

Advocacy Document: Movement and Capacity Building for Food Sovereignty in ECOWAS

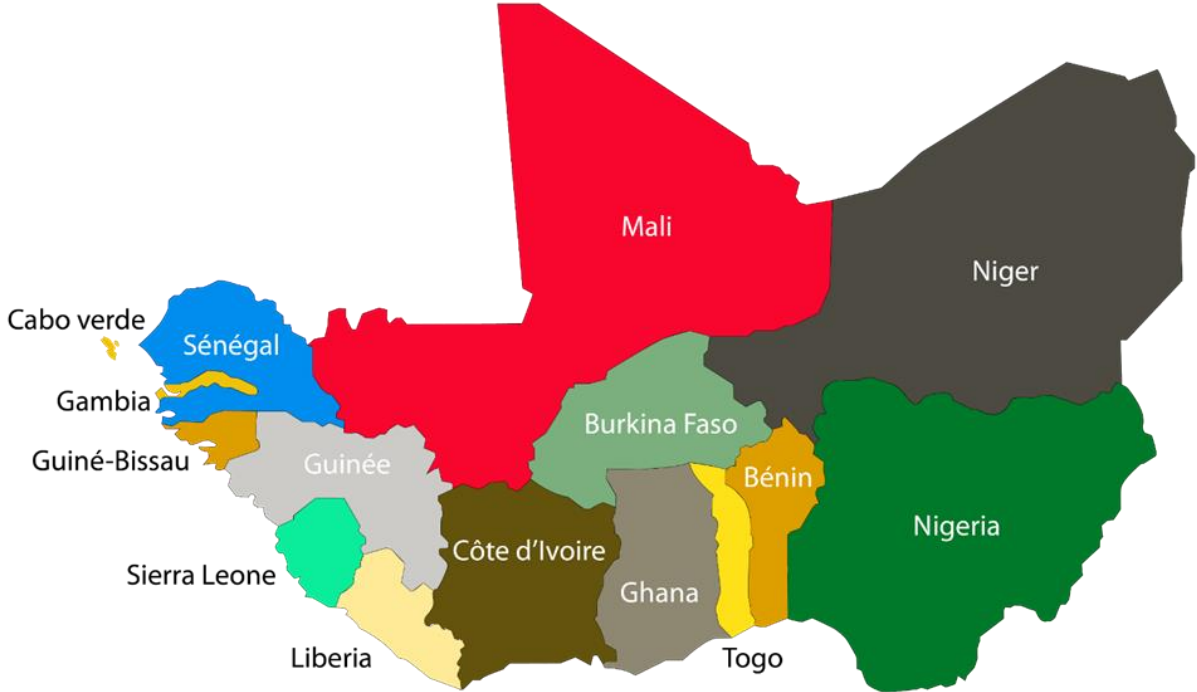


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Preamble: Food For Thought: Imagine if you can – what will you do?

1. When you sit down for a meal with your family, how often do you consider where that food comes from? What would it mean for your children if foreign corporations rather than local farmers controlled the sources of their meals?
2. How do you envision your children's relationship with food if they grow up in a world where traditional farming practices have been replaced by laboratory-engineered agriculture? What cultural and nutritional knowledge might they miss?
3. What kind of legacy do you want to leave for your children regarding their access to healthy, culturally appropriate food? How does our current trajectory affect that legacy?
4. If our local food systems continue to erode, what challenges do you foresee for your children in terms of food security and their ability to make choices about what they eat?
5. How would you feel knowing that your children might have to rely on processed or imported foods that lack the nutritional value and cultural significance of locally grown produce? What impact could this have on their health, economy and identity?
6. As climate change threatens agricultural production, how prepared do you think our future generations will be to adapt if we do not prioritize food sovereignty today? What skills or knowledge will they lack?
7. What would it mean for your children if they had to depend on a global market for their daily meals, especially during times of crisis when supply chains are disrupted or Africa is an afterthought in the international supply chain – recall the distribution of COVID vaccine^{i,ii}? How might this affect their quality of life?
8. In envisioning a future where your children have limited control over their food sources, what societal implications do you see arising from this loss of autonomy and self-sufficiency – think of colonization and neo-colonization?
9. How would you feel if the seeds that have been passed down through generations in your family were no longer available, replaced by genetically modified seeds controlled by large corporations?
10. When you think about the soil that nourishes your food, what emotions arise when considering that it may no longer support local seeds due to degradation or chemical inputs from foreign corporations?
11. How do you perceive the role of local knowledge in agriculture? What happens when this knowledge is overshadowed by corporate agendas that prioritize profit over your health and the wellbeing of your community?
12. If you were to wake up in a world where all food production is controlled by a handful of corporations, what fears would you have about access to healthy, culturally appropriate food for yourself and your family?
13. How would you advocate or work for food sovereignty within your community, national and continental region? What steps do you think are necessary to reclaim control over local food systems from corporate powers?



If you could foresee a future where your grandchildren struggle to find fresh, healthy and locally sourced food, what actions would you take today to prevent that scenario from becoming reality?

INTRODUCTION- The Trade-offs: Feeding at What Cost?

- ✘ *Make No Mistake – There is no western hero coming to save Africa.*
- ✘ *The one that oppresses cannot be the same to save you.*
- ✘ *For corporation, it is all about maximizing business profit and control.*
- ✘ *Protect yourself or be exploited.*

What is Food Sovereignty and why is it important?

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.”

– *Declaration of Nyéléni, the first global forum on food sovereignty, Mali, 2007*ⁱⁱ

“Food Sovereignty means defending peoples’ rights, land, territories, seeds and biodiversity, promoting agroecology, and fighting the agribusiness model and neoliberal trade and investment policies...Food Sovereignty is a political movement and a pathway towards the fundamental transformation of our broken food system and societies...Food Sovereignty means defending peoples’ rights, land, territories, seeds and biodiversity, promoting agroecology, and fighting the agribusiness model and neoliberal trade and investment policies.

– *Fiends of the Earth International*.^{iv}

Food sovereignty is the right of people, communities, and nations to **control** their own food systems, including the production, distribution, and consumption of food. It emphasizes the importance of local and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. Food sovereignty goes well beyond ensuring that people have enough food to meet their physical needs. It asserts that people must reclaim their power in the food system by rebuilding the relationships between people and the land, and between food providers and those who eat.

A country loses its food sovereignty when it can no longer control its own food systems, policies, and production methods, often due to external pressures or internal governance failures. Some key indicators and factors that signify this loss includes:

Indicators of Loss of Food Sovereignty

1. **Dependency on Imports:** A significant reliance on imported food products indicates a loss of local agricultural capacity, making a country vulnerable to global market fluctuations and trade policies.
2. **Corporate Control Over Agriculture:** The increasing influence of transnational corporations (TNCs) in local food systems can undermine local producers and lead to a focus on export-oriented agriculture rather than local food needs.^v

3. **Weak Local Food Policies:** When national policies prioritize international trade agreements over local agricultural development, this can erode the ability of communities to produce their own food sustainably.
4. **Loss of Agricultural Biodiversity:** The decline in diverse local crops in favour of monocultures, often driven by corporate interests, reduces resilience against pests, diseases, and climate change impacts.
5. **Marginalization of Small Farmers:** As small-scale farmers face economic pressures from subsidized imports or corporate farming practices, their ability to sustain themselves and contribute to local food systems diminishes.
6. **Environmental Degradation:** Unsustainable agricultural practices promoted by external entities can lead to soil degradation, loss of water resources, and biodiversity loss, further compromising a country's ability to produce food locally.

Several factors contribute to the loss of local agricultural systems and food sovereignty. Neo-colonization, globalization and trade policies often favour large agribusinesses, imposing restrictions that limit a country's ability to protect its local agriculture. Structural adjustment programs mandated by international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank in some instances, can force countries to open their markets, undermining local food production systems. Additionally, the imposition of foreign agricultural practices and technologies (such as the imposition of GMOs, dumping of Highly Hazardous pesticides, etc) and diets erode traditional food systems and cultural practices related to food production and consumption. Violent conflicts, poor urban planning and political instability, characterized by issues such as corruption or a lack of political will to protect local food rights, further hinders the implementation of effective agricultural policies that support food sovereignty.

Aim of the Document

Food sovereignty is a crucial issue for ECOWAS countries, a region facing challenges such as dependence on food imports, acute hunger, malnutrition, severe impacts of climate change, and inadequate agricultural policies and financing. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in this struggle for food sovereignty, but to maximize their impact, it is essential to coordinate their efforts at the regional level.

The "Movement and Capacity Building for Food Sovereignty in ECOWAS" project aims to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to advocate for policies and programs that promote food sovereignty in the region. The project supports CSOs in creating a regional movement for food sovereignty and enhance their advocacy, research, and communication skills.

This advocacy document serves as a guide to strengthen these efforts by demonstrating the importance of food sovereignty and recommending concrete actions. This advocacy document appeals to ECOWAS Commission officials related to agriculture to take into consideration the impacts of industrial agriculture in West Africa. The document also highlights the need to practice agroecology and promote food sovereignty in West Africa as an alternative to industrial agriculture.

Objective of the Movement and Capacity Building for Food Sovereignty in ECOWAS Project

This advocacy document is prepared as part of the "Movement and Capacity Building for Food Sovereignty in ECOWAS" project. It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of food sovereignty in West Africa, identify the root causes of the food crisis, and propose actionable recommendations to policymakers at ECOWAS and national levels to enhance food sovereignty in the region.

. The project's objectives include:

1. **Strengthening Local Food Systems:** The project seeks to enhance the resilience of local food systems by promoting agroecology, supporting smallholder farmers, and reducing dependence on imported food.
2. **Building Capacities of Smallholder Farmers:** Empowering smallholder farmers with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to adopt sustainable agricultural practices is a key objective. This includes training on agroecology, seed saving, and organic farming methods.
3. **Enhancing Policy Advocacy for Food Sovereignty:** The project aims to influence ECOWAS and national policies to prioritize food sovereignty, ensuring that agricultural policies support local food production, protect the rights of smallholder farmers, and promote sustainable development.
4. **Promoting Regional Cooperation and Solidarity:** By fostering collaboration among civil society organizations (CSOs) across West Africa, the project aims to build a strong, united movement for food sovereignty that can effectively advocate for change at the regional level.

Project Activities

To achieve the objectives outlined above, the project will undertake the following activities:

1. **Capacity Building Workshops and Training Programs:** The project will organize workshops and training programs for smallholder farmers, CSOs, and community leaders to build their capacity in agroecology, food sovereignty advocacy, and sustainable farming practices.
2. **Research and Data Collection on Food Sovereignty:** Comprehensive research will be conducted to gather data on the state of food sovereignty in West Africa, identify challenges, and document best practices. This data will inform advocacy efforts and help shape policy recommendations.
3. **Advocacy Campaigns and Public Awareness:** The project will launch advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of food sovereignty, engage policymakers, and mobilize public support for policies that promote local food systems.
4. **Networking and Alliance Building among CSOs:** Efforts will be made to strengthen networks and alliances among CSOs working on food sovereignty in West Africa. This includes facilitating communication, information sharing, and joint advocacy initiatives.

Remember & Visualization: Who we were before Colonization



Overview of Food Sovereignty in West Africa

One in eleven people worldwide faced hunger in 2023, 1 in 5 in Africa.^{vi} Around 733 million people faced hunger in 2023, equivalent to one in eleven people globally and one in five in Africa, according to the latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report^{vii} the world has been set back 15 years, with levels of undernourishment comparable to those in 2008-2009.

The UN estimates that it needs \$51.5bn to provide life-saving support to 230 million people deemed most at risk worldwide. Twenty (20) of the world's biggest food corporations – the largest in the grain, fertiliser, meat and dairy sectors – returned a total of \$53.5bn to their shareholders in in 2021 and 2022 financial years.^{viii} These corporations 'earned' these profits during a period of unprecedented turmoil – a [global pandemic](#) and full-scale [war in Ukraine](#) – when global supply chains were disrupted and millions of people went hungry. While consumers in wealthier countries experienced moderate increases in food prices ranging from 3% to 4.5% in the UK, Canada, and the US during the initial months of the pandemic the impact on developing countries has been far more severe.

Only four companies; Archer-Daniels Midland, Bunge, Cargill, and Dreyfus, control as much as 90% of the global grain trade. These corporations are not required to disclose crucial information about global markets, including details of their own grain reserves. This lack of transparency allows them to manipulate grain prices to suit their interests, with even hedge funds unable to access this information unless directly sourced from the companies themselves.

Food sovereignty is a significant concern in West Africa, with a population exceeding 450.8million, representing about 5.6% of the global population.^{ix} Of this number, 61% are involved in agriculture either directly or indirectly. By 2050, the population is expected to double, with a disproportionate number of young people under 25. This rapid growth will require more than double the current food supply to meet the demands of this youthful population. However, there remains a considerable

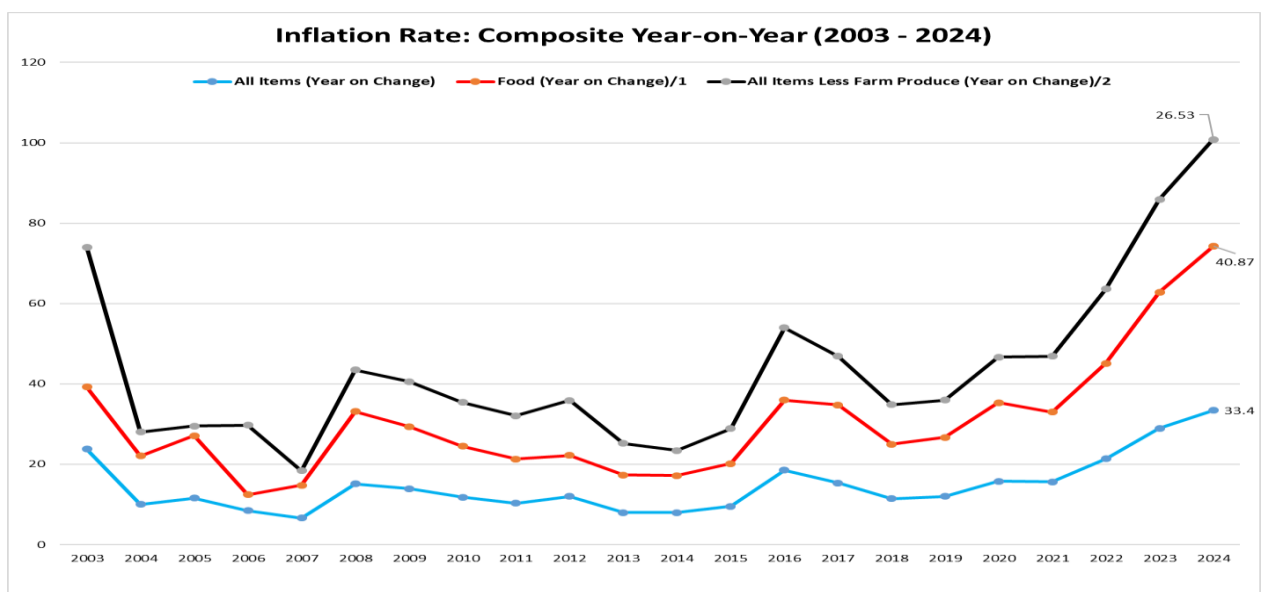
gap between food production and consumption, forcing these regions to rely on imports of staple crops like rice, maize, and wheat.

Malnutrition in West Africa is alarmingly high, with 16.7 million children under five acutely malnourished and more than 2 out of 3 households unable to afford healthy diets. In addition, 8 out of 10 children aged 6-23 months do not consume the minimum number of foods required for optimal growth and development.^x The Western Africa sub region’s prevalence of wasting is 6.9%, which is also higher than the global average of 6.7%. The Western Africa sub region’s adult population also faces a malnutrition burden: an average of 8.0% of adult (aged 18 and over) men live with diabetes, compared to 7.2% of women.^{xi}

According to the World Food program in April 2024^{xii}, nearly 55 million people in West and Central Africa will struggle to feed themselves in the June-August 2024 lean season, according to the March 2024 Cadre Harmonisé food security analysis released by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). This figure represents a four-million increase in the number of people who are food-insecure compared to the November 2023 forecast and highlights a fourfold increase over the last five years. The situation is particularly worrying in conflict-affected northern Mali, where an estimated 2,600 people are likely to experience catastrophic hunger (IPC/CH phase 5). The latest data also reveals a significant shift in the factors driving food insecurity in the region, beyond recurring conflicts.

Economic challenges such as currency devaluations, soaring inflation, stagnating production, and trade barriers have worsened the food crisis, affecting ordinary people across the region with Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Mali being among the worst affected.

Prices of major staple grains continue to rise across the region from 10 percent to more than 100 percent compared to the five-year average, driven by currency inflation, fuel and transport costs, ECOWAS sanctions, and restrictions on agropastoral product flows. Currency inflation is a major driver of price volatility in Ghana (23%), Nigeria (30%), Sierra Leone (54%), Liberia (10%), and The Gambia (16%), Togo (7%), etc. Historically food has always been the component with the largest contribution to headline inflation, followed by energy and transportation.



West and Central Africa remain heavily dependent on imports to meet the population's food needs. Import bills continue to rise due to currency depreciation and high inflation, even as countries struggle with major fiscal constraints and macroeconomic challenges.

Cereal production for the 2023-2024 agricultural season shows a deficit of 12 million tons in the region, while the per capita availability of cereals is down by two percent compared to the last agricultural season.

When a country heavily relies on food imports and external farm inputs, it becomes vulnerable to external shocks – FOREX volatility, international politics and conflict, debts, sanctions, etc, all of these erodes the food sovereignty of the locals in the country, and informs major inflationary pressure.

Some Indicators of loss of food sovereignty include:

Heavy Dependence on Imported Food: As already stated, countries that rely significantly on imported food face several risks, including price volatility, currency fluctuations, and trade restrictions. This undermines their ability to maintain a stable and resilient food supply and price. In West Africa, this issue is particularly acute:

- **Mali:** Mali's food import dynamics reveal a significant reliance on external sources to meet its domestic needs, with approximately 53% of its imports consisting of petroleum oils, primarily from Côte d'Ivoire and Niger. The country also imports essential food products such as cement, palm oil, and fertilizers, which together constitute a substantial portion of its agricultural import bill. In recent years, Mali has faced challenges such as conflict and economic instability, which have exacerbated food insecurity and increased the need for imports. The total agricultural import expenditure is estimated to be around \$1 billion, reflecting the country's struggle to achieve self-sufficiency in food production amidst ongoing socio-economic challenges.^{xiii}
- The composition of Mali's food imports is heavily influenced by its agricultural production limitations. While the country is rich in natural resources like gold, its agricultural sector is underdeveloped, leading to a reliance on imported staples. Key imports include cereals and processed foods, which are essential for meeting the dietary needs of the population. The government has been working towards enhancing local agricultural productivity through initiatives aimed at improving farming practices and infrastructure. However, persistent challenges such as inflation and trade barriers continue to hinder progress and maintain high levels of food dependency on imports
- **Nigeria:** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) predicts that about 26.5 million people in Nigeria will face food shortages by the end of 2024.^{xiv} This crisis is exacerbated by ongoing conflicts, climate irregularities, removal of petrol subsidies in May 2023, and

Russia sends first free grain to Africa since end of Black Sea deal

Moscow begins shipments of 200,000 tonnes of grain months after it withdrew from UN-brokered Black Sea grain deal.



rising production costs. Food inflation has surged, with rates exceeding 34% as of May 2024, driven by rising prices of staples due to supply shortages and insecurity.^{xv} According to the World Bank, this rising inflation led to the number of impoverished Nigerians to rise from 89.8 million in the beginning of 2023 to a staggering 104 million in 2024.^{xvi} Additionally, post-harvest losses are significant, with up to 50% of produced food lost due to inadequate storage and infrastructure, severely affecting food availability and prices.^{xvii}

The growing demand-supply gap in staple foods has led Nigeria to increase its agricultural imports. Between 2016 and 2019, cumulative agricultural imports reached approximately ₦3.35 trillion, while agricultural exports amounted to only ₦803 billion during the same period. Despite efforts to boost local production, Nigeria still imports substantial quantities of farm inputs like fertilizer, pesticides and staple foods, including staple food like rice, where only 57% of the 6.7 million metric tons consumed annually is produced locally. Nigeria recorded a 121.7 percent increase in the value of imported foods within the 5-year period, rising to N1.9 trillion in 2022 from N857 billion in 2018.

According to the [International Trade Administration \(2023\)](#), Nigeria relies on \$10 billion of imports to meet its food and agricultural production shortfalls (mostly wheat, rice, poultry, fish, food services, and consumer-oriented foods). Europe, Asia, the United States, South America, and South Africa are major sources for Nigeria's agricultural imports.^{xviii} Nigeria's food and beverage import bill increased by 30% from N 1.21 trillion in the fourth quarter of 2023 to N1.59 trillion in the first three months of 2024.

- **Senegal:** Agriculture plays a key role in Senegal's economy, contributing roughly 16 percent to its GDP and providing 30 percent of the country's total employment in 2020. Despite its significance, Senegal is located in the drought-prone Sahel region, which experiences irregular rainfall and has generally poor soil quality. Consequently, the country depends on imports for around 70 percent of its food supply.^{xix} The main agricultural imports include rice, wheat, corn, onions, palm oil, dairy products, fresh vegetables, sugar, potatoes, and ingredients for food processing.

The country's reliance on imported food puts it at risk of global price shocks. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of international borders led to sharp price increases and shortages of essential foods.

- **Togo:** Togo's food import landscape is characterized by a significant reliance on external sources to meet its domestic consumption needs. As of recent data, Togo imports approximately 50% of its food, with major imports including rice, wheat, and vegetable oils. The country has seen a steady increase in food imports due to rising population demands and urbanization trends that shift dietary preferences towards more processed and imported foods. In 2021, Togo's agricultural import bill was estimated at \$600 million or CFA214 billion worth of food products,^{xx} reflecting the challenges faced in local agricultural production, which is often hindered by inadequate infrastructure and investment in farming technologies.^{xxi}

The composition of food imports in Togo highlights a dependency on staple grains and processed foods. Rice remains the largest single food import, accounting for nearly 30% of total imports. Wheat follows closely behind, with significant quantities being used for local bread production. Furthermore, Togo's economic situation has been exacerbated by

global market fluctuations, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which have driven up prices for essential commodities.

