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**FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA:  
WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED FROM REGIONAL INTEGRATION?**

**Jean-Marc PRADELLE**  
**Serge SNRECH**

**Key-words: regional integration; cereals; livestock; agricultural policy; trade policy / West Africa**

## Acronyms

<b>CIDA</b>	<b>Canadian International Development Agency</b>
<b>AIRD</b>	<b>Associates for International Resources and Development (Boston, USA)</b>
<b>AfDB</b>	<b>African Development Bank</b>
<b>CEAO</b>	<b>Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest</b>
<b>CEBV</b>	<b>Communauté Economique Bétail et Viandes</b>
<b>ECOWAS</b>	<b>Economic Community of West African States</b>
<b>EEC</b>	<b>European Economic Community</b>
<b>CFA</b>	<b>Zone Franc currency</b>
<b>CILSS</b>	<b>Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel</b>
<b>CMAAOC</b>	<b>Conférence des Ministres de l'Agriculture de l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre</b>
<b>ECDPM</b>	<b>European Center for Development Policy Management (Maastricht, Pays-Bas)</b>
<b>IFPRI</b>	<b>International Food Policy Research Institute (Washington)</b>
<b>INRA</b>	<b>Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (Montpellier, France)</b>
<b>INSAH</b>	<b>Institut du Sahel (Bamako)</b>
<b>IRAM</b>	<b>Institut de Recherche et d'Application des Méthodes du développement (Paris)</b>
<b>OAU</b>	<b>Organisation of African Community</b>
<b>PRMC</b>	<b>Programme de Restructuration du Marché Céréaliier (Mali)</b>
<b>UNB</b>	<b>Université Nationale du Bénin (Cotonou, Bénin)</b>
<b>USAID</b>	<b>United States Agency for International Development</b>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>INTRODUCTION</i> .....	1
<b>I. THE ORIGINS OF THE REGIONAL MARKETS PROGRAM</b> .....	3
"From the notion of a "protected cereals market" .....	3
... to frameworks for consultation .....	5
<b>II. MAIN FINDINGS FROM WORK ON REGIONAL MARKETS IN WEST AFRICA</b> 9	
<b>A MORE ACCURATE AND REALISTIC VIEW OF REGIONAL PHENOMENA</b> ....	9
The realities of trade .....	9
The realities of policy application .....	10
How rational are the players? .....	11
<b>DOMESTIC POLITICS: A KEY VARIABLE</b> .....	11
<b>IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITS OF INTEGRATION</b> .....	12
<b>III. WHAT ACTION CAN BE TAKEN TO PROMOTE REGIONAL COOPERATION IN WEST AFRICA?</b> .....	14
<b>PROMOTE THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES NEEDED TO OVERCOME THE CURRENT DEADLOCK</b> .....	15
<b>DEFINE LIMITED BUT WELL TARGETED REGIONAL PROJECTS</b> .....	18
<b>REACH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF REGIONAL PHENOMENA AND PROMOTE DIALOGUE</b> .....	19
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	22

## FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA: WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED FROM REGIONAL INTEGRATION?

### INTRODUCTION

Ever since they were created following the major drought of 1973, the CILSS and the Club du Sahel<sup>1</sup> have paid close attention to cereals policies in the countries of the Sahel. Cereals policy has been considered a priority for the two organizations, and for Sahelian governments, because of the crucial importance of cereals in the Sahelian diet; and food security continues to be a strategic concern for the region's governments.

For a long time, cereals policy debate revolved around the notion of national food self-sufficiency, and discussions always took place in a strictly national framework. Even though commercial imports and food aid were rapidly strengthening the relations the Sahelian countries had with world markets, each country continued to act as if its economy were independent and separate from the economies of its neighbors.

Policy debate was not only restricted by this overly national view of things. Policies were shaped in relation to an economic model based on an all-powerful State -- with its insistence on controlling producer and consumer prices and maintaining a monopoly over cereals trade -- and no real consideration was given to the constraints of the real economy.

In the 1980s, the countries of the Sahel and their partners from the aid agencies gradually came to recognize the consequences of this approach. State organizations responsible for managing food production were in bankruptcy; and a dual market system had become established, with a narrow, managed market on the one hand, and a vast, private market on the other hand, operating inefficiently because of its necessarily semi-clandestine nature. These dysfunctions undoubtedly contributed to the stagnation of the food production sector and the growth in food imports. In the early 1980s, the entire agricultural policies of these countries started to come under review.

Structural adjustment policies brought greater rigor to the management of public finances and forced States to reduce their involvement -- whether they liked it or not -- in some sectors of public life and the economy. However, structural adjustment has not brought new development strategies and, in most West African countries, the agricultural policy crisis is still just as acute as it was.

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<sup>1</sup> The CILSS (Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) is an inter-governmental organization founded in 1973 and today brings together nine countries in the Sahel region. Since 1976, the International Community provides specific assistance to the CILSS through the Club du Sahel. The Secretariat of the Club du Sahel operates under the auspices of the OECD.

*The specific role of the CILSS/Club du Sahel system is to advise governments and aid agencies on natural resource management and food security policy. Because of this role, the CILSS and the Club du Sahel together form the interface between knowledge (with particular reference to the scientific research community) and action (with particular reference to government initiatives).*

The idea of regional integration in Africa has re-emerged against this backdrop. But is this renewed interest illusory? Is it based on an entirely theoretical view of the benefits regional integration could offer? And, if there is real determination this time to move toward greater integration, will West African leaders and their partners adopt a pragmatic, progressive approach based on the real assets of the region and its people?

Work on regional trade by the CILSS and the Club du Sahel over the years has pointed to the fact that current agricultural and food problems have genuinely regional dimensions, and, as a result, the scope of the two organization's work on regional trade has progressively been extended to cover the whole of West Africa. Original approaches to the issues in hand have highlighted some of the current strengths and weaknesses of regional processes at work in the region, and have provided a basis for a number of suggestions for policy-makers both in the countries of the Sahel and in the donor community.

