

Regional Economic Communities in Africa and agroecology

A rapid review of policy opportunities,
challenges and gaps | April 2025

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Colophon

The [DeSIRA Initiative](#)¹ (Development Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture), funded by the European Commission, Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), seeks to enhance an inclusive, sustainable and climate-relevant transformation of rural areas and of agri-food systems, by linking better agricultural innovation with research for more developmental impact. It supports actions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to strengthen the resilience of their agri-food systems, the relevance of the national and regional research and innovation systems, and the coherence and efficiency of their agricultural public research and extension services related to climate change challenges.

[DeSIRA-LIFT](#)² (Leveraging the DeSIRA Initiative for Agri-Food Systems Transformation) is a service project (June 2021 – May 2024) to the European Commission, DG INTPA with the main objective to enhance the impact of the DeSIRA Initiative by providing (ondemand) services to DeSIRA project holders and partners. DeSIRA-LIFT includes three service areas aligned to the three DeSIRA Pillars:

Service Area 1 supports country-led DeSIRA projects to enhance their impacts on climate-oriented innovation systems in line with more sustainable food system transitions. **Service Area 2** supports the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) ex-pillar IV organizations in their Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) related roles. **Service Area 3** is providing support to policy makers on themes related to agricultural research for development (AR4D) and innovation policies and programming.

DeSIRA-LIFT is implemented by members of the Agrinatura and EFARD, in particular the members: Wageningen UR, CIRAD ISA (University of Lisbon), NRI (University of Greenwich), SLU and COLEAD. Agrinatura (<http://agrinatura-eu.eu>) is the European Alliance on agricultural knowledge for development. EFARD (<http://www.efard.org>) is an umbrella network of European research and non-research stakeholders from public and private European organisations and the European Commission.

Acknowledgements

The authors duly acknowledge the valuable contributions of the key informants and reviewers of this report.

Citation

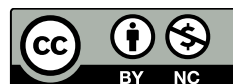
Odhiambo, M., Bizzotto Molina, P., Posthumus, H. 2025. Regional Economic Communities in Africa and agroecology; a rapid review of policy opportunities, challenges and gaps. DeSIRA-LIFT report. European Commission, Brussels

Photo front cover: © CIAT, Georgina Smith

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This publication has been realized within the DeSIRALIFT project financed by the European Commission / DG INTPA (FOOD/2021/424-11) and implemented by member organisations of the Agrinatura (CIRAD, ISA, NRI, SLU, WUR) and EFARD networks (COLEAD). The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the author(s) and does not necessarily represent the views of Agrinatura, EFARD or the European Commission.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACTESA	Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
AU	African Union
AUDA NEPAD	African Union Development Agency for New Partnerships for African Development
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CEMAC	Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (Central African Economic and Monetary Community)
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CILSS	Comité Permanent inter-État de Lutte Contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel)
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
DERNADR	Département Environnement, Ressources Naturelles, Agriculture et Développement Rural
DeSIRA	Development Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture
DG INTPA	Directorate General for International Partnerships
EACCCMP	East African Community Climate Change Master Plan
EC	European Commission
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECOWAP	Economic Community of West Africa Agricultural Policy
EOA-I	Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative of the African Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GMOs	Genetically Modified Organisms
HLPE	High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IGADD	Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development
IOC	Indian Ocean Commission
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries

MS	Member State
NAIPs	National Agricultural Investment Plans
NPCA	NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAC-CEEAC	Politique Agricole Commune - Communauté Économique des États de l'Afrique Centrale
PRA-PAAO	Programme Régional d'Appui à l'Agroécologie en Afrique de l'Ouest"
PRESAN	Programme Régional de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle
PRIASAN	Programme Régional d'Investissement Agricole, de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle
RAIPs	Regional Agricultural Investment Plans
RAP	Regional Agricultural Policy
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
UEMOA	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (West African Economic and Monetary Union)

Extended Abstract

This report presents the findings of a rapid review of agricultural policies of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the African Union (AU). The objective of this review is to shed light on **mandates, policies and priorities of the AU and RECs** concerning agricultural development and identify **opportunities for effective partnership** between the European Commission and the REC for promoting the **transformation of agrifood systems based on agroecological approaches** in Africa.

The AU is a continental body consisting of 55 member states which was officially launched in July 2002 in Durban-South Africa. Subsequently, the AU Agenda 2063 was developed as a strategic framework for Africa's long-term socio-economic and integrative transformation. The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is the agricultural strategy of the Agenda 2063 to realize commitments under the Malabo Declaration to among other things, end hunger by 2025, reduce poverty by half through agriculture, boost intra-African trade in agricultural goods, promote research and innovation, and enhance resilience to climate change. The RECs coordinate the implementation of the CAADP within their respective regions by facilitating the adoption of CAADP by their Member States and ensuring a functional Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) is in place serving its Member States. Some African countries are members of more than one REC and other regional institutions developing policies and strategies (Figure 1).

This review is based on the analysis of websites and reports presenting policies, strategies and plans of the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) addressing agriculture, rural development and natural resources management. Some interviews of European Union (EU) delegations and REC staff were conducted to provide additional information.

The triple challenge to African agriculture

Africa faces triple challenges of how to increase agricultural productivity while also ensuring sustainable management of natural resources and social inclusion in a context of increasing climate change. Such a context places **agroecology as a credible option for agricultural development** in the continent. Although African farmers have traditionally employed agricultural production methods that are essentially agroecological, many policy actors view the continued predominance of these practices as part of the problem with African agriculture. Thus, **most agricultural development policies privilege adoption of agriculture** based on mechanization, chemical inputs, hybrid seeds and even genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

However, there is **mounting evidence** that while industrial agriculture practices may provide short-term solutions in terms of increased productivity, they pose **long-term risks to agricultural production, environmental sustainability and adaptation to climate change**. There is a growing body of scientific evidence that agroecological farming systems could improve the production and incomes of smallholder farmers and positively address environmental issues (soil health, biodiversity loss, climate change). By investing in innovations and strengthening links to markets, agroecology has the potential to both increase productivity and address social and environmental concerns (Figure 2). This has prompted calls for African countries from farmers' organisations, civil society and private sector actors to adopt agroecology as a sustainable approach to agriculture.

Index in Africa

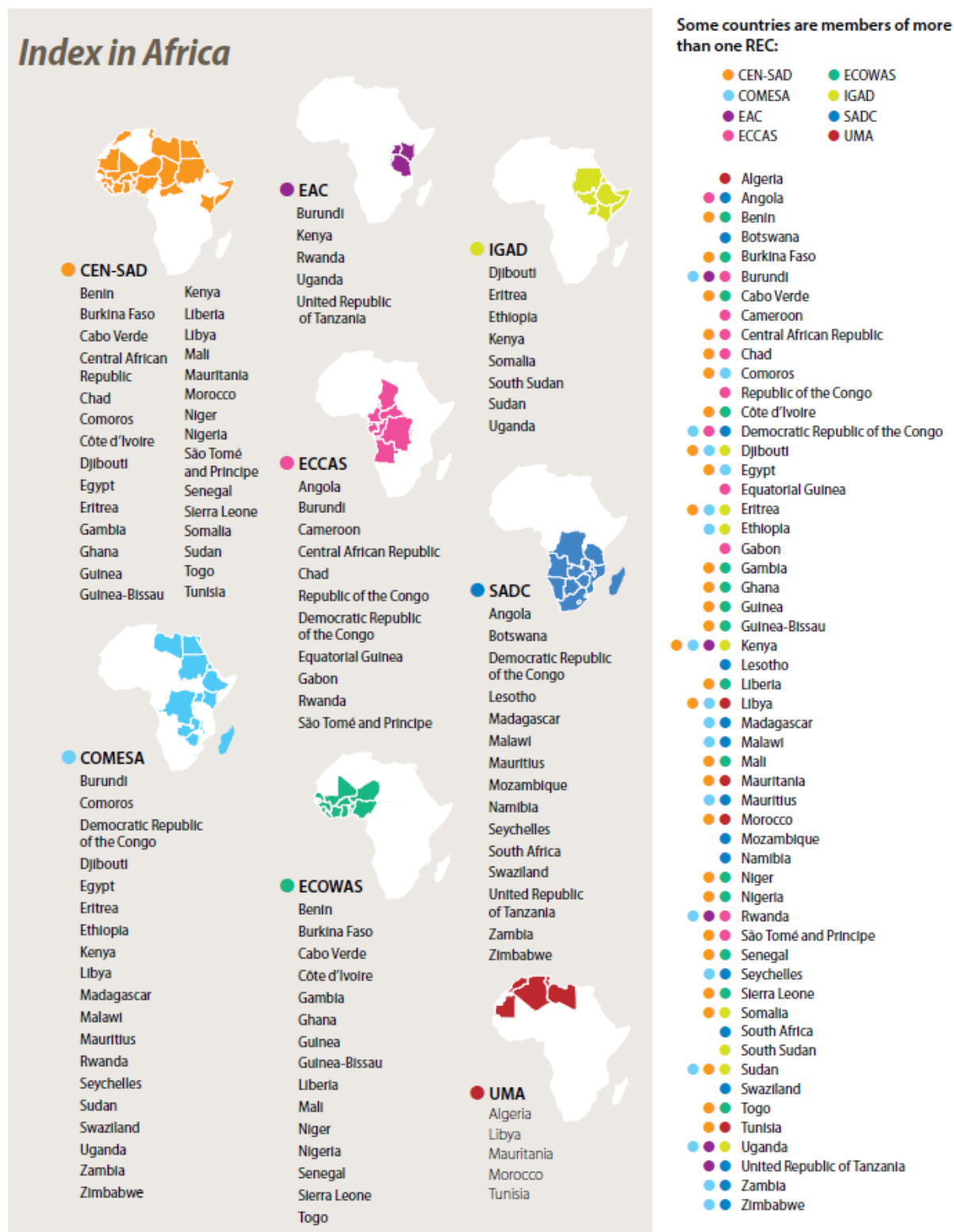


Figure 1. REC memberships (UNECA, 2017).