- **Ghana:** Ghana, like many other developing nations, relies heavily on imports of food and consumer goods to feed its population. With estimates indicating that, about 30% of its food supply comes from abroad. In 2022, Ghana's agricultural import expenditure reached approximately \$2.6 billion, with key imports including rice, poultry, and dairy products. The high demand for these products is driven by a growing middle class that increasingly seeks diverse and convenient food options. For instance, Ghana imports [55% of the rice](#)^{xxii} that is consumed locally.

U.S. exports of agricultural and related products to Ghana in 2022 were valued at \$125.4 million, a decrease of 19.0 percent from the preceding year's value (\$155.2 million). Although U.S. exports to Ghana had mostly been rice, poultry, and wheat, exports of U.S. consumer-oriented food products reached an all-time high of \$127.2 million in 2021. Based on year-over-year growth in 2022, the 10 best U.S. high-value consumer-oriented product prospects categories for the Ghanaian market in descending order are: 1) beer; 2) processed fruit; 3) sugar, sweeteners, beverage bases; 4) fresh vegetables; 5) seafood products; 6) wine and related products; 7) pet food; 8) processed vegetables; 9) fruit and vegetable juices; and 10) food preparations.^{xxiii}

- **Côte d'Ivoire:** Côte d'Ivoire is one of West Africa's largest food importers, with approximately 40% of its food supply sourced from other countries. The country's agricultural import bill was projected at around \$1 billion in 2022. Key imports include rice, wheat flour, and cooking oils, driven by an increasing urban population that demands more diverse diets. The Ivorian economy has shown resilience; however, it remains vulnerable to external shocks that affect food prices and availability¹².

The predominant composition of Côte d'Ivoire's food imports includes staple grains such as rice and wheat flour, which are essential for local diets. Rice imports alone account for nearly 30% of total agricultural imports. This heavy reliance on imported staples poses challenges for national food security and encourages the government to promote self-sufficiency through initiatives aimed at enhancing local agricultural production capabilities. Efforts are being made to improve infrastructure and access to resources for farmers to reduce dependency on foreign food supplies.

- **Niger:** Niger's food import situation is marked by a significant dependency on external sources to satisfy its food needs, with about 30% of its total food supply imported. In 2021, Niger's agricultural import bill reached approximately \$500 million, with key imports including rice, wheat, and vegetable oils. The country faces considerable challenges in domestic agricultural production due to climatic conditions and limited resources, which further exacerbates its reliance on imported food products. Major trading partners for these imports include Nigeria, France, Brazil, and Côte d'Ivoire²⁴.

The composition of Niger's food imports highlights a focus on staple grains such as rice and wheat, which are critical for local diets. The country has been working towards increasing local production through various agricultural initiatives; however, progress remains slow due to infrastructural deficits and environmental challenges. Additionally, rising global food prices have placed additional strain on Niger's economy, making it

imperative for the government to seek strategies that enhance self-sufficiency while managing the costs associated with food imports

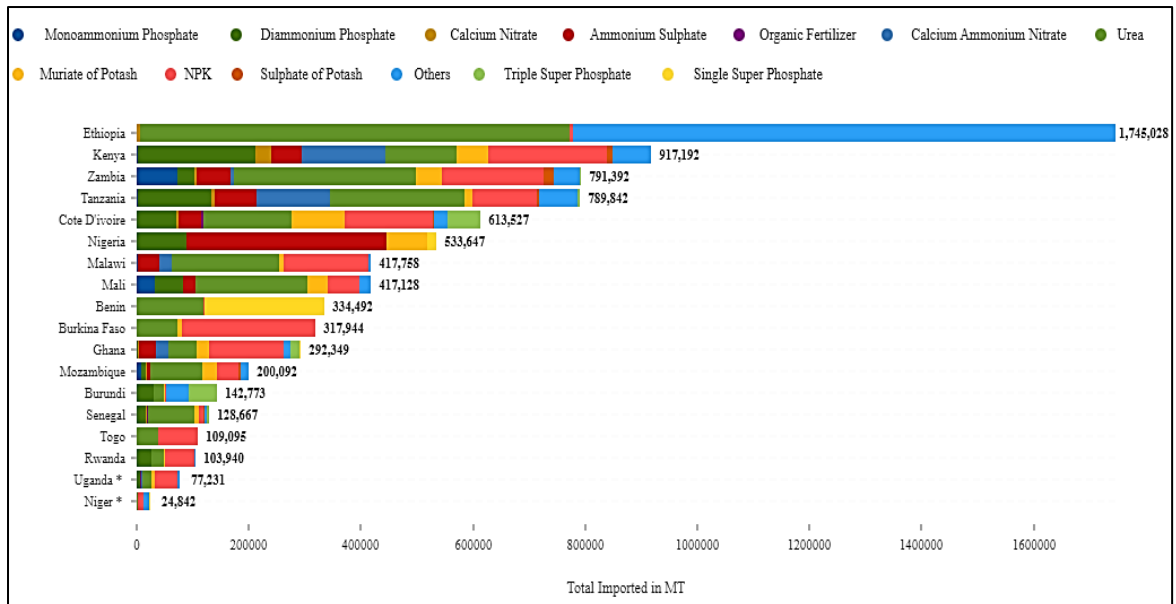
Dependence on Imported Farm Inputs: A country's reliance on imported agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and machinery can also weaken food sovereignty. It leaves domestic farmers vulnerable to international supply chain disruptions and price hikes.

- **Fertilizer Dependency:** West African countries, including Ghana, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire, import large quantities of fertilizer, much of it from Russia and other global suppliers. In 2022, the global fertilizer crisis exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine war caused prices to soar by 300%. This drastically reduced fertilizer usage in many West African countries, leading to lower crop yields.

In August 2024, West Africa's agricultural sector encountered significant difficulties due to extreme weather and volatile fertilizer markets. Countries like Nigeria and Niger were hit by heavy rainfall and flooding, which caused extensive crop damage, while other areas faced drought and water shortages. These erratic weather conditions, worsened by climate change, highlighted the critical need to strengthen climate resilience in agriculture to protect food security. At the same time, the fertilizer market in West Africa remained stable but with high prices, fueled by increased demand during the planting season. Côte d'Ivoire managed to keep prices steady by stockpiling fertilizers, maintaining costs around \$42 (CFA 25,000) per 50 kg bag. In contrast, countries like Ghana and Nigeria struggled with affordability due to currency depreciation and fluctuating exchange rates, placing additional financial strain on farmers.

Between 2018 and 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global average price of fertilizer fell by 20.6%. During this period, Ghana nearly doubled its fertilizer imports, increasing from 315,157 tons in 2018 to 618,638 metric tons in 2020. However, after the pandemic hit, global fertilizer prices surged by 98%, prompting Ghana to cut its imports by 61%. The situation was further exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which drove fertilizer prices to USD 628 per ton by March 2022, leading to further reductions in Ghana's imports. This has strained fertilizer supply and pushed up domestic prices. A 25 kg bag of subsidized fertilizer, which cost GH¢62 in 2021, skyrocketed to GH¢160 by the first quarter of 2022.^{xxiv} The conflict has also driven up fuel prices, leading to higher transportation costs and an increase in staple food prices. Additionally, Ghana's macroeconomic challenges, such as currency depreciation and high inflation, may further hinder investments in agriculture.

In Liberia, the rainy season spurred fertilizer demand, but prices dropped as dealers cleared out old stock, while Togo maintained a strong supply despite unexpectedly low demand. Despite government efforts, high fertilizer costs continued to challenge smallholder farmers across the region, though overall supply was sufficient to meet rising demand and ensure the continuity of agricultural activities.



Source: African Fertilizer

- Seeds:** The use of hybrid seeds, which are largely imported, is widespread in West Africa. While these seeds can increase productivity, they often come with dependencies on proprietary technologies or require specific fertilizers, locking farmers into cycles of dependence on multinational corporations for inputs.

Declining Agricultural Productivity: Despite having vast arable land, the region's agricultural productivity remains low. For example, Nigeria's agricultural sector has been growing at less than 2% annually, much slower than the population growth rate of 2.6%. This indicates a growing gap between food production and food demand, increasing reliance on imports.

Trade Imbalances: Countries losing food sovereignty often show increasing trade deficits in agricultural products. For instance, Senegal's food import bill surged by over 10% between 2018 and 2021, indicating an increasing reliance on foreign food supplies.

External Price Shocks and Inflation: When global food prices rise, West African countries are disproportionately affected. In 2022, following the Russia-Ukraine war, wheat prices spiked globally, resulting in higher bread prices in countries like Senegal, Ghana, and Nigeria. The World Bank reported that the food inflation rate in Nigeria exceeded 20% in 2021, largely due to reliance on imported food and inputs.

Land Grabbing and Corporate Control: Another sign of declining food sovereignty is the increasing presence of foreign corporations in domestic agriculture. In countries like Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, large-scale foreign agricultural investments have led to "land grabbing," displacing smallholder farmers and reducing their control over local food production.

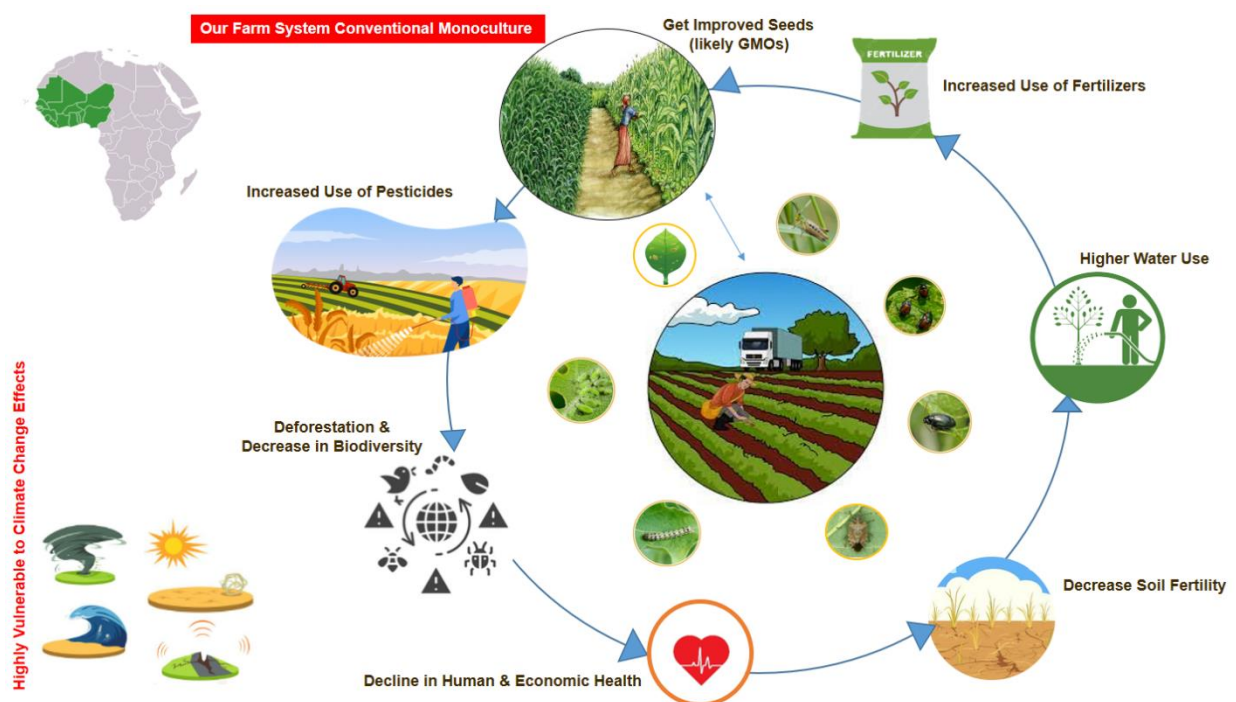
Inadequate Local Processing Capacity: Many West African nations export raw agricultural products but lack sufficient processing capacity, leading to importation of finished goods. For example, despite being one of the world's top producers of cocoa, Côte d'Ivoire imports large quantities of processed chocolate.

Major Root Factors Threatening Food Sovereignty and Fueling the Food Crisis in West Africa

Economic Policies & the Farm System: Neoliberal economic policies in West Africa have prioritized foreign investment in agriculture, often at the expense of local food production. This shift has led to a focus on cash crops for export, such as cocoa in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, and cotton in Burkina Faso, rather than staples for local consumption. For instance, Ghana is one of the world's largest cocoa producers, with cocoa exports accounting for approximately 30% of total export earnings. However, this focus on cash crops has marginalized smallholder farmers who primarily grow food for local markets.

The increasing dependency on imports is evident in the region's food import bill, which rose from \$7.9 billion in 1993-95 to approximately \$43.6 billion in 2018-20. This reliance on imported food undermines local agricultural systems and exposes communities to global market fluctuations. The systematic neglect of smallholder agriculture has created a vicious cycle that weakens urban-rural linkages and traps farmers in poverty while leaving urban populations dependent on volatile world markets.

Conventional monoculture policies in West Africa threaten food security and sovereignty by prioritizing the large-scale production of single crops, often for export, over diverse food crops for local consumption, and supporting the influx and indiscriminate use of highly Hazardous pesticides. All of these reduces biodiversity, making crops more vulnerable to pests, diseases, and market fluctuations, while degrading soil and depleting water resources. Smallholder farmers, who dominate the region, face increased dependency on expensive external inputs like fertilizers and seeds, and imported pesticides leading to economic vulnerability, aside the environmental contamination. Additionally, monoculture encourages land grabs, displaces traditional farming practices, and undermines local food systems, weakening both livelihoods and food sovereignty.



Industrial Agriculture and Agrochemical Dependence: The push for industrial agriculture, supported by international development organizations and agribusiness, promotes the use of monocultures, genetically modified seeds, and chemical inputs. This model of agriculture often leads to environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and the marginalization of small-scale farmers. The introduction of patented seeds by multinational companies threatens the traditional practice of seed saving and exchange, which is vital for maintaining local seed diversity and food sovereignty.

Policy and Governance Issues: Government policies often favour large-scale industrial agriculture over smallholder farming, providing little support for the latter in terms of access to credit, infrastructure, and markets. In many West African countries, agricultural policies are not designed to support food sovereignty. Instead, they often promote export-oriented agriculture and the interests of multinational corporations. There is also a lack of political commitment to implement policies that support food sovereignty, such as investing in sustainable agriculture, protecting local seed systems, and empowering smallholder farmers.

Climate Change: West Africa is particularly vulnerable to climate change due to its high reliance on rain-fed agriculture and limited adaptive capacity. The region is experiencing increased temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events such as droughts and floods. According to projections from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), yields for staple crops like maize and sorghum could decline by 10-30% due to climate change impacts.

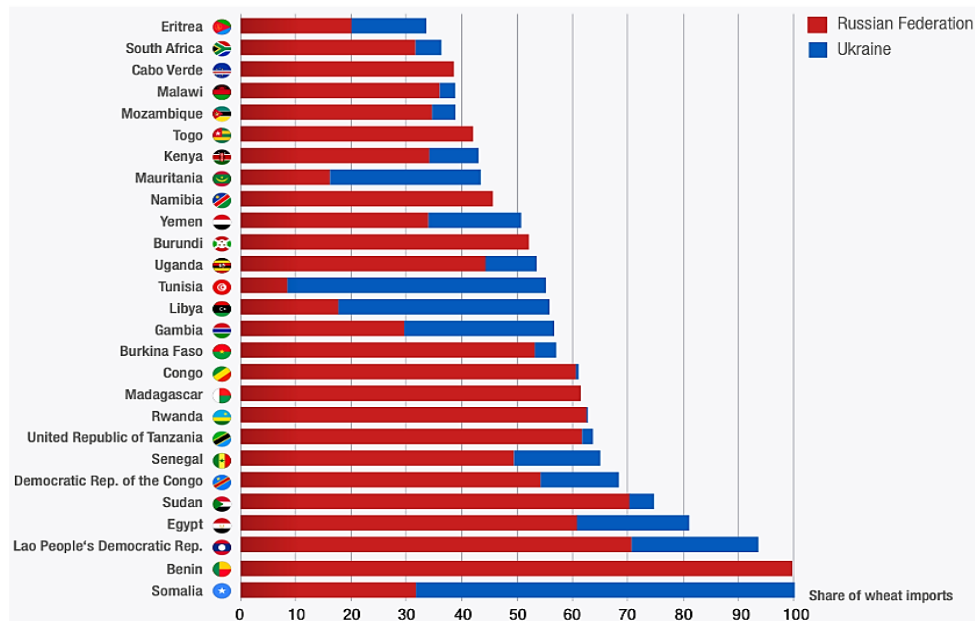
For example, the Sahel region, which includes parts of Mali and Niger, has witnessed rising temperatures that are 1.5 times the global average. This warming has led to prolonged droughts that disrupt planting seasons and reduce crop yields significantly. In Nigeria, farmers in the Northeast have turned to irrigation farming following severe flooding in 2022 that washed away soil fertility, highlighting the urgent need for adaptive strategies to cope with climate variability.

Conflict and Political Instability: Ongoing conflicts in West African countries such as Mali, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso have severely disrupted agricultural activities and displaced farmers, exacerbating food insecurity. In Mali, conflict between government forces and armed groups has led to significant displacement; over 1 million people have been forced from their homes, disrupting farming activities and increasing reliance on food aid.

In Nigeria's Northern and Middle Belt region, violent clashes between herders and farmers over land resources have intensified due to competition exacerbated by climate change impacts. The continued spread of insurgent, bandits and kidnapping in Nigeria has also made farms unsafe especially for the women farmers. As a result, agricultural productivity suffers, leading to higher food prices and increased food insecurity among vulnerable populations. The conflict not only disrupts farming but also limits access to markets, further deepening food insecurity.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has drastically altered fertiliser and food supply. Russia and Ukraine exports of 28% of the world's fertilisers made from nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. Russia and Belarus supply 40% of the world's potash exports, the latter of which has halted exports on certain fertilisers. For ammonium nitrate, Russia alone exports 48% of the world's supply. As for food supplies, Russia and Ukraine are among the top 10 wheat producers, and among the five largest wheat exporters in the world. [Together, they represent a combined 27% of the global trade in wheat and 12% of total calories traded in the world.](#) Without fertilisers, growing seasons are made more difficult and without wheat exports, countries are unable to supply the difference in supply declines.

The war has left current supplies of wheat at risk of never reaching their destination, and future supplies are at risk of never being grown if the war persists through planting season (September to November). In Ukraine alone, nearly 20 million tons of wheat are stuck, waiting to get out of the country. For perspective, from July 2020 – June 2021, Ukraine exported 16.6 million tonnes of wheat. An estimated 20 countries depend on the two for over 50% of wheat imports and in total 40% of Africa’s wheat imports come from Russia and Ukraine.



Source: UNCTAD calculations, based on data from the UNCTADstat database (accessed 4 March 2022).

Lack of Investment: Insufficient investment in agricultural infrastructure, research, and development hampers the capacity of local farmers to improve productivity and resilience. In many West African countries, public investment in agriculture remains low; for example, only about 10% of national budgets are allocated to agriculture despite commitments made under the Malabo Declaration.

In Senegal, while there are initiatives aimed at improving irrigation infrastructure, challenges remain due to inadequate funding and technical expertise. The country has recognized the potential for irrigation to double agricultural productivity but has yet to fully capitalize on this opportunity due to limited investment.

Similarly, in Burkina Faso, despite having a significant agricultural sector, that employs over 80% of the population, investment in research and development is insufficient to address challenges posed by climate change or improve crop yields effectively.

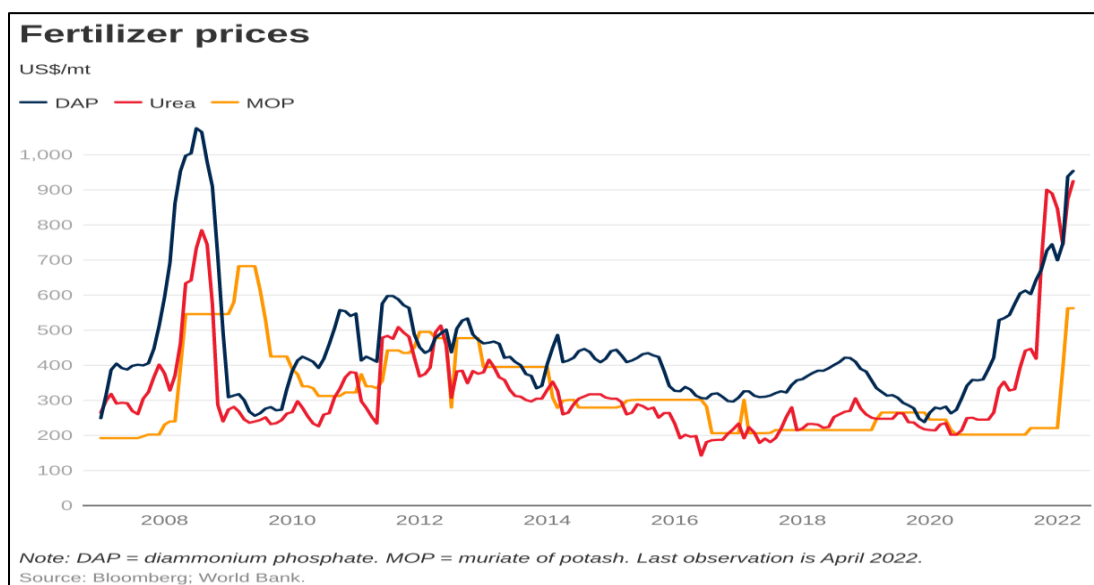
Poor Land Tenure System & Land Grabbing: In West Africa, insecure land tenure remains a critical issue, particularly affecting women farmers. Traditional norms and inadequate legal frameworks often exclude women from owning land or accessing credit based on land ownership. For instance, only 15% of women in Nigeria own land compared to 50% of men. Similarly, in Mali, women hold only about 10% of land titles, limiting their ability to invest in long-term sustainable practices. In Ghana, land tenure issues also persist, where customary land ownership systems can lead to conflicts and uncertainty for farmers. The lack of formal documentation often results in disputes over land rights, further complicating efforts to promote sustainable agricultural practices.

Land grabbing by foreign investors and agribusinesses has displaced smallholder farmers and indigenous communities, reducing their access to arable land and water resources. This has led to a decline in local food production and increased food insecurity.