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief presentation of the approach the two Secretariats have adopted and the main conclusions of the work they began in 1987 on regional trade in West Africa.

The document draws largely from the different studies and surveys conducted as part of the "Regional Markets" program, which were commissioned directly by the two Secretariats or conducted in close liaison with their partners. The text refers to some of these publications. A list of publications is provided in Appendix.

## **I. THE ORIGINS OF THE REGIONAL MARKETS PROGRAM**

### **From the notion of a "protected cereals market"...**

Certain observers were quick to point to the regional dimension of the food problem. One of the recommendations of the Nouakchott Conference in 1979 was that further discussion be devoted to regional self-sufficiency rather than national self-sufficiency<sup>2</sup>. But the regional integration question remained very much a secondary issue for many years.

In the Sahel, regional integration was back on the agenda in 1986 for the Mindelo Conference. One of the proposals made at Mindelo was to examine the possibilities of setting up a "regional cereals market within which national produce would be protected and trade among the countries of the region would be encouraged"<sup>3</sup>.

Although the proposal was officially adopted at the highest level in the countries of the Sahel (CILSS Council of Ministers, 1987), the protected regional market has never become a reality. The expression has become a convenient cliché for some, and a source of irritation for others. It has given rise to no end of ideological debate on the benefits or the evils that can be expected from a protectionist policy<sup>4</sup>.

Why, then, did the "regional market" remain at the conceptual stage? Probably because the idea was launched somewhat impulsively, and was not based on detailed knowledge of the trade mechanisms the regional market system was meant to replace, and without having formally gauged how the public- or private-sector operators in the cereals sector would react to such a system.

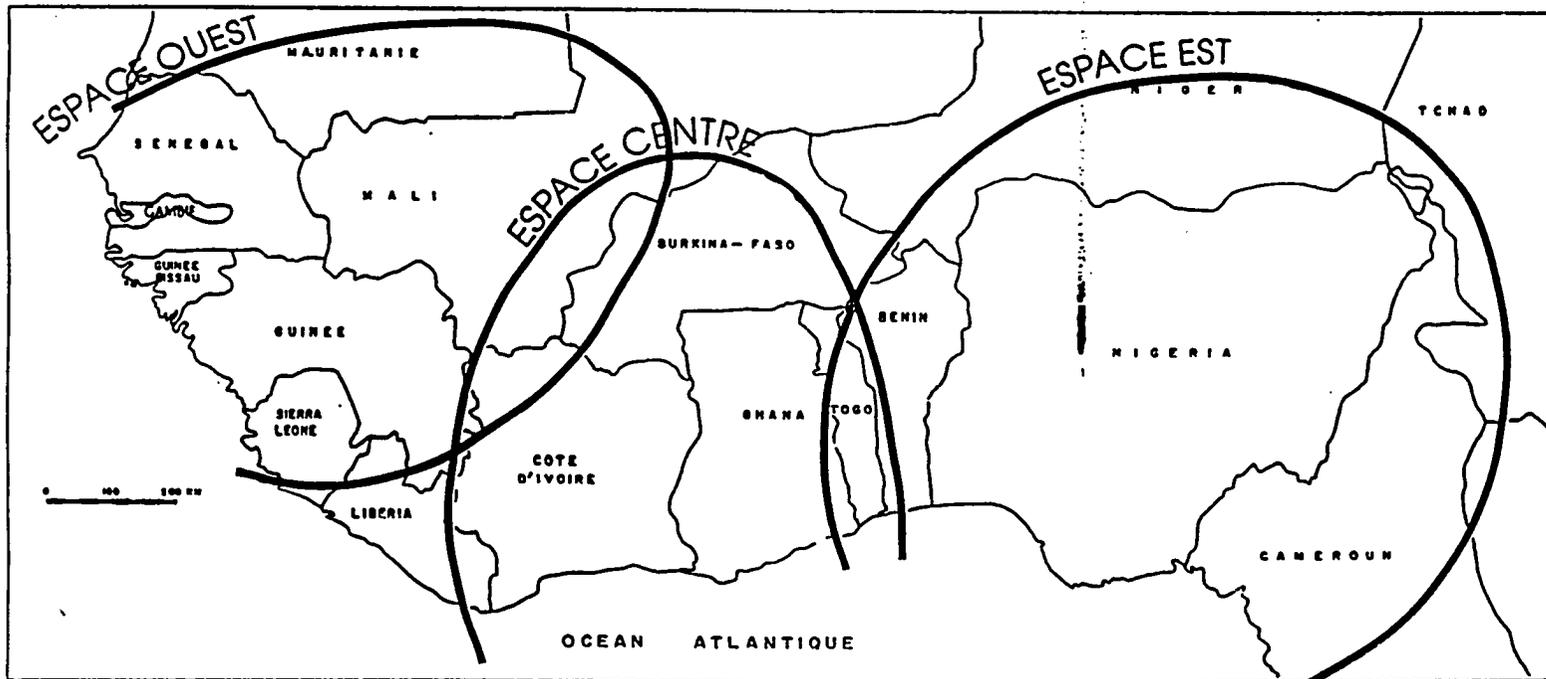
In 1987, an initial investigation by Jacques Giri of the idea of a regional market showed how conflicting reasoning and divergent objectives in the region's different national cereals policies would hamper the creation in the short term of a unified regional market. Jacques Giri argued that, if the ultimate goal was regional integration, then the first step should be to promote frameworks for consultation within which the different countries could discuss their policies together and gauge how coherent or compatible they were.

