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Special Edition on 13th Multidisciplinary Team Meeting for West Africa

Thank you all for a successful subregional meeting!



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Fred Kafeero
FAO Representative in Nigeria and to ECOWAS

Over 200 delegates from the 15 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Sahel participated in hybrid event. Our sincere appreciation goes to Honourable Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Mahmoud Mohammed Abubakar, for hosting it. This signifies the cordial relationship that FAO has with the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Permit me also to thank the ECOWAS Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Mr. Sekou Sangare, and his team; our development partners for joining physically and virtually.

At this point, I would also wish to express thanks to the ECOWAS member states' Permanent Representatives to FAO including His Excellency Cissé Seydou, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire who travelled all the way from Rome.

Many thanks to the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i., Mr. Matthias Schmale, and colleagues from the Nigeria UN Country Team for their active participation.

Finally, I wish to appreciate FAO colleagues, including the Regional Representative for Africa, Assistant Director General, Abebe Haile-Gabriel, the Sub-Regional Coordinator for West Africa, Mr. Robert Guei and their teams, fellow FAO Representatives from the region, our able Multidisciplinary Team members together with FAO Nigeria organizing committee members who made the meeting a huge success.

Thank you all!

Dear Partners,

FAO Nigeria had the honour of hosting the 13th Multidisciplinary Team Meeting (MDT13) for West Africa subregion and the Sahel between March 15 and 17, 2022 in Abuja. This MDT13 offered an opportunity for enhancing collaboration, joint planning, and mutual accountability in driving actions towards a resilient agri-food systems in the region.

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About the FAO's subregional MDT13 for West Africa and the Sahel

Background

The FAO's 13th subregional Multidisciplinary Team Meeting (MDT13) for West Africa and the Sahel MDT, was the third since the opening of the sub regional office for West Africa in Dakar, Senegal in 2019.

This year, 15 countries members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), were hosted by the Federal Government of Nigeria at the invitation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through its Subregional Office for West Africa (SFW) in Dakar, Senegal.

The 3-day meeting, which was both virtual and physical, attracted the attendance of over 200 delegates from the ECOWAS member states.

The Context

The MDT13 came at a time when West African and the Sahel societies are in the midst of rapid demographic and socioeconomic transformations, with population growth, urbanization, rising incomes, climate change and globalization acting as key drivers of change.

At the same time, West Africa's agrifood system faces continuing challenges of a declining natural resource base, recurrent natural and human-caused disasters, climate change, and rising insecurity.

Key Objectives and Theme

Under the theme: 'Joining efforts to build resilient Agrifood Systems in West Africa and Sahel', the countries took stock of developments, achievements and challenges of the previous

SUB REGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST AFRICA 13th MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM MEETING

MARCH 15 - 17 2022

ABUJA, NIGERIA



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Joining efforts to build resilient
Agrifood Systems in West Africa and Sahel



year, the alignment of national priorities with those of the sub-region and Africa Region at large and then plan for the emerging issues during 2022.

MDT13 further deliberated on the current food and nutrition situation in the subregion and its determinants, as well as on the needs and requirements of the member states and key partner institutions to mitigate the situation.

It also provided an opportunity for reinforcing cohesion for enhanced collaboration, joint planning and mutual accountability in driving actions towards a resilient Agrifood Systems in West Africa and Sahel.

Besides, it also took stock of the preparations for the FAO's 32nd Regional Conference for Africa slated for April 11 – 14 this year in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

Participants

Senior government officials, ministers and commissioners of agriculture, FAO staff, regional organizations/bodies and their representatives, and civil society organizations.



A cross-section of MDT13 participants following the deliberations from Abuja, Nigeria.

A great opportunity for Nigeria and West Africa subregion – Dr. Abubakar

Nigeria’s Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Muhammad Mahmood Abubakar, has described the just ended FAO’s Multidisciplinary Team Meeting for West Africa and the Sahel as a great opportunity for the country and the subregion for ensuring food security and nutrition to the country and the subregion as a whole.

“This is quite an opportunity for the countries to come together. I have always advocated for Africa to cooperate more than we are doing now. We need more of brotherly country to country cooperation,” Dr. Abubakar said adding:

“This way we ensure that our priorities as a country and those of the region align with FAO’s objectives for our own benefits and development through cooperation and coordination.”