Irrigation Farming: Irrigation is crucial for enhancing agricultural productivity, especially in the face of climate change. In Nigeria, only 1% of arable land is equipped for irrigation, while an estimated 90% of agriculture is rain-fed. As a result, crop yields are significantly affected by erratic rainfall patterns. In Niger, only about 6% of arable land is irrigated, despite the potential for irrigation to significantly boost crop yields. The Niger Basin Water Resources Development Project aims to improve irrigation infrastructure, but challenges remain due to limited funding and technical expertise. In Burkina Faso, the government has recognized the importance of irrigation and is working to expand irrigated areas through initiatives like the West African Irrigation Project (WAIPRO), which focuses on improving irrigation schemes and increasing productivity. However, as with many countries in the region, the majority of agriculture remains rain-fed, leaving farmers vulnerable to erratic rainfall patterns.

Limited Access to Efficient Technology: The mechanization rate across West Africa is low, with countries like Benin reporting that less than 5% of farms are mechanized. This reliance on outdated methods reduces productivity and efficiency. For instance, in Ghana, many farmers still rely on manual labor for planting and harvesting due to limited access to modern equipment. In Mali, traditional practices dominate rice milling; approximately 70% of rice is milled using inefficient methods, leading to low-quality output and significant post-harvest losses. The mechanization rate in Nigeria is alarmingly low at 0.027 hp/hectare, far below the FAO's recommended 1.5 hp/hectare. Many farmers rely on outdated methods, which reduces productivity and efficiency. For example, 80% of locally milled rice still employs inefficient diesel-powered mills, leading to low-quality output. The improper disposal of agricultural waste contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions; rice straw and husk alone account for approximately 4.34 million tonnes of CO2 emissions annually.

Production Costs: High costs for seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides increases the overall cost of farming, making it less profitable for farmers and farm communities in West Africa. High production costs translates into higher food prices, making nutritious food less accessible, especially for low-income populations. Fertilizer prices have risen nearly 250% since the start of 2022, following 2021's 80% surge. Soaring prices are driven by a confluence of factors, including surging input costs, supply disruptions caused by sanctions (Belarus and Russia), and export restrictions (China). Urea prices have surpassed their 2008 peaks, while phosphates and potash prices are inching closer to 2008 levels. Concerns around fertilizer affordability and availability have been amplified by the war in Ukraine.



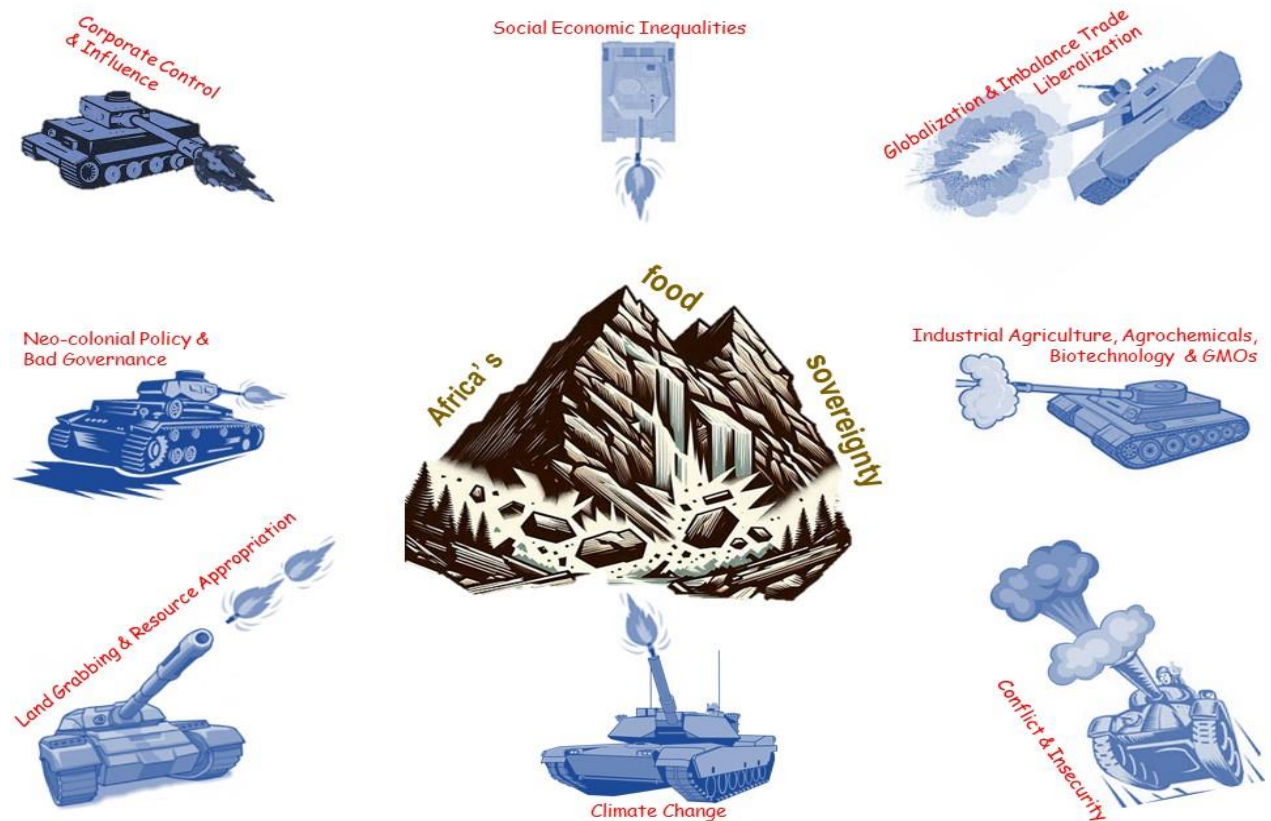
Source: African Fertilizer

Input Distribution: Farmers across West Africa frequently encounter difficulties accessing essential inputs such as seeds and fertilizers. In Togo, reports indicate that many farmers struggle with inconsistent availability of quality seeds during planting seasons. This situation affects crop performance and overall productivity. In Liberia, despite having abundant natural resources, farmers often lack access to improved seeds and fertilizers due to poor distribution networks and infrastructure challenges.

Post-Harvest Losses: Post-harvest losses are significant in West Africa due to poor storage facilities and inadequate transportation infrastructure. In Nigeria alone, it is estimated that 40% of annual food production is lost after harvest due to waste and spoilage. The FAO estimates these losses cost Nigeria approximately \$9 billion annually, contributing significantly to food insecurity in the region. This situation is echoed in Ghana, where poor storage conditions contribute to approximately 30% of harvested crops being lost each year.

Deforestation and Tree Felling: Deforestation poses a severe threat to food security and livelihoods in West Africa. In Ghana, the deforestation rate has reached approximately 2% annually, driven largely by agricultural expansion and reliance on firewood as a primary cooking fuel—over 60% of households depend on firewood. Similarly, in Nigeria, deforestation rates between 5% and 6% annually threaten ecosystems essential for agriculture. In both countries, reliance on solid biomass for cooking exacerbates environmental degradation while limiting access to cleaner energy sources.

Corporate Control and Influence: Multinational corporations have significant control over the global food system, from seed production to food distribution. Their influence often leads to the prioritization of profit over the needs of local communities and the environment. Corporations and their lobbyists (some in the guise of development partnership and grants) exert considerable influence over government policies, often pushing for regulations that favor their interests at the expense of local food systems and sovereignty.



The Dread of Colonization and Transitional Agro-companies: Lobby for Market Capture – undermining food sovereignty

The legacy of colonization and local market capture by big transnational corporations has deeply impacted food sovereignty and security in West Africa. The shift towards conventional monoculture for cash crops, land dispossession, bioengineering of staple foods by big international agrocompanies, lobbyist policies for the agricultural industry and economic exploitation has created vulnerabilities that persist till date. Current data on food security and indicator of food sovereignty losses, illustrate the urgent need for sustainable solutions that reclaim local agricultural practices and enhance self-sufficiency across ECOWAS states.

Addressing these historical injustices is crucial for building resilient food systems capable of supporting the region's growing population amidst ongoing challenges related to climate change and economic instability. To achieve food sovereignty, Africa must become self-reliant, free from foreign dependency and investment in the agricultural sector.

Pre-Colonial Farming in Africa, like most parts in the Global South was primarily focused on subsistence agriculture, where farmers grew crops primarily for their own consumption. This included a diverse range of crops such as yams, cassava, millet, and sorghum, tailored to local climatic and soil conditions. Farmers utilized traditional farming methods, including shifting cultivation and mixed cropping.^{xxv} These practices promoted biodiversity and soil health, as different crops were grown together to enhance resilience against pests and diseases. Agricultural activities were conducted using simple, hand-held tools and implements made from locally available materials. This limited the scale of production but was well-suited to the local environment and the needs of the communities.

With the arrival of colonization, colonial policies significantly influenced the shift to conventional farming in Nigeria by restructuring agricultural practices to align with British economic interests. The British colonial administration prioritized the production of cash crops such as cocoa, groundnuts, and palm oil for export. This shift was driven by the need to supply raw materials to British industries and generate revenue for the colonial government. As a result, traditional subsistence farming practices were largely side-lined in favour of cash crop production, fundamentally altering the agricultural landscape in Nigeria.^{xxvi} Colonial land policies, such as the Land and Native Rights Ordinance, redefined land ownership and usage.^{xxvii} These policies often favoured colonial interests, leading to the confiscation of land from local farmers and the establishment of plantations.

The Disruption: Colonialism & Our Food System

1. Disruption of Traditional Agricultural Practices
2. Land Dispossession and Redistribution- British Companies
3. Introduction of Cash Crops for Export
4. Development of Infrastructure Primarily for Export
5. Socioeconomic Inequalities Favoring European Settlers and companies
6. Dependency on Colonial Powers for Agricultural Trade and Markets
7. Erosion of Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity
8. Land Displacement and Environmental Degradation
9. Competition for Land and Resources
10. Dependency on Oil Revenue
11. Social Disruption and Economic Inequality
12. Environmental Pollution and Health Impacts
13. Neglect of Agricultural Infrastructure and Services
14. Marginalization of Local Food Crops in Favor of Cash Crops
15. Legacy of Underdevelopment for Locals
16. Exploitative Labor Practices
17. Destruction of Indigenous Agricultural Systems
18. Imposition of Western Legal Systems and Property Rights Regimes
19. Underinvestment in Rural Areas and Smallholder Farming Communities
20. Creation of Monoculture Farming Systems
21. Introduction of Industrial Farming Systems



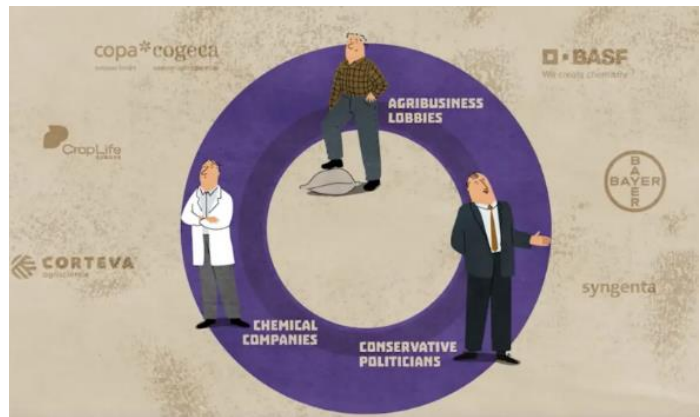
The colonial focus on cash crops resulted in the exploitation of local farmers, who were often compelled to produce surplus crops for export while neglecting their own food needs. This created a dependency on imported food and undermined traditional agricultural practices, leading to a decline in local food production and increased vulnerability to food insecurity.

Conventional farming, as developed during the colonial period and beyond, relies heavily on chemical fertilizers, pesticides and biotechnology seeds – most pushed GMOs, which were not part of the post-colonial practices. Unfortunately, the strong holds persist in the influencing of countries policies and laws around the national food systems through lobbyist groups of agrochemical companies and corporations from countries that fed on colonialism and driving capitalist movements that threatens food rights to people and human.

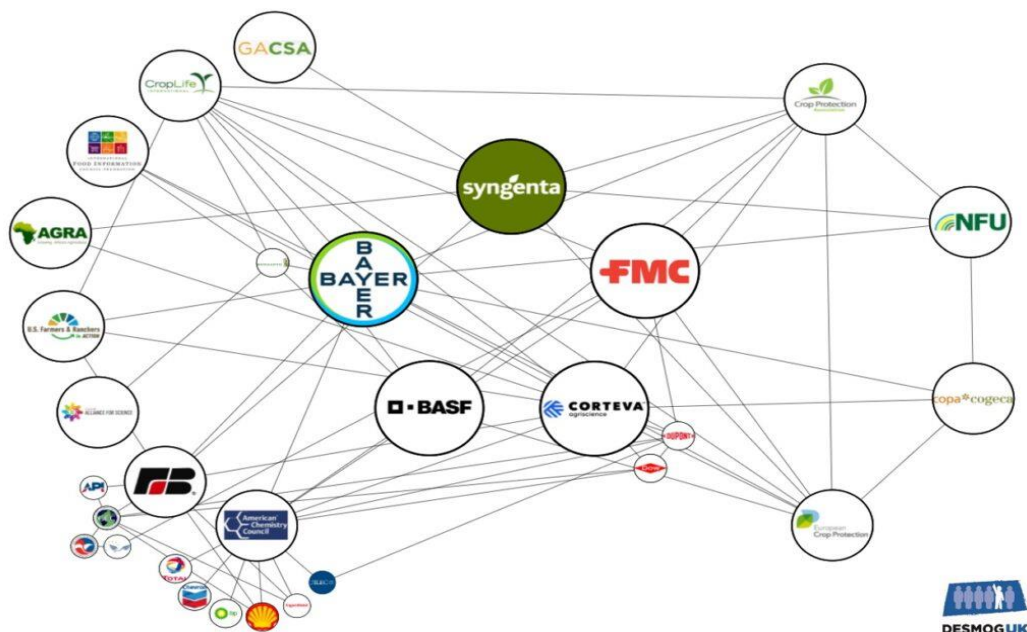
The legacy of colonization continues to affect food sovereignty and security in West African countries today. Many ECOWAS states remain heavily reliant on food imports despite having significant agricultural potential. Countries like Nigeria, Senegal and Togo are net importers of food, reflecting a failure to achieve self-sufficiency due in part to historical disruptions in local agriculture. The reliance on cash crops has persisted, making economies vulnerable to external shocks such as price volatility in global markets. For instance, Senegal's economy has grown but remains susceptible to fluctuations in energy and fertilizer prices, influencing overall food security.

From Exploitative Colonizers to Lobbyist Corporation:

Today, a handful of global corporations organize the world's agriculture and food-consumption patterns. Seven companies currently dominate the global production of pesticides and seeds, a key sector in agriculture. Seeds and pesticides are of great importance for the chemicals corporations, but their market influence extends far beyond agriculture. It is all about control.



Bayer, BASF, Corteva and Syngenta are the world's largest pesticide firms. Although competitors, the companies collaborate to intensify their lobby efforts. They drive and finance the activity of lobby group CropLife.

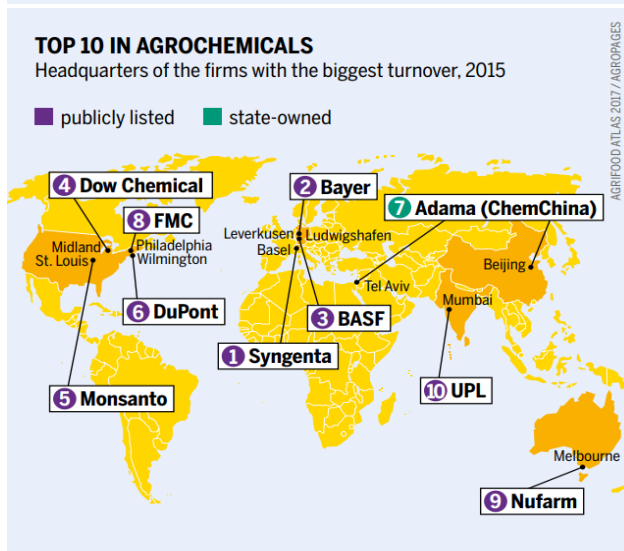
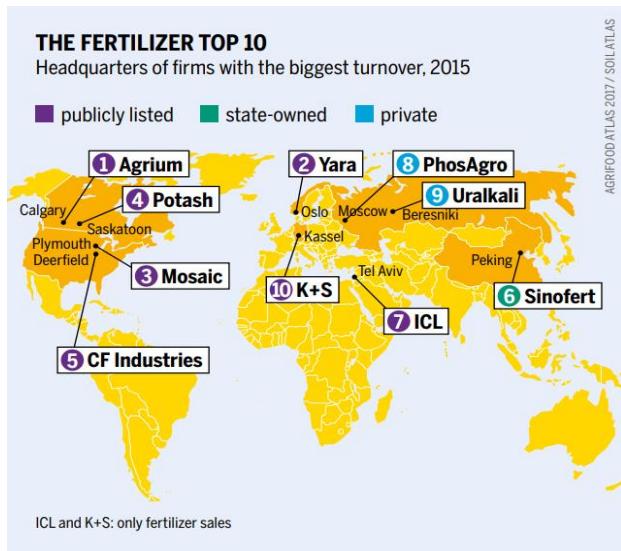


According to Investigate Europe^{xxviii}, in 2019, the global pesticide market was valued at €52 billion, with €12 billion attributed to European sales. Four major companies control about two-thirds of the market, with Bayer leading the pack, generating over €20 billion in revenue from its "crop protection" business. Following Bayer are Syngenta, which is based in Switzerland and owned by state-run ChemChina, Corteva, created from DuPont and Dow in the US, and another German chemical giant, BASF.

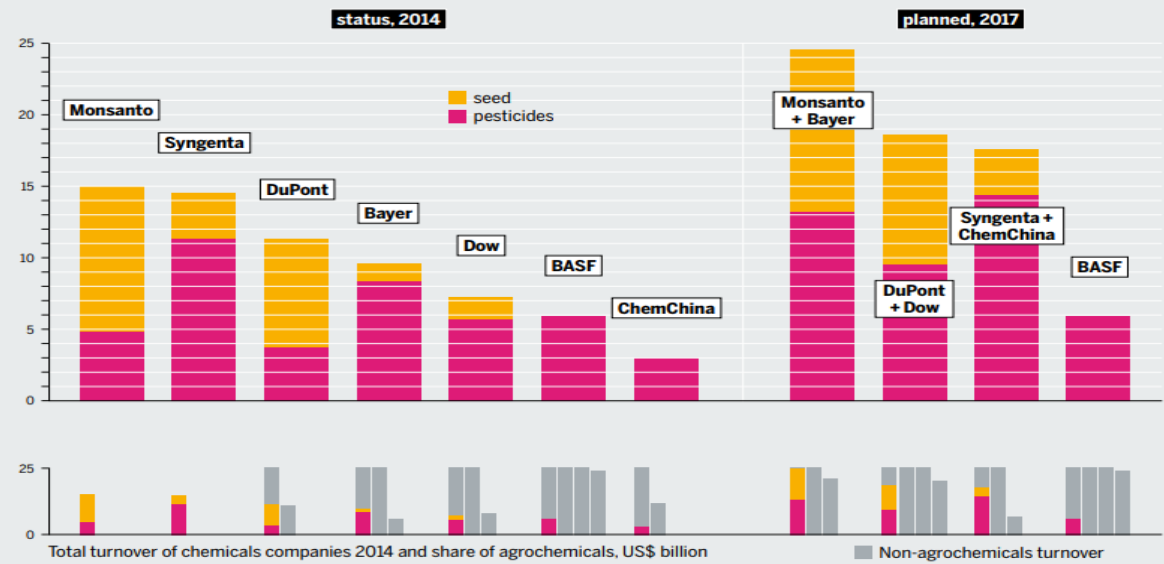
Bayer, BASF, and Corteva are partially owned by five major US investment funds: Blackrock, Vanguard, State Street, Capital Group, and Fidelity. These funds also hold between 10% and 30% ownership in large global food companies such as Unilever, Nestlé, Mondelez, Kellogg, Coca-Cola, and PepsiCo.

The bigger a multinational, the more power it has to lobby politicians and to influence legislation. Bayer could soon become the world's number one in the seed and pesticide sector.

Agrocompaines like Bayer directly, or through farm input associations, majorly CropLife continue to try to alter the agrochemical laws, influence licensing and labelling requirements of genetically modified plants, and patent laws, as they either portray existing rules as obstacles of business growth and trade; or introduce these laws in countries with weak regulations as a means to ease business entry. Big tasks lie ahead: Whoever secures genetic material through patents will control the seed sector and will influence agriculture, food production – and ultimately world food security, and sovereignty.