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<sup>2</sup> cf. CILSS/Club du Sahel. *Acts of the Nouakchott Conference. 1979.*

<sup>3</sup> CILSS/Club du Sahel. *Acts of the Mindelo Conference and Final Recommendations. 1986.*

<sup>4</sup> A number of studies were published by the CILSS/Club du Sahel during this period: Gabas J.J./Giri J./Mettetal G. "A Protected Regional Cereals Market: An Initial Exploration of a New Idea", 1987 [D(87)311] ; Giri J. "A Regional Cereals Market: Myth or Tomorrow's Reality?", 1988 [D(88)319] ; Berg E. "The Competitiveness of Sahelian Agriculture" in "Compilation of Studies on Sahelian Agriculture, Regional Trade and World Markets", 1989 [D(89)332].



MAP OF REGIONAL SUB-REGIONS

### **...to frameworks for consultation**

The CILSS and the Club du Sahel then received an explicit mandate from the Sahelian Heads of State and their partners in the donor community to work toward two complementary objectives:

- (i) achieve a better understanding of the real economy;
- (ii) establish meaningful dialogue on regional cooperation on a factual basis as established in point (i).

The Club du Sahel therefore supported the work by a Franco-African team concentrating specifically on regional trade. This team, coordinated by J. Egg (INRA), J. Coste (IRAM) and J. Igué (UNB), made an initial diagnostic study of trade flows among West African countries, confirming the existence of clandestine flows of cereals, gauging the importance of these flows and indicating the mechanisms governing them, which are often linked to differences between neighboring countries' agricultural and trade policies.

This work and studies conducted elsewhere by other teams were extensively discussed at the Lomé Seminar in November 1989<sup>5</sup>. The Lomé Seminar was held in a coastal country that is not a member of the CILSS, and brought significant progress toward a better understanding of regional processes in a number of respects:

- Although the countries of the Sahel form a meaningful region in terms of agro-ecology and food crisis management, for example, the Sahel is too restrictive an entity when issues such as trade in agricultural and food products, or even development in general, are involved. In these areas, Sahelian countries have close relations with their coastal neighbors. **No meaningful action can be taken in the CILSS area, therefore, without a clear understanding of what is happening in the whole of West Africa.**
- However, the countries of the CILSS and their coastal neighbors form a group of 18 countries, and the interests of these 18 countries are so disparate that motivation for discussion or consultation would be low. **The solution would be to split the target region into sub-regions on the basis of the strongest trading, historical, geographical and human relationships and the greatest number of shared interests (see map opposite).**
- Another important idea is that the regional process is much more than the sum of national processes. **Interactions between the policies of neighboring countries are often of crucial importance in all these processes. These interactions are particularly intense inside each of the sub-regions.**

The Lomé Seminar thus endorsed the notional validity of the "sub-region" as a functional entity (rather than an institutional entity) for the purposes of study and dialogue and as a basis for addressing the tangible problems of regional integration. The seminar also recommended several complementary areas of investigation:

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<sup>5</sup> CILSS/Club du Sahel. *The Dynamics of Regional Cereals Markets in West Africa. Final Recommendations of the Lomé Seminar, Lomé (Togo). November 6-11, 1989. 12 pp.*

- the need to broaden the scope of the study to cover other products, with particular reference to meat and livestock;
- the need to compare and contrast the different methods used to observe and analyze regional trade;
- finally, the need to inform as many managers and political leaders as possible of the initial findings of the study and to discuss operational consequences with them.

Three years after the idea of a "protected regional market" was mooted, therefore, the foundations had been laid for a completely new way of tackling the issues in hand. This new pragmatic approach is based on a West Africa made up of three functional entities, each with focal points in the coastal countries: the Western sub-region, centered on Senegal, and, potentially, Guinea (see below); the Eastern sub-region, centered on Nigeria, which we are currently investigating<sup>6</sup>; and the Central sub-region, centered on Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, in which analysis will concentrate in particular on livestock.

The Secretariats of the CILSS and the Club du Sahel<sup>7</sup> have thus adopted several complementary approaches to their work on the regional markets issue:

- **Diagnostic studies** have improved our understanding of the real mechanisms of regional trade and of the connections between those mechanisms and policies (official and effective) in different countries. Various methods (from socio-economic to econometric) relying on a wide range of indicators have been used to perform these diagnostic studies, and this has made it possible to cover an extensive spectrum of different cultural backgrounds and interests.
- **Prospective analysis** has enabled us to (i) envisage various different short-term policy scenarios (impact of changes in agricultural and economic policies on individual countries and on the different groups of players in each country) and (ii) examine the longer-term future: What kind of future can the region expect, what role will agriculture play, how much room for manoeuvre is there? The prospective dimension is indispensable in that it provides a dynamic framework for any potential action.

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<sup>6</sup> *The audit of the Eastern sub-region will be published in 1992. This report will discuss recent changes in Nigerian agricultural policy and the influence of Nigerian economic policy on neighboring countries.*

<sup>7</sup> *CILSS work on regional markets has been coordinated by Dramane Coulibaly with support from Josué Dioné of the Sahel Institute. The team from the Secretariat of the Club du Sahel comprises Anne de Lattre, Henri Josserand, Jean-Marc Pradelle and Serge Snrech.*

### **CILSS/CLUB DU SAHEL APPROACH TO STUDY ON WESTERN SUB-REGION**

*Recognising the difficulties of conducting an in-depth investigation in the three sub-regions in West Africa, the Secretariats of the CILSS and the Club du Sahel decided after the Lomé Seminar to concentrate in the first instance on the Western sub-region. This decision was made because the majority of the countries in this sub-region are CILSS member States, because there appeared to be significant policy disharmony and divergence of interests between the countries involved, and because aid agencies had specifically requested analysis of this sub-region.*

*To improve the diagnostic study on the Western sub-region, the Secretariats attended the brief of the INRA-IRAM-UNB team. Rather than simply studying trade flows and networks, the team was asked to systematically analyze trade mechanisms by examining agricultural and trade policies, methods of applying those policies, production potential, transportation costs, etc. This analytical dimension helped to transform what was essentially an inventory into a detailed diagnostic study of interactions between the policies of neighboring countries.*