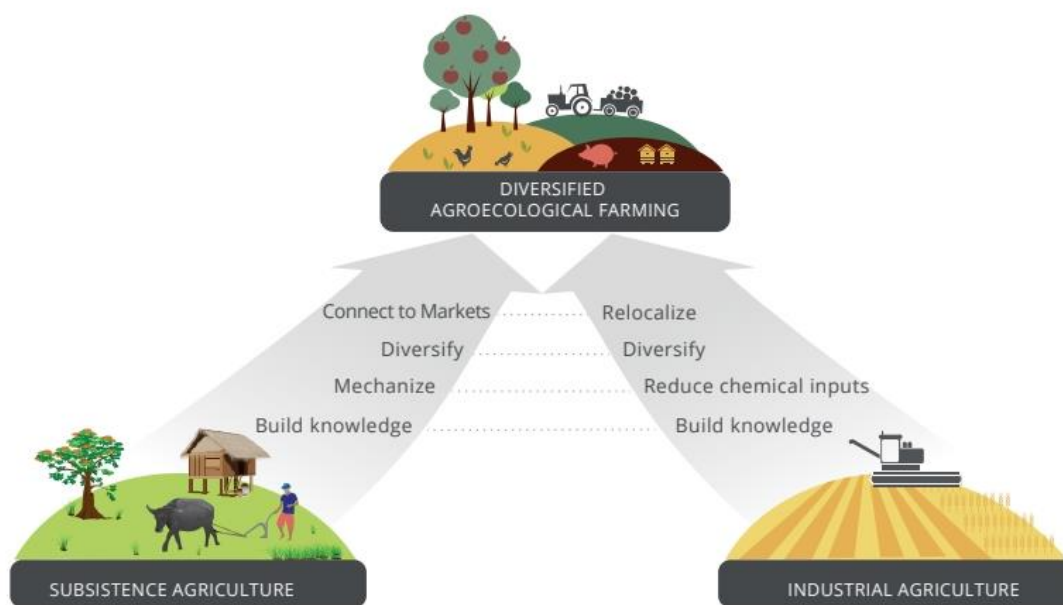


Figure 2. Transitioning from different starting points (from IPES Food 2016)

AU and RECs key actors in agricultural development policy and programming not fully supportive of agroecology

The AU and its RECs play important and **complementary roles in supporting sustainable agricultural development** across the continent. They spearhead coordinated planning and action, and support policy and institutional development among AU Member States within the framework of the **CAADP** through the development and implementation of Regional Agricultural Investment Plans (RAIPs), National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs), and the negotiation of CAADP Compacts between governments and major stakeholders. The RECs also support Member States (MS) in implementing CAADP through capacity building, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy. However, the agricultural sector still faces challenges. Only twelve AU MS have indeed reported consistent improvement of their performance since the first CAADP Biennial Review (BR) in 2017. As of 2023, the BR report **showed that no country is on track to meet the Malabo Declaration targets by 2025.**

The place and role of the **AU and RECs** in policy and programming for agriculture makes them **potential key actors in the promotion of agroecology** in Africa. Even if the REC plans and policies still tend to favour industrial pathways to agricultural development there are some windows of opportunities for promoting agroecology. More specifically, since the third CAADP Biennial Review Report, AU Member States are requested to formally report on the status and progress of the AU Decision on Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA). One of the main achievements has been **the push by the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) to integrate new indicators related to EOA/Agroecology in the CAADP processes** (use of organic fertilisers, area of arable land on organic and agroecological practices and integration of farmer-managed seed systems). In the fourth CAADP Biennial Review these three indicators were adopted. Data were collected from the countries, and they have been included in the latest Biennial Review (2023).

There has also been progress **towards mainstreaming Ecological Organic Agriculture into a few National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs) and Regional Agricultural Investments Plans (RAIPs).**

Furthermore, several African countries have adopted strategies for agroecology and/or organic agriculture (e.g. Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and Ethiopia have EOA policy drafts at various stages of approval). RECs like EAC and ECOWAS are working on regional agroecology strategies under the EOA Initiative.

The EOA-I is reviewing its current Strategic Plan (2015-2025) with an aim of preparing a new Strategic Plan for the period 2025-2035. The development of this Strategic Plan concurs with the discussion on post Malabo and the future of the CAADP planning which will also be for a period of ten years (2026-2035). In the 2023 Biennial Review this is highlighted as an opportunity for alignment between the EOA-I and post Malabo outcomes. Though agroecology is not explicitly mentioned, the post-Malabo agenda opens opportunities to address topics related to agroecology (agroforestry, conservation agriculture, nutrient recycling through organic fertilisers, farmer-managed seed systems, farmers' organization participation, etc.).

Only a few RECs explicitly mention agroecology

All the RECs are investing in practices aligned with some agroecological principles to promote sustainable use of land and natural resources and to address the impacts of climate change including interventions such as organic agriculture, conservation agriculture and climate-smart agriculture. **ECOWAS and SADC have plans that specifically mention** agroecology even if they also support more intensive agriculture. The interventions are supported by development partners, with the EU playing a prominent role in this regard. For its Common Agriculture Policy, CEMAC calls for the promotion of agroecology and climate-smart agriculture as strategies for reducing and mitigating the impacts of climate change on the environment and natural resources. However, there are no specific interventions in this field.

The **Agroecology Programme in West Africa** is one of the stronger examples of a REC taking up agroecology in its implementation of policies. The programme is implemented within the framework of ECOWAP (ECOWAS' Agricultural Policy) with the specific objective of promoting innovative agroecological projects in the region. **Agroecology is explicitly mentioned in the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030** for the adoption of sustainable agriculture that integrates ecological principles into agricultural production to enhance biodiversity, soil health, and ecosystem services. However, its Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP) and Protocol on Environmental Management for Sustainable Development (2013) call for conservation agriculture and conservation of ecosystems, and do not mention agroecology explicitly.

Other REC policies and strategies not dedicated to agriculture may offer an opportunity to integrate and promote agroecology. An example is the EAC; though the EAC does not have a specific programme that focuses on promoting agroecology, it is in the process of developing a Regional Biodiversity Strategy that is intended to include interventions related to agroecology among the EAC Member States.

AU and REC policies and strategies intend to articulate contradictory objectives

AU and RECs policy documents on agricultural development tend to articulate somewhat contradictory imperatives, seeking on the one hand to adopt technologies associated with intensive high-input agriculture and on the other hand to promote low-input and even indigenous production and resource management approaches. However, multiple pathways are needed to do justice to the diversity of farming and agri-food systems in Africa.

This tension seems to manifest sometimes between the political and technical wings of the RECs, with contradicting documents coming from political actors (Treaties and Policies) and technical departments (Strategies and Action Plans). Diverging views seems to also manifest between departments or services in charge of agriculture emphasizing production and productivity based on intensive agriculture, and departments or services in charge of natural resources management focusing on ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation with sometimes mention of more sustainable farming practices or approaches including agroecology. The tensions are also linked to the need to address new challenges and to contribute to the commitments linked to the three Rio conventions (climate change, biodiversity, desertification) where intensive industrialised agriculture is questioned. In these three conventions, agroecology is clearly stated as an alternative to conventional agriculture.

Table 1. Summary overview of potential entry points for agroecology in REC policies

REC	Policy/Strategy	Entry points for agroecology
COMESA	COMESA RAP (2002) / RAIP (2018)	--
	COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan 2020-2025	-
	COMESA Regional Resilience Framework	-
	COMESA strategy on Climate Change 2020-2030	++
EAC	EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and Strategy	+
	EAC CAADP Compact (2017)	+
	EAC RAIP (2019)	-
	EAC Protocol on Environment and Natural Resource Management (2006)	+
	EAC Climate Change Policy & Climate Change Master Plan (2011-2031)	++
ECCAS	ECCAS Common Agricultural Policy	++
	ECCAS Regional CAADP Compact	-
	ECCAS Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP)	-
	ECCAS Medium Term Indicative Strategic Plan (2021-2025)	-
ECOWAS / CILSS	ECOWAP (2005)	-
	ECOWAS Environmental Policy (2008) / Environmental Action Plan 2020-2026	+
	ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2030	++
	CILSS Strategic Plan for Horizon 2050	+
	CILSS Work Plan 2023-2027	+
IGAD	IGAD Regional Strategy 2021-2025	+
	IGAD Environment and Natural Resource Strategy	-
	IGAD Land Governance Business Plan 2020-2030	-
	IGAD Climate Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030	-
IOC	Regional Food Security Program, PRESAN (2016)	+
SADC	SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, RISDP 2020-2030	++
	SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (2014)	+
	SADC Food and Nutrition Strategy 2015-2025	-
	SADC Protocol on Environmental Management for Sustainable Development	+
	SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan	-
Legend	<i>Actively promoting / supporting agroecology agenda</i>	++
	<i>Promoting agroecological practices (e.g. agroforestry, IPM, traditional food crops, indigenous knowledge, etc.)</i>	+
	<i>Not promoting agroecological practices, but agroecology could contribute to objectives</i>	-
	<i>Not conducive to agroecology; focus on modernisation and industrialisation of agriculture</i>	--

Table 1 provides a summary overview of potential entry points for agroecology in existing REC policies. Only the COMESA Strategy on Climate Change 2020-2030, the ECCAS Common Agricultural Policy and the ECOWAS Environmental Policy specifically mention agroecology in the text. The other policy strategies (except for the COMESA RAP and RAIP) promote agricultural practices and interventions that align with some of the agroecological principles.

The RECs in the post-Malabo process

With the Malabo Declaration ending in 2025, **the African Union is working on the post-Malabo CAADP development agenda**. Political mobilization across the continent took place in 2024, and will culminate in the declaration of a new agenda and commitments by the Heads of State and Government by the end of January 2025, at an Extraordinary Summit in Kampala. The stakeholder engagement and dialogue workstream encompasses a series of dialogues spearheaded by Regional Economic Communities with their Member States and stakeholders. These Regional Consultations (held in Q2 2024) provided an opportunity to outline key issues, priorities, and strategic interventions for inclusion in the post-Malabo agenda.

Five regions published their consultation reports: Eastern Africa, ECCAS, ECOWAS, SADC and UMA. The Eastern Africa region report covers three RECs – COMESA, EAC and IGAD. A quick review was done to summarize the reports and to assess the extent to which agroecology is being featured in the priorities.

The ECCAS, ECOWAS and UMA consultations reports specifically mention agroecology as one of multiple strategies for sustainable agriculture, but ECOWAS is most pronounced in its support of agroecology. All RECs mention some agroecological practices (Table 2). The RECs in Eastern Africa, ECCAS and SADC explicitly prioritize their support for high-yielding varieties and agrochemicals (fertilizers, pesticides) as strategies to increase productivity and resilience of agriculture in their regions, which can seem to contradict agroecological approaches. Though these practices are needed to boost productivity, they should be applied in an appropriate manner within the right contexts.

All reports mention the shift from agriculture-led growth to the need for agri-food systems transformation, highlighting the need for sustainable agricultural practices that enhance resilience and reduce environmental impact. Climate-smart agriculture and precision agriculture are commonly mentioned as a strategy to adapt to and mitigate climate change, and use (scarce) resources efficiently. Support for smallholder farmers in terms of providing access to markets, inputs, and technologies is emphasized in all reports. Improving infrastructure such as roads, storage facilities, and communication networks is also a common recommendation.

The consultations **also highlight a shared priority of ensuring the participation of women, youth, and marginalized communities in value chains and policymaking**. Leveraging private sector investment for sustainable agricultural development through public-private partnerships is a common strategy. Eastern Africa promotes measures like conservation agriculture techniques and structured engagement mechanisms for marginalized groups. UMA focuses on water use optimization, seed production, and biodiversity preservation, along with promoting precision agriculture and digital tools. SADC, ECOWAS, and ECCAS emphasize the importance of enhancing trade competitiveness, addressing food security and nutrition, and improving data management and mutual accountability.

Table 2. REC consultations mentioning agroecological practices

PRACTICES	Eastern Africa (COMESA / EAC / IGAD)	ECCAS	ECOWAS	SADC	UMA
Crop diversification	Promotes local seed systems and traditional crops	Promotes key value chains for food security	Promotes agroecological practices in general	Encourages the use of diverse crops including neglected and underused species	Supports diversification, particularly in the fisheries, aquaculture, and beekeeping sectors
Conservation agriculture	Promotes conservation agriculture techniques such as minimum tillage, crop rotation, cover cropping	Promotes soil conservation and minimum tillage	Promotes agroecological practices in general	Promotes practices such as soil and water conservation (contour ridges) and soil management	
Agroforestry		Promotes agroforestry	Promotes agroecological practices in general		
Integrated Pest Management	Promotes IPM		Promotes agroecological practices in general	Promotes IPM	Encourages use of organic pesticides
Organic farming			Promotes agroecological practices in general		Encourages the use of ecological inputs and organic fertilizers
Water management	Promotes rainwater harvesting and drip irrigation		Promotes watershed management and precision irrigation	Promotes investment in irrigation systems	Promotes rational water management through precision irrigation systems to optimize water use.
Climate-Smart Agriculture	Promotes drought-resistant crop varieties and improved water management.	Promotes CSA	Promotes CSA	Promotes improved crop varieties and sustainable land management.	Promotes improved water management (precision irrigation).