According to him, the meeting came at an opportune time when our sub-region is faced with the devastating effects of climate change, associated challenges of a declining natural resource base and rising security issues threatening food supply.

“I’m glad that delegates deliberated on how to address these major issues facing agriculture. The multidisciplinary nature of the meeting is a reminder of the need to respond to the causes and effects of climate change and how to low-income countries in the region can respond to these negative events,” he pointed out. The Honourable Minister further said that the Federal Government of Nigeria has recognized the importance of multisectoral approaches and



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Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Muhammad Mahmood Abubakar

working to set inter-ministerial coordination platforms both at policy and technical levels to strengthen synergies and complementarities in the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP 2021 – 2025).

This includes the establishment of a viable system that guide, and coordinate food and nutrition activities undertaken by relevant ministries, departments and agencies as well as the use of nutrition indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of development impacts and at all levels.



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FAO’s Assistant Director General for the Region of Africa , Mr. Abebe HaileGabriel addressing the MDT13 delegates from Accra, Ghana.

Resilient agri-food systems key for food security and nutrition in West Africa, Sahel

The FAO’s Assistant Director General for the Region of Africa (RAF), Abebe HaileGabriel, has underscored the importance of strengthening agri-food systems and agriculture in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition in West Africa and Sahel and called for collective action towards that goal.

He said this during his opening remarks at the FAO’s 13th Multisectoral Team Meeting that was held between March 15 and 17, 2022 attracting the attendance of over 200 delegations from fifteen countries belonging to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

“Agriculture is very crucial in many regions of the world and particularly West Africa and the Sahel and cannot wait for other priorities to be addressed first. Accelerating actions for results and impacts for resilient agri-food systems call

therefore for continued political commitment and engagement as well as better planning,” he explained.

We need to join effort for an extraordinary thinking, ways of doing business and extraordinary efficiency and effectiveness to fast track the delivery of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he added.

Mr. HaileGabriel called upon FAO in West Africa and Sahel to make extraordinary efforts, Hand in Hand with the Governments and partners, to achieve tangible on-the-ground progress towards reducing hunger, making agrifood systems more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

“This will ultimately enable us to achieve the Four Betters – Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment and a Better Life for all,” he explained.

West Africa and the Sahel is a region with ever-looming challenges but also opportunities; with varied bioclimatic zones, diverse economies across many dimensions of development, and it is the region with some of the continent’s least developed countries.

Overall, the region has made impressive gains in recent decades. However, the region still has a long way to go to achieve the SDGs on eradicating poverty and ending hunger and Africa’s priorities spelled out in Agenda 2063.

Further as elaborated in the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods.

FAO’s support to countries in West Africa and the Sahel include engaging policy-makers, advocacy, priority to programmatic investments in food agriculture and nutrition, with the support of development partners.

This is though provision of the foremost technical expertise and knowledge to strengthen countries’ capacity to address food crisis impacts rapidly and effectively and mobilizing resource for the agrifood systems transformation

“I therefore urge our partners to continue joining hands with us to devise innovative strategies and develop solutions, together with rural communities and enable them to achieve development outcomes,” the FAO’s Assistant Director General for the Region of Africa concluded.

The 13th MDT for West Africa and the Sahel was held ahead of the next FAO’s 32nd Regional Conference for Africa which is planned to be held between April 11 and 14, 2022 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

Ministers of agriculture and other senior government officials and development partners from the FAO member states in Africa will participate.



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FAO’s Sub Regional Coordinator for West Africa , Robert Guei

Time to plan and strategize together

FAO’s Sub Regional Coordinator for West Africa , Robert Guei, described the 13th MDT for West Africa and the Sahel as a time for joint planning and programming for the next biennium.

“This three-day meeting was an opportunity for us to be guided by Governments and other key partners in the sub-region.in our planning and programming,” he said.

Through this meeting, he added, they:

- Provided updates on the implementation of the Priority Programming Framework of the FAO Subregional Office for West Africa (2020-2024),
- Shared the new FAO’s strategic framework in response to national priorities and the SDGs, and collected comments for our biennial planning, on the priorities that we collected from the countries and sub-regional institutions during our preliminary discussions.
- Provided updates on the preparations for the FAO’s 32nd Regional Conference for Africa scheduled for April 11 to 14, 2022 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

Explaining about the theme, Mr. Guei said that the aim was to call upon joint efforts to strengthen the agri-food systems and agriculture in order to improve food security and nutrition.