*The diagnostic study was complemented by a study conducted by the American team from AIRD on the direct resource costs (DRCs) of various cereals production systems in three of the countries in the sub-region. This study provided the basis for a debate on the competitiveness of the different production systems and the region's comparative advantages in the agricultural sector.*

*The Secretariats' information and awareness program involved several important initiatives:*

- *The CINERGIE unit was set up at the headquarters of the African Development Bank in Abidjan to actively lobby political decision-makers with a view to encouraging trade-driven regional integration in West Africa.*

- *Moves were taken with the ECPDM inside the Western sub-region to set up a network of African managers. A series of regional workshops was organized with managers from different administrations in the countries in the sub-region. These informal meetings provided an opportunity for discussion of shared concerns.*

*Finally, moves were taken to promote prospective analysis. This involved drawing up scenarios based on different agricultural policy options, and has been well received by decision-makers.*

*The two Secretariats then organized a regional meeting in Bamako. The Bamako meeting recommended that the following priorities be adopted in subsequent work on regional markets:*

- *Provide national political decision-makers and managers, and aid agencies with better information on current regional processes and future opportunities for the region.*

- *Improve prospective analysis in order to develop well argued alternatives to current policies that could reconcile the need to maintain a balance in the short term with responses to longer-term challenges.*

- *Use the knowledge gathered so far as a basis for helping Sahelian governments and their partners in the donor community to adopt suitable strategies.*

- *Provide the CILSS with the means to capitalise on the progress made on the regional markets issue by enabling researchers and national partners to make direct use of the findings on a continuing basis.*

- **Systematic dissemination with a view to promoting dialogue on findings and methodology and constituting a network of experts and decision-makers to address issues connected with regional markets. National decision-makers, aid agencies and private operators have been targeted in all cases.**

**In addition to its exploratory role, the Club du Sahel has made considerable efforts to build bridges between the different areas of interest and organize consultation among the different players who are endeavoring to make the system as streamlined and coherent as possible in order to create the conditions needed for development policies to succeed.**

## II. MAIN FINDINGS FROM WORK ON REGIONAL MARKETS IN WEST AFRICA

The cereals policy approach is relatively technical and clearly only provides a partial response to the complex question of regional integration. However, it is of interest for at least two reasons. First, as a strategic commodity in the Sahelian countries, grain is of major political significance. Second, the mechanisms governing cereals (policy-related, monetary, trade-related, etc.) also apply to other parts of the agricultural sector, and indeed to other sectors of the economy. A number of lessons can be learned from the study on cereals that are of direct relevance to regional processes in general.

### *A MORE ACCURATE AND REALISTIC VIEW OF REGIONAL PHENOMENA*

This is probably the main achievement so far of the CILSS/Club du Sahel work on regional markets. Several realities that were formerly unknown or deliberately concealed have been brought to light. A scientific and political debate has been initiated on the basis of these new facts, and the facts themselves and their consequences have been largely interpreted.

#### **The realities of trade**

The studies showed that a significant proportion of regional trade is not recorded in official statistics. Unrecorded trade flows are of two types:

Trade between neighboring areas either side of a national border often goes unrecorded because it would be too restrictive to follow official procedures (regulations, taxes, or simply the need to make a detour through a customs post). This kind of unofficial border trade could be fairly easily assimilated by the formal economy, provided the additional constraints for those involved are not excessive. For the time being, this kind of trade contributes to regional processes and can be taken as an illustration of how flexible those processes are.

*In the Western sub-region, cereals flows primarily involve millet and sorghum leaving Mali for Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal or Mauritania.*

*The sub-region covers 70% of its own cereals requirements, but the vast majority of its output is consumed by producers themselves. Less than 20% of total local output is marketed. Regional flows are limited by high collection and transport costs and the low level of solvent demand for these products. These flows involve less than 3% of the region's total output.*

Clandestine trade (i.e., trade that is deliberately unrecorded) often involves products that are imported from the world market by one country and then re-exported clandestinely to a neighboring country to benefit from economic or monetary policy disparities. In general, there is active government support for this kind of trade, at least on one side of the border.

*Several countries in the Western sub-region grow rice, and some of these countries have invested heavily in irrigation. All these countries tax imports to limit competition from the world market. Other countries have chosen not to invest in rice production and import rice freely. There can thus be a fairly significant, albeit artificial, price differential created by economic policy disparities -- and border trade becomes an attractive*

*proposition as a result. Clandestine re-exports account for more than 10% of total rice imports and certain smaller countries have made this kind of trade a "national speciality".*

### **The realities of policy application**

The discrepancy between official policy and effective practices is a reflection of two types of gaps: first, the gap between the "reasonable" policies the international community imposes on governments and the policies those governments would really like to adopt; and second, the gap between current political regimes and the real mechanisms governing society. This again illustrates the urgency -- and difficulty -- of establishing a *de jure* State in the region. Because of the discrepancy between official policy and effective practices -- a discrepancy all too often minimized by policy-makers themselves -- there is a vital need for detailed knowledge of the way the region's economies really operate.

The first of the two gaps mentioned above has been widely spoken about and illustrated in connection with structural adjustment programs. Typically, there is a clear reluctance on the part of many governments to implement the measures that reduce their sphere of influence (suppression of taxes and controls, job losses in State administrations, etc.)<sup>8</sup>.