The REC priorities align partially with some of the 10 elements of agroecology defined by FAO¹, though not all (Table 3). The RECs prioritize resilience and efficiency to adapt to climate change and increase agricultural productivity. The 10th element of circular and solidarity economies is not being referred to in these consultation reports.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/agroecology/overview/overview10elements/en/>

Table 3. REC priorities alignment with the ten elements of agroecology

PRINCIPLES	Eastern Africa (COMESA / EAC / IGAD)	ECCAS	ECOWAS	SADC	UMA
Diversity	Promotes dietary diversity and food sovereignty by recognizing and supporting local seed systems and traditional crops	Promotes diversity of crops and livestock; supports protection of indigenous crop varieties and local biodiversity	Promotes agroecological practices and diverse farming systems (incl. agro-pastoralism)	Encourages diversification of crops and practices, including intercropping	Promotes crop diversification and the preservation of local biodiversity and plant genetic resources.
Synergy	Advocates for integration of nutrition into agriculture and health programs	Advocates for combining agriculture, health and education; supports livestock (incl. silvo-pastoral) and fisheries sector	Promotes agroecological practices Encourages development of local food industries		Encourages agroecological practices
Efficiency	Promotes climate-smart agriculture to enhance productivity, such as drip irrigation, precision farming, and mechanization	Promotes access to inputs (quality seeds and agrochemicals), mechanization, soil fertility management, and food safety management	Encourages optimizing the use of resources through precision agriculture, mechanization and digitalization. Advocates for agroecology as key strategy to increase productivity	Encourages precision agriculture and digital tools, soil management, good agronomic practices and high-yielding seed varieties	Supports optimizing resource use, in particular water
Resilience	Promotes sustainable practices, early warning systems, crop insurance to enhance resilience to shocks such as extreme weather events, health crises and economic instability	Promotes climate-smart agriculture to build resilience to climate change and address crop-pastoral conflicts. Promotes sustainable agriculture (agroforestry, agroecology, soil conservation)	Emphasizes building resilience to climate change and other environmental shocks.	Promotes climate-smart agriculture to build resilience to climate change.	Emphasizes building resilience to climate change (drought and heat) and other shocks through sustainable practices.
Recycling	Encourages investments in soil health	Promotes soil health management including investment in	Promotes agroecological practices and reduction post-harvest losses		Advocates for rational water management and ecological inputs

PRINCIPLES	Eastern Africa (COMESA / EAC / IGAD)	ECCAS	ECOWAS	SADC	UMA
		local input production (fertilizer, pesticide, seed, and agricultural equipment)			Promotes use of renewable energies in agricultural production
Co-creation and sharing of knowledge	Organize smallholder farmers to support them with training, access to credit, inputs, value addition, markets	Strengthen farmer extension and value chain services to enhance input use Promotes institutional strengthening and platforms for knowledge sharing	Promotes African-led research Calls for strategic partnerships with agricultural research institutions and universities to disseminate knowledge to farmers Calls for knowledge sharing among stakeholders	Emphasizes the importance of farmer education and the dissemination of sustainable practices	Encourages collaboration with farmers' organizations and research institutions to contribute to growth, innovation and sustainability in agriculture
Human and social values	Encourages inclusivity and equality through empowering women and youth, and tailor services to their needs	Integrating more women and youths in jobs and agriculture Enhance access to land and land tenure security.	Calls for recognizing different stakeholder categories to enhance inclusivity and gender participation in agriculture	Ensures the inclusion of smallholder farmers and marginalized groups (women, youth) in accessing knowledge and decision-making	
Culture and food traditions	Promotes traditional and indigenous crops and fisheries / aquaculture	Promotes traditional and indigenous crops	Supports traditional and local food systems	Promotes nutrition-sensitive agriculture including indigenous foods	Promotes preservation of local biodiversity and genetic resources including heritage and know-how
Responsible governance	Calls for improved policy support, stakeholder engagement, and coordination to ensure effective implementation of agricultural strategies and accountability	Calls for development of land administration and management to enhance access and land tenure security Recognizes lack of good governance as main challenge	Advocates for stakeholder participation in policy development and implementation; multi-stakeholder platforms	Advocates for civil society engagement Advocates for supportive national policy frameworks	Promotes inclusive governance and the participation of women, youth, and marginalized communities in decision-making processes.

Interestingly, **the five RECs seem to prioritize slightly different approaches to achieve food and nutrition security in their regions**. Eastern Africa emphasizes the One Health principle for multi-sectoral collaboration and mainstreaming food safety and nutrition education. ECCAS encourages the adoption of new technologies and sustainable farming practices. ECOWAS highlights the promotion of agroecology and local food systems to improve food security. SADC focuses on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and improving storage facilities. UMA stresses the importance of agroecology and healthy food systems to ensure access to high-quality food.

Conclusion

The policies and strategies reviewed call mainly for the adoption of **agricultural development technologies and practices that enhance production and productivity**. AU, the RECs and their Member States are attracted by the promise of increased productivity through intensive and commercial agriculture and its associated technologies. But they are also alive to the need for sustainable approaches to agricultural production that protect the integrity of land and ecosystems and enhance diversity and resilience to enable adaptation to climate change.

Even if there is a growing recognition of agroecology as a pathway to address intricate challenges such as food production, soil health, or climate change, there is still a long way to mainstream agroecology in the AU and RECs policies and strategies. However, there are windows of opportunities with the AU Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative Strategy, some RECs mentioning explicitly agroecology and with explicit mentions in Post-Malabo Agenda Consultations and RECs policies and strategies to practices or approaches linked to agroecology with the willingness to overcome the limits of the green revolution approach. There are also opportunities in the intention to make the policies and AU and REC strategies related to agriculture and those related to natural resource management more coherent.

The main entry points within the RECs to discuss DeSIRA+ are the Departments responsible for agriculture, food security, environment and natural resource management, and climate change. Meeting the policy challenge of integrating agroecology into the agricultural development policies of the RECs involves, on the one hand, getting the political leaders and policy-makers to appreciate the long-term negative impacts of industrial agriculture practices, and on the other hand, getting them to recognize the potential that agroecology holds for enabling increased productivity while also promoting adaptation to climate change and sustainable management of the environment and natural resources. It also implies the mobilization of farmers' organisations, civil society organisations, private sector actors to advocate for renewed policies for agroecology.

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Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy for the East African Community (2005-2030), November 2006

EAC CAADP Compact, June 2017

EAC Climate Change Master Plan 2011-2031, September 2011

EAC Climate Change Policy, May 2010

EAC Protocol on Environment and Natural Resources Management, April 2006

EAC Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) 2018-2025, January 2019

EAC Vision 2050: Regional Vision for Socio-Economic Transformation and Development, February 2016, February 2024

ECCAS

Revised Treaty Establishing the Economic Community of Central African States, December 2019

Common Agricultural Policy of ECCAS: Towards food security and sovereignty by 2040, February 2024

ECCAS Regional Agricultural Investment Plan for the Period 2024-2028: Towards Food Security and Sovereignty by 2040

ECCAS Medium Term Indicative Strategic Plan 2021-2025

ECOWAS

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Revised Treaty, July 1993

Economic Community of West African States Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP), 2005

ECOWAS Environmental Policy, 2008

ECOWAS Environmental Action Plan 2020-2026

ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2030

IGAD

Agreement Establishing the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), March 1996

IGAD Regional Strategy 2021-2025

IGAD Environment and Natural Resource Strategy, April 2007

IGAD Land Governance Business Plan 2020-2023

IGAD Climate Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030

IOC

Programme Régional de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle (PRESAN) 2016-2020. IOC & FAO

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SADC Vision 2050: One Region.16 Nations. Towards a Common Future

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SADC Regional Agricultural Policy, 2014

SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy 2015-2025

SADC Protocol on Environmental Management for Sustainable Development

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REC Post-Malabo Agenda consultation reports

COMESA/EAC/IGAD. Regional Consultation on the Post-Malabo CAADP Agenda: Eastern Africa Region Synthesis Report. May 21-23 2024. Nairobi, Kenya

ECCAS. Regional Consultation on the Post-Malabo CAADP Agenda: Central Africa Region Synthesis Report. May 28-30, 2024. Douala, Cameroon

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SADC. Regional Consultation on the Post-Malabo CAADP Agenda: Southern Africa Region Synthesis Report. June 3-5, 2024. Lusaka, Zambia

UMA. Regional Consultation on the Post-Malabo CAADP Agenda: Northern Africa Region Synthesis Report. June 20-22, 2024. Tangier, Morocco

Annex 1: Analysis of the RECs policies

1. Methodology, Methodological Challenges and Focus of the Review

This review sought to establish policy incentives, opportunities and potential partnerships for the promotion of agroecology in the RECs and technical bodies, to identify strategic entry points for EU engagement with the RECs on the next phase of DeSIRA. In this connection, the review aimed to answer the four specific questions listed in Box 1 below.

Box 1 - Questions for the review

1. What are the existing policies, strategies and investments of the RECs on or related to agricultural development?
2. To what extent are the RECs investing in or supporting agroecological (or related) approaches to agricultural development?
3. What partnerships exist between the RECs and donors, especially the EU in agricultural development?
4. What services, departments or key contact persons could be entry points for EU engagement with the RECS on DeSIRA+.

The main methodology used in this rapid review was the analysis of relevant policy and strategy documents of the six RECs and three technical bodies. The documents were identified through internet research, support from RECs and EUD staff, and the consultant's contacts. The review of policy and strategy documents was supplemented by targeted key informant interviews (KIIs) with relevant officers of the RECs and technical bodies, identified through the consultant's contacts and assistance from the EUDs. KIIs were also conducted with officers of EUDs responsible for partnerships with the RECs. In addition to verifying the information generated from the document review, the KIIs were used to identify contact persons, services and departments that DG INTPA can engage with to further partnerships with the RECs under DeSIRA+.

The major methodological challenge/s faced in the review was the difficulty of accessing policy and strategy documents from some institutions. Not all of these documents are available online, and in some instances, it was not even possible to access documents through contacts within some organizations. A secondary challenge arose from the consultant's lack of proficiency in French, while some RECs and technical bodies use French as their operational language and issue their strategy and policy documents in French. Translating such documents to generate the information needed for the analysis took time and caused substantial delay in writing the review report. The consultant also experienced serious challenges in accessing officers of the RECs for purposes of KIIs.

2. Policies of the AU, RECs and Technical Bodies on Agricultural Development

RECs and technical bodies for the most part draw on policies of the AU in articulating their policies for agricultural development. It is therefore appropriate to preface the review of agricultural policies of RECs and technical bodies with an outline of the relevant policies of the AU.

