Agricultural Technology Fair (WATEF) is a partnership event organized by Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) and the West African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF). It was aimed at showcasing agricultural technologies of TAAT, along with those from CORAF's National Centers of Specialization/Regional Centers of Excellence (NCoS/RCE), in order to open avenues for their brokerage, uptake, and mainstreaming towards agricultural transformation and socio-economic development in countries of West and Central Africa region.

#### Observations and Call to Action

The event successfully brought together a broad range of partners to view and discuss the various technology products. A number of key points and actions for implementation were identified. Some of these are indicated below:

1. The presence and participation of the private sector and government officials were not as strong as desired. Special efforts need to be made in engaging private sector for such events, such as through national Chambers of Commerce and other Private Sector associations at region or country levels. Similar efforts need to be made on engaging Governments through the instrument of the Economic Community of West African States (**ECOWAS**) and its inter-ministerial council. TAAT and CORAF are called upon to initiate such engagement for future events.
2. It was felt that most of the technologies exhibited are still at the pilot or prototype stage of testing. There is a need to move beyond technology development to place more emphasis on mainstreaming proven technologies within national programs and country programs for creating impact at scale.
3. There is a need to move beyond the development of Pilots, Prototypes and Paradigms, and head towards large-scale technology mainstreaming. Programs such as TAAT, TARSPro (Agricultural Technologies and Innovations Scaling Up Project for Increasing the Resilience of Production Systems and Family Farms in West and Central Africa), and the NCoS need to make a bold move in this direction. The following Actions are needed in this respect:
  - a. **Technology Profiling:** There is a need for a mechanism and process for technology profiling. This should involve assessing various technologies to determine their scaling readiness, and economic/social potential and sustainability. Return-on-Investment analysis that showcases the small, medium and large-scale investment opportunities also need to be undertaken. An excellent example of this is the Catalogues developed



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by TAAT on various commodities. There is however need to come up with Policy Brief versions of these documents for policymakers.

- b. **Certification:** A rigorous Certification process needs to be in place to guarantee the technology's efficacy, quality, and safety. Such a technology certification process could be linked with Government-controlled processes wherever they exist. CORAF and TAAT should collaborate in this regard.
  - c. **Private sector engagement:** Technologies deemed to be certified as scalable need to be taken through the brokerage process, which involves linkage to and role of the Private Sector. Special strategies need to be embarked upon concerning engaging with the Private Sector in this brokerage activity, including mobilization of resources from the private sector in support of technology brokerage. Programs such as TAAT and CORAF's NCoSs should work with the governments to create an enabling environment for the private sector to flourish.
  - d. **Government engagement:** A key element of technology brokerage is engaging with the Government and mainstreaming the technologies into Government programs. This should include mechanisms for involvement in country loan programs from development banks. The proven, tested, and certified technologies must be well-profiled and packaged to incorporate into country loan programs and other initiatives.
4. **Intellectual property (IP) on public-funded technologies:** The issue of IPs as they relate to private sector uptake of technologies developed through public sector support as public good products need to be further analyzed. A special expert group meeting or consultancy may need to be established to deliberate and provide guidance on this.

### In this respect, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The transformation of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres into a One CGIAR entity is noted with appreciation. The creation of West and Central Africa regional program under One CGIAR is noted, and the expansion of focus to include delivery, dissemination and scaling of its technologies is mainly supported.
- TAAT, in its next phase of operation, needs to adopt a strategy based on Technology Brokerage and expand its operations in mainstreaming technologies into country programs and loan packages. This should include establishing strong links with the Development Banks in this respect.
- The NCoS/RCE model is an excellent model with potential for expanding technology brokerage and regional sharing of expertise and resources. Strong efforts need to be



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made in supporting these initiatives to be well established at both country and regional levels of engagement. This is particularly so in supporting the functioning of the regional responsibility dimension of the responsible National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) and RCE.

- With regards to TAAT Compacts and the NCoS, there is a need to strengthen the delivery of technology by de-risking uptake and breaking the hesitancy syndrome on technologies. TAAT, through its Compacts, should establish partnership agreements and operations with respective NCoS/RCE. This will enhance synergy and help to regionalize the efforts.
- Efforts should be made for the reconciliation and linkage of the Platforms of Technology Profiling of CORAF (MITA) and TAAT (PROPAS) and Catalogues, etc.

In Conclusion, the West Africa Technology Fair has been a great source of information and experience sharing across the various technology options. This needs to be built upon. It is suggested that the future phases of TAAT/NCoS must embrace the agronomic gains made and translate the same to economic gains at scale. In this regard, there is a need to rethink the structure of Commodity and Enabler Compacts to ensure that the enabling elements for technology function are built within the various commodity programs and compacts.

The Capacity Development and Technology Outreach (CDTO) of TAAT, led by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), should be repositioned to go beyond training of stakeholders in technology use and respond to the long-term demand market-driven economic transformation as public goods across the ecologies.

International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and CORAF, under the aegis of ECOWAS, and through the instruments of TAAT, FARA and programs such as the NCoS and TARSPPro, are called upon to establish a Task Force for the development of a Strategic Plan for the realization and implementation of the recommendations arising from this Technology Fair. It is recommended that the first step in the realization of this recommendation must be in place before the end of 2021 and be built into work plans for 2022 in all the associated programs. Lead responsibility in this rests with CORAF and TAAT.