*This is also how Senegal, without admitting to any deliberate action, manages to exceed the rice import quota negotiated with its financing institutions (340,000 tons) through clandestine imports from neighboring Gambia (up to 50,000 tons in certain years).*

The second gap is no less serious. The relations between the State and "civil society" are changing rapidly, but, in the cereals sector, the following two characteristics still seem to hold true:

- *The State is incapable of applying its decisions throughout its jurisdiction if those decisions are not in line with the hopes and expectations of local players. In concrete terms, although the State announced it had a cereals marketing monopoly in the 1970s, it never actually sold more than 10-20% of the total cereals marketed, but it did succeed in disrupting the entire market system.*
- *In addition, a significant proportion of the population of West Africa is not unequivocally integrated into the "formal economy" and can easily escape State control if it deems that the disadvantages of the formal economy outweigh the advantages. This is particularly true of certain traders: In 1990, for example, the majority of cereals exports from Mali remained outside official channels despite the fact that the Malian government was subsidizing them, traders apparently preferring comfortable anonymity to hypothetical government premiums.*

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<sup>8</sup> *This question is illustrated in the report by Elliot Berg "Adjustment Postponed: The Case of Senegal" (DAI) and in the book by Jean Coussy and Philippe Hugon: "Intégration régionale et ajustement structurel en Afrique sub-saharienne (French Ministry of Cooperation).*

These discrepancies are a constant source of misunderstanding and frustration for development partners. While the studies were being conducted, therefore, it became clear that particular attention should be paid to the strategies followed by the different players involved: producers, consumers, State officials and employees, and traders.

### How rational are the players?

The studies demonstrated that clandestine regional trade relies on highly structured trading networks with direct connections with the governments. To understand why clandestine trade continues to flourish, it is important to understand the rationale behind the way these two groups operate.

Each player has his own reasoning, but the product (or confrontation) of two individual approaches is not bringing the region any closer to developing its productive capacity or establishing regional markets that make maximum use of complementarities between different countries.

*Re-exports are handled by traditional networks of traders with the capacity to work in several countries and with access to reliable information on both local harvests and world markets. Particular efforts were made to understand the relations between these networks and the authorities<sup>9</sup>. In the Western sub-region, for example, most of the imports and re-exports of cereals purchased on the world market are controlled by no more than fifteen large-scale wholesalers, most of whom are established in several countries and many of whom have close ties with political circles<sup>10</sup>.*

*In many cases, State strategies are of crucial importance in the processes observed in the region, whether they are aimed at consolidating State authority and power or creating and perpetuating an economic rent for State officials and their patrons. In fact, the first objective has strengthened the national dimension of policy management, while rent-seeking has frequently been easier in dealings with the outside world (aid, exports of tropical products, imports) than within the local or regional economy. In both cases, despite official positions, the role the State plays has not generally been favorable to regional integration.*

### DOMESTIC POLITICS: A KEY VARIABLE

West African States are still young and fragile. They have made enormous progress in terms of affirming their existence, and it is fair to say that national consciousness is gradually developing in this region. But in West Africa, the nation State is not always the only framework through which unity can be expressed; nor, more importantly, is it the strongest. The State has not yet

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<sup>9</sup> Several of the papers presented at the Lomé Seminar dealt with this question. See also the final report of the audit on the Western sub-market, "Cereals Trade and Agricultural Policies in the Western Sub-Market. Regional Processes and Prospects for Integration", coordinated by Coste and Egg, April 1991, [SAHID(91)367].

<sup>10</sup> See also the pedagogical document produced by the Solagral's Food Strategies Network (RSA) on the basis of the studies of the Western sub-market: "Coopération régionale: Commerce et politiques agricoles en Afrique de l'Ouest", September 1991

succeeded in establishing its primacy over other groupings (primarily based on ethnic or geographic origins, or religion).

In view of the lack of consensus over the nation as an expression of unity, the State in its national deliberations systematically needs to strike short-term balances between "private" groups. Management of these domestic balances is closely linked to the State's capacity to distribute wealth and investments, and the ability to maintain balances in turn dictates how funds are applied. The type and relative weight of the different lobbies are thus fundamental parameters of national policy. Today, the most influential groups are government employees, urban consumers and traders. All these groups are significantly more influential than the producers, and they all have a vested interest -- albeit for different reasons -- in encouraging cheap imports.

The primary objective of the States, therefore, is to optimize their domestic policy equations. In sharp contrast to their official lines, they are not particularly concerned by regional integration as such. But at times they have built their internal strategies on an aspect of regionalism that appears favorable to them at that moment.

*A number of relatively typical national attitudes can thus be identified in West Africa:*

- *relative autarky (e.g., Guinea, where the State lives on rent from the country's raw materials, or Mauritania);*
- *"proximity rent", where one country benefits financially from its proximity to a richer or larger neighbor (e.g., Gambia/Senegal or Benin/Nigeria);*
- *exploitation of relative wealth (e.g., Côte d'Ivoire, which imports cheap Sahelian labor to develop its plantation economy);*
- *exploitation of the franc area (Nigeria's use of the naira/CFA exchange rate);*
- *collective gathering of funds through the proliferation of regional organizations.*

By contrast, it would be hard to find a country that had voluntarily set aside part of its resources or natural rent for the benefit of a neighbor as part of a commitment to integrated regional development.

This self-centered attitude on the part of the States is quite natural. It explains why many regional organizations and trade agreements have failed, even though they were set up or negotiated by the States themselves. As alliances shift and contradictory treaties are signed, there are grounds to argue that current declarations of the determination to promote regional integration merely reinforce the image of an Africa in search of an identity through the myth of unity<sup>11</sup>.

#### **IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITS OF INTEGRATION**

The studies have therefore shown that the region already operates in many respects like a free-trade zone. Intense activity in the trading networks and the capacity of certain population groups to trade large volumes of goods across national borders are living proof of the existence of a *de facto* integrated regional market in West Africa.

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<sup>11</sup> *The publication of an excellent article on this topic by Daniel Bach coincided with the seminar organized by the European Commission and the University of Florence in April 1992.*

The studies have shown that this trade undoubtedly plays a positive role in terms of its contribution to market fluidity, but also, and more importantly, that it plays a negative role because it is favorable to the region's growing dependency vis-à-vis the outside world, as interconnection automatically aligns any border area and its surrounding district on the more permissive of the two neighbors.