“Our agri-food systems are not functioning as they should. Increasingly, food supply chains and the livelihoods of agrifood system actors are disrupted by shocks – from droughts and floods to armed conflict and food price spikes, climate change and environmental degradation,” he pointed out.

Furthermore, he said, the vulnerability of agri-food systems was evident in 2020 when measures taken to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) disrupted national and global supply chains and caused an economic downturn. in numerous countries.

Mr. Guei disclosed that the meeting constituted an important moment of planning allowing the FAO’s Office for West Africa (SFW) to re-examine its results and its prospects

in the light of the evolutions of the African and international environment of food systems and its impact on food and nutritional security and the resilience of populations in the region.

“The biennial planning work consisted preparing our detailed work plans in which we defined what we are going to do with the countries, the sub-regional organizations, the producers’ organizations and the partnership that we are going to establish with all the technical and financial institutions and with our colleagues in the United Nations system,” he explained.

The last year’s United Nations Summit on Food Systems laid a foundation for FAO’s Strategic Framework 2022-2031. The strategy aims for transformation of the agri-food systems to make them more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient and more sustainable for better production, better nutrition, better environment and better living conditions, without leaving nobody aside.

FAO’s systematic approaches against hunger and poverty commendable

The Nigeria’s United Nation’s Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Matthias Schmale a.i, has commended the FAO’s systematic approaches for development and the fight against hunger and poverty describing them as the right approach for ensuring food security and nutrition.

Mr. Schmale was speaking at the opening of the FAO’s 13th Multidisciplinary Meeting for West Africa and Sahel that was held in Abuja between March 15 and 17, 2022.

“I commend the systematic approaches undertaken by FAO for securing not only development gains in the fight against hunger and poverty but also progressing on the delivery of Global Sustainable Development Goals,” he said adding:

“FAO’s new strategic framework seeks to support our collective 2030 Agenda through the transformation into more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life that leave no one behind.”

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator added that this is more important now that the world faces the impact of climate change, declining natural resource base, recurrent natural and human induced disasters and rising insecurity.

“All of these factors adversely affect agri-food systems causing the agricultural production and yield in the subregion to be the lowest in the world. Also, the Covid-19 over the last two years has significantly worsened the food security situation in many households in the region especially the poor ones,” he said.



UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria a.i, Mr. Matthias Schmale

He was of opinion that the meeting came at a good time given the need to align the FAO Strategic Framework with priorities of governments in the sub-region to address a number of structural policy constraints which continue to threaten the ability of the west African region to seize the opportunities for building resilient agri-food systems.

As the UN system in Nigeria including all Agencies together with FAO our priority is to work with the Government and partners in a coordinated One UN approach to ensure transformative partnerships that accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, Mr. Schmale assured.

Need for more concerted efforts to tackle hunger and malnutrition in ECOWAS states



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ECOWAS Commissioner in Charge of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Sekou Sangare.

The Commissioner in Charge of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Sekou Sangare, has called for more concerted efforts for combating hunger and malnutrition in West Africa sub-region and the Sahel.

During his remarks at the FAO's 13th Multidisciplinary Team Meeting for the West Africa subregion and the Sahel that was held in Abuja, Mr. Sangare described the food insecurity and malnutrition situation as a big concern that needs addressed.

"For the second consecutive year, several ECOWAS member states are facing a major food and nutrition crisis. Vulnerable populations concentrate in conflict-affected areas in northeastern Nigeria where we have about 4.3 million people affected as well as 3.2 million in the Liptako Loop-Gourma – the triangle area bordering Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso," he pointed out.

Mr. Sangare noted that the new hotspots of food insecurity are also emerging in the Gulf of Guinea, particularly in Sierra Leone. "In the ECOWAS region, according to the analysis of the food and nutrition analysis of October-December 2021, nearly 22.3 million people are in food insecurity phases," he revealed.

According to him, the situation is compounded by the coronavirus health crisis which has annihilated the achievements recorded

previously in the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition by ECOWAS and its Member States. "This makes it very important that we join hands to address these challenges collectively. We appreciate the support provided by FAO and other partners in this cause and we call upon more concerted efforts to ensure that the region is food secure," he urged.