BUY TO SQUEEZE OUT THE COMPETITION
 Concentration of the world's biggest agrochemicals companies, 2014 turnover, without merger-related self-offs, in billion US dollars

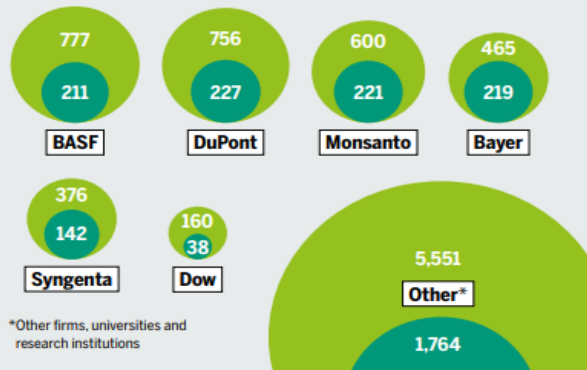


AGRI FOOD ATLAS 2017 / ECOMBERG

BOUNTEOUS HARVEST

Number of patents on plants applied for and granted, by applicant, European Patent Office, end 2015

■ applied for ■ of which granted

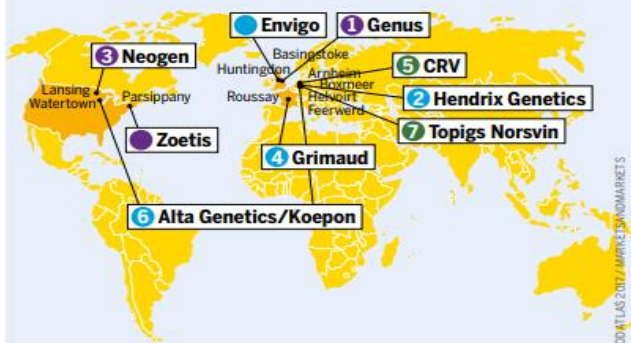


AGRI FOOD ATLAS 2017 / EPA

BIG PLAYERS IN ANIMAL GENETICS

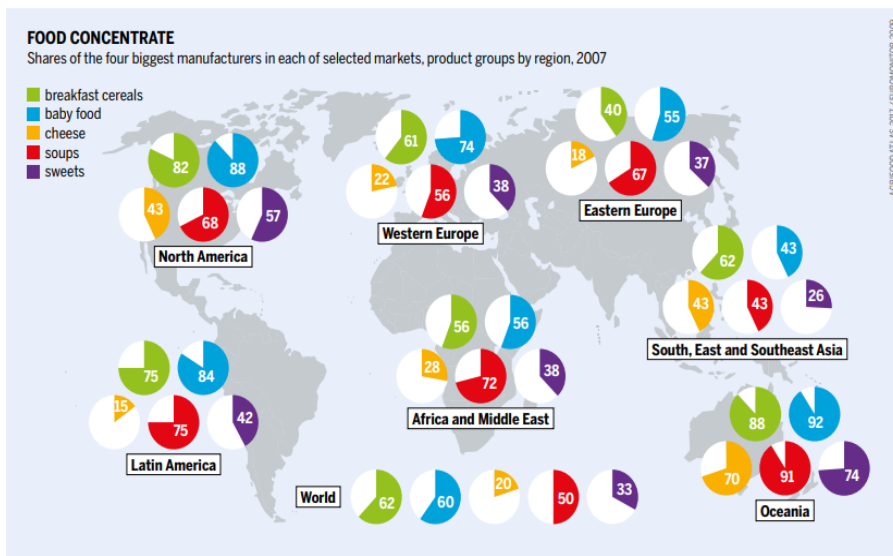
Headquarters of companies with the highest turnover, 2015/16

■ publicly listed ■ cooperative ■ private or family-owned



Envigo, Zoetis: Share of animal genetics cannot be separated from total turnover

AGRI FOOD ATLAS 2017 / IFFRICE SPAIN/IMARKETS



Big national or international food manufacturers dominate in many regions and product groups... but have hardly met addressed rising acute hunger and nutritional deficiency, yet they hold control of food policies and market - we let them

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The Role of Lobbyist Groups in West Africa: Disguised threat to Food Security and Food Sovereignty.

Lobbyist groups in the form of farm input association and technical support groups i.e. CropLife, an international supposedly (non-for-profit) organization, but representing (pushing and promoting the agenda of) the leading global manufacturers of pesticides, seeds and biotechnology products (for profit) in its territories, presents supports to governments to push policies and programs primarily for the promotion of business for their members and principals.

CropLife Africa Middle East was registered in Brussels in November 2002 and represents today more than 20 national associations across its region. The association is supposedly legally fully independent but maintains a strong link with the global CropLife network (www.croplife.org). Their significant influences the agricultural sector in West Africa, potentially threatening food sovereignty through various means:

1. **Promotion of Chemical Inputs:** CropLife advocates for the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which leads to increased dependency among farmers. This reliance undermines traditional farming practices and local knowledge systems that are better suited to the region's specific agro-ecological conditions. Their promotion of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) imports even those banned in Brussels and in other European states, highlights the double standard in the trade of hazardous pesticides, especially knowing the poor state of health systems and other structures to ensure safe handling of the toxic chemicals, and taking advantage of the weak regulatory system to promote their businesses.
2. **Market Control:** By promoting patented seeds, GMOs and chemical products, CropLife contributes to market consolidation where a few multinational corporations dominate. This limits farmers' access to diverse seed varieties and increases their vulnerability to price fluctuations and supply chain disruptions. Their strong lobbying efforts in countries like Nigeria, include supporting the drafting of bills, as well as amendments, under the curtains to ensuring food security and safety, but contents shows clear market capture and use of laws to deliver ease of business for their members/sponsors.^{xxix}
3. **Loss of Biodiversity:** The push for monoculture farming with pesticides and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) reduces agricultural biodiversity. This diminishes resilience against pests, diseases, and climate variability, ultimately threatening food security. The early introduction and continued dependence on highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) have caused a forced extinction of beneficial insects, pollinators, and eroded lots of indigenous plants and sea species. In other words, the only seeds designed to grow in the polluted soils are the GM (largely unlabelled) seeds. Because weeds are also growing resistant to the pesticides (herbicides), more toxic formulations of pesticides are applied, allowing the GMO crops to translocate chemical pesticides through its parts to the plates and bodies of consumers.
4. **Economic Pressure on Smallholders:** Many farmers in West Africa are smallholders who may not afford the high costs associated with patented seeds and chemical inputs. This economic pressure can lead to increased debt and reduced autonomy over their farming practices. Reported instances across the globe where farmers have gone into debt due to the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) include:

- ✘ India: The introduction of Bt cotton has led many farmers into debt due to high seed costs and dependence on pesticides, resulting in a significant number of farmer suicides linked to financial distress.
- ✘ United States: Farmers growing GM crops often face high input costs for seeds and herbicides, leading to financial struggles, particularly when crop yields do not meet expectations.
- ✘ Argentina: The adoption of glyphosate-resistant soybeans has resulted in increased costs for herbicides and seeds, contributing to farmer indebtedness, especially among smaller producers.

- ✘ Brazil: Similar to Argentina, Brazilian soybean farmers have reported going into debt due to the rising costs associated with GM seeds and herbicides, compounded by market fluctuations.
- ✘ Philippines: Farmers growing Bt corn have faced high seed prices and ongoing costs for chemical inputs, leading to significant debt burdens when crop yields are insufficient.
- ✘ South Africa: The use of GM crops like Bt maize has resulted in increased production costs for farmers, which can lead to debt if the market prices fall or yields are poor.
- ✘ Canada: Farmers using GM canola have reported financial strain due to high seed prices and reliance on specific herbicides, which can lead to debt accumulation.
- ✘ Vietnam: The introduction of GM rice varieties has caused some farmers to incur debts from expensive seeds and inputs while facing challenges in achieving expected yields.
- ✘ Mexico: Farmers have expressed concerns about the costs associated with GM corn seeds and the financial risks involved in adopting these technologies, leading some into debt.
- ✘ Egypt: The introduction of GM crops has raised concerns about input costs and market access, leading some farmers to take on debt as they transition to these new agricultural practices.

These instances highlight the financial risks associated with adopting the GMOs technology, particularly when it comes to high input costs and market dependencies.

5. **Health Risks:** The promotion of pesticides raises health concerns for farmers and consumers alike. Increased exposure to harmful chemicals can lead to health complications, further complicating food security as sick farmers may be unable to work effectively. Several members of CropLife have faced lawsuits or legal challenges due to pesticides hazards including:

- ✘ Monsanto (now part of Bayer): The company has faced numerous lawsuits related to Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, with plaintiffs claiming that exposure caused cancer. Thousands of cases have been filed against Monsanto, resulting in substantial settlements.
- ✘ Syngenta: The company has been sued for its sale of Atrazine, a herbicide linked to environmental and health issues. Legal actions have focused on its alleged contamination of water supplies and its effects on human health.
- ✘ BASF: This company has faced lawsuits related to its herbicides, including claims that they contributed to the development of resistant weed species, leading to increased herbicide use and environmental damage.

- ✘ Dow AgroSciences (now part of Corteva): The company has been involved in legal disputes over its herbicide products, particularly regarding claims that they cause harm to non-target crops and the environment.
- ✘ DuPont (now part of Corteva): DuPont has faced lawsuits concerning its pesticide products, particularly regarding allegations that they pose risks to human health and contribute to environmental degradation.
- ✘ FMC Corporation: The company has been involved in litigation over claims related to pesticide exposure and its effects on farm workers and surrounding communities.
- ✘ Pioneer Hi-Bred (a subsidiary of Corteva): The company has faced legal challenges related to its genetically modified seeds and the associated pesticide use, particularly regarding claims of economic harm to farmers.
- ✘ Agrochemical companies in Brazil: Various companies have been sued for damages related to pesticide drift affecting non-target crops and causing economic losses for farmers.
- ✘ Legal actions in India: Members of CropLife have faced lawsuits from farmers alleging that GMO cotton seeds led to crop failures and financial ruin, contributing to a broader agricultural crisis.
- ✘ European Union regulatory challenges: CropLife members have faced legal scrutiny over compliance with EU regulations regarding pesticide safety, leading to lawsuits concerning the approval and use of certain chemicals deemed hazardous.

These instances illustrate the legal complexities and challenges faced by agrochemical companies associated with CropLife regarding pesticide hazards and their impacts on health and the environment.

6. **Neglect of Sustainable Practices:** Though the network claims to support sustainable agriculture and drive innovation, the industrial profit from the manufacturing and the trade of chemical pesticides, which keeps CropLife's focus on chemical solutions unshaken, often overshadows sustainable agricultural practices that could enhance food sovereignty, such as organic farming/agroecology, which are more aligned with local needs and environmental conditions.
7. **Regulatory Influence and Toxic Alliances with Government, Global and Regional Bodies:** By lobbying for favorable regulations regarding GMOs and pesticides, CropLife makes good effort to shape policies that prioritize corporate interests over local agricultural needs, undermining national sovereignty in food production. This instance is clear in Nigeria and other parts of the world, where they drive partnerships with government ministries and food regulatory agencies, support the activities of the government and co-finance projects at global and regional scale such as working with the ECOWAS, and FAO.^{xxx} Such toxic alliances weaken regulations and tailor the programs of the development agencies towards meeting the goals of the members of CropLife, rather than prioritise the protection of the rights and environments of the locals to grow food sustainably and safe-guard biodiversity.

8. **Dependency on Imports:** The promotion of high-tech agricultural solutions can lead countries to rely on imported seeds and chemicals, as well as unfit mechanisations rather than developing local capacities for seed production, pest management and locally fit technologies that meet the need of the majority of smallholder farmers, most of whom are women.
9. **Cultural Erosion:** The introduction of foreign agricultural technologies can erode traditional farming cultures and practices that have been developed over generations, reducing community resilience.
10. **Climate Vulnerability:** As West Africa faces increasing climate variability, reliance on chemical inputs promoted by CropLife may not address the underlying vulnerabilities in agricultural systems, but rather exacerbate food insecurity in the face of climate change.

These factors collectively threaten food sovereignty by undermining local control over food systems, increasing dependency on external inputs, and compromising the ecological integrity necessary for sustainable agriculture in West Africa. CropLife Africa Middle East is active in several West African countries, promoting agricultural technologies and practices that can impact food sovereignty. Here are some key countries where CropLife is present and their activities:

Nigeria:

- CropLife promotes the safe use of pesticides and biotechnology products to improve crop yields and pest management.
- They are also pushing for bills that will ease the pesticide registration process, bring CropLife into the Council on Pesticide Registration and present little or no liability to their members for defaults on disclosure, environmental pollution and remediation, workers safety, compensations and penalties, etc
- They are also delivering training on pesticide use, and obsolete pesticides but are not exposing the health hazards associated with the various pesticides, nor are they investing in protective kits, certification of professional applicators, or set to take responsibility on wider Extension Producer Responsibility Program, or end of open sales of pesticides.
- The organization works with local stakeholders to enhance the regulatory framework for agrochemicals, and seed patenting. They have a good number of supporters in government that also support their lobby efforts.

Ghana:

- CropLife supports initiatives aimed at increasing the availability of certified seeds and improving agricultural productivity through the adoption of modern farming practices.
- They focus on training farmers on the safe use of pesticides.

Mali:

- The organization engages in projects to promote sustainable agricultural practices and improve access to crop protection products.
- CropLife collaborates with local agricultural bodies to enhance pest management strategies – safe pesticide use.

Burkina Faso:

- CropLife is involved in promoting integrated pest management (IPM) practices, reducing reliance on chemical pesticides.
- They are providing training and raising awareness among farmers on the safe and effective use of pesticides and biotechnology
- They also work on enhancing the capacity of local farmers to use biotechnology effectively.

Senegal:

- The organization advocates for the adoption of GMOs and modern agricultural technologies to boost food production.
- CropLife participates in regulatory discussions to streamline the approval processes for biotech crops.

Benin:

- CropLife focuses on strengthening the seed industry by promoting high-quality seeds and efficient pest control methods.
- They conduct training programs for farmers on sustainable agricultural practices.

Togo:

- The organization works on improving access to crop protection products while emphasizing responsible usage and environmental safety.
- CropLife engages in dialogues with policymakers to influence agricultural policies favorably.

Ivory Coast:

- CropLife promotes the use of biotech crops, particularly in cash crops like cocoa and cotton, to enhance productivity.
- They also focus on educating farmers about the benefits and risks associated with pesticide use.

Gambia:

- The organization is involved in initiatives aimed at improving agricultural productivity through better pest management solutions.
- CropLife collaborates with local governments to develop regulations that support sustainable agriculture.

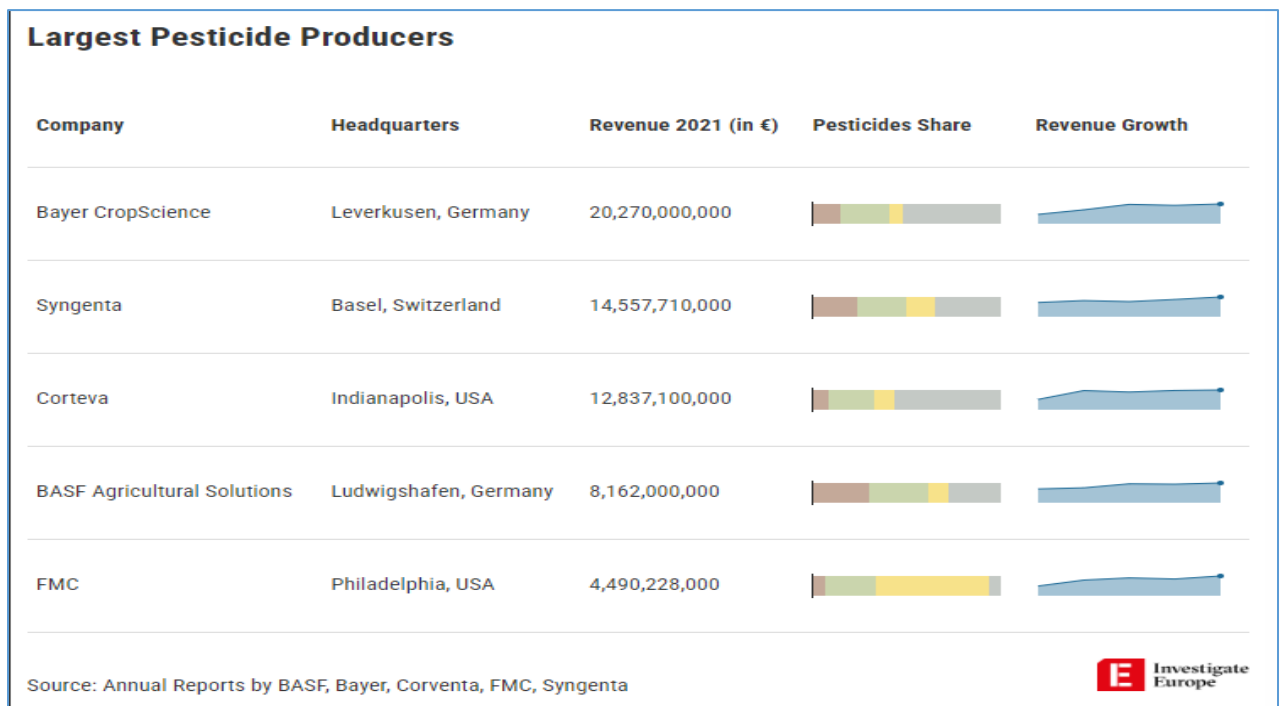
Niger:

- CropLife promotes integrated approaches combining traditional farming methods with modern technologies to improve resilience against climate change impacts.
- They provide resources and training for farmers on effective pesticide application techniques.

Threats to Food Sovereignty

Some of these activities of CropLife can pose threats to food sovereignty in West Africa by:

- **Increasing Dependency:** Promoting patented seeds and chemical inputs can lead farmers away from traditional practices, making them dependent on external suppliers.
- **Erosion of Biodiversity:** Encouraging monoculture farming with pesticides and GMOs reduces crop diversity, which is crucial for ecological resilience.
- **Health Risks:** The promotion of pesticides and the safe use campaign raises concerns about health impacts for farmers and consumers, potentially leading to food safety issues.
- **Market Control:** Corporate control over seed and pesticide markets can limit farmers' choices and increase their vulnerability to price fluctuations.



The campaign promoting genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in West Africa is primarily sponsored by a coalition of multinational corporations, philanthropic organizations, and research foundations.

Key Sponsors of the GMOs Campaign

1. Multinational Corporations:

- **Monsanto/Bayer:** These companies are at the forefront of GMOs development and commercialization in Africa, providing genetic material and technical support for projects like the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) initiative.
- **Syngenta:** Along with other major players in the biotech industry, Syngenta is involved in developing and promoting GM crops tailored for Africa.

2. Philanthropic Organizations:

- **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:** The foundation has invested significantly in agricultural biotechnology initiatives in Africa, including the WEMA project, which aims to develop drought-resistant maize.
- **Rockefeller Foundation:** This foundation funds the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), which coordinates various GMOs projects across the continent.

3. Research Institutions:

- The AATF collaborates with local research institutes to facilitate the development and dissemination of GM crops. They work on projects that aim to address specific agricultural challenges faced by farmers in West Africa.

4. Government Agencies and NGOs:

- National biosafety management agencies in countries like Nigeria and Ghana are involved in regulatory processes that support the introduction of GMOs. These agencies often collaborate with international organizations and private sector stakeholders to promote biotechnology.

Implications of Sponsorship: The involvement of these sponsors raises concerns about potential conflicts of interest and the influence of corporate interests on agricultural policies in West Africa. Critics argue that this push for GMOs may prioritize profit over local food security needs, potentially sidelining traditional agricultural practices that have been effective for local farmers. Overall, while the campaign for GMOs adoption is backed by significant financial resources and expertise, it faces challenges related to public perception, regulatory frameworks, and the need for sustainable agricultural practices that truly benefit local communities.

West African farmers, like the rest of the world have applied their pesticides and chemical fertilizers on farms, which have not only eradicated weeds but also diminished native plant species. These chemicals have severely compromised the quality of soil, water, and air, rendering them unsafe.

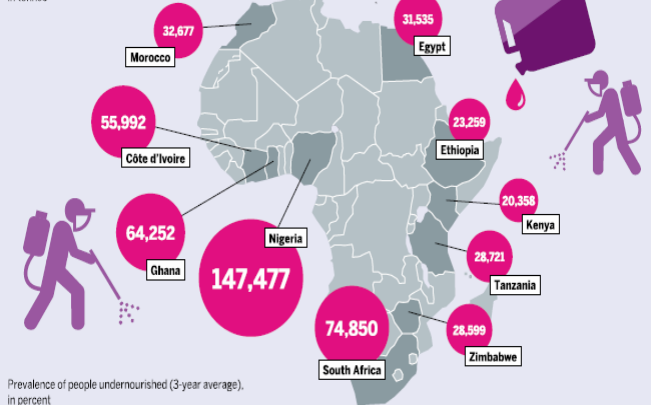
“Despite adopting, the so-called ‘improved’ seeds and genetically modified organisms (GMOs)—often without a real choice—hunger and malnutrition continue to rise at alarming rates. The more countries rely on these external inputs, spending billions on imports, the more our soils degrade, and our local seeds and biodiversity face extinction. No country whether in the global north or south, that have invested billions in the use of chemical pesticides or biotechnology in food has achieved food security; it has been more profit for the big corporations, and medical bills for consumers”

- Mariann Basse-Orovwuje, Food Sovereignty Activist and Deputy Director of Environmental Rights Action, Nigeria

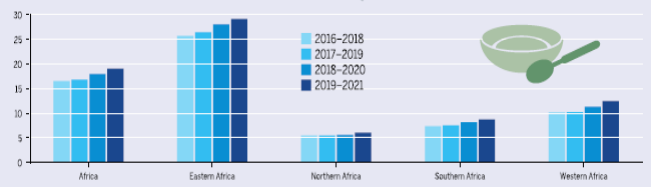
Through powerful lobbying, they influence our policymakers, convincing our Ministries of Agriculture and Food Safety agencies to enact legislation that favour their interests and monopolize our markets.

MORE PESTICIDES, NOT LESS HUNGER

Top ten highest importers of pesticides in Africa, 2020, in tonnes



Prevalence of people undernourished (3-year average), in percent



Smallholder Farmers

The majority of the world's poor and hungry are farmers...

80% of the most impoverished people live in rural areas of developing countries, and most rely on farming for sustenance.

60% of the world's farmable land is used by smallholder farms.

Farming accounts for more than 25% of global GDP...

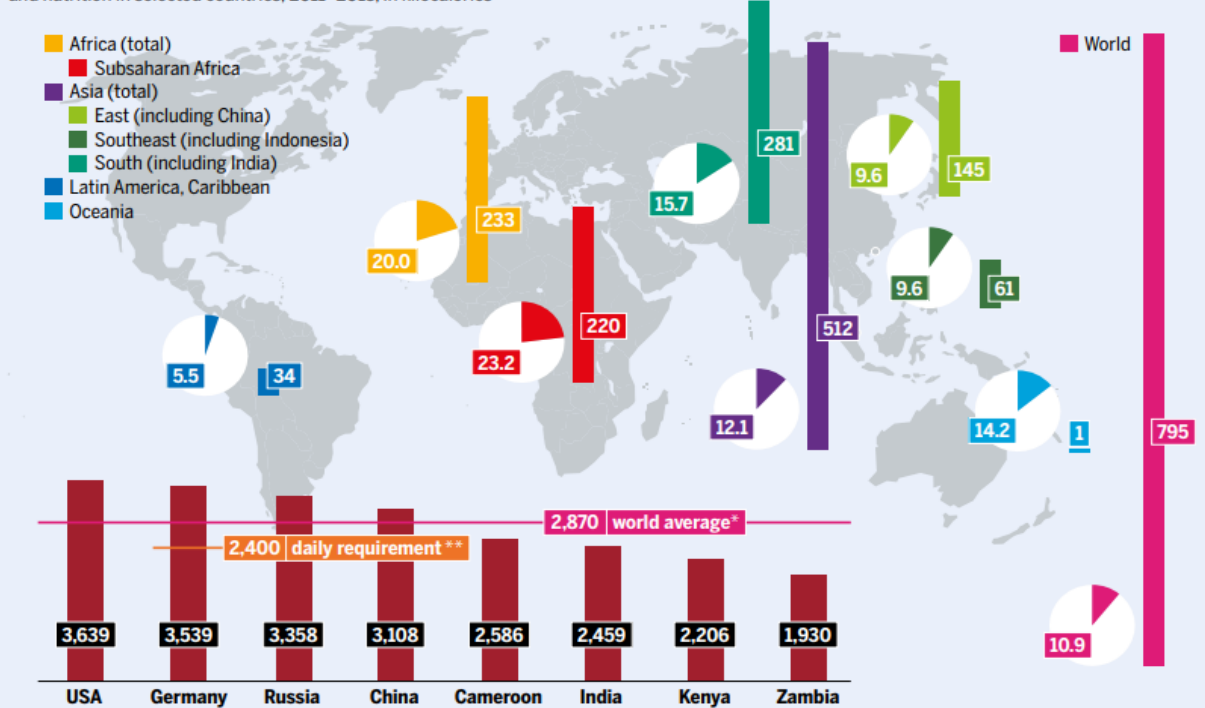
...Yet ¼ of all land is degraded beyond use, which leaves families without food or money.