As the situation stands at present, regional trade is more a result of policy disharmony than the reflection of comparative advantages between the region's centers of production. Paradoxically, therefore, greater integration through policy harmonization could actually reduce border trade, at least in the first instance.

Genuine regional integration will be a long and gradual process, because it relies on the emergence of a real desire on the part of the region's governments to promote collective development. But neither the most powerful lobbies at the national level, nor the aid agencies in their day-to-day practices, are doing anything today to promote this integration. If this situation is to change, new relationships between State and civil society are needed so that producers, rural population groups and city-dwellers are represented fairly. Democracy and aid can help those relationship to form.

In other words, before the region's economies can develop, there is a need to reorganize the States, their objectives, their resources and their relationships with the local economy and the rest of the world.

Until this reorganisation is complete -and, although change is under way, it will be a slow and difficult process- the future of regional cooperation depends on a simple alternative: the States will support those regional processes that are liable to help solve their short-term problems at the national level, and will leave to one side, in practice if not in their official declarations, those that appear to involve additional problems.

### **III. WHAT ACTION CAN BE TAKEN TO PROMOTE REGIONAL COOPERATION IN WEST AFRICA?**

A deeper understanding of the regional processes at work in West Africa has made it possible to form a clearer vision of the situation. Without that clearer vision, nothing meaningful can be done. From this point of view, the initiatives the Secretariats of the CILSS and the Club du Sahel have taken over recent years have brought real progress, even if the complexity of their findings is somewhat frustrating in that any hope of a simple solution can now be categorically ruled out.

This clearer vision of a highly complex situation must not be allowed to demotivate the players involved, because a great deal can and must be done. The overview presented in the preceding pages raises the following issues:

- Even if we now have a better understanding of certain aspects of the region's economies, experts still find it extremely difficult to describe the global mechanisms governing West African economies.
- As in many other fields, the links between researchers and decision-makers must be strengthened. Decision-makers do not always appear to be conversant with the latest research findings.

In addition, it is not sufficient to simply convey the information. Policy-makers then need to incorporate the new facts in their own decision-making process and modify their systems of references, procedures and so on. Work on the Western sub-region has led certain aid agencies to change their appreciation of the prospects of cooperation in this part of the region, and to review their way of working. But this is far from the general rule, and the integration of results from the latest investigations into the decision-making process needs to become systematic both at the national government level and inside the aid agencies in the future.

- No progress can be made in this respect without a great deal of determination, for there is no accepted model or set formula for advising decision-makers from governments or aid agencies. The State is still in its formative years in West Africa, and there is a need both to ensure it is in a position to manage the way it operates on a day-to-day basis, and to encourage it to prepare for the future.
- As things stand today, most major regional projects based on economic cooperation (customs unions, common markets, tariff and quota alignment, etc.) look set for failure<sup>12</sup>.
- Counting on the private sector is not sufficient either. Analysis has shown that the private sector can neither develop nor contribute to development without a proper political and legal framework, referred to here as *the Rule of Law* (justice, security, etc.).

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<sup>12</sup> A detailed analysis of these major regional projects can be found in the report produced by Elliot Berg in 1990 for the CILSS/Club du Sahel CINERGIE project, "Strategies for West African Economic Integration. Issues and Approaches." [SAHID(91)382]

- Finally, deep seated reform of regional organizations is vital, but who is prepared to undertake such a reform?

So what can governments and aid agencies do? And how can they best be informed and advised in their tasks?

**PROMOTE THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES NEEDED TO OVERCOME THE CURRENT DEADLOCK**

First, governments and aid agencies must take steps to limit centrifugal forces in the region: the introversion reflex and the temptation to close borders on the part of coastal countries affected by the crisis, opposition between linguistic or monetary blocs, disparate policies in neighboring countries, competing investments, etc. Both history and current events are a constant reminder that this region could be much less united even than it is today. The first priority, therefore, must be to **safeguard the peace and freedom the region already enjoys**, for these are precious assets and they are becoming rare commodities elsewhere in Africa.

*The aid agencies have an important role to play in this respect: They must avoid implicitly favoring fragmentation. Statistical analysis of the practices of the main financing institutions for the 1980-85 period shows, for example, that two small countries receive 50% more aid on average than they would receive together if they became a single country.*

*The operational deficiencies of the Abidjan-Niger railroad administration have been blatantly clear since it was split into two independent national organizations. But does it receive more or less financing since the split?*

*More globally, the question of economic relations between countries in the franc zone and their neighbors deserves particularly close attention. There is no doubt that the regions of West Africa where the potential for trade is the greatest, and where population density is the highest, usually comprise countries inside the franc zone as well as countries outside the franc zone, particularly Nigeria and Ghana. Several aid agencies have shown recently that they are well aware of this situation. The development of relations between English-speaking and French-speaking countries, notably on monetary matters, is thus a variable of great significance to the future of the region.*

Second, **States and societies will need to continue to mature** if genuine regionalism is to be achieved: The notion and realities of *the Rule of Law* must become firmly established, further economic liberalization will be required, and so on. In particular, the gradual formation of lobbies for economic development -- i.e., based on "productive" interests rather than religious or ethnic interests -- is very important, for these lobbies (farmers' unions, private-sector organizations, etc.) are often the driving forces of development.

Only organizations of this kind can exert effective pressure on the State so that the State plays a more constructive role. It is particularly difficult to have an influence from the outside on this kind of change, for what is involved is African societies themselves and the way they manage

their relationships with their governments. All aid agencies and the international community at large can do is to provide as much support as possible for the positive changes that are under way.

Finally, the free circulation of ideas, people and goods is a vital prerequisite for development and for economic and political maturity in West African societies. Substantial investments are needed for transportation and telecommunications, and these investments must be made on a regional scale. It is quite astounding that Senegal and Gambia are the only countries of the six in the Western sub-region to be connected by a paved road. These kinds of investments are also sustainable (they are not affected by political fluctuations) and are of benefit to a broad section of the community.