2.1 AU policies on agricultural development

The AU agenda for agriculture was first clearly articulated in the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos adopted by what was then the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in April 1980. This Plan

marked a reorientation of the organization, which since its founding in 1963, had primarily focused on political liberation. The Plan committed African leaders and governments to achieve “self-sufficiency in food production and supply”².

Lagos Plan of Action and the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community

The importance of agriculture for Africa’s development is evidenced by the fact that the first chapter of the Lagos Plan of Action is on food and agriculture. The Plan acknowledged that the absence of appropriate policies was a major cause of the challenges to food security and agricultural development in the continent³. This acknowledgement informed subsequent policy initiatives, the most significant of which was the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), signed in Abuja, Nigeria on 3rd June 1991. By Article 46 of the Treaty, MS commit to, among other things, harmonization of agricultural development and food security strategies and policies at regional and Community levels.

Constitutive Act of the AU and Agenda 2063

In July 2000, the Heads of State and Government of the then OAU adopted the Constitutive Act of the AU to rebrand the organization and align it with its new orientation of promoting social and economic development. The mission of the AU is to accelerate implementation of the Treaty Establishing the AEC “in order to promote the socio-economic development of Africa”⁴. The Constitutive Act commits MS of the AU to coordinate policy and decision making about food and agriculture. To this end it establishes a specialised technical Committee on Rural Economy and Agricultural Matters.

The AU’s vision for agricultural development is encapsulated in Agenda 2063, which places agriculture at the centre of the continent’s quest for sustainable economic growth, food security, and poverty reduction. Modernizing agriculture for increased productivity and production is one the goals pursued in order to achieve the aspiration for “a prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development”⁵. Agenda 2063 also calls for the creation of “environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities”. Among the priorities for realizing this goal are sustainable natural resource management; biodiversity conservation, genetic resources and ecosystems; and climate resilience.

To realize the vision of a modern agricultural sector, Agenda 2063 commits AU MS to adopt modern agricultural technologies, improve infrastructure and market access, and strengthen agricultural value chains by developing agro-industries and agribusiness, with a focus on regional integration and trade in agricultural goods and services. Additionally, they commit to increasing investments in agricultural research and improving access to inputs and extension services particularly by smallholder farmers. Agenda 2063 underscores the importance of sustainable agricultural practices that are resilient to climate change and calls for adopting environmentally friendly farming practices and techniques that ensure biodiversity protection. The MS pursue these goals collectively through policy and institutional reforms to create an enabling environment for agricultural development, and human capital

² Preamble 3(iv)(c), at page 4

³ “At the root of the food problem in Africa is the fact that Member States have not usually accorded the necessary priority to agriculture, both in allocation of resources and in giving sufficient attention to policies for the promotion of productivity and improvement of rural life” (paragraph 17 at page 8)

⁴ Preamble

⁵ This paragraph draws on ‘Table 2: Overview of Aspirations, Goals and Priority Areas of Agenda 2063’, which appears at page 105 of the Framework Document

development through education, training, and capacity building to develop skills in modern agricultural practices, agribusiness, and agricultural research.

NEPAD and CAADP

The AU's work on economic development is implemented within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Inaugurated as an economic development programme of the AU at the inaugural Assembly of the Heads of State and Government in Durban South Africa in July 2002⁶, NEPAD was formally integrated into AU structures and processes in 2003⁷. In July 2018, AU Heads of State and Government adopted a decision to transform the NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency (NPCA) into the African Union Development Agency (AUDA)⁸. As Africa's collective programme for achieving food security, poverty eradication, sustainable growth and development, NEPAD works on five economic sectors: agriculture, human development, infrastructure, agro-industry diversification development, and environment. It implements CAADP, the flagship agricultural development programme of the AU.

CAADP was endorsed by AU Heads of State and Government as a NEPAD programme in July 2003. Its overall goal is to help African countries reach a higher path of economic growth through agriculture-led development. It pursues this goal through investments aimed at eliminating hunger, reducing poverty and food insecurity, and expanding agricultural exports. CAADP provides a framework for aligning regional and national agricultural policies, mobilizing investments and partnerships and facilitating actions to achieve two key targets: increasing agriculture growth rates to a minimum of six percent per year; and increasing public investments in agriculture to a minimum of 10 per cent of national budgets.

RECs coordinate implementation of CAADP within their respective regions by facilitating the alignment and harmonization of national agricultural policies with the broader CAADP framework through the development and implementation of Regional Agricultural Investment Plans (RAIPs) and National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs), and the negotiation of CAADP Compacts between governments and major stakeholders. The RECs also support MS in implementing CAADP through capacity building, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy. Some African countries are member of more than one REC (Figure 3).

Maputo and Malabo Declarations

CAADP is central to the achievement of commitments that African leaders signed up to under the 2003 Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa (Maputo Declaration)⁹ and the 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. Through the Maputo Declaration African Heads of State and Government committed to allocating at least 10% of their national budgets to agriculture and rural development with the goal of achieving annual agricultural growth rates of at least 6%. They endorsed CAADP as a strategic framework to achieve agricultural growth and food security in Africa.

Ten years later, the Heads of State and Government adopted the Malabo Declaration to reaffirm commitments made in Maputo, while introducing more specific and measurable targets to accelerate

⁶ Assembly/AU/Decl. 1(I)

⁷ Assembly/AU/Decl. 8(II)

⁸ Assembly/AU /Dec.691(XXXI)

⁹ Assembly/AU/Decl. 7(II)

agricultural growth and transformation in the continent. Specifically, they committed to halving poverty, ending hunger, and tripling intra-African trade in agricultural goods and services by 2025. The Malabo Declaration underscores the need for agricultural development programmes to integrate measures to build resilience to climate variability and other shocks and promote sustainable land and water management practices. The signatories agreed to a biennial review process to monitor and report on progress as a means of promoting accountability for the commitments made in the Malabo Declaration.

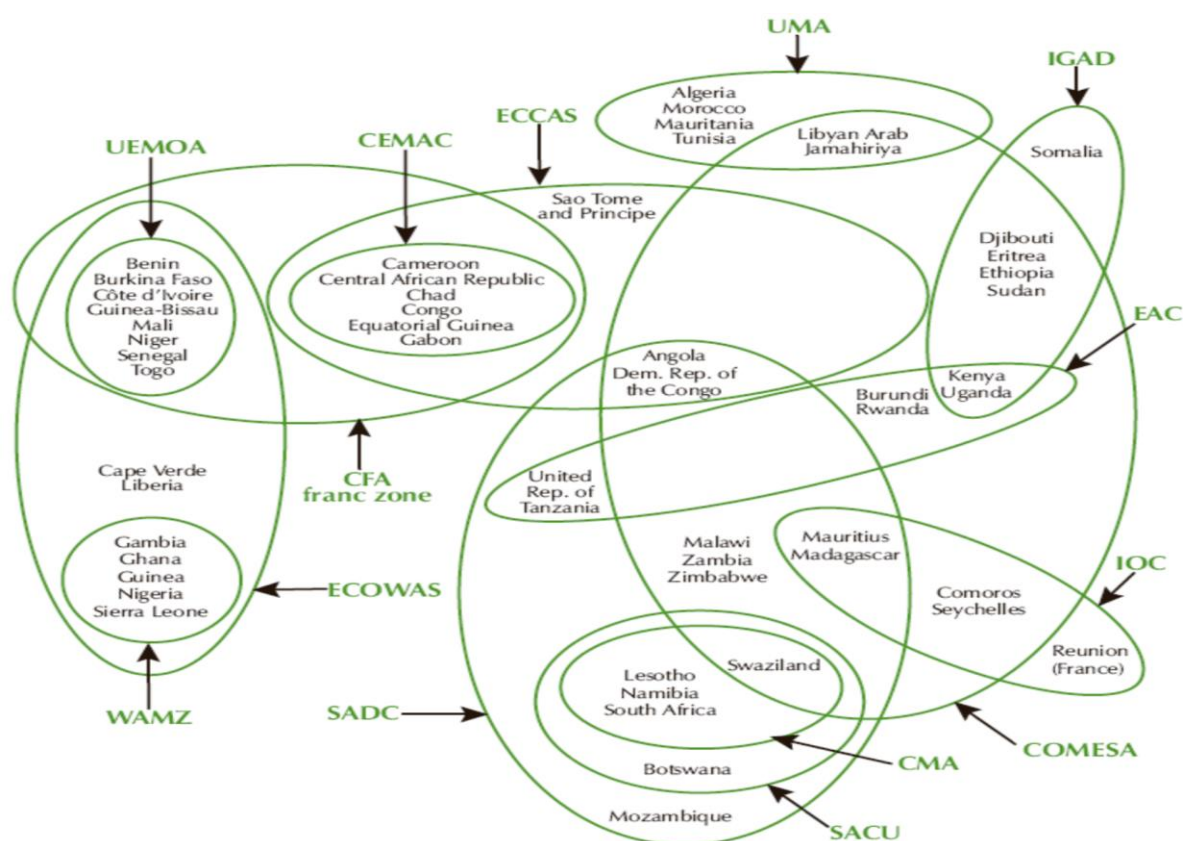


Figure 3: Overview of the RECs and their membership (UNECA, 2009)

Other relevant AU Policies and Strategies

While the policies and strategies discussed above are the ones most directly relevant to the AU agenda and work on agricultural development, the organization has adopted a host of other policies and strategies that also impact agricultural development and are pertinent to this review. These include policies and strategies on climate change, environment and natural resource management, and the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

In addition, there is the African convention on the conservation of nature and natural resources since 1968, stating that “the contracting States shall undertake to adopt the measures necessary to ensure conservation, utilization and development of soil, water, flora and faunal resources in accordance with scientific principles and with due regard to the best interests of the people”.

The Protocol on Relations between the AU and RECs provides the framework for cooperation among RECs and between them and the AU in implementation of policies and programmes, including those on agriculture and rural development.

Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I)

Established on an AU Head of State and Government Decision on Organic Farming (Doc. EX.CL/631 (XVIII)), the EOA Initiative is not a policy but a programme. It is the most relevant framework within the AU when it comes to the prospects for engaging with the organization on agroecology. Through EOA-I, the AU is providing leadership for its MS to mainstream ecological organic agriculture into national agricultural systems. Objectives of the initiative include the promotion of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices that enhance soil fertility, biodiversity, and productivity; and building resilience of farming systems to climate change and other environmental challenges.

EOA-I has supported the establishment of national and regional platforms for knowledge sharing and communication among farmers, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders, and the formation of alliances and networks that advocate for policies that support organic agriculture. It advocates for the integration of organic agriculture into national and regional policies and development plans. It has spearheaded the integration of organic agriculture into national agricultural policies of several African countries.

2.2 COMESA

Article 3 of the Treaty Establishing a Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) outlines its aims and objectives, which include “to attain sustainable growth and development of the MS by promoting a more balanced and harmonious development of its production and marketing structures” and “to contribute towards the establishment, progress and the realisation of the objectives of the African Economic Community”.

To realize these objectives, the Treaty commits MS to undertake specific activities in different fields, including agriculture. In the field of agriculture, the MS commit to:

- a) cooperate in agricultural development, export of agricultural commodities, and agricultural research and extension;
- b) adopt a common agricultural policy;
- c) enhance regional food sufficiency;
- d) coordinate their policies regarding the establishment of agro-industries; and
- e) enhance rural development¹⁰.

Chapter Eighteen of the Treaty provides for cooperation in agriculture and rural development, prioritizing the adoption of a common agricultural policy that harmonizes agricultural policies of MS.