Joint FAO-ECOWAS food security and nutrition initiatives in West Africa, Sahel

- Regional Programme for Plant Pests Control in West Africa and the Sahel (with focus on the fall armyworm).
- Sub-Regional Programme on Integrated Management and Control of Water Resources.
- 'One Million Grain Silos for West Africa and the Sahel' initiative (supporting the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Food Security Storage Strategy).
- Regional Programme for the Development of Animal Feed Value Chains and the Promotion of Sustainable Management of Natural Animal Feed Resources.
- Programme to Strengthen Regional Coordination Mechanisms to Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in West Africa.
- Regional Biodiversity Development Programme for the Restoration of Degraded Lands.
- Capacity Building Programme in Veterinary Epidemiology as well as information and rapid sharing of disease surveillance at the regional level.
- Integration of Agroecological Approaches to Increase Resilience to Climate Change and Improve Sustainable Food Systems in West Africa and the Sahel).
- Resilience Building Programme in the Great Green Wall of Africa.
- Global Forest Transformation for People and Climate Program_ Focus on West Africa.
- Regional Nutrition Support Programme to Improve Nutrition in West Africa.
- Regional Programme on Youth Employment and Women's Empowerment in Agrifood Systems in West Africa



FAO Representative in Cabo Verde, Ana Laura Touza

Participants appreciate FAO's commitment, agree on next 10 points of action

The participants appreciated the commitment of the subregional office to support agri-food transformation in the sub-region.

The meeting was held for three days. It was comprised of nine sessions, with two main components, first component was about discussions on achievements and challenges of the previous year, as well as information on 2021 events.

The second component was on forward planning together with emerging issues for 2022.

It was highly interactive, using the following approach for each session, presenters from FAO Headquarters, FAO Regional Office for Africa and the Subregional Multidisciplinary Team took turns to introduce the different topics.

Other presenters came from private sector, development partners, regional bodies, among others.

At the end of the three-day meeting, the participants came up with a joint communique composed of ten recommendations as points of action for improving food security and nutrition in the sub-region.

These resolutions were read on behalf of all participants by FAO's Representative in Cabo Verde, Ana Laura Touza.

Ten recommendations for action

1. Support Livestock and pastoralism for conflict prevention, strengthening animal health using an One Health approach especially PPR and other TADs and improvement of feed availability and sustainable use of natural resources
2. Continue to strengthen member states capacity to collect and analyze data for evidence-based decision making in support to the transformation of agri food systems
3. FAO continues to strengthen the efforts to consolidate the partnership with sub-regional institutions, UN agencies, private sector, and support the implementation of the regional initiatives for the resilience of agri-food systems including initiatives towards improve intra-regional trade of agricultural products, inputs and livestock.
4. Increase interactions and collaborate with research, extension institutions and producers organizations in the development and adoption of innovative products and technologies to support agri-food systems transformation
5. Present to the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, the results of the government consultations on the scope of the new strategic framework in response to national priorities and the SDGs
6. Continue SFW's support to countries and subregional organizations in line with the results of the 15 countries Governments consultation, which are already reflected in SFW four (4) priority areas
7. Foster the implementation of the Humanitarian-Peace-Development nexus in the context of protracted crises, with focus on local opportunities in terms of resources such as land, water and human resources (youth in particular) and positive narratives
8. Engage youth and women at the heart of agri-food systems transformation interventions and related projects and programmes
9. Leverage South-South cooperation to strengthen knowledge sharing, up scaling good practices, capacity building and technical assistance
10. Strengthen the adequacy of the regulatory environment to increase agricultural production, improve nutrition, raise the standard of living of rural populations and contribute to economic growth in the sub region.

Photo Gallery



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ECOWAS Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Sekou Sangare, (left) being awarded for his service and cooperation with FAO.



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FAO's Senior Policy Officer for the West Africa, Bintia StephenTchicaya, presenting the subregion's organigram and workplan during the MDT13.



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A cross-section of some of the participants of the FAO's MDT13 meeting for West Africa subregion and the Sahel following the discussions from Abuja, Nigeria



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Minister of Agriculture, Mohammad Mahmood Abubakar(2nd right), listening to a testimony by a beneficiary of an FAO-supported project .

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