### **DEFINE LIMITED BUT WELL-TARGETED REGIONAL PROJECTS**

There are still not many real prospects for regional initiatives in the strict sense of the term, i.e., where the regional dimension is really more important than the sum of independent national dimensions. Until there is a genuine political will on the part of the region's governments, the only projects that have a serious chance of succeeding are those that are of short-term benefit to all the parties involved. For example:

- \* Projects based on the management of a shared resource (production centers) and/or trading systems (e.g., livestock: see box) and involving several countries:

*Mali, Mauritania and Senegal have pooled their efforts in the OMVS to build large dams on the Senegal River. Mauritania and Senegal have both developed irrigated rice production on the banks of the river that separates the two countries, but they do not yet coordinate their rice-production policies. Before a conflict closed the borders, there were significant flows of goods between the countries either side of the river, and both countries' producers benefitted together from the more profitable market. The rice production policies of Senegal and Mauritania cannot therefore remain unconnected in the long term because of the rice-growing basin either side of the shared border.*

- \* Projects aiming to optimize use of diffuse resources and skills:

*For example, the Sahel Institute<sup>13</sup> organizes networks of researchers on topics that are considered priorities for the region. There are in fact relatively few researchers, and they tend to be isolated in their respective countries, so these networks provide an opportunity for them to discuss shared concerns, launch joint studies and even negotiate more solid foundations for partnerships with research institutes from the countries of the North.*

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<sup>13</sup> *The Sahel Institute (INSAH) operates under the auspices of the CILSS. Based in Bamako, Mali, the Institute coordinates agricultural and socio-economic research conducted in the Sahelian countries.*

### LIVESTOCK IN THE CENTRAL CORRIDOR

*In the livestock sector, the Sahel has benefited for some considerable time from burgeoning demand from the coastal countries, which is connected to the "economic boom" these countries have experienced, as well as urbanisation and population growth. In 1980, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso exported a total of 670,000 head of cattle, primarily to Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. In 1970, Côte d'Ivoire alone accounted for 72% of Burkina Faso's exports and 59% of Mali's. For both exporting countries, these exports accounted for close to one-half of total production.*

*Oil revenue has enabled Nigeria to increase its imports substantially. In 1982, it imported 470,000 head of African cattle and "only" 20,000 tons from the world market. Nigeria thus accounted for 60% of regional trade in live cattle, compared with 40% in 1970.*

*But competition has increased significantly, particularly since the beginning of the 1980s. The EC now accounts for 95% of West Africa's meat imports and has a stranglehold over prices through its system of subsidies. Average CIF prices of the main products imported fell by 50% between 1980 and 1987. Over the same period, the proportion of West and Central African demand met by the world market increased from 35% in 1980 to 46% in 1985 and to 61% in 1987.*

*Most of the coastal countries reacted to this development by protecting their pork and poultry markets (these countries are producers of pork and poultry). Then the beef issue arose: The centers of consumption are in the major cities of the Gulf of Guinea, while most West African production is in the Sahelian countries.*

*Analysis of elasticities of supply and demand showed that, in view of the low level of income in the coastal countries, it would be more efficient to reduce the cost of Sahelian meat than to tax imports; and this was the first line of action taken. But there is little hope for productivity increases, for production systems are already strongly affected by low market prices. Subsequent efforts concentrated on reducing selling costs (limiting official and unofficial taxes, improving transportation). All these steps are included in a plan of action being drawn up for the Central sub-region, but they could prove insufficient for the Sahelian livestock sector as a whole.*

*Will coastal countries agree to tax European imports to safeguard the future of Sahelian beef? And if they do, what can they expect from the Sahelian countries in return? The answer to that question is not self-evident, but the coastal countries undoubtedly have good reason not to let the Sahelian countries go under, because they are the coastal countries' natural outlets in time of crisis.*

*Similarly, the Club du Sahel and the CINERGIE unit are facilitators of a region-wide network of businessmen. This network enables businessmen to exchange information and experience, forge links between business communities in French-speaking and English-speaking countries, and even pinpoint business opportunities that are as yet untapped inside the region.*

Projects aiming to enable countries to reach critical mass in certain specialized areas (satellite image reception, specialized training, etc.):

*The Agrhymet center in Niamey is a good example of a successful project in this area. The center brings the most modern satellite data reception and interpretation technologies within reach of the nine countries in the CILSS area.*

The success of limited, well targeted regional projects clearly relies on real commitment, first on the part of the governments, and subsequently on the part of the aid agencies. Government action at the national and regional levels must also be coherent.

In this respect, the diagnostic study performed by the INRA-IRAM-UNB team on cereals in the Western sub-region stresses that the development of the cereals sector at the local level will depend on a combination of factors: in-the-field development projects, consolidation of producers' and industrial lobbies, as well as harmonization of the external trade policies adopted by the different countries in the sub-region. This scenario will be studied in greater depth, but, since the Bamako meeting in May 1991, there are already grounds to wonder whether there is a real determination on the part of the countries involved to agree on a common external trade policy for cereals. For this kind of agreement to be effective, certain countries would need to abandon positions that are currently highly favorable to them.

In certain cases, when the respective advantages that the different countries are liable to draw from an agreement cannot be immediately defined, foreign aid agencies could act as facilitators in an interim period.

In addition, to really help the countries in the region to move toward regional cooperation, foreign aid agencies in the future must go further than mere appearances: The scope of their action must go beyond a strictly national framework and the timeframe must be considerably longer than the very short term, which is currently the sole concern of the governments in the region. Certain structural adjustment programs are starting to address the consequences of adjustment on neighboring countries, and there is talk of a regional structural adjustment program for Central Africa. But however desirable these developments may be, the usual pitfalls remain. Just like the African countries, aid agencies are themselves highly "balkanized", and usually operate on a bilateral basis -- which is not the best way to take the regional dimension into account. Continued efforts to coordinate sources of aid are also essential.