Investing in sustainable methods of farming is the best way to increase food security amongst this community...

...Sustainable farming can save resources, keep land healthy, improve the nutritional value of crops, and boost harvests.

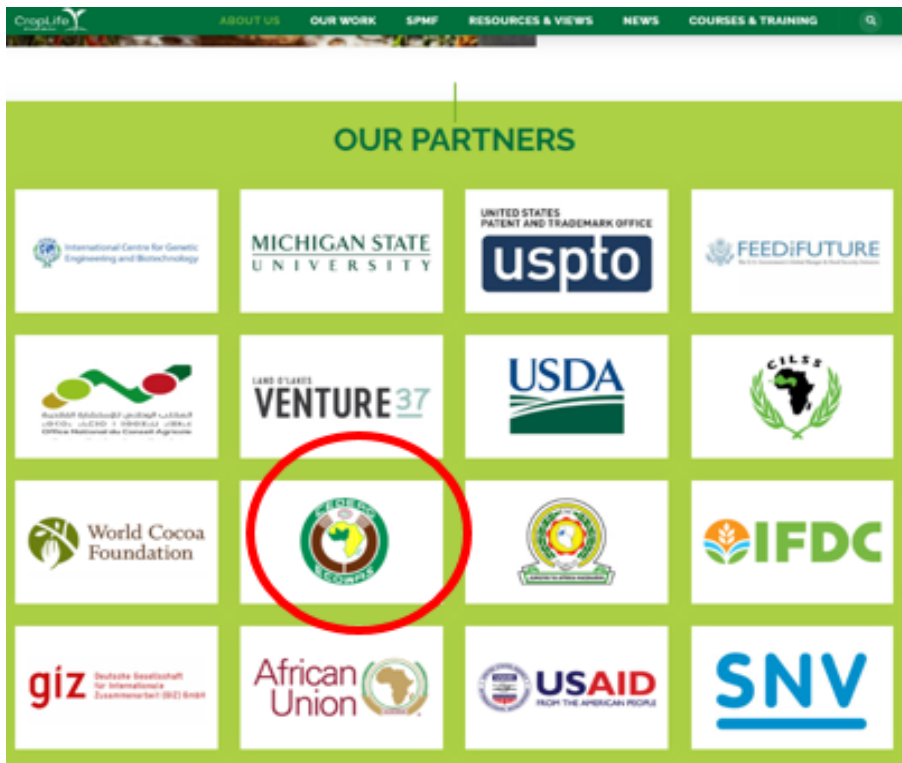
THE END IS NOT YET IN SIGHT

Estimated numbers of people hungry by region, 2014–2016, in millions and percent of the population, and nutrition in selected countries, 2011–2013, in kilocalories



* Daily calorie use, with global average loss of 800 kcal in distribution and households ** Daily requirement, recommendation for men aged 25–51

CropLife's lobbying activities, particularly in promoting genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the use of hazardous pesticides, pose a significant threat to West Africa's food sovereignty. This lobbying prioritizes corporate interests over local, sustainable agricultural practices, and it undermines efforts to maintain control over the region's food systems, biodiversity, and health. ECOWAS should apply caution in their partnership and alliance with CropLife, and take decisive action to counter these activities and protect the integrity of its agricultural sector.



Recommended Actions for ECOWAS Against Toxic Alliance and Anti-people Lobbying:

1. **Say No to Agrochemical Alliances:** ECOWAS should avoid forming alliances with the agrochemical industry, including receiving money and grants from them, as such partnerships compromise public health, environmental integrity, and food sovereignty—he who pays the piper dictates the tune.
2. **Develop a Unified Front Against Corporate Lobbying:** ECOWAS member states should work together to resist pressure from powerful lobbying groups. This includes creating legal frameworks that restrict corporate influence on policymaking and promoting transparency in regulatory processes.
3. **Strengthen Policy Frameworks on GMOs and Pesticides:** ECOWAS should establish robust regional policies that regulate the introduction and use of GMOs and hazardous pesticides. These policies must be based on scientific evidence and prioritize the health of the environment, local populations, and the long-term sustainability of the region's agriculture.
4. **Promote Agroecological Practices:** Invest in and promote agroecological and indigenous farming practices that support local food systems, biodiversity, and resilience. ECOWAS should encourage sustainable farming methods that do not rely on GMOs or hazardous pesticides, thereby reinforcing the region's food sovereignty.
5. **Enhance Regional Research and Development:** Support research and innovation in sustainable agriculture, focusing on solutions that are tailored to West African ecological and cultural contexts. This will reduce dependency on multinational corporations and their technologies, giving local farmers more control over their food production.

6. **Strengthen Public Awareness and Farmer Education:** Educate farmers, policymakers, and the public about the risks associated with GMOs and pesticide use. ECOWAS should launch campaigns that highlight the importance of food sovereignty, the dangers of corporate control, and the benefits of sustainable agriculture.
7. **Collaborate with Civil Society and International Partners:** Form alliances with civil society organizations, farmer groups, and international bodies that are advocating for food sovereignty and sustainable agricultural practices. Joint efforts can amplify ECOWAS's stance and counter the influence of corporations like CropLife.
8. **Regulate the Import of GM Seeds and Products:** ECOWAS should impose strict regulations on the importation and distribution of genetically modified seeds and related agricultural products. The region must retain control over what enters its agricultural markets and ensure that decisions align with local food security goals.
9. **Leverage International Trade Agreements:** In negotiations with trading partners, ECOWAS should prioritize food sovereignty and ensure that trade agreements do not compromise the region's ability to reject GMOs and other harmful agricultural inputs.
10. **Promote Local Seed Systems:** Encourage the development and protection of local seed systems, which are central to maintaining biodiversity and food sovereignty. ECOWAS should work to ensure that farmers have access to locally adapted, non-GMO seeds that can be freely exchanged and reproduced.

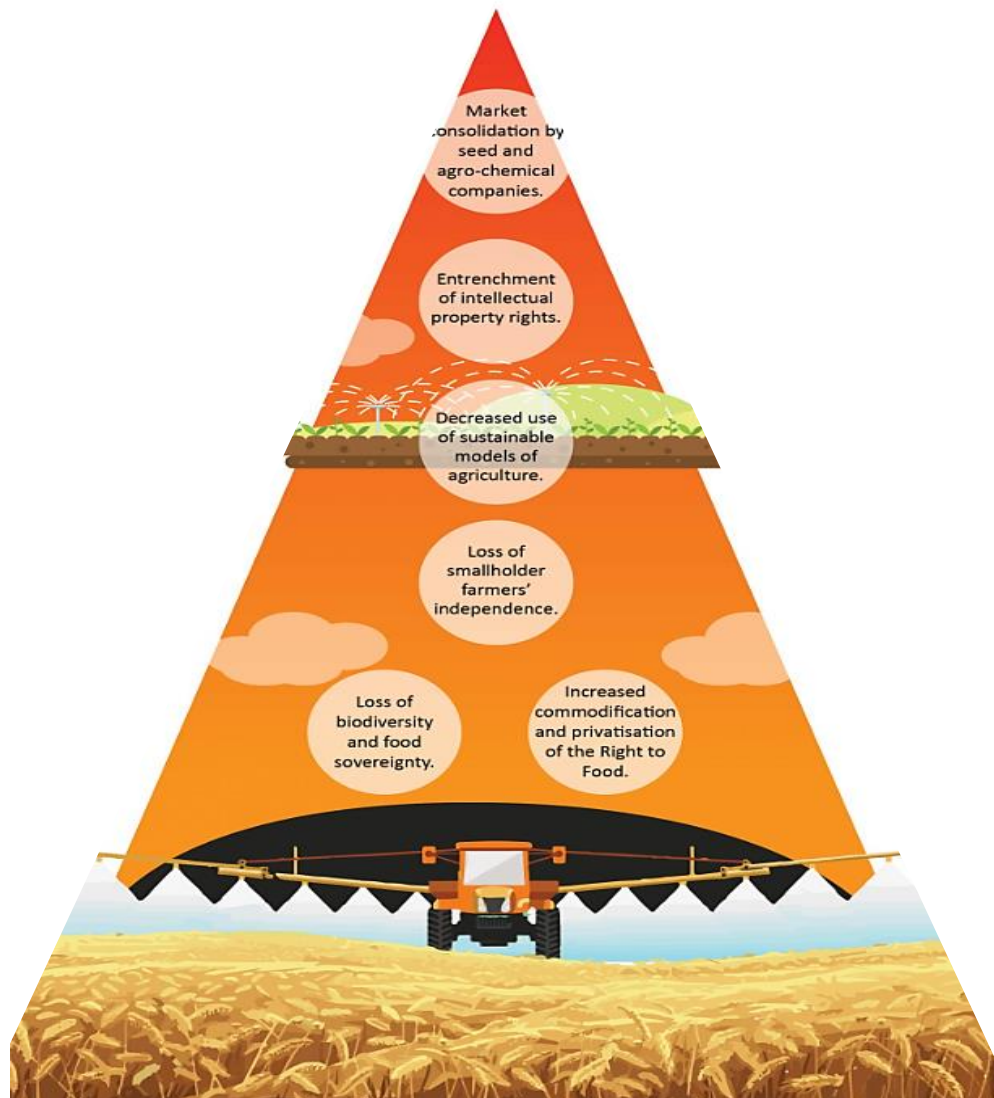
Responding to the Double Standard in the Trade and Export of Highly Hazardous Pesticides by Europe – Advocacy Action for ECOWAS

Although certain chemical pesticides are banned within the EU, they can still be produced and exported to countries where their use is permitted. This includes seeds treated with these hazardous substances, which are sold to nations that often export agricultural products back to the EU. Farmers across these countries have expressed their frustration, arguing that the EU should enforce the same stringent regulations on imported agricultural products from countries like Brazil, Chile, Morocco, and others.

Recommended Actions for ECOWAS on Double Standard by Advance Countries on Export of Banned and Toxic Agricultural Inputs:

1. **Advocate for Harmonized Trade Standards:** ECOWAS should push for the adoption of consistent EU standards on pesticide usage, both for domestic production and for imports. This would protect West African farmers from being exposed to hazardous chemicals that are banned elsewhere.
2. **Strengthen Regional Regulations:** ECOWAS should develop and enforce stricter regulations on pesticide imports, ensuring that banned or highly hazardous substances cannot be legally sold or used within the region.
3. **Promote Sustainable Alternatives:** ECOWAS should invest in promoting and incentivizing sustainable agricultural practices, such as organic farming or the use of safer, eco-friendly pesticides, to reduce dependency on harmful chemicals.

4. **Enhance Capacity for Monitoring and Enforcement:** Establish or strengthen regional bodies to monitor the import and use of pesticides, ensuring compliance with both ECOWAS and international standards.
5. **Engage in Diplomatic Pressure on EU:** ECOWAS could collectively pressure the EU through diplomatic channels to stop the export of banned pesticides to African countries, aligning trade policies with global health and safety standards.
6. **Support Farmers' Advocacy:** Facilitate platforms where farmers can express their concerns regarding the double standards in pesticide regulations and collaborate with international bodies to advocate for fair trade practices.



Source: Route to Food^{xxxi}

False Narratives Pushed by Lobbyist - Threats to Our Food Sovereignty in West Africa: Countering them

Twenty-two (22) false narratives pushed by lobbyists regarding GMOs and pesticides in Africa. These narratives collectively shape public perception and policy decisions regarding GMOs and pesticides in Africa, often at the expense of local agricultural practices and food sovereignty:

1. **GMOs as a Silver Bullet:** Lobbyists claim that GMOs alone can solve all agricultural challenges, ignoring the complexity of food systems and local contexts.
2. **Pesticides Are Necessary for Organic Farming:** They argue that organic farming cannot succeed without synthetic pesticides, contradicting the principles of organic agriculture.
3. **Biotechnology Equals Modernization:** The narrative suggests that adopting GMOs is synonymous with modernization, overlooking effective traditional practices.
4. **Resistance to GMOs Is Anti-Progress:** The narrative frames opposition to GMOs as a rejection of progress and modernization, ignoring the importance of local knowledge and cultural practices in agriculture.
5. **Pesticides Are Always Safe:** Lobbyists assert that all pesticides are rigorously tested for safety, ignoring evidence of harmful effects on health and the environment.
6. **Increased Yields with Pesticides:** They claim that pesticides guarantee higher crop yields, while studies show over-reliance can lead to pest resistance and reduced biodiversity.
7. **Public Fear Is Unfounded:** The narrative downplays legitimate public concerns about GMOs and pesticides, dismissing them as irrational despite documented health issues.
8. **GMOs Will Reduce Food Prices:** The assertion is made that GMOs will lower food costs, yet market control by a few corporations often leads to higher prices for farmers.
9. **Weakening Biosafety Laws Is Necessary:** They assert that removing strict biosafety regulations will enhance agricultural productivity, disregarding the potential risks to health and the environment.
10. **Corporate Control Is Beneficial:** The narrative suggests that increased corporate control over seeds and agriculture will lead to economic growth –more jobs, revenue and increased productivity, while it often results in dependency and loss of local autonomy.
11. **GMO Technology Is Always Safe:** Lobbyists promote the idea that GMO technology is inherently safe and beneficial, despite ongoing debates and evidence suggesting otherwise.
12. **Pesticides Are Environmentally Friendly:** Lobbyists promote the idea that modern pesticides are eco-friendly, while many are linked to soil and water contamination.
13. **Global Standards Ensure Safety:** The belief that international standards guarantee safety overlooks discrepancies in enforcement and compliance among different countries.

- 14. Farmers Prefer GMOs and Pesticides:** The claim is made that most farmers favor these technologies, while many smallholder farmers advocate for agroecological practices instead.
- 15. Economic Necessity:** Proponents argue that pesticides are essential for economic growth, disregarding sustainable farming practices that can be more profitable.
- 16. Resistance to Climate Change:** The narrative suggests GMOs are the only solution to climate impacts, overlooking sustainable agricultural practices that can more effectively address these challenges.
- 17. Job Creation:** The assertion that GMOs create jobs ignores the consolidation of farming operations, which often leads to job losses in rural communities.
- 18. Cultural Acceptance:** Lobbyists claim widespread acceptance of GMOs in Africa, while many communities remain skeptical and prefer traditional methods of agriculture.
- 19. Public Health Risks Are Exaggerated:** They downplay legitimate health concerns associated with pesticide exposure, including potential carcinogenic effects, promoting a false sense of security regarding their use.
- 20. Carcinogenic Risks Are Location-Specific:** Lobbyists claim that what causes cancer in Europe may not cause cancer in Africa, suggesting that carcinogenic substances are harmless in different environmental contexts. This narrative undermines the universal biological mechanisms of cancer and ignores scientific evidence showing that known carcinogens pose risks regardless of geographical location.
- 21. Using GMO Reduces Pesticide Use:** Proponents argue that GM crops lead to reduced pesticide use by being resistant to pests, thereby decreasing the need for chemical applications. However, this narrative overlooks the fact that GM crops can also carry highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) into the human body through translocation, raising serious health concerns. Additionally, reliance on herbicide-resistant GMOs has resulted in increased herbicide use due to the emergence of resistant weed species, which ultimately perpetuates a cycle of dependency on agrochemicals rather than reducing it. Studies indicate that this over-reliance has led to a significant increase in herbicide applications, undermining the claim that GMOs effectively reduce pesticide use overall.^{xxxii}
- 22. International NGOs Supporting Resistance to GMOs as Neocolonialism:** The assertion that international NGOs like Greenpeace are neocolonial for opposing GMOs and HHPs is a fallacy because it misrepresents the motivations and actions of these organizations. While critics argue that these NGOs hinder Africa's development by resisting modern agricultural technologies, this perspective fails to acknowledge the legitimate concerns regarding public health and environmental sustainability associated with GMOs and HHPs. Moreover, framing resistance as neocolonial ignores the agency of African civil society organizations advocating for safe and sustainable agricultural practices tailored to local contexts. This narrative simplifies complex issues into a binary conflict between development and resistance, overlooking the nuanced debates surrounding food sovereignty and ecological integrity in Africa.

New Report Exposes US Government Funding of “Social Network” Attacking Pesticides and GMOs Critics

Further on false narratives pushed by lobbyists and threat to food sovereignty, a recent report^{xxxiii} published in September 2024 exposed how GMOs and pesticides industry actors/advocates have established a “private social network” to counter resistance to pesticides and genetically modified (GM) crops in Africa, Europe and other parts of the world, while also denigrating organic and other alternative farming methods.

This network profiled in an online platform hundreds of individuals from around the world deemed a threat to industry interests, including the US food writers Michael Pollan and Mark Bittman, the Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva and the Nigerian activist Nnimmo Bassey. Many profiles include personal details such as the names of family members, phone numbers, home addresses and even house values. The profiling is part of an effort – that was financed, in part, by US taxpayer dollars – to downplay pesticide dangers, discredit opponents and undermine international policymaking, according to court records, emails and other documents obtained by the non-profit newsroom Lighthouse Reports. This shows the extent these industry players and their allies in government are ready to go to consolidate these false narratives and protect their commercial interests.

Why should we worry over who controls our food?

The control of food systems is a critical issue that has far-reaching implications for communities, economies, and individual health. The question of who controls our food, be it the local farmers or foreign agricultural companies - has profound implications for economic stability, health outcomes, environmental sustainability, cultural identity, and overall community resilience. Understanding why we should be concerned about whether food is controlled by local farmers or foreign agricultural companies highlights the importance of food sovereignty. Some reasons to be concerned about includes:



1. Impact on Local Economies

When local farmers control food production, the economic benefits remain within the community. Supporting local agriculture helps create jobs, stimulates local businesses, and keeps money circulating in the local economy. In contrast, when foreign agrochemical companies dominate the market, profits are often repatriated to their home countries, depriving local communities of economic growth opportunities. For example, in many West African countries, smallholder farmers make up about 80% of agricultural producers but often struggle against large transnational corporations that prioritize their interests over local needs.^{xxxiv}

2. Food Quality and Nutrition

Local farmers typically engage in practices that prioritize the production of fresh, nutritious food. They are more likely to use sustainable farming methods that avoid harmful chemicals and pesticides, resulting in healthier produce for consumers. In contrast, reliance on imported agricultural inputs from large corporations can lead to lower-quality food that may be chemically treated to prolong shelf life but lacks nutritional value. Research indicates that locally grown produce retains more nutrients and flavour compared to items transported over long distances.^{xxxv,xxxvi}

3. Environmental Sustainability

Local farming practices often promote biodiversity and environmental sustainability. Small-scale farmers tend to utilize crop rotation, organic fertilizers, and natural pest control methods that protect ecosystems. Conversely, industrial agriculture controlled by foreign companies frequently relies on monocultures and synthetic fertilizers, which can lead to soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, and increased carbon emissions due to transportation.^{xxxvii} The overuse of chemical inputs not only harms the environment but also poses health risks to communities.