COMESA Regional Agricultural Policy and Regional Agriculture Investment Plan

In furtherance of the commitments under the Treaty, the MS adopted COMESA Agricultural Policy (CAP) in November 2002. The primary objective of the policy is to increase agricultural productivity, enhance food security, and improve livelihoods in member states. The specific aims of the policy are:

- a) to promote adoption of modern technologies and practices to boost agricultural productivity;

¹⁰ Article 4(5)

- b) to reduce trade barriers and improve market infrastructure to facilitate market access and trade in agricultural products;
- c) to strengthen agricultural research and innovation;
- d) to support capacity building for farmers and agricultural institution; and
- e) to attract private sector investments in agriculture.

To ensure long-term agricultural sustainability, the policy also seeks to promote sustainable land and water management practices. A key focus of the policy is the promotion of regional harmonization of policies to support free trade in agricultural products, the development of agro-industries and enhancement of value-addition.

Through its Regional CAADP Compact signed at Addis Ababa in November 2014, COMESA aimed to align the Regional Agricultural Policy and the national agricultural policies of its MS with CAADP. The Regional CAADP Compact was agreed following inclusive regional planning and policy dialogue processes that brought together State and Non-State stakeholders. The stakeholders committed:

- a) to improve investments in agriculture in line with the ambition of the Malabo Declaration, which calls for allocation of at least 10% of national budgets to agricultural development to achieve annual agricultural growth rates of at least 6%;
- b) to mainstream evidence-based planning of agricultural development programmes;
- c) to promote sustainable agricultural practices that include soil conservation measures and the optimal use of fertilizers;
- d) to promote regional cooperation and integration for improved food security and trade; and
- e) to establish and implement mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress towards achievement of CAADP goals.

COMESA Regional Agriculture Investment Plan (RAIP) outlines the priority CAADP related investments for the region. These investments are aligned with and inform policies, programmes and implementation structures for CAADP at the national level in MS. COMESA has supported establishment of CAADP Round Tables in each MS, and supported them to develop and implement National CAADP Compacts. Through the National CAADP Compacts, State and Non-State Actors coordinate investments to achieve the goals of CAADP in each country. Additionally, COMESA facilitates review of CAADP implementation by supporting regional policy analysis and dialogue. The COMESA RAIP for 2018-2022 has lapsed, and the process of developing a new plan is ongoing at the time of this review.

Other relevant COMESA Policies and Strategies

Other policies of COMESA relevant to agricultural development and food security, and therefore pertinent to this review, include those that focus on adaptation to climate change and environmental sustainability. The principal documents in this regard are:

1. COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan 2020-2025;
2. COMESA Regional Resilience Framework, and
3. COMESA Strategy on Climate Change 2020-2030

COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan 2020-2025

The COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan appreciates the link between environmental sustainability, climate and agricultural development. It prioritizes measures aimed at promoting sustainable production and productivity while building resilience to climate change. Specific measures include:

- a) strengthening regional coordination and linkages to information and tools for managing climate risks and mitigating transboundary plant and animal diseases, hazards and risks; and
- b) strengthening partnerships to leverage resources for sustainable agricultural transformation.

The existing partnership between COMESA and the EU supports the implementation of these measures.

COMESA Regional Resilience Framework

The COMESA Regional Resilience Framework articulates priorities, approaches and partnerships for design and implementation of programmes for resilience building in the region. It envisions “*a fully integrated, internationally competitive regional economic community with high living standards that is sustainable and resilient to climate shocks and stresses*”. This vision integrates the imperative of resilience into the overall vision of COMESA¹¹¹².

One of the priority areas for resilience building is ecosystem disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. To this end, the Framework calls for wider application of climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices, including landscape and ecosystem-based approaches that integrate agroecology in land and water management. These practices have been widely piloted within COMESA.

COMESA Strategy on Climate Change 2020-2030

The COMESA Strategy on Climate Change 2020-2030 builds on the achievements of the COMESA’s Climate Change Initiative 2009-2013. According to the Strategy, the Initiative “has been the guiding blueprint for the climate change initiative of COMESA” and its objectives and core tenets “are as valid today as they were more than a decade ago”¹³.

The COMESA Climate Change Initiative aims to address the impact of climate change on agriculture and promote climate-resilient agricultural practices. It promotes strategies that enable farmers to adapt to climate change, and has supported the piloting of flagship projects with a focus on CSA.

2.3 EAC

The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community¹⁴ provides the foundation for the Community’s work in support of agricultural development and food security. Chapter 18 of the Treaty makes provisions on agriculture and food security, while Chapter 19 makes provisions on cooperation in environment and natural resource management.

On agriculture, the Partner States “undertake to adopt a scheme for the rationalization of agricultural production with a view to promoting complementarity and specialization in and sustainability of national agricultural programmes” for the purpose of ensuring:

- a) a common agricultural policy;
- b) food sufficiency within the Community;
- c) an increased in the production of crops, livestock, fisheries and forest products for domestic consumption, exports and as inputs into agro-based industries; and

¹¹ The overall vision of COMESA is “To be a fully integrated economic community that is prosperous, internationally competitive, and ready to merge into the African Economic Community.”

¹² COMESA in Brief

¹³ p.10

¹⁴ The Treaty signed on 30th November 1999 has been amended twice, on 14th December 2006 and 20th August 2007

- d) post-harvest preservation and conservation and improved food processing

By Article 109(d), the Partner States commit to “adopt and promote the use of environmentally safe methods of land use”.

The Partner States’ cooperation in environment and natural resource management is inspired by their recognition “that development activities may have negative impacts on the environment leading to degradation of the environment and depletion of natural resources and that a clean and healthy environment is a prerequisite for sustainable development”¹⁵. The objectives of their cooperation in environmental management are:

- a) to preserve, protect and enhance the quality of the environment, and contribute towards its sustainability;
- b) to ensure sustainable utilization of natural resources; and
- c) to develop and adopt water resources conservation and management policies that ensure sustenance and preservation of ecosystems.

The Partner States commit to, among other things, cooperate and coordinate policies and actions for protection and conservation of natural resources and the environment against all forms of development-induced degradation and pollution; and develop and promote capacity building programmes for sustainable management of natural resources. They undertake to integrate environmental management and conservation measures in all development activities including agriculture¹⁶.

The EAC does not have a specific programme or project that focuses on promoting agroecology, although it is in the process of developing a Regional Biodiversity Strategy that is intended to include interventions to promote agroecology among the MS. At the moment, EU-EAC cooperation does not have a specific focus on agriculture, food security and rural development. The most relevant ongoing action is the EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme. Now in its second phase, the programme seeks to improve EAC exports by supporting participation in regional and global value chains with particular focus on the EU and targeting agro-industrial crops (coffee, tea) and horticulture (avocado, spices, peas).

Nevertheless, policies adopted by the EAC to realize the Treaty commitments by the MS on agricultural development, food security, and environment and natural resource management offer entry points for engaging the Community on agroecology. The policies that are most relevant in this connection are:

1. EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Policy;
2. EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy;
3. EAC Protocol on Environment and Natural Resource Management; and
4. EAC Climate Change Policy

¹⁵ Article 111

¹⁶ Article 112(1)(e)

EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Policy, and Strategy

EAC Policy on Agriculture and Rural Development¹⁷ and the EAC Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development¹⁸ provide the framework for designing programmes and interventions aimed at fulfilling the commitments made by Partner States in the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC regarding agricultural development and food security. These two documents together establish the necessary structures and outline measures to achieve the Partner States' vision for the agricultural sector as articulated in EAC Vision 2050: "increased investment and enhanced agricultural productivity for food security and a transformation of the rural economy"¹⁹.

The overall objective of the Partner States in cooperating on agriculture and rural development is to achieve food security and rational agricultural production. Specific objectives include promoting sustainable use and management of natural resources to conserve the environment.

The Policy proposes several measures relevant to this review. With regards to food security, it proposes promoting research and development of traditional food crops and food processing; as well as the appropriate use of agricultural inputs. Additionally, it calls for promotion of appropriate irrigation technologies; agroforestry; and sustainable agricultural practices that are environment friendly. These measures can serve as a foundation for engaging the EAC on agroecology.

The vision of the EAC Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development is "a well-developed agricultural sector for sustainable economic growth and equitable development"²⁰. Its mission is "to support, promote, and facilitate the development, production and marketing of agricultural produce and products to ensure food security, poverty eradication and sustainable economic development"²¹. The Strategy primarily emphasizes the modernization of agricultural production to increase productivity. Although it highlights the need for sustainable utilization of natural resources, the proposed measures proposed do not directly address agroecology. Overall, the Strategy does not offer significant improvements over what is outlined in the Policy.

The relevance and importance of the EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and Strategy to the discourse on agroecology lie in their acknowledgement of the significant role of smallholders in the region's agricultural development. Both documents emphasize the imperatives of sustainability in agricultural production and recognize the necessity of utilizing the environment and natural resources sustainably. These imperatives provide entry points for engaging with the EAC and its MS on agroecology.

EAC CAADP Compact

The EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and Strategy guides the region in implementing CAADP to achieve the objectives of the Malabo Declaration. The EAC CAADP Compact adopted in 2017 sets out parameters for long-term investments and partnership among major stakeholders in the agriculture sector to align their development goals to the EAC agricultural sector programmes and the CAADP Framework. It facilitates coordination of regional, transboundary and cross-cutting programmes that complement national agricultural programmes and projects in the Partner States.

¹⁷ Full title 'Agriculture and Rural Development Policy for the East African Community'

¹⁸ Full title Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy for the East African Community (2005-2030)

¹⁹ p.60

²⁰ 4.1 at p.62

²¹ 4.2 ibid

The EAC CADP Results Framework is used to track implementation of the Compact and to ensure that the results align with commitments under the Malabo Declaration.

The EAC CAADP Compact has seven priority areas, two of which are particularly relevant to this review. These are: ‘Sustainable Natural Resource Use and Management’; and ‘Enhancing Resilience of Livelihoods and Production Systems and Management of Risks’. The first priority is to be achieved through investments in governance and institutional development to secure efficient use of shared ecosystems and resources; promote farm forest development; and support conservation of water catchment, soil, and biodiversity. Investments for achievement of the second priority will focus on building resilience to agricultural sector risks along the value chain; promoting agricultural insurance to attract and encourage increased investment in agriculture; initiating CSA programmes; mainstreaming risk reduction in policies, strategies and investment plans; and improving capacity for disaster preparedness, response, climate change mitigation and management. Agroecology can effectively contribute to achieving these two priorities and the associated investments.

EAC Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP)

The EAC RAIP was adopted by the EAC Council of Ministers in January 2019. It sets out priority investments for implementation of the EAC CAADP Compact and aligns with the EAC Food Security Action Plan and its policy framework for agriculture and rural development. Its overall objective is to facilitate enhanced regional food supply and efficient utilization. Two of its specific objectives relevant to this review are to increase resilience of livelihoods and improve risk management, and to promote sustainable management of shared natural resources and effective response to climatic shocks.