#### **REACH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF REGIONAL PHENOMENA AND PROMOTE DIALOGUE**

In a number of areas, our knowledge is still very incomplete, and the investigations that have been conducted have been strictly national -- even if the issues in hand are of crucial importance to the future of the region. Subjects such as population and settlement dynamics, migration and

urbanization, infrastructure, agricultural potential or monetary mechanisms cannot be fully understood without examining the regional processes involved. Regional studies must be complementary to national approaches in these areas.

Recognizing this shortcoming, the Club du Sahel and the CINERGIE unit launched the West Africa Long Term Prospective Study (WALTPS) (see box). For the short-term dimension, further examination of alternative policy scenarios is needed<sup>14</sup>, and decision-makers from the different countries and aid agencies must be involved more closely in this examination.

These prospective analyses should provide an opportunity to mobilize intellectual resources in West Africa through the different networks of researchers and intellectuals, and to help to formulate positive scenarios for the future.

To support these initiatives, the States and the aid agencies could model their approach on that adopted by the OECE (*Organisation Européenne de Coopération Economique*), which prepared the groundwork for European integration after the Second World War by setting up a permanent forum where all interested parties could share economic and social information and discuss development policies.

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<sup>14</sup> The work on the Western sub-region made it possible to draw up initial scenarios, which are described in the study by Béatrice Hibou and Jean Coussy "Variables in national external trade policies and cereals markets in West Africa" (working document published by IRAM) and in the report by Dirck Strycker and Lynn Salinger "Regional Economic Integration in West Africa: Potential for Agricultural Trade as an Engine of Growth in the Western Subregion", which will be published in 1992 by the Club du Sahel.

### BACK-UP FROM CINERGIE

*Based at the headquarters of the African Development Bank in Abidjan, CINERGIE has a mandate to promote regional cooperation in West Africa. The unit will provide valuable back-up for the CILSS/Club du Sahel Regional Markets program, particularly in the following fields: establishment of networks in the coastal countries; communication of research findings to the media; creation of links between State decision-makers and representatives of the private sector; and organization of discussions on the long-term future in West Africa in terms of population, land use and economics.*

#### *The prospective dimension*

*The basic precept of this prospective investigation is that rapid population growth is the primary factor affecting changes in the conditions for development. (Between 1930 and 2025, the population of Africa probably will have increased ten-fold, i.e., from 130 million inhabitants to 1.3 billion.)*

*This demographic growth has led to rapid changes in the structure of the population: migration, urbanization, changes in activities, changes in regional markets, etc. Population movements will continue, and will become a major factor of the region's future development.*

*To a certain extent, retrospective analysis of these processes can help us to understand how they have reacted to changing economic contexts, and, conversely, what influence they have had on the economic context. Retrospective analysis gives us a capacity to develop a long-term perspective view, which can be applied to regional initiatives and programs of action taken by the States and the aid agencies.*

*In the initial phase (or "round") of WALTPS, a series of key variables will be selected. In the second phase, the system will be expanded and additional criteria gradually integrated, thereby making the prospective analysis more complex but also more accurate.*

*CINERGIE's long-term analysis will be of considerable value in the Club du Sahel's prospective investigations, which are among the Secretariat's priorities for 1992 and 1993. The Club du Sahel will also be addressing the following topics in its latest series of prospective initiatives: agricultural and food policy scenarios, livestock and economic policies (several teams of experts will be working on this issue), and agriculture-environment-population (which provides a basis for building economic context and settlement patterns into the way environmental issues in the Sahel are tackled).*

## **CONCLUSION**

The different geographical areas of West Africa are not as compartmentalized as was thought for a long time. Population groups living near borders, migrants and traders have perpetuated a tradition of free movements of goods and people within West Africa.

These movements play a role in food security as they facilitate the circulation of goods. But as things stand today, the system is also a source of increased dependence on the outside world, because it favors penetration by products imported from the world market more than it favors the expansion of local production systems.

This situation is a reflection of the policies that have been adopted since independence, whose primary aim has been to consolidate the sovereignty of the State, often through rent from raw materials or trade controls. Local economic development, and the development of local agriculture in particular, has been only a secondary objective of these policies.

Recent diagnostics studies also point to the incapacity of the regional institutions that are meant to encourage the States to consult one another and cooperate. Many official declarations have been made in favor of regional cooperation, and many initiatives have been taken with a view to promoting this same regional cooperation, but there is very little concrete evidence that cooperation between countries in the region is actually on the increase.

The Club du Sahel and the CILSS have taken a number of other steps in addition to these diagnostic studies to provide new impetus to discussions on regional cooperation in West Africa.

These additional initiatives have validated the notion of the "sub-region", which is a functional entity based on observation and has nothing to do with the notion of a protected regional market, which is still totally theoretical in the West African context.

They have shown how States, aid agencies and civil societies are constantly at odds as to how to even approach the development of the region, let alone take practical steps toward regional development. In this respect, it is crucially important to fully understand the exact role of the State. The State's role is to manage the complex interests on the country and interface with the outside world. But the State is also a private political group that defends its own interests.

In the current period of change that Africa is experiencing, the States are living in the short term. The only players who can take the long-term regional potential into account are groups that invest in the economy, operators from the civil society, and, in a different way, aid agencies. Aid agencies can exert a positive influence over State policy-makers by taking regional concerns into account in their own development programs, setting a clear course for those programs and ensuring they stay on course for a meaningful period of time.

In this way, there are two vital prerequisites for progress toward regional cooperation: (i) a broad, long-term vision, without which it is impossible to determine where regional potential lies and no course can therefore be chosen; and (ii) continuing dialogue between civil society and State, and among the different countries in the region, without which political and social change will not serve the interests of the community at large.

**APPENDIX**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE DOCUMENTS CONDUCTED AS PART OF  
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