4. Food Sovereignty and Cultural Identity

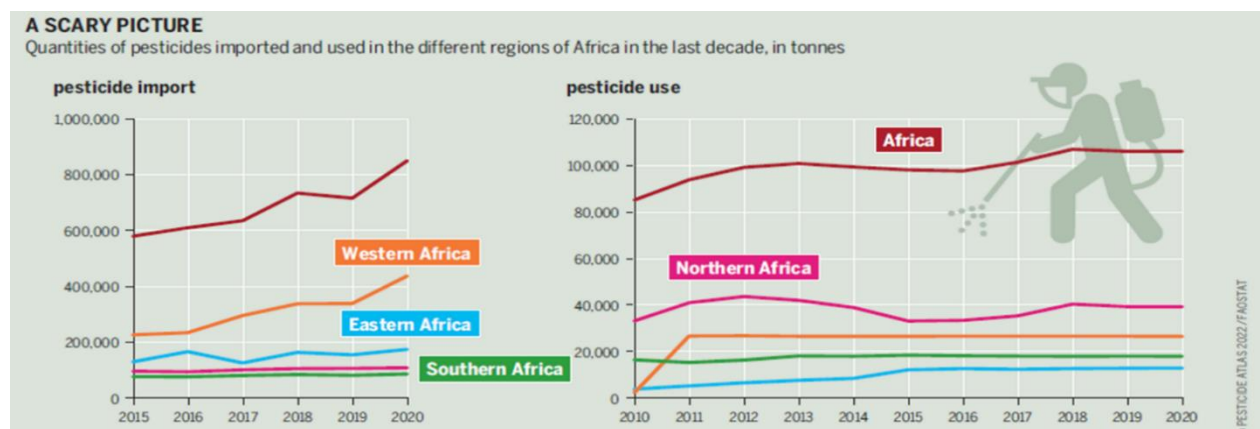
Food sovereignty emphasizes the right of communities to define their own food systems based on cultural preferences and ecological conditions. When foreign entities control food production, they often prioritize cash crops for export over culturally significant foods for local consumption. This shift can erode cultural identity and traditional dietary practices within communities. For instance, in Madagascar, land leased to foreign companies for biofuel production has resulted in local populations facing chronic hunger while their arable land is used for exports.^{xxxviii}

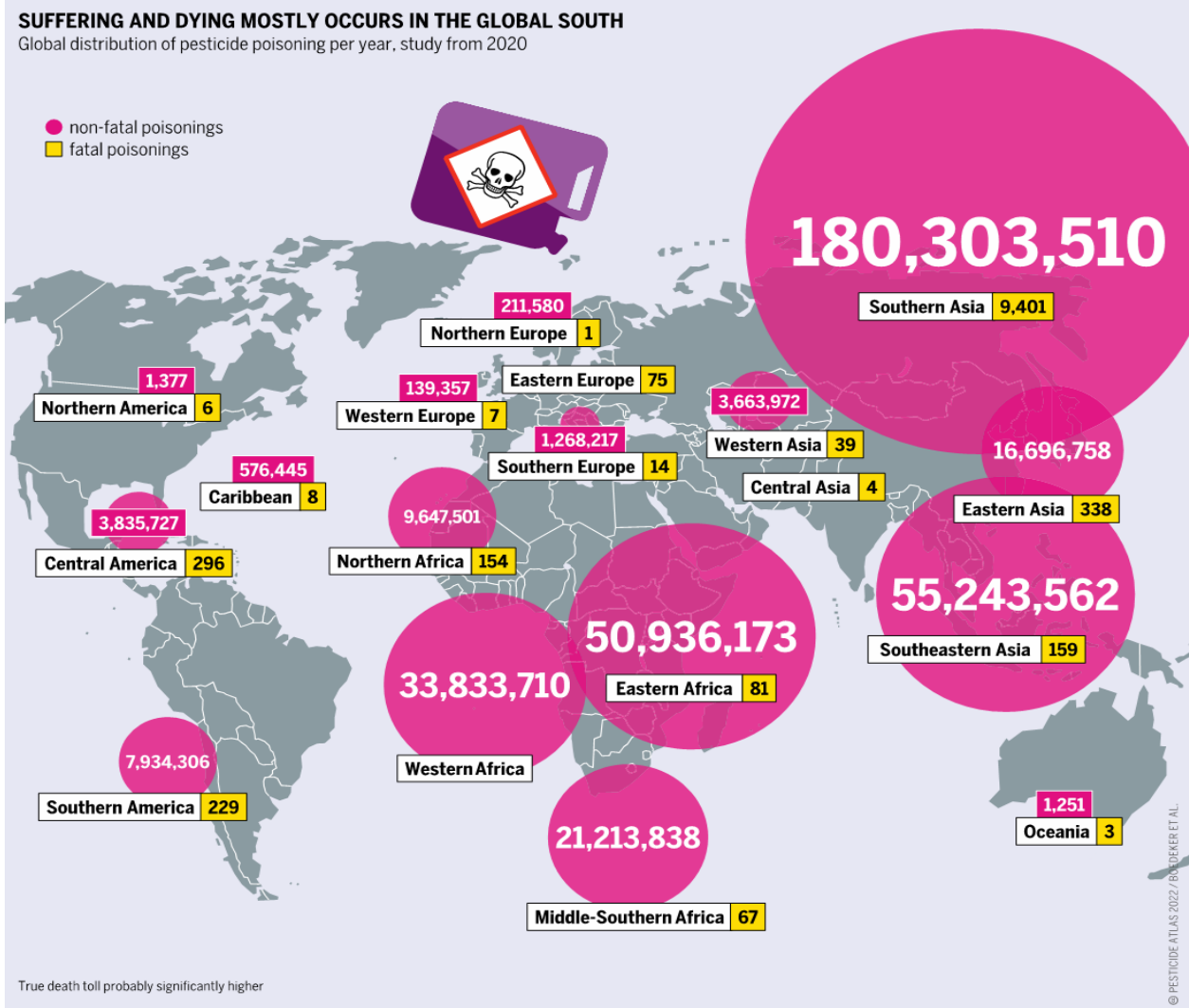
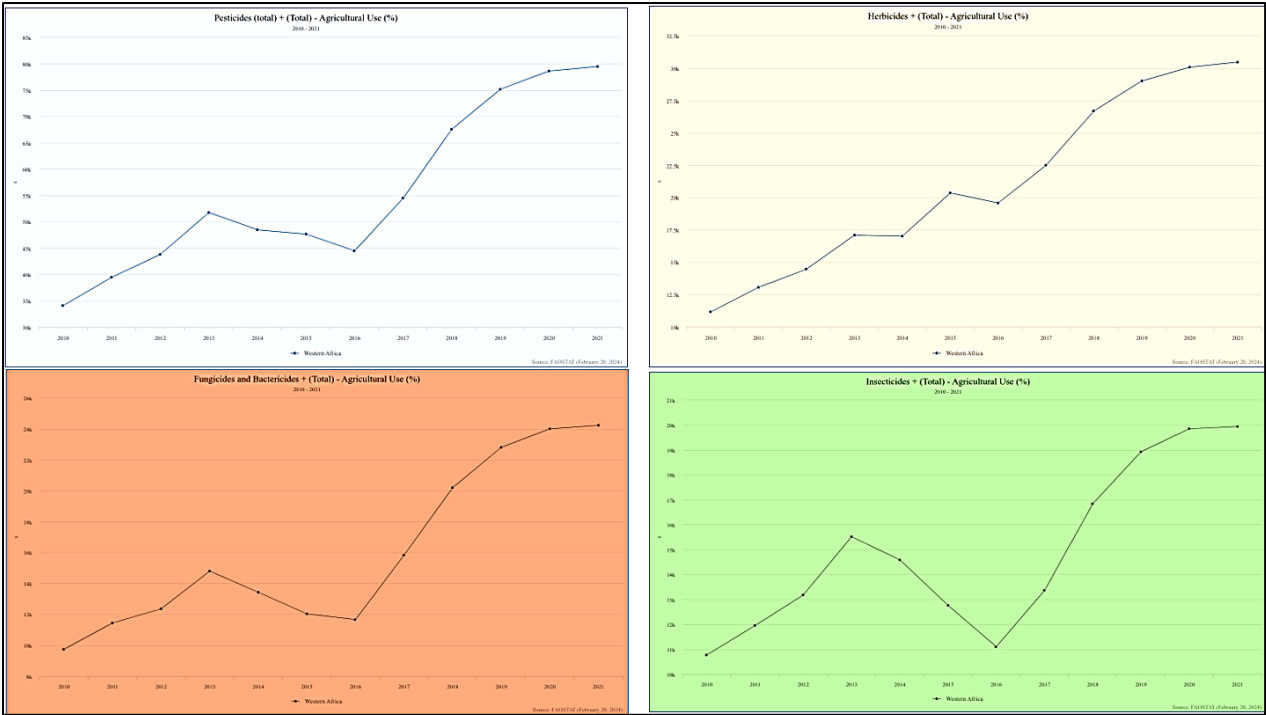
5. Vulnerability to Global Market Fluctuations

Dependence on foreign agrochemical companies makes communities vulnerable to global market fluctuations and supply chain disruptions. Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the Russia-Ukraine War highlighted how fragile global food systems can be when reliant on imports. Local farmers are better positioned to adapt quickly to changes in demand or supply constraints since they operate within their communities.^{xxxix}

6. Health Risks from Chemical Exposure

When food production is dominated by large agrochemical companies, there is a higher likelihood of chemical exposure for both farmers and consumers. Imported fertilizers and pesticides may contain harmful substances that can contaminate water supplies and affect public health. For instance, studies have shown that chemical runoff from agricultural fields can lead to health issues such as respiratory diseases and other chronic diseases among community members. In fact, over 45% of pesticides used in Nigeria are not only Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs), but banned in Europe (where they are imported from) – costing the country huge export revenue losses from food rejection from Europe – the Double Standard.^{xi}





7. Loss of Control over Food Systems

When foreign corporations dominate food production, local communities lose control over their food systems. This loss can manifest in various ways—such as rising prices for basic staples due to corporate pricing strategies or lack of access to land as large agribusinesses acquire arable land for large-scale production.^{xii} Communities that cannot influence their food systems may find themselves at the mercy of corporate decisions driven primarily by profit motives rather than community welfare.

Benefits of Food Sovereignty

1. **Empowerment of Local Communities:** Food sovereignty empowers local communities to control their food systems, ensuring that food production meets local needs and preferences. It promotes community resilience and self-sufficiency.
2. **Resilience to External Shocks:** By prioritizing local food production and reducing dependence on imports, food sovereignty enhances resilience to external shocks, such as global market fluctuations, war, trade sanctions, and climate change. By reducing dependence on food imports and improving domestic food production, ECOWAS countries can better withstand global market shocks and maintain economic stability.
3. **Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** Food sovereignty advocates for sustainable agricultural practices that protect the environment, preserve biodiversity, and ensure the long-term viability of local food systems.
4. **Cultural Preservation and Local Diets:** Food sovereignty supports the preservation of traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and local diets, which are often more diverse and nutritious than imported alternatives.
5. **Increased Food Security:** Food sovereignty allows countries to prioritize domestic food production and reduce dependence on imports, ensuring a more stable food supply and better addressing food security needs. Food sovereignty can lead to increased food self-sufficiency, which can reduce the need for food aid and improve the overall food security of the region.
6. **Improved Trade Balance:** By focusing on export crops that are competitive in the global market, ECOWAS countries can improve their trade balance and generate more foreign exchange earnings.
7. **Enhanced Rural Development:** Food sovereignty initiatives can create more opportunities for rural development by promoting local food systems, supporting smallholder farmers, and increasing agricultural productivity. Food sovereignty can lead to improved livelihoods for farmers and rural communities by providing better access to markets, higher prices for their products, and more control over their agricultural activities.
8. **Increased Government Revenue:** Governments can generate more revenue through taxes and tariffs on domestic food production and trade, which can be used to fund social programs and infrastructure development.
9. **Reduced Fiscal Stress:** By reducing dependence on food imports and improving domestic food production, ECOWAS countries can reduce their fiscal stress and allocate more resources to other sectors.

10. **Increased Regional Integration:** Food sovereignty can promote regional integration by encouraging cooperation among ECOWAS countries on agricultural policies, trade, and market access.

The Role of CSOs in the Food Sovereignty Movement in West Africa: Successes and Challenges.

Coalitions and Civil society organizations (CSOs) in and across West African countries have been actively engaged in the fight for food sovereignty, facing both successes and challenges in their efforts. These groups include:

1. Country: West Africa (Regional)

- **Organization/Group name:** ActionAid West Africa
- **Website or social media:** <https://actionaid.org>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocating for social justice, gender equality, and sustainable development across multiple countries including Senegal, Nigeria, Gambia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.
- **Period:** Active since 1972; ongoing initiatives across West Africa.
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Improved access to education and health services for marginalized communities.
 - o Enhanced livelihoods through capacity-building programs for smallholder farmers.
 - o Success:
 - o Successfully influenced national policies to promote gender equality and women's rights in agriculture.
 - o Developed community-based programs that empower women farmers and promote sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Challenge:** Addressing systemic inequalities and resistance from entrenched interests in governance.

2. Country: Continental (Africa)

- **Organization/Group name:** African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB). The African Centre for Biodiversity plays a crucial role in advocating for sustainable agricultural practices, protecting local seed systems, and ensuring that smallholder farmers have a voice in shaping food policies across Africa.
Focus Areas:
 - GM & Biosafety: Building public awareness about the risks associated with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and advocating for biosafety measures.
 - Seed Sovereignty: Resisting commercial seed laws that threaten smallholder farmers' rights to maintain agricultural biodiversity.
 - Corporate Expansion: Monitoring corporate practices in agriculture, conducting research, and fostering popular resistance against harmful agricultural inputs.
- **Website or social media:** <https://www.acbio.org.za/en>
- **Campaigns:** ACB works towards food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa, focusing on biosafety, seed systems, and agricultural biodiversity while dismantling inequalities and resisting corporate-industrial expansion in food and agriculture systems.
- **Period:** Established in 2003, registered in 2004; name changed to African Centre for Biodiversity in 2015; ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Developed public awareness and capacity to respond to GM technologies and corporate practices threatening smallholder farmers.
 - o Conducted research and advocacy leading to policy recommendations that support seed sovereignty and agricultural biodiversity.
 - o Successfully opposed the aggressive push of the Green Revolution in Africa, promoting agroecological practices as alternatives.
 - o Established extensive continental and global networks to support local seed systems and resist corporate capture of agriculture.
- **Challenge:** Overcoming the influence of corporate interests in seed laws and agricultural policies that undermine smallholder farmers' rights, resistance from government policies favouring industrial agriculture, and access to biodiversity.

3. Country: Africa (Pan-African Organization)

- **Organization/Group name:** African Organic Network (AfrONet)
- **Website or social media:** <https://afronet.africa/>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advancing organic agriculture across Africa, promoting sustainable farming practices, and establishing a continental platform for organic agriculture.
- **Period:** Established in 2012, ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:** Creation of a network that unites various National Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAMs) across Africa, facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- **Success:** Increased visibility and advocacy for organic farming practices at national and continental levels, influencing agricultural policies.
- **Challenge:** Overcoming barriers to organic farming adoption, including market access and competition from conventional agriculture.

4. Country: Nigeria

- **Organization/Group name:** Alliance for Action on Pesticide in Nigeria (AAPN)
AAPN a loose alliance of CSOs, academia, farmers, media experts, researchers and experts who are committed to increasing awareness and demanding improved regulation of pesticide entry, trade, and use in Nigeria while promoting sustainable food systems that safeguard community health and environmental integrity
- **Campaigns/Issues:**
 - ✓ Advocating for the phasing out of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) and promoting safer, sustainable agricultural practices.
 - ✓ Supporting research and regulatory drafting and implementing oversight on pesticide trade, use and monitoring
 - ✓ Raising public awareness about pesticide hazards to inform choices regarding pesticide use.
 - ✓ Advocating for improved pesticide regulations to protect human health and the environment.
 - ✓ Promoting Integrated Pest Management (IPM) systems as alternatives to conventional pesticide-dependent farming, and promoting organic agriculture and agroecology practices.
 - ✓ Add voice to regional and global campaign in the called for ending the double standard in the international trade of banned pesticides and Hazardous pesticides to the global south
 - ✓ Opposing the commercialization of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) due to concerns over safety, environmental impact, and food sovereignty.
- **Website or social media:** <https://aapn.org.ng>
- **Period:** Established on October 28, 2021; ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:**
 - Enhanced public awareness of pesticide issues has empowered farmers and consumers to make informed choices regarding pesticide use.
 - Initiated productive discussions with policymakers aimed at improving regulations governing the importation, trade, and usage of pesticides in Nigeria.
 - AAPN made a notable impact by submitting a strong position on the proposed Pesticide Council Bill, which uncovered attempts by CropLife to influence HHP usage through legislation. This engagement led to AAPN's inclusion in the Legislative Technical Committee responsible for reviewing the bill.
 - The launch of the report "Time for a Detox in Agriculture: Pesticide Use in Four States in Nigeria" on November 25, 2021, prompted the Federal Ministry of Health to issue a memo calling for urgent action to strengthen regulations on HHPs.
 - Following AAPN's advocacy efforts, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development banned eight HHPs on March 7, 2022. Additionally, NAFDAC announced bans on Paraquat and Atrazine-based products in November 2023.
 - AAPN's collaborative initiatives facilitated public dialogues on pesticide impacts, including a significant event held in Kano from February 28 to March 1, 2022.
 - Their advocacy work has earned them a seat on the National Council on Chemical Management in Nigeria (NCCM), further solidifying their influence in regulatory discussions.
 - AAPN has actively contributed to the anti-GMO campaign by raising concerns over the introduction of GMOs in Nigeria, highlighting risks to public health and biodiversity while advocating for food sovereignty against corporate control over seeds.

- **Challenge:**
 - o Facing resistance from agribusiness interests that benefit from the continued use of HHPs and conventional farming methods.
 - o Navigating regulatory challenges within the Nigerian government that may hinder the implementation of stricter pesticide regulations.
 - o Ensuring sustained engagement and participation from farmers and community members in advocacy efforts amid competing priorities.

5. Country: Continental (Africa)

- **Organization/Group name:** Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)
Focuses on promoting food sovereignty, agroecology, and the rights of smallholder farmers across Africa. The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is a broad alliance of different civil society actors that are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. These include African farmers' organizations, African NGO networks, specialist African NGOs, consumer movements in Africa, international organizations that support the stance of AFSA, and individuals. Its members represent smallholder farmers, pastoralists, hunter/gatherers, indigenous peoples; faith based institutions and environmentalists from across Africa. It is a network of networks and currently with 30 active members.

Campaigns/Issues:

- ✓ Advocating for policies that prioritize smallholder farming and agroecological practices.
 - ✓ Resisting the corporate industrialization of agriculture, which threatens biodiversity and community rights.
 - ✓ Promoting traditional knowledge systems and sustainable land management practices.
 - ✓ Engaging in policy dialogues with the African Union to influence agricultural policies at a continental level.
- **Website or social media:** <https://afsafrika.org>
 - **Campaigns/Issues:** Promoting agroecology and resisting corporate control over food systems.
 - **Period:** Established in 2008; officially launched at COP 17 in December 2011; ongoing initiatives
 - **Outcomes and Successes:**
 - o Influenced policy discussions at the AU level regarding food sovereignty and sustainable agricultural practices.
 - o AFSA's report released at COP 17 highlighted how food sovereignty can contribute to climate mitigation while ensuring food security, gaining traction among policymakers.
 - o Increased visibility of issues related to land grabbing, biodiversity loss, and the rights of local communities through campaigns and public awareness initiatives.
 - o AFSA has been actively engaging with the African Union to advocate for policies that support sustainable land management, promoting organic fertilizers and soil health as critical components of food sovereignty:
 - o AFSA emphasizes the importance of healthy soils for sustainable agriculture. They have launched campaigns aimed at educating farmers about soil conservation techniques, organic farming practices, and the importance of maintaining soil biodiversity.
 - **Challenge:**
 - o Overcoming the entrenched interests of corporate agriculture that promote industrial farming practices detrimental to local ecosystems and communities.
 - o Addressing the political complexities within AU member states that hinder effective implementation of food sovereignty policies.

Ensuring adequate representation of marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, within decision-making processes related to agriculture.

6. Country: Senegal

- **Organization/Group name:** Association of Peasant Seed Producers (ASPSP)
Campaigns/Issues:
Promoting the preservation of indigenous seeds and traditional farming practices.
Advocating against the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture.
Supporting smallholder farmers in accessing quality seeds and enhancing agricultural biodiversity.
Engaging in awareness campaigns about the importance of seed sovereignty and food security.
- **Website or social media:** <https://aspspsenegal.wixsite.com/aspsp-senegal>

- **Period:** Established in 2005; ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Successfully mobilized local farmers to participate in seed production and conservation efforts.
 - o Increased awareness among communities about the benefits of using indigenous seeds and the risks associated with GMOs.
 - o Developed a network of seed producers that promotes collaboration and knowledge sharing among farmers.
 - o Influenced local agricultural policies to support seed sovereignty and the rights of smallholder farmers.
 - o The organization has implemented programs focused on collecting, preserving, and distributing indigenous seeds to local farmers.
 - o ASPSP conducts workshops to educate farmers about sustainable agricultural practices, seed production techniques, and the importance of biodiversity.
 - o The organization actively participates in national dialogues regarding agricultural policies, advocating for the rights of peasant seed producers and promoting sustainable farming practices.
- **Challenge:**
 - o Overcoming the challenges posed by corporate interests promoting GMOs and hybrid seeds that threaten traditional farming practices.
 - o Ensuring adequate funding and resources for seed conservation projects and farmer training programs.

7. Country: Togo

- **Organization/Group name and focus area:** Association pour le Développement et la Transformation (ADT-Togo)/Friends of the Earth Togo
Focuses on promoting sustainable agriculture, agroecology, and food sovereignty in Togo. ADT-Togo plays a vital role in advocating for sustainable agricultural practices and food sovereignty, focusing on empowering local communities to enhance their resilience against economic and environmental challenges.
- **Website or social media:** <https://www.amiterre.org/about>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocating for the rights of farmers, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and enhancing food security through community engagement.
- **Period:** Established in 2003, ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Improved agricultural practices among local farmers through training and capacity building.
 - o Increased awareness of agroecological methods and their benefits for sustainable development.
 - o Successfully implemented projects that have led to improved food security and resilience among farming communities.
 - o Established partnerships with various stakeholders to promote agroecology in Togo.
- **Challenge:** Overcoming limited access to resources and support for smallholder farmers in adopting sustainable practices.

8. Country: Senegal

- **Organization/Group name:** Association pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique au Sénégal (APAB)
- **Website or social media:** <https://apab.sn>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Promotion of organic farming practices and sustainable agriculture policies.
- **Period:** Established in 2010, ongoing efforts to support organic producers in Senegal.
- **Outcomes:** Improved market access for organic products among local farmers.
- **Success:** Successful initiatives promoting organic certification processes for farmers.
- **Challenge:** Competition from conventional agricultural products affecting market share.

9. Country: Mali

- **Organization/Group name:** Association Nourrir Sans Détruire (ANSD). ANSD is a national non-profit organization that was created in 2011 and dedicated to the fight against poverty, hunger and social injustice through the promotion of agro-ecology. Its overall objective is to contribute to the socio-economic development of disadvantaged populations, particularly rural populations, through the fight against hunger.
- **Website or social media:** <https://ansdbf.org/>
- **Campaigns:** ANSD has focused on promoting agroecology and food sovereignty, especially in the face of climate change challenges in Mali.
- **Period:** 2010 - Present
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Implemented the "Agroecology for Food Sovereignty" project, which led to the adoption of agroecological practices by over 3,000 farmers in Mali (2014-2017).
 - o Advocated for and achieved policy changes in Mali's agricultural sector, which now prioritizes support for agroecological farming (2018).