To increase resilience and improve risk management the Partner States commit to enhancing capacity to manage agricultural sector risks along the value chain and to improving coordination for disaster preparedness, risk analysis, response, climate change adaptation, mitigation and management. To promote sustainable management of shared natural resources and response to climate shocks, they commit to developing, strengthening and harmonizing relevant policies; promoting conservation and sustainable utilization of genetic resources and intellectual property rights (IPRs), community and breeders’ rights, and protecting indigenous knowledge; and strengthening the Implementation of the EAC Climatic Change policy and Master Plan. Since these commitments align with agroecological principles, the RAIP provides an entry point for engagement with the EAC on the agroecological transition.

EAC Protocol on Environment and Natural Resource Management

Adopted by the EAC in April 2006, this Protocol establishes a framework for cooperation among Partner States in managing the environment and natural resources. The Protocol is pertinent to this review as its scope encompasses sustainable environment and natural resources management, conservation of biological diversity, management of forest and tree resources, management of water resources, and soil and land use management.

The provisions of Article 8 on sustainable development are particularly relevant, recognizing the potential adverse impacts of development activities on the environment and natural resources. Partner States commit to ensuring that “conservation and management of environment and natural resources are treated as an integral part of national and local development plans”²². Additionally, the Partner States pledge to “take all necessary measures, at local, national and regional levels, that are

²² Article 8(i)(1)

conducive to sustainable development, poverty alleviation and food security in the Community as a means of protecting the environment and natural resource base”²³.

Among the measures Partner States commit to for development, conservation, sustainable management and utilisation of forests and tree resources is to “encourage local communities to grow and conserve trees and to integrate the growing of trees into farming systems”²⁴. To prevent soil and land degradation and ensure sustainable management of soil and land resources, the Partner States commit to “implement agricultural practices that promote sustainable farming and agro-forestry practices to ensure sustainable productivity of the land”²⁵.

EAC Climate Change Policy, and Climate Change Master Plan

Concerns about the long-term impacts of climate change and the interaction between the climate crisis, agricultural development and food security provide strong incentives for policy makers to align agricultural development policies with sustainability imperatives. These concerns have inspired the development of policies that reinforce sustainable environment and natural resource management.

Climate Change Policy

Within the EAC, the Climate Change Policy and its implementation framework, the Climate Change Master Plan fall within this category²⁶. The Policy outlines three objectives for the agricultural sector, one of which, “to improve management of natural resources (land, water, fisheries and forest) to ensure sustainable production”. This objective is directly relevant to this review as it provides an entry point for agroecology as a means of integrating sustainability imperatives into agricultural production. The measures for adaptation to climate change that Partner States commit to realizing this objective include two of direct relevance²⁷:

- a) promote sustainable land management practices, including Conservation Agriculture and improved production systems, as a way to adapt to climate change; and
- b) Promote practices and technologies for the efficient utilization of water for irrigation, livestock and aquaculture.

The Policy also commits Partner States to measures for climate change mitigation that are equally relevant and provide entry points for agroecology. Specifically, the Partner State commit to “upscale activities that enhance the carbon storage capacity, such as Conservation Agriculture and Agroforestry; support best agricultural practices that lead to reduced emissions, such as soil conservation; and promote efficient crop and livestock production systems to reduce emissions associated with agricultural practices”²⁸.

These measures provide appropriate entry points for agroecology given that it is a sustainable approach comprised of practices that foster the efficient utilization of water and natural resources.

²³ Article 8(ii)(d)

²⁴ Article (11(b)(5)

²⁵ Article (21(2)(iv)

²⁶ The EAC Climate Change Strategy lapsed in 2016, and its provisions have been integrated into the Climate Change Master Plan

²⁷ p.10

²⁸ 2.3.3.4, p.21-22

Climate Change Master Plan 2011-2031

The East African Community Climate Change Master Plan (EACCCMP) provides an operational framework for implementing the EAC Climate Change Policy to facilitate adaptation and mitigation. The Vision of the Master Plan is “the people, economies and ecosystems of the EAC Partner States are climate resilient and adapt accordingly to Climate Change”²⁹.

The overall objective of the Master-Plan is to strengthen regional cooperation to address climate change issues that are of a regional nature or have regional implications. Among its specific objectives are to provide effective and integrated response to regional climate change adaptation; and to enhance the mitigation potential of Partner States in the energy, infrastructure, agriculture and forestry sectors. Agriculture and forestry land uses are targeted for mitigation interventions as they are identified as some of the most polluting sectors in the region.

The Master Plan derives its priorities from the Climate Change Policy. Of relevance to this review are the priorities related to agriculture and food security, water security, and biodiversity and ecosystem services. Interventions under these priorities aim to improve sustainable land use to enhance agricultural production and ensure food security in the context of climate change, protect and ensure sustainable management and resilience of trans-boundary water resource, and conserve and protect the integrity of biodiversity in order to secure the ecosystem services they provide.

The Master Plan includes a long list of interventions to be implemented in the agricultural sector for both adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. Adaptation interventions of particular relevance to this review and to the agroecological transition of food systems in the region include the promotion of suitable forms of conservation agriculture (CA), the promotion of agroforestry, and integration of indigenous and traditional knowledge in planning, design and implementation of adaptation programmes. Relevant mitigation interventions include promotion of agroforestry, the promotion of low-tillage regimes, and other agricultural approaches that limit soil disturbance. These interventions provide entry points for the integration of agroecology, provided that policy actors understand and accept the potential that agroecology holds for enabling the adaptation of the agricultural sector to climate change.

Resolution recognizing agroecology as a strategic priority

The East African Legislative Assembly Signed a resolution with Food Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2024, recognizing agroecology as a strategic priority for formulating and recommending sustainable policies in agriculture, tourism, and natural resource management across the East African region. The resolution includes the following commitments: development of regional legal frameworks, promotion and advocacy for policies and parliamentary initiatives for agroecology, and commitment to advance agroecology³⁰.

²⁹ p.22

³⁰ [East African Legislative Assembly Signs a resolution with Food Agriculture Organization \(FAO\), Recognizing Agro-ecology as a Strategic Priority in the EAC | East African Legislative Assembly](#)

2.4 ECCAS

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) was founded in 1983 and groups together 11 Central African countries³¹. The Revised Treaty Establishing ECCAS³² spells out objectives of the organization, which include harmonization of national policies in order to promote, among other things, agriculture and natural resource management.

Chapter XI of the Revised Treaty makes provisions for cooperation among MS in the fields of agriculture, food and nutrition security, animal and fisheries resources. By Article 63 of the Revised Treaty, the MS of ECCAS commit to cooperate in these fields with a view to, among other things, raising the standard of living of rural populations, increasing employment and income opportunities in the agricultural sector and enhancing food security. They also undertake to cooperate in establishing policy and funding mechanisms for managing disasters, including those arising from the impacts of climate change.

To give effect to the commitments made under Article 63, and in compliance with the provisions of Article 64 of the Revised Treaty, the MS have developed and are implementing the Common Agricultural Policy of ECCAS (PAC-CEEAC) and the Regional Agricultural Investment Program on Food and Nutritional Security (PRIASAN), which provide the framework for ECCAS MS to fulfil their commitments under the Malabo Declaration and implement CAADP. Indeed, since 2013, ECCAS has implemented the Regional CAADP Compact, which integrates the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan. The ECCAS Medium Term Indicative Strategic Plan 2021-2025 sets out the overall framework for pursuing the objectives of integration spelt out in the ECCAS Treaty.

Implementation of PAC-CEEAC and PRIASAN vest in the Department for the Environment, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development (DERNADR). The Department supports MS to develop, plan and implement agriculture, food security and rural development programmes.

Common Agricultural Policy of ECCAS (PAC-CEEAC)

ECCAS Common Agricultural Policy was adopted by the Heads of State and Government at their 16th Ordinary Session on 25th May 2015. An updated version of the Policy that builds on eight years' experience of implementing a common agricultural policy in the region was published in February 2024. The CAP prioritizes the transformation of food systems, and with its emphasis on food sovereignty and the need to align agricultural production to the imperatives of addressing the climate crisis, can provide a basis for engaging ECCAS MS on agroecology. Specifically, agroecology can reinforce strategies that the Policy proposes for strengthening the resilience of production systems and managing the environment and biodiversity in the face of increased climate change. Agroecology can make an important contribution to the policy objective of food security and sovereignty by 2040 and help to reconcile the twin imperatives of sustainable increased in the productivity and competitiveness of agricultural value chains and effective management of the impacts of climate change. PAC-CEEAC specifically calls for promotion of agroecology and climate smart agriculture as strategies for reducing and mitigating the impacts of climate change on the environment and natural resources.

³¹ The 11 MS of ECCAS are: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Príncipe

³² The Revised Treaty signed by the Head of State and Government on 18th December 2019 supersedes the Treaty Establishing the Economic Community of Central African States that was signed on 18th October 1983

ECCAS Regional Agricultural Investment Plan 2024-2028

The ECCAS Regional Agricultural Investment Plan for the period 2024-2028 is the first plan developed to operationalize the region's new Common Agricultural Policy. Its overall objective is to contribute to structural transformation of the food systems of ECCAS MS on the basis of the priorities set out in the Common Agricultural Policy of establishing resilient production systems, efficient markets and sovereign and inclusive food and nutritional governance.

It prioritizes the transformation of local food systems to strengthen resilience, improve productivity to meet the food and nutrition needs of a growing population and manage systemic shocks, both endogenous (effects of climate change and other calamities) and exogenous (markets imperfections). Although the Plan is focused on increasing production and productivity, it also underscores the need to preserve the environment, conserve biodiversity and use resilient production systems. It recognizes the importance of working with indigenous populations and integrating their knowledge and institutions.

Although it does not speak directly to agroecology, the Plan can be used as an entry point for engaging ECCAS on agroecology in view of its recognition of the need to balance increasing agricultural productivity with sustainable management of natural resources. In particular, agroecology can reinforce its commitment to promote climate smart agriculture. In any case, the Plan implements the ECCAS Common Agricultural Policy which specifically mentions agroecology.

ECCAS Medium Term Indicative Strategic Plan 2021-2025

The ECCAS Medium-Term Indicative Strategic Plan for the period 2021-2025 provides the framework within which ECCAS currently pursues its integration agenda. Drawing on the Revised Treaty Establishing ECCAS, the document lists environment³³, agriculture and rural development as one of the key areas of integration. The ECCAS MS seek integration in agriculture and rural development as in order to improve production, productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector as a means of ensuring food security and sustainable development. This is also the area within which ECCAS MS aim to promote their cooperation in addressing the challenges of climate change.

It is instructive that ECCAS Medium Term Strategic Plan does not make any reference to agroecology or climate smart agriculture. This demonstrates the abiding tension between competing imperatives with regards to agricultural development, which is common across all the RECs. Policy documents on agricultural development tend to articulate somewhat contradictory imperatives, seeking on the one hand to adopt technologies associated with industrial agriculture and on the other hand to promote sustainable and even indigenous production and resource management approaches. This tension seems to manifest between political and technical wings of the RECs, with documents coming from political actors (Treaties and Policies) tending to be strong on food sovereignty underpinned by agroecological approaches, while those coming from technical people (Strategies and Action Plans) are more focused on increasing production and productivity, including through adoption of industrial production approaches. Engaging ECCAS and the other RECs on agroecology will provide an opportunity for these tension and contradictions to be addressed in a structured manner so as to lay the foundations for the transformation of food systems to achieve sustainability and resilience.