10. Country: Ghana

- **Organization/Group name and focus area:** Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) - Focuses on transforming indigenous institutions and local groups into vibrant grassroots civil society organizations to enhance rural community participation in development processes.
- **Campaigns/Issues:**
 - ✓ Facilitating dialogue on the role of indigenous knowledge and institutions in modern community development.
 - ✓ Strengthening sustainable food systems, traditional health systems, and natural resource management.
 - ✓ Promoting traditional women leadership and enhancing community participation in decision-making processes.
 - ✓ Advocating against the commercialization of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Ghana
- **Website or social media:** <https://cikodgh.com>
- **Period:** Established in 2003; ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Successfully strengthened chiefs and traditional women leaders in Ghana, enabling them to provide effective leadership for community development initiatives across various sectors.
 - o Enhanced community engagement through the use of participatory tools such as Community Institutional Resource Mapping and Community Visioning, allowing communities to identify their resources and development priorities.
 - o Increased awareness of indigenous knowledge's importance in addressing local challenges, leading to more culturally relevant solutions in community development.
 - o CIKOD's efforts have led to significant dialogue regarding the commercialization of GMOs, emphasizing that such solutions do not address the underlying issues of food security in Ghana.
- **Challenge:**
 - o Overcoming resistance from government and corporate interests that may prioritize extractive industries over community rights and environmental sustainability.
 - o Addressing the need for greater visibility and strengthening of other indigenous institutions to enhance their role as vehicles for community participation.
 - o Ensuring sustained funding and resources to support ongoing programs aimed at empowering communities through indigenous knowledge.

11. Country: Regional (West Africa)

- **Organization/Group name:** Coalition for the Protection of African Genetic Heritage (COPAGEN)
Coalition for the Protection of Africa's Genetic Heritage (COPAGEN) comprises a membership of farmers' organizations, trade unions, women organizations, youth groups, academics, NGOs in ten countries; Benin, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and the Ivory Coast. COPAGEN works on the following issues: GMOs, farmers' rights, land issues, agrofuels, agricultural policies and food sovereignty. The regional coordination group meets at least once a year between two GAs, convened by the Regional Focal Point.
- **Website or social media:** <http://www.copagen.org/>
- **Campaigns:** COPAGEN has focused on safeguarding Africa's genetic heritage, opposing the introduction of GMOs, and promoting food sovereignty through agroecology.
- **Period:** 2004 - Present
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Led successful campaigns against the introduction of GMOs in Burkina Faso, resulting in the government banning GMO cotton in 2016.
 - o Promoted seed sovereignty initiatives, helping to preserve indigenous seeds and traditional farming practices.
- **Challenge:** Overcoming the influence of corporate interests in agricultural policies and national policies favouring industrialist.

12. Country: Mali

- **Organization/Group name:** Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes du Mali (CNOP)
- **Website or social media:** <https://cnopmali.org>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocacy for peasant rights and sustainable agriculture practices.
- **Period:** Ongoing since 2006.
- **Outcomes:** Increased participation of smallholder farmers in policy-making.
- **Success:** Successful mobilization of farmers against GMOs.
- **Challenge:** Resistance from government policies favoring industrial agriculture.

13. Country: Senegal

- **Organization/Group name:** Dynamics for an Agroecological Transition in Senegal (DyTAES)
- **Website or social media:** <https://dytaes.sn>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Promoting agroecological practices, advocating for policy changes to support sustainable agriculture, and enhancing food sovereignty in Senegal.
- **Period:** Established in 2015; ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Increased awareness of agroecology among local farmers and communities.
 - o Successful implementation of agroecological practices in various farming communities.
 - o Established partnerships with local and international NGOs to promote sustainable agricultural practices.
 - o Influenced local agricultural policies to incorporate agroecological principles.
- **Challenge:** Overcoming resistance from conventional agricultural sectors and securing funding for agroecological initiatives.

14. Country: Nigeria

- **Organization/Group name:** Environmental Rights Action (ERA) / Friends of the Earth, Nigeria
- **Website or social media:** <https://www.foei.org/member-groups/Nigeria>
- **Campaigns:** ERA has been involved in advocating for food sovereignty by opposing industrial agriculture and promoting sustainable farming practices.
- **Period:** 2005 - Present
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Successfully led campaigns against land grabbing in Nigeria, protecting smallholder farmers from displacement and promoting local food production (2013-2015).

- Contributed to the drafting of Nigeria's Biosafety Law, ensuring that provisions were included to protect the interests of smallholder farmers (2015).
- **Challenges:** Overcoming the influence of corporate interests in agricultural policies, strong lobbyist and donor groups sponsoring, pushing GM, unfavourable seed laws, and marginalisation of small holder farmers.

15. Country: Benin

- **Organization/Group name:** Fédération des Organisations de Producteurs Agricoles du Bénin (FOPA-Benin)
- **Website or social media:** <https://www.fuprobenin.org/>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocacy for farmers' rights and sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Period:** Active since 2005.
- **Outcomes:** Improved access to resources for smallholder farmers.
- **Success:** Increased production of organic crops among members.
- **Challenge:** Economic pressures from global market fluctuations.

16. Country: Senegal

- **Organization/Group name:** Federation of Agro-Pastors of Diender (FAPD).^{xlii}
The Diender Agropastoral Federation is a peasant organization of about 3,000 members whose main objective is to promote healthy and sustainable agriculture for better food security in the Niayes area. It was established in 1994 and operates in the Niayes area where market gardening, fishing and small business activities dominate. FAPD has the mission of raising awareness among the population about the dangers of chemical inputs, promoting agroecological practices, protecting natural resources, improving the status of rural women and household living conditions, strengthening collective and solidarity development and consolidating the empowerment and professionalization of producers.
- **Website or social media:** Not available online; operates locally.
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocacy for agroecology, food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture, livestock management, and environmental protection.
- **Period:** Established in 1994, ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:** Implementation of training programs and awareness campaigns on agroecological practices among local farmers and pastoralists.
- **Success:** Strengthened community resilience to climate change impacts through sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Challenge:** Limited access to resources and markets for agro-pastoral products.

17. Country: Senegal

- **Organization/Group name:** Fédération Nationale pour l'Agriculture Biologique (FENAB)
- **Website or social media:** <https://fenab.org/>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Promoting organic and ecological agriculture, food sovereignty, and research & development in agriculture.
- **Period:** Established in March 2008, ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes and successes:**
 - Formation of a National Platform for Ecological and Organic Agriculture, uniting over 200 organizations across Senegal's four agroecological zones.
 - ENAB brings together 6 support organizations which are: Enda Pronat, Agrecol Afrique, Green Senegal, ASPAB, GIT and CEAS and 18 producer organizations.
 - The federation has set up a National Platform for Ecological and Organic Agriculture which brings together more than 200 organizations spread across the 4 agroecological zones of Senegal: Casamance (Kolda, Sédhiou, Ziguinchor), the Center-East (Tambacounda, Kédougou, Fatick, Kaolack, Kaffrine), the Peanut Basin zone (Dakar, Thiès, Niayes, Diourbel) and the River Valley (Louga, Saint Louis, Matam).
 - Increased awareness and adoption of organic farming practices among producers, consumers, and stakeholders in Senegal.

- **Challenge:** Overcoming barriers to widespread adoption of organic practices and ensuring access to markets for organic products.

18. Country: Ghana

- **Organization/group name:** Food Sovereignty Ghana (FSG)
- **Website or social media:** <https://foodsovereigntyghana.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/FoodSovereigntyGhana/>
- **Campaigns/issues:** Advocacy against GMOs, promoting indigenous seeds, supporting agroecology
- **Period:** Established in 2012, ongoing initiatives
- **Outcomes:** Raised awareness about the importance of indigenous seeds
- **Success:** Successful campaigns leading to bans on certain GMOs
- **Challenge:** Resistance from agribusiness interests

19. Country: Regional (West Africa)

- **Organization/Group name:** Friends of the Earth Africa (FoE Africa). FoEA seeks to contribute to the strengthening of national groups in Africa and the development of shared strategies to improve the quality of life for vulnerable peoples in Africa, and to ensure that people have a real voice that influences and develops democratic societies and governance structures within Africa.
- **Website or social media:** <https://foeafrica.org>
- **Campaigns:** Friends of the Earth Africa has led various campaigns on agroecology and food sovereignty, focusing on resisting genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and promoting sustainable agriculture.
- **Period:** 2007 - Present
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Organized the "No to GMOs" campaign, leading to increased awareness and policy shifts in countries like Ghana and Nigeria, where stricter regulations on GMOs were introduced.
 - o Played a key role in the "We Feed the World" campaign, which promoted agroecology and small-scale farming as alternatives to industrial agriculture.
- **Challenge:** Overcoming the influence of corporate interests in seed laws and agricultural policies that undermine smallholder farmers' rights and access to biodiversity.

20. Country: Ghana and Nigeria

- **Organization/Group name and focus area:** Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) Bawku and Ibadan Chapter focuses on sustainable landscape management, food sovereignty, and agroecology in the Bawku region.
- **Website or social media:** <https://thinklandscape.globallandscapesforum.org>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Engaging local farmers to reduce agrochemical use, promote manure composting, and enhance biodiversity through local species planting.
- **Period:** Established in 2021, ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes and successes:**
 - o Increased community engagement through local radio broadcasts and direct outreach to farmers in Bawku Ghana.
 - o Set up a tree nursery providing free seedlings of local species to enhance environmental sustainability.
 - o Expanded outreach from 100 farmers to nearly 500 adopting sustainable agricultural practices in Ibadan.
 - o Positive community response to tree planting initiatives, with increased participation in sustainable practices.
 - o Training programs initiated to help residents care for their seedlings effectively.

Challenge: Addressing issues related to land degradation, climate change impacts, and access to credit for smallholder farmers.

21. Country: Nigeria

- **Organization/Group name:** Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)
HOMEF is an ecological think tank advocating for socio-ecological justice and food sovereignty in Nigeria and Africa at large.
Campaigns/Issues:
 - ✓ Opposing the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Nigeria and advocating for sustainable agricultural practices.
 - ✓ Promoting food sovereignty and environmental justice through community engagement and awareness campaigns.
 - ✓ Addressing climate change impacts on agriculture and advocating for agroecological farming methods that align with local socio-economic contexts.
- **Website or social media:** <https://homef.org> ; [@ecohomef](#)
- **Period:** Active since 2013; ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:**
 - Increased awareness among farmers and consumers about the risks associated with GMOs, including potential health hazards and environmental degradation.
 - Successfully mobilized public opinion against GMOs, leading to significant discussions in legislative bodies regarding their introduction in Nigeria.
 - Put political pressure on the legislative chamber into initiating an investigation into the introduction of GMOs, halting new approvals until the investigation's completion.
 - Influenced key stakeholders, including policymakers and community leaders, to prioritize public health, biodiversity, and support for smallholder farmers through agroecological practices.
 - Conducted market shelf surveys revealing over 50 processed foods containing GM ingredients, raising awareness about labelling issues and consumer rights.
 - Empowering communities towards transition to agroecology practices
 - Increasing awareness and demanding increase regulation of the use and import of pesticides.
 - HOMEF has played a pivotal role in advocating for a thorough investigation into the introduction of GMOs in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for unbiased research to assess their potential impacts on food security and biodiversity.
 - The organization conducts workshops and outreach programs aimed at educating communities about the dangers of GMOs and the benefits of agroecological practices.
 - HOMEF collaborates with other civil society organizations, such as the GMO-Free Nigeria Alliance, to strengthen advocacy efforts against GMOs and promote food sovereignty.
 - HOMEF also leads the Alliance for Action on Pesticides in Nigeria (AAPN) in the demand for improved regulation of pesticides use and trade in Nigeria.
- **Challenge:**
 - Facing resistance from government bodies and agribusiness interests that promote GMOs as solutions to agricultural challenges, complicating advocacy efforts.
 - Navigating the complexities of regulatory frameworks that may favor corporate interests over smallholder farmers' rights and environmental sustainability.

22. Country: Mali

- **Organization/Group name:** Mouvement Biologique Malien (MOBIOM)
- **Website or social media:** <http://www.mobiom.org>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Promotion of organic farming practices among smallholder farmers.
- **Period:** Established in 2003, ongoing efforts to promote organic agriculture in Mali.
- **Outcomes:** Improved access to organic farming resources for farmers.
- **Success:** Increased production of organic crops leading to better market access.
- **Challenge:** Limited consumer awareness about organic products.

23. Country: Regional (West Africa)

- **Organization/Group name:** La Via Campesina Africa
- **Website or social media:** <https://viacampesina.org/en/regions/west-and-central-africa/>
- **Campaigns:** La Via Campesina Africa, part of the global La Via Campesina movement, has been advocating for the rights of smallholder farmers, land rights, and food sovereignty.

- **Period:** 2003 - Present
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Mobilized farmers across West Africa in the Global Day of Action for Food Sovereignty in 2010, raising awareness and pushing for policy changes.
 - o Contributed to the establishment of regional platforms for smallholder farmers to engage in policy dialogues with ECOWAS.
- **Challenge:** Overcoming the influence of corporate interests in agricultural policies and national policies favouring industrialist.

24. Country: Regional (West Africa)

- **Organization/Group name:** Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA). ROPPA is an initiative specific to farmers' organizations and agricultural producers in West Africa. It brings together 13 member national farmer organizations (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo) and associated member farmer organizations (Cap- Green, Nigeria).
- **Website or social media:** <https://www.roppa-afrique.org/about-us/>
- **Campaigns:** ROPPA has been a leading voice in advocating for food sovereignty across West Africa, focusing on the promotion of family farming and sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Period:** 2000 - Present
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Successfully lobbied for the adoption of the ECOWAP (ECOWAS Agricultural Policy) in 2005, which emphasized support for family farming.
 - o Influenced the development of the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) 2011-2020, which included provisions for promoting food sovereignty.
- **Challenges:** Overcoming the influence of corporate interests in seed laws and agricultural policies that undermine smallholder farmers' rights and access to biodiversity.

25. Country: Ghana

- **Organization/Group name:** Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFAG)
- **Website or social media:** <http://pfag.org.gh>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocacy for the rights of smallholder farmers and sustainable practices.
- **Period:** Active since 2007.
- **Outcomes:** Improved policy frameworks supporting smallholder farmers.
- **Success:** Increased visibility and political engagement for food sovereignty issues.
- **Challenge:** Competing interests from agribusiness sectors.

26. Country: Burkina Faso

- **Organization/Group name:** Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs de l'Agriculture Familiale du Burkina (ROPPA)
- **Website or social media:** <https://www.roppa-afrique.org/>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocacy for agroecological practices and food sovereignty policies.
- **Period:** Ongoing since 2000.
- **Outcomes:** Enhanced capacity of local farmers through training and resources.
- **Success:** Strengthened farmer networks across the region.
- **Challenge:** Limited access to funding and resources.

27. Country: Nigeria

- **Organization/Group name:** Small Scale Women Farmers Organization in Nigeria (SWOFON)
- **Website or social media:** <https://swofon.org/>

- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocating for women-friendly agricultural policies, women's access to land, and promoting the rights of smallholder women farmers across Nigeria.
- **Period:** Established in August 2012; ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:**
 - o Mobilized over 500,000 women farmers across 36 states to advocate for their rights and access to resources.
 - o Conducted budget tracking and analysis of national agriculture budgets to ensure gender-responsive policies.
 - o Successfully organized national dialogues on gender-responsive agriculture policy that influenced decision-making processes.
 - o Supported recommendations to the African Union on women's land rights during the 33rd GIMAC Conference in Ethiopia.
- **Challenge:** Overcoming cultural barriers that limit women's participation in agriculture and ensuring adequate funding for women's initiatives.

28. Country: Sierra Leone

- **Organization/Group name:** Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF)
- **Website or social media:** <https://www.silnorf.org>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocacy for the right to food and sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Period:** Established in 2014, ongoing activities.
- **Outcomes:** Increased awareness of food rights among communities.
- **Success:** Successful campaigns leading to policy changes on land rights.
- **Challenge:** Limited governmental support for grassroots movements.

29. Country: Liberia

- **Organization/Group name:** Sustainable Development Institute (SDI)
- **Website or social media:** <http://www.sdiliberia.org>
- **Campaigns/Issues:** Advocacy for sustainable land use and food sovereignty.
- **Period:** Active since 2002.
- **Outcomes:** Improved community engagement in land management issues.
- **Success:** Increased recognition of indigenous farming practices.
- **Challenge:** Ongoing deforestation and land conflicts.

30. - Country: Togo

- **Organization/Group name and focus area:** The Togolese Coordination of Peasant Organizations and Agricultural Producers (CTOP) - Focuses on advocating for the rights of smallholder farmers, promoting food sovereignty, and sustainable agricultural practices in Togo.
- **Website or social media:** <https://ctoptogo.org/nos-realisations-plaidoyer-et-representation/>
- **Campaigns/Issues:**
 - o Advocating for policies that support smallholder farmers and enhance food sovereignty.
 - o Promoting agroecological practices to improve food production and resilience against climate change.
 - o Engaging in campaigns against land grabbing and advocating for land rights for local communities.
 - o Collaborating with regional networks to influence agricultural policies at national and continental levels.
- **Period:** Established in 2003; ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes and successes:**
 - o Successfully mobilized peasant organizations across Togo to advocate for their rights and interests.

- Increased awareness among local farmers about sustainable agricultural practices and their benefits.
 - Strengthened community engagement in policy dialogues regarding agriculture and food systems.
 - CTOP has successfully lobbied for the inclusion of peasant organizations in national agricultural policy discussions, ensuring that the voices of smallholder farmers are heard. They have organized workshops and forums that bring together farmers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to discuss pressing agricultural issues.
 - CTOP represents Togolese farmers in regional networks, allowing them to share experiences, challenges, and solutions with counterparts across West Africa. This collaboration enhances their capacity to influence policies at both the national and continental levels.
 - The organization emphasizes the importance of soil health as a foundation for sustainable agriculture. They promote agroecological practices that improve soil fertility, such as organic farming techniques, composting, and crop rotation.
- **Challenge:**
- Overcoming the influence of corporate interests in agriculture that threaten smallholder farmers' rights and access to resources.
 - Addressing systemic barriers that limit access to markets, financing, and technology for smallholder producers.

31. Country: Togo and Continental

- **Organization/Group name:** Young Volunteers for the Environment (YVE)
 Young Volunteers for the Environment (YVE), or Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement (JVE) in French, is a non-governmental organization founded in 2001 and headquartered in Lomé, Togo. With around 40 local branches within Togo, JVE has grown into the largest youth-focused environmental movement in Africa, boasting affiliates in 21 countries across the continent. Starting from the small Togolese village of Tsiko, where it focused on raising awareness and educating about local environmental degradation, the organization has since broadened both its geographical reach and areas of expertise, while remaining committed to sustainable development.

YVE's key activities center on providing access to essential services such as energy, water, and sanitation; promoting cultural biodiversity and environmental awareness; addressing climate change; and managing natural resources.

Campaigns/Issues:

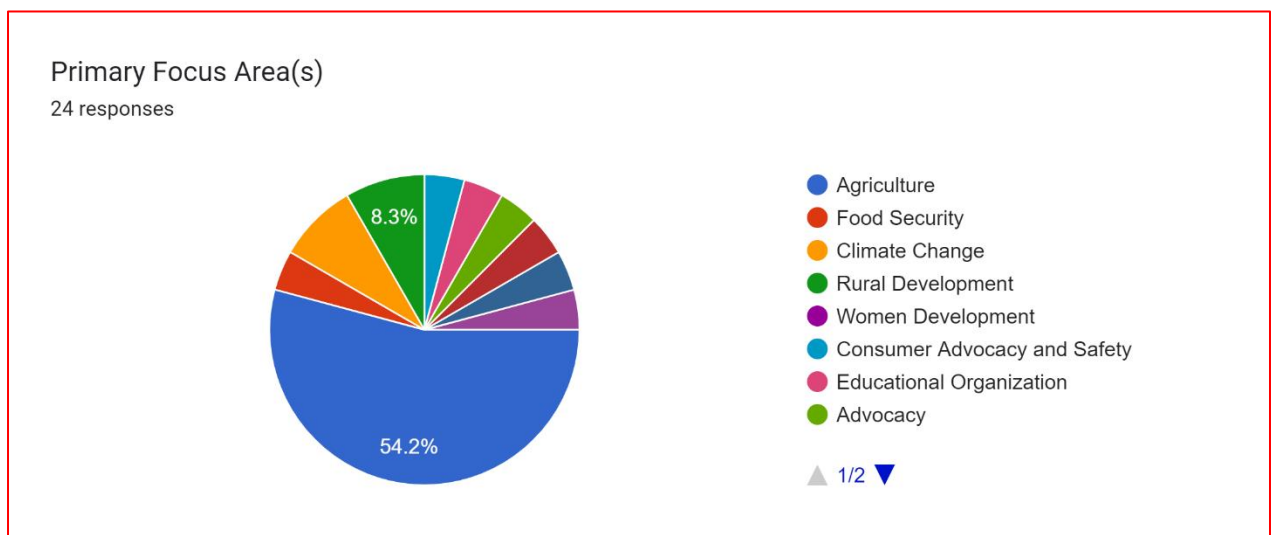
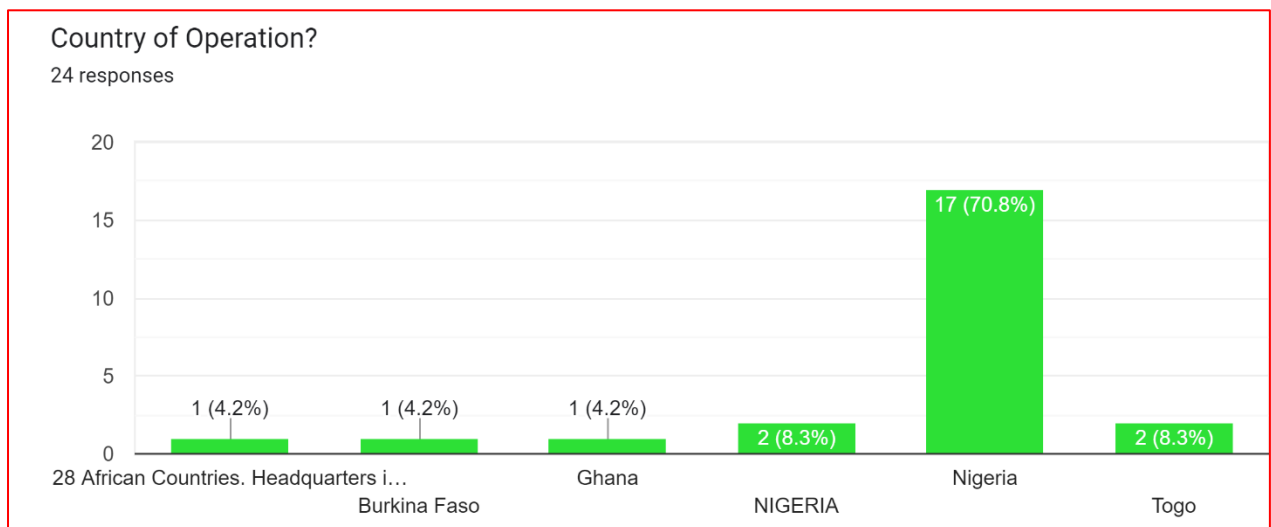
- **Website or social media:** <http://www.jve-international.org>
- **Period:** Founded in 2001; ongoing initiatives.
- **Outcomes:**
- Established around 40 local branches within Togo, making YVE the largest youth-focused environmental movement in Africa, with affiliates in 21 countries.
 - Implemented various projects that have raised awareness about local environmental degradation and promoted sustainable practices among communities.
 - Developed a strong network of young volunteers who actively participate in environmental conservation projects, including tree planting and climate education initiatives.
 - Successfully influenced local policies related to environmental management and sustainable development through advocacy efforts.
- **Challenge:**
- Overcoming financial constraints to support ongoing projects and expand their reach to more communities.
 - Engaging youth consistently in volunteer activities amid competing interests and challenges.