³³ The Strategic Plan clarifies that the term 'environment' encompasses natural resources including forests, water resources and extractives

2.5 ECOWAS and CILSS

ECOWAS and CILSS play complementary roles that are of relevance to this review. ECOWAS, which groups together 15 West African countries³⁴ is a REC of the AU. It was formed to promote cooperation and integration of its MS into an economic union for the purpose of raising the living standards of the people of the region “and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations-among Member States and contribute to the progress and development of the African Continent”³⁵. ECOWAS Treaty³⁶ articulates measures for realizing these aims and objectives, among them “the harmonisation and co-ordination of national policies and the promotion of integration programmes, projects and activities, particularly in food, agriculture and natural resources (...) and the harmonisation and co-ordination of policies for the protection of the environment”³⁷.

CILSS is the acronym for Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel, French for Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, a regional organization established in 1973 to coordinate research on strategies for combating the effects of desertification with a view to improving food security and creating a new ecological balance to promote sustainable development of the region. Seven of the nine CILSS MS³⁸ are also MS of ECOWAS. It is a specialized organization that works to establish a new ecological balance in the Sahel by supporting sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, food security, and environmental protection, as the basis for building resilience and promoting sustainable development in the region. For the seven CILSS MS that are also members of ECOWAS, these activities complement ECOWAS interventions to promote agricultural development, water resource management, and resilience to climate change.

ECOWAS

Of the two institutions, ECOWAS is the most critical for this review, being a REC of the AU. CILSS plays a complementary role that contributes to achievement of the broad mandate of ECOWAS, which encompasses economic, political, and social integration. The key policy and strategic instruments of ECOWAS relevant to the review are those on agriculture and climate change. These are respectively, Economic Community of West Africa Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) 2005; 2025 Strategic Policy Framework for ECOWAP/CAADP; and ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2030.

ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP), 2005

Chapter IV of ECOWAS Treaty makes specific provisions cooperation among its MS in food and agriculture. By Article 25 of the Treaty, the MS commit to cooperate in the development of agriculture with a view to, among other things, ensuring food security and increasing production and productivity. To this end, they further commit to harmonize agricultural development strategies and policies and to adopt a common agricultural policy with respect to research, training, production, preservation, processing and marketing of agricultural produce.

In furtherance of these Treaty provisions and commitments, ECOWAS MS adopted the Economic Community of West Africa Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) in 2005 as a regional framework for

³⁴ Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote D'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo

³⁵ Article 3(1)

³⁶ ECOWAS Revised Treaty, 1993

³⁷ Article 3(2)

³⁸ Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. Of these, only Chad and Mauritania are not Member States of ECOWAS

programming on agriculture and food security. It aims to promote regional integration through harmonization of agricultural policies to enable leveraging of natural complementarities among countries of the region. It creates a framework for cooperation and coordination to address challenges of a regional nature, and provides the basis for articulation and implementation of supportive policies and programmes by regional technical cooperation organizations, including CILSS and WAMU.

The Policy articulates the principles and objectives that the MS pursue in their cooperation to promote agricultural development to promote food security and enhance the role of agriculture in creating wealth and employment. Although increasing the productivity and competitiveness of West African agriculture is a major thrust of the Policy, the pursuit of this objective is underpinned by a commitment to reducing food dependence and achieving food sovereignty.

The vision for the 2025 Strategic Policy Framework for ECOWAP/CAADP was developed by ECOWAS Department of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources (DAEWR) following a review of the first decade of ECOWAP. The vision of the 2025 Strategic Policy Framework is expressed as “*A modern and competitive agro-forestry-pastoral and fisheries sector, inclusive and sustainable, guaranteeing decent jobs, food and nutrition security and food sovereignty*”³⁹. It defines “food sovereignty” as “the region's right and duty to develop and implement its own food policies based on reducing the dependency on imports of strategic products in food systems and a positive agricultural and agri-food trade balance”⁴⁰. This provides a strong foundation for ECOWAS engagement with agroecology. This is further reinforced by commitments in the Strategic Policy Framework to the promotion of sustainable and climate-friendly production systems.

The 2025 Strategic Policy Framework sets out priorities for the agricultural sector within the region for the period 2016-2025, integrating the imperatives agreed at the AU level and set the Malabo Declaration. The Strategic Policy Framework is implemented through five-year programmes under the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan for Food and Nutrition Security (RAIPFNS), the first of which covered the period 2016-2020⁴¹. Although it does not speak directly to agroecology, the Plan envisages “Development of production systems that meet the dual challenge of rapidly improving productivity, ensuring environmental sustainability (mainly protecting water, soil and biodiversity) and a good capacity for adaptation to climate variations and change”.

ECOWAS Environmental Policy 2008 and Environmental Action Plan 2020-2026

Chapter VI of ECOWAS Treaty provides for MS' cooperation in environment and natural resources. In this connection, the MS undertake to protect, preserve and enhance the natural environment of the region by adopting relevant policies, strategies and programmes at national and regional levels and establishing appropriate institutions to manage environmental challenges, including erosion, deforestation and desertification. The MS adopted the ECOWAS Environmental Policy in 2008, the overall objective of which is “to reverse environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources, ameliorate the quality of the living environment, conserve biological diversity, with a view to ensuring a healthy and productive environment; thereby improving the well-being of the ecosystem and the population of the sub region”.

³⁹ p.25

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ We were unable to establish whether a RAIPFNS for the period after 2020 was developed

Although the Policy does not speak directly to agroecology, it provides an entry point for engaging ECOWAS on the issue. In particular, agroecology can contribute to achievement of the second strategic objective articulated by the policy on “promotion of sustainable management of resources for the improvement of environment-friendly sub-regional economy”, and to combating land degradation, drought and desertification. Additionally, that the Supplementary Act to the Policy affirms recognition by MS of “the identity of local communities, their culture and interest in the field of sustainable management of natural resources” creates an enabling environment for application of indigenous knowledge and practices of agricultural production, which are themselves aligned to agroecology.

ECOWAS Environmental Policy is implemented through the ECOWAS Environmental Action Plan 2020-2026, in which strong emphasis is placed on sustainable land management for the development of agriculture and livestock production. The Action Plan articulates measures for control of land erosion and desertification, preservation of ecosystems, and promotion of agroforestry in order to improve agricultural land productivity through the restoration of land fertility. Agroecology has the potential to make significant contribution to these measures.

ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2030

The climate crisis poses critical challenges to the economies of MS of ECOWAS, given their heavy reliance on agriculture, fishing, livestock production, and forestry resources, which are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The threats that the climate crisis poses to agricultural production and productivity, and its impacts on environment and natural resources make responding to the challenges of climate change a critical policy imperative within ECOWAS. The MS collaborate in responding to the climate crisis within the framework of their Treaty commitments for cooperation in diverse areas, including food and agriculture, environment and natural resources, and combating deforestation and desertification.

ECOWAS adopted the Regional Climate Strategy (RCS) in 2022 to provide a harmonised framework for action to address the challenges of climate change in the region through both adaptation and mitigation measures, building on the MS’ Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and in line with their commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The RCS addresses itself to climate change related threats to agricultural production, and aims to contribute to achievement of objectives of the 2025 Strategic Policy Framework on adapting production systems and techniques to climate change and strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations in the face of chronic food insecurity.

To this end, the RCS has a result area (R2. A) on promotion of climate-smart agriculture, including agroecological practices. To achieve this result, the West African Climate-Smart Agriculture Alliance (WACSAA) implements projects that integrate the promotion of agroecology. Of particular significance in this regard is the Agroecology Programme in West Africa, which is implemented within the framework of ECOWAP with the specific objective of promoting innovative agroecological projects in the region. This programme and this result area of RCS provides an appropriate entry point for engaging with ECOWAS on agroecology.

CILSS

The work that CILSS does supporting its MS in the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and resilience complements the work done by ECOWAS and has a direct bearing on agroecology. The work includes research on agroecological practices suited to the climatic and soil conditions of the Sahel,

with a view to developing innovative farming techniques that improve productivity while also preserving the environment. CILSS also supports capacity building to enable communities to adopt sustainable farming methods; advocates for policies that support sustainable agroecological practices (and by extension, agroecology); and implements projects on soil conservation, water resource management, agroforestry and integrated pest management (IPM) that incorporate agroecological principles.

CILSS Strategic Plan for Horizon 2050

CILSS Strategic Plan for Horizon 2050⁴² presents the long-term vision and strategy for realizing the goal of sustainable development in the Sahel region by addressing the challenges of food insecurity and strengthening resilience to climate change. The Strategic Plan prioritizes food security and nutrition, as well as natural resource management and climate change, all of which are of relevance to this review. Although it does not speak directly to agroecology, the Strategic Plan calls for promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, with a specific focus on climate-smart agriculture. On natural resource management, the second strategic objective articulated under Strategic Plan makes a clear link between sustainable management of natural resources and adaptation to climate change. The results to be achieved under the strategic objective include strengthening of sustainable land management and strengthening of climate resilience of ecosystems and populations. The Strategic Plan proposes measures to enhance sustainable management of water, soil, and biodiversity, combating desertification and land degradation, and promoting reforestation and afforestation. The Plan is to be implemented through partnerships and collaboration, including with international partners, as a means of mobilizing technical and financial resources

CILSS Work Plan 2023-2027⁴³

The CILSS Work Plan 2023-2027 articulates the actions, projects, and initiatives to be undertaken within this period to achieve the long-term goals of the Strategic Plan Horizon 2050. Within the Work Plan are opportunities for advancing the agenda of agroecology through climate-smart agriculture, which aims to promote agricultural practices that increase productivity, while also strengthening resilience to climate change; and through initiatives for promotion of sustainable management of natural resources, including water, soil and biodiversity. Support to community-based adaptation projects that reduce vulnerability to climate impacts also allow for integration of community practices related to agriculture and natural resource management that hold the potential for enabling adoption of agroecology.

The Work Plan underscores partnerships and collaboration with international organizations, donors, and development partners to mobilize technical and financial resources to support implementation of the Strategic Plan. This provides an entry point for the EU to engage CILSS on partnership and collaboration to promote agroecology through the projects for implementation of the Strategic Plan.

2.6 IGAD

IGAD was established in 1986 as a framework for coordination of its eight Horn of Africa MS⁴⁴ to respond to the challenges of droughts, food insecurity and environmental degradation, and

⁴² Plan Strategique du CILSS a' L'Horizon 2050: Résilience des populations Sahéliennes et Ouest Africaines : le CILSS dans la vision et l'action à l'horizon 2050

⁴³ Plan de Travail 2023-2027

⁴⁴ Djibouti, Eritrea Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda

was known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD). In 1995, it changed its name to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

The goal of IGAD is articulated as “transformation towards sustainable development, resilience and stability in the IGAD Region”; and its strategic objectives include “to enhance sustainable management of natural resources and the environment and build resilience to disasters and climate change/variability”. According to its constitutive document, the Agreement Establishing IGAD, its aims and objectives include: to harmonize policies with regard to, *inter alia*, agriculture, and natural resources; achieve regional food security; encourage and assist efforts of MS to collectively combat drought; and initiate and promote programmes and projects for sustainable development of natural resources and environmental protection. MS commit to cooperate in agriculture, food security, addressing impacts of climate change (particularly drought) and sustainable environment and natural resource management⁴⁵.

The main strategic document for IGAD operations is the IGAD Strategy 2021-2025. Although it does not speak directly to agroecology, the Strategy emphasizes sustainable agriculture and environmental protection, as well as women’s land rights. The Strategy is organized around four Pillars, the first of which is on agriculture development, natural resources management, environment protection, climate variability/ change and disaster risk management. The two strategic development objectives of Pillar 1, namely: to enhance food and nutrition security in the region, and to enhance sustainable management of natural resources and the environment and build resilience to disasters and climate, are both relevant to agroecology. It is through this Pillar that IGAD provides support to its MS to implement CAADP.

All the six programme areas under this Pillar (i.e., Agriculture, Livestock and Blue Economy; Land Governance; Natural Resource Management; Protection of Environment, Climate Variability, Protection and Change; and Disaster Risk Management) align with some of the principles of agroecology. The Strategy underscores the need to build resilience to shocks such as droughts, floods, and pests, which are increasingly frequent and severe in the region, and to this end includes measures for development of resilient agricultural systems to ensure food security and enhance resilience to climate change. It calls for adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices and efficient use of natural resources.

IGAD sector strategies of relevance to this review include IGAD Environment and Natural Resource Strategy, IGAD Land Governance Business Plan 2020-2030, and IGAD Climate Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030. While none of these strategies speak directly to agroecology, they are relevant because of the emphasis they all place on sustainable management of land, environment and natural resources, and on strengthening resilience to climate change. The potential of agroecology to contribute to achievement of these imperatives creates an opening for engagement with IGAD in promoting agroecology.

2.7 IOC

The IOC was established in 1982 with the objective of promoting cooperation and development in the Indian Ocean region. It facilitates cooperation among its five MS⁴⁶ on economic development, environmental sustainability, and regional security. Of relevance to this review are IOC programmes

⁴⁵ Art. 13A

⁴⁶ Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion, and Seychelles

that seek to enhance agricultural productivity, improve food security, and promote sustainable development.

The Regional Food and Nutritional Security Unit (URSAN⁴⁷) implements the Regional Programme on Food Security and Nutrition (PRESAN⁴⁸). Although it was published in 2016 to run for the period 2016-2020, its implementation has been extended for the period 2021-2025⁴⁹. The Programme seeks to contribute to food and nutrition security as well as poverty reduction in Member States of the IOC with a focus on increased productivity, production, competitiveness and inter-island trade in agricultural products.

While it does not speak directly to agroecology, PRESAN highlights the need to align agricultural development to the objective of addressing the climate crisis through climate-resilient agricultural systems and practices that mitigate the effects of climate change on food production. It also aims to promote sustainable farming practices and the preservation of biodiversity, which provide an entry point for integration of agroecology. Moreover, agroecology can contribute to the achievement of the Program's objective of supporting changing habits towards healthier diets.

2.8 SADC

SADC comprised of 16 MS⁵⁰. Originally established as the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980, it became the Southern African Development Community in August 1992 when the Head of State and Government signed the Declaration and Treaty of SADC.

The centrality of agriculture to the regional integration agenda in SADC is evident in the fact that food security, land and agriculture top the list of areas of cooperation⁵¹ articulated by the Declaration and Treaty. Furthermore, one of the objectives of SADC is to “achieve sustainable utilization of natural resources and effective protection of the environment”⁵². A critical policy challenge is thus to strike the proper balance between the quest for increased agricultural productivity and the sustainable management of land, environment and natural resources.

SADC Vision 2050 captures well this policy challenge, in its articulation of the collective vision for the agriculture sector as “A transformed agricultural sector that practices sustainable management of the environment and its natural resources”. The vision for food and nutrition is for the region to have “improved food and nutrition security for the socio-economic well-being of people in the region”. Additionally, the vision envisions strengthened climate change, adaptation, and mitigation; improved disaster risk management in support of regional resilience; and sustainable utilisation and conservation of natural resources and effective management of the environment. The collective vision for the region is pursued through a number of policies, strategies and protocols, of which the most important for purpose of this review are: SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030, SADC Regional Agricultural Policy, 2014, SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy 2015-2025, SADC Protocol on Environmental Management for Sustainable Development, and SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

⁴⁷ Acronym for the French title Unité Régionale de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle

⁴⁸ Acronym for the French title Programme Régional de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle

⁴⁹ Key informant from IOC, by email 2nd September 2024

⁵⁰ Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe

⁵¹ Art. 21(2)(a)

⁵² Art. 5(1)(g)

SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030

The priorities outlined in the SADC RISDP 2020-2030 that are of relevance to this review relate to food and nutrition security; agricultural productivity and production; sustainable agriculture; and climate change adaptation and mitigation. RISDP underscores the need to ensure food security and improve nutrition across the region and proposes measures for increasing agricultural productivity and addressing challenges such as climate change, pests, and diseases. To this end it calls for adoption of modern technologies, improved farming practices, better access to agricultural inputs, and improved agricultural development infrastructure, including irrigation systems and rural roads. It calls for promotion of sustainable agricultural practices that integrate soil and water conservation and reduce the environmental impact of farming activities, to ensure long-term viability of the agricultural sector. It also calls for development and implementation of strategies to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change on agriculture and enhance the resilience of the agricultural sector to climate-related risks.

While it does not mention “agroecology” explicitly, the emphasis that RISDP places on adoption of sustainable agricultural practices to ensure the long-term viability of the agricultural sector envisage the use of agroecological approaches that integrate ecological principles into agricultural production to enhance biodiversity, soil health, and ecosystem services. Calls for adoption of climate-smart technologies and production approaches, including climate-smart agriculture constitute entry points for engaging with SADC and its MS on agroecology, as these approaches can potentially be aligned to the imperatives of agroecology if implemented appropriately.

SADC Regional Agricultural Policy, 2014

SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP) defines “common agreed objectives and measures to guide, promote and support actions at regional and national levels in the agricultural sector of the SADC Member States in contribution to regional integration and the attainment of the SADC Common Agenda”.⁵³ It seeks to enhance sustainable production, productivity and competitiveness to achieve food sufficiency in the region, enhance incomes and reduce hunger and poverty, while also increasing the competitiveness of SADC MS as suppliers of strategic commodities to regional and global markets.

The RAP does not speak directly to agroecology, but it proposes strategies and articulates goals that align with the principles of agroecology, including its emphasis on sustainable agricultural practices and the efficient use of natural resources. Specifically, the Policy calls for measures to ensure soil conservation, water management, and reduced use of chemical inputs. In order to address the impacts of climate change on agricultural production, the Policy calls for adoption of farming practices that can withstand climatic shocks, including conservation agriculture. It also encourages diversification of crops and integration of livestock and crop production systems to enhance biodiversity conservation and provision of ecosystem services. Its recognition of traditional agricultural knowledge provides an entry point for mainstreaming indigenous agroecological practices. Its calls for research and innovation to promote sustainable farming practices also provides scope for introduction of agroecology.

SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy 2015-2025

SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy 2015-2025 was adopted in August 2014 with the goal of significantly reducing food insecurity in the region by 2025. It articulates strategies for ensuring stable

⁵³ p.2

and sustainable availability, access and utilisation of food. It reiterates the objective of the SADC RAP with regards to increasing production, productivity, and competitiveness. Of relevance to this review is its call for creation of resilient food systems that can withstand shocks, including those related to climate change.

The Strategy can be used to engage SADC on agroecology given the potential that agroecological practices have in contributing to achievement of its key imperatives, including sustainable agricultural practices, resilience, and food system stability as the basis for long-term and sustainable food security.

SADC Protocol on Environmental Management for Sustainable Development

The SADC Protocol on Environmental Management for Sustainable Development was adopted in 2013 to promote sustainable utilization and transboundary management of the environment among MS. Through the Protocol SADC MS commit to cooperate in developing and implementing joint climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and sustainable land management practices. The MS also commit to take measures to conserve ecosystems through sustainable management and utilization, including ecosystem-based approaches.

Of relevance to this review are the provisions of the Protocol on conservation of biodiversity and natural heritage, sustainable land management, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. These provisions align with agroecological principles with their focus on maintaining soil health, preventing land degradation, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices that enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services.

SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan provides a regional framework for coordinated action to address the challenges of climate change to improve local livelihoods and achieve sustainable economic growth. It proposes adaptation and mitigation strategies for the sectors of agriculture, water and biodiversity that are of relevance to this review as they align with principles of agroecology. These include calls for adoption of adaptive agricultural technologies and techniques to reduce vulnerability of the sector to climate change and variability and provide incentives for the development of green agri-business; promotion of water conservation and use efficiency; and promotion of scientific and indigenous knowledge on the vulnerability of biodiversity to climate change.

The Strategy provides an entry point for engaging SADC on agroecology through its emphasis on adoption of climate smart agriculture to build resilience of agricultural systems to climate change. Agroecology aligns with the focus of the strategy and can contribute to biodiversity conservation and integrated land and water management.

Annex 2: List of Contributors

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Annex 3: RECs Partnership on Agricultural Development

REC	Agricultural Development Project	Partner
COMESA	Regional Integration Implementation Program (RIIP)	EU
	COMESA-EU Trade Facilitation Project (TFP)	EU
	Regional Food Security and Risk Management Programme (REFORM)	SDC
	COMESA Agricultural Inputs Program (CAIP)	EU
	Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA)	EU, USAID, IFAD
	COMESA-EU Trade Facilitation Project	EU
	COMESA Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Program	EU and World Bank
	Livelihoods Improvement Programme in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (LIPEAR)	IFAD
EAC	East Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (EAAPP)	World Bank
	Feed the Future Initiative	USAID
ECOWAS	West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP)	World Bank
	Regional Program for the Promotion of Agricultural Value Chains in West Africa (PPAAO)	AfDB
	Programme for Building Resilience Against Food and Nutrition Insecurity in the Sahel (P2RS)	AfDB
	Support Program for Food and Nutrition Security in West Africa (PASANAO)	EU
	Agriculture Policy Support Project (APSP)	USAID
	Regional Support Project for Sustainable Land and Water Management in the Sahel (PRAGS)	GEF
	West African Food Security Storage Support Project (FSSP)	EU
CILSS	Agriculture and Food Security Program (PAISA)	EU, World Bank
	Regional Support Project for Pastoralism in the Sahel (PRAPS)	World Bank
	West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP)	World Bank
	Programme for Building Resilience against Food and Nutrition Insecurity in the Sahel (P2RS)	AfDB
	Project to Support Agricultural Risk Management in the Sahel (PARA)	World Bank, AfDB
	Agro-sylvo-pastoral and Hydraulic Program (PASEL)	EU, IFAD
IGAD	Drought Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods Program (DRSLP)	AfDB
	IGAD Regional Food Security and Nutrition Programme (IFSN)	EU
	Building Resilience in the Horn of Africa (BRHoA)	EU
	Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Resilience Project (RPLRP)	World Bank
IOC	Regional Program for the Promotion of Agricultural Value Chains in the Indian Ocean (PRPAIO)	EU
	Blue Economy and Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (BESFM)	EU
	Sustainable Development of Agricultural Sectors in the Indian Ocean (DESA)	AFD
	Enhancing Climate Resilience in the Indian Ocean (ClimResIO)	GEF
	Indian Ocean Islands Food Security and Nutrition Program (IOFSNP)	World Bank
	Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Improved Agricultural Productivity (SRCIAP)	IFAD
SADC	SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP) Implementation Programme	EU
	Support towards Operationalization of the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (STOSAR)	EU
	SADC Regional Food Security Programme	AfDB, World Bank
	SADC Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) Programme	GEF, FAO

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Funded by
the European Union