Challenges faced by CSOs in promoting food sovereignty in the ECOWAS region include:

- 1. Political Resistance:** Despite successes, CSOs often encounter political resistance when advocating for food sovereignty. Many governments prioritize modernization and industrial agriculture models that favour corporate interests over smallholder farmers, which can undermine local food systems.
- 2. Cultural and Social Barriers:** In some cases, cultural attitudes towards traditional farming practices can pose challenges. There is often a disconnect between modern agricultural practices promoted by governments or international organizations and the traditional methods that many communities rely on.
- 3. Dependency on External Aid:** The reliance on external funding from international NGOs or donor agencies can create vulnerabilities for CSOs. This dependency may limit their autonomy and ability to advocate for locally relevant solutions tailored to the specific needs of their communities.
- 4. Limited funding and technical support for CSO initiatives:** CSOs working on food sovereignty in ECOWAS countries often lack adequate funding and capacity building support. This hinders their ability to effectively implement programs and advocate for policy changes. The lack of financial resources hampers their ability to conduct research, mobilize communities, and engage in sustained advocacy efforts.
- 5. Weak coordination and information-sharing between CSOs, governments, and regional bodies:** There appears to be a "disconnect" between the expectations and outcomes of food sovereignty policies in the region. Improved coordination and collaboration between different stakeholders is needed.
- 6. Insufficient capacity building for smallholder farmers:** There is a the need to invest in programs that build the capacity of smallholder farmers to adopt agroecological practices and access markets. This is crucial for strengthening food sovereignty at the local level.
- 7. Policy incoherence between regional frameworks and national implementation:** While ECOWAS has developed the ECOWAP policy to promote food sovereignty; there are challenges in aligning this with national agricultural plans and ensuring effective implementation across the region.
- 8. Tensions between food sovereignty and trade liberalization:** The challenges of balancing food sovereignty principles with trade policies, such as the ECOWAS Customs Union and Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU. This creates uncertainty around the future of agricultural protection in the region.

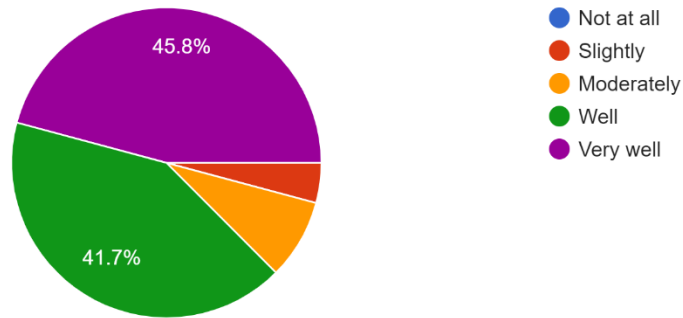
Data Presentation from Survey among CSOs Across West Africa on Food Sovereignty

This section presents the analysis of the survey designed to capture perspectives on key issues related to food sovereignty among twenty-four (24) CSOs and farmers group. The survey explored the understanding and significance of food sovereignty within both national and regional contexts, examined the challenges faced in promoting food sovereignty, and assessed the strategies and advocacy efforts employed. Additionally, it evaluated the effectiveness of regional collaborations and the role of ECOWAS in advancing food sovereignty. The responses provide valuable insights that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the food sovereignty movement in West Africa, highlighting gaps, opportunities, and informing the development of more effective advocacy strategies aimed at influencing national and regional policies.



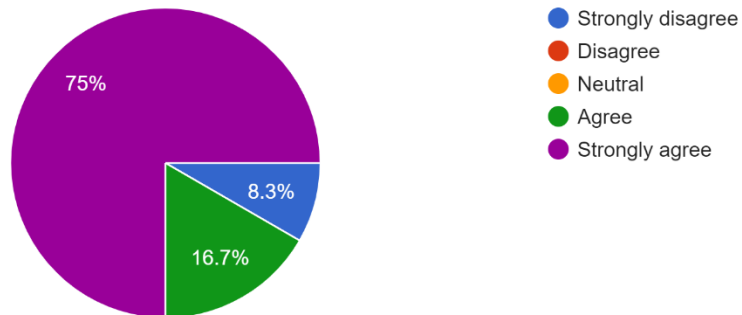
How well does your organization understand the concept of food sovereignty?

24 responses



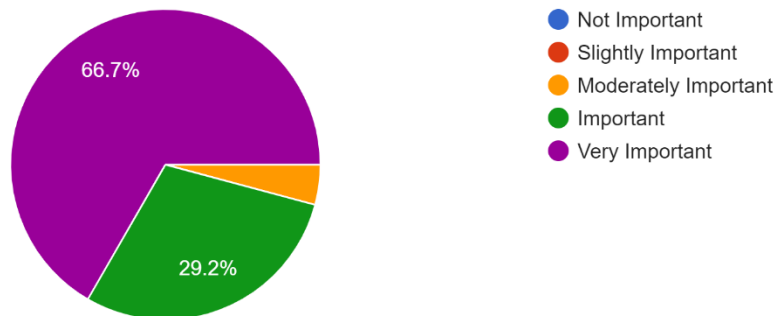
To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Food sovereignty is crucial for the economic, social, and cultural well-being of communities in my country."

24 responses



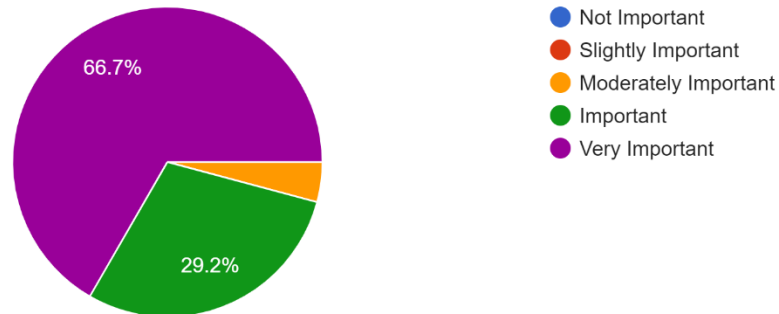
How important are the following components of food sovereignty to your organization's work? Control over land and resources

24 responses



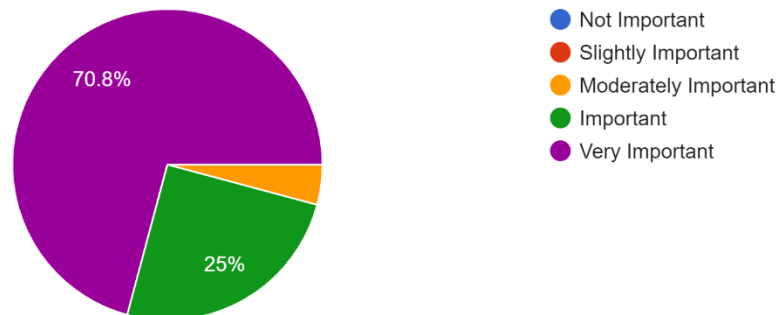
How important are the following components of food sovereignty to your organization's work? Control over land and resources

24 responses



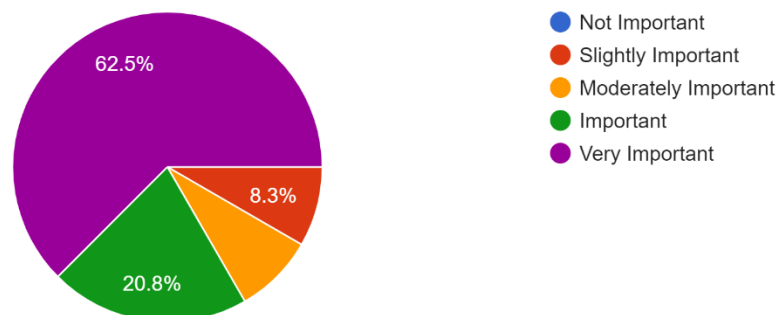
How important are the following components of food sovereignty to your organization's work? Access to local markets

24 responses



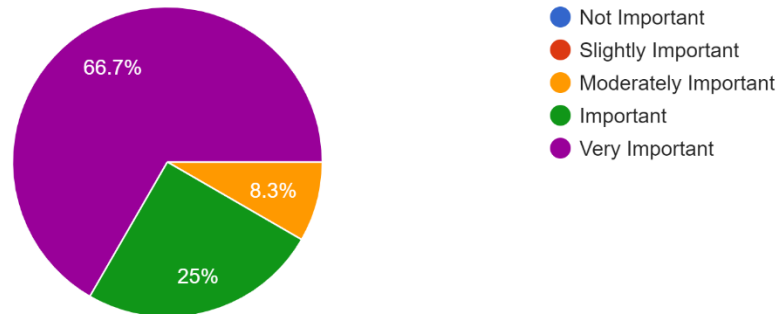
How important are the following components of food sovereignty to your organization's work? Preservation of traditional agricultural practices

24 responses



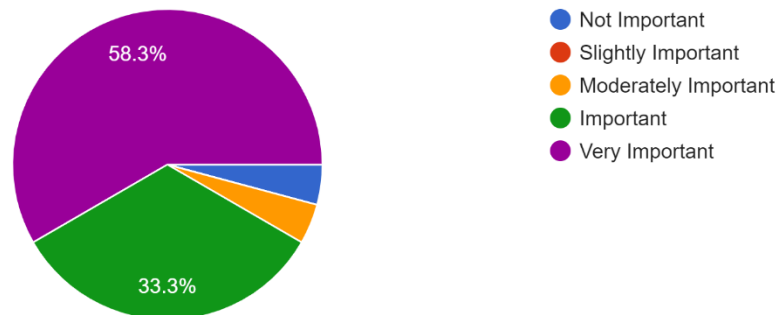
How important are the following components of food sovereignty to your organization's work? Gender equity in food systems

24 responses



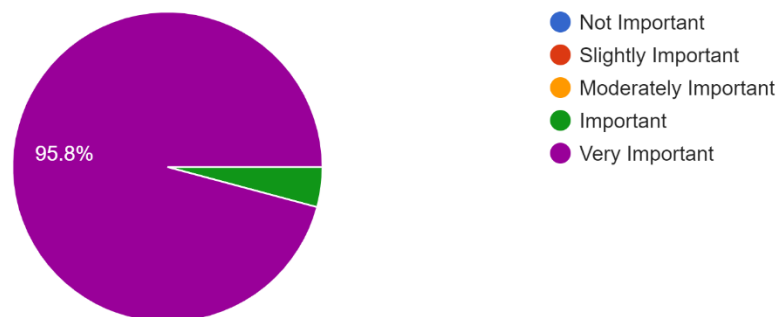
How important are the following components of food sovereignty to your organization's work? Protection against corporate control

24 responses



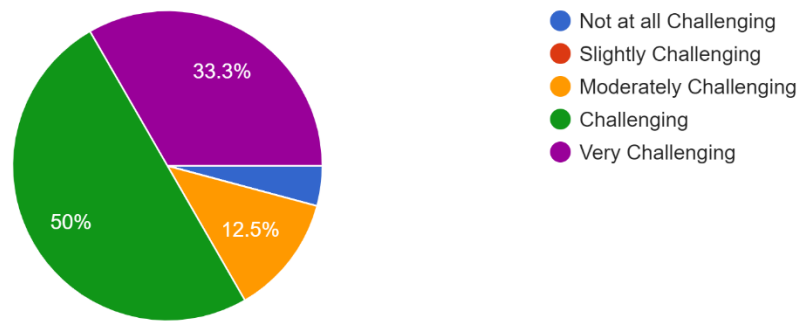
How important are the following components of food sovereignty to your organization's work? Environmental sustainability

24 responses



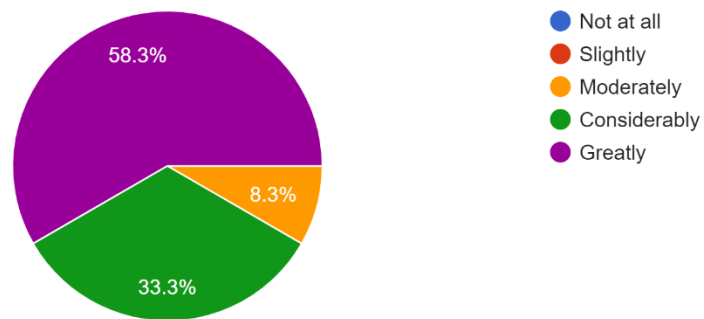
How challenging has it been for your organization to promote food sovereignty in your country?

24 responses



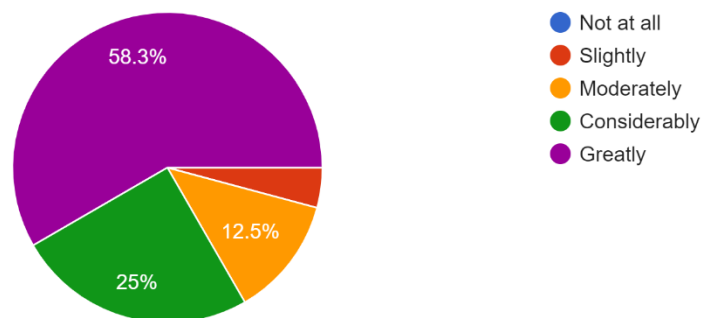
To what extent do the following challenges impact your organization's efforts in promoting food sovereignty? Lack of funding/resources

24 responses



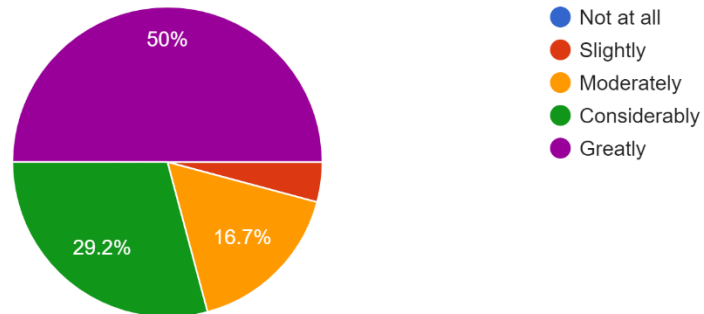
To what extent do the following challenges impact your organization's efforts in promoting food sovereignty? Government policies favouring industrial agriculture

24 responses



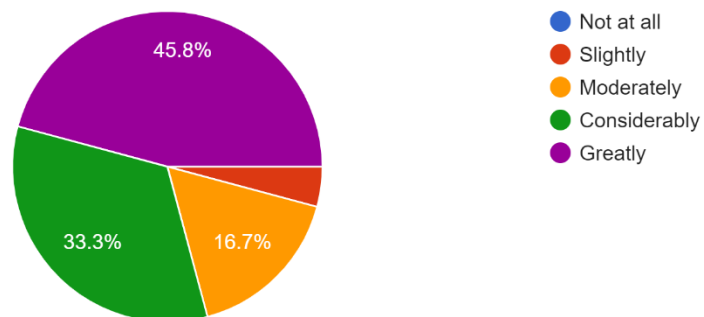
To what extent do the following challenges impact your organization's efforts in promoting food sovereignty? Corporate influence on food systems

24 responses



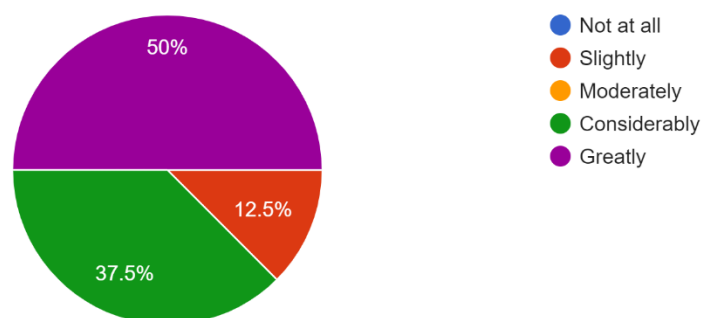
To what extent do the following challenges impact your organization's efforts in promoting food sovereignty? Lack of awareness among local communities

24 responses



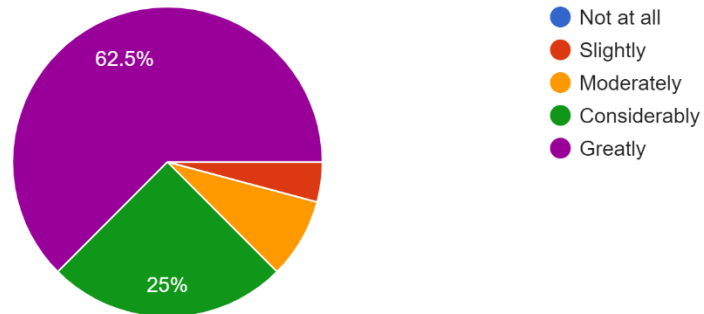
To what extent do the following challenges impact your organization's efforts in promoting food sovereignty? Access to land and resources

24 responses



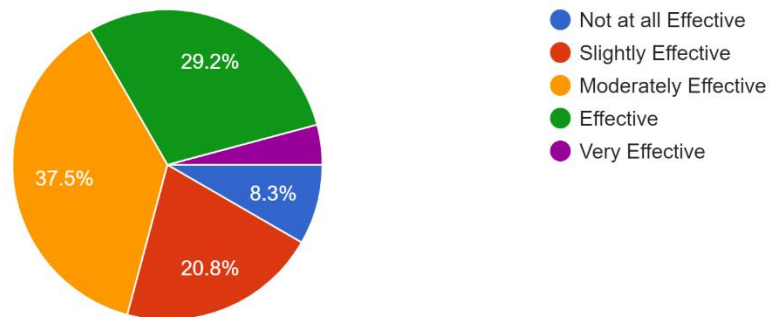
To what extent do the following challenges impact your organization's efforts in promoting food sovereignty? Climate change impacts

24 responses



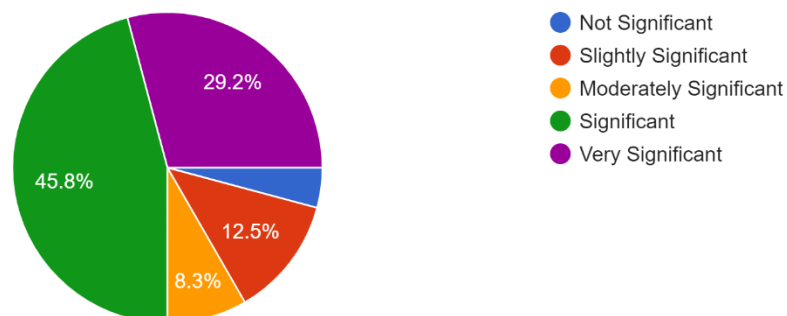
How effectively has your organization addressed these challenges?

24 responses



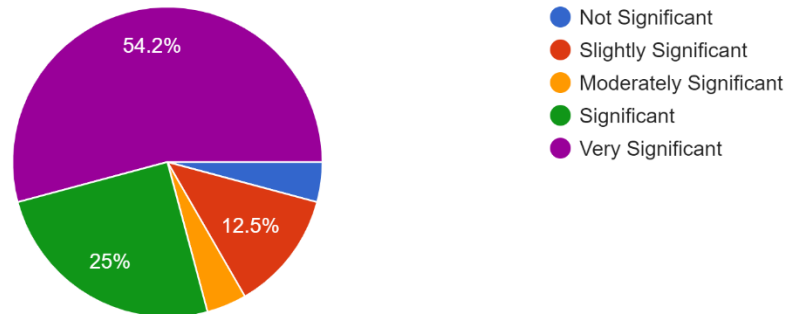
How significant are the following factors in threatening food sovereignty in your country? Land grabs by corporations

24 responses



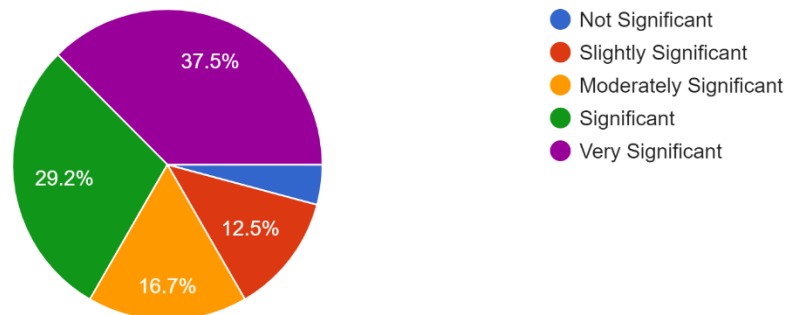
How significant are the following factors in threatening food sovereignty in your country? Dependence on imported food

24 responses



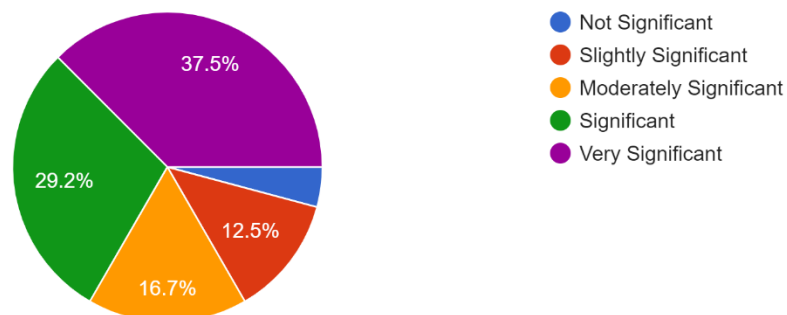
How significant are the following factors in threatening food sovereignty in your country? Loss of traditional farming practices

24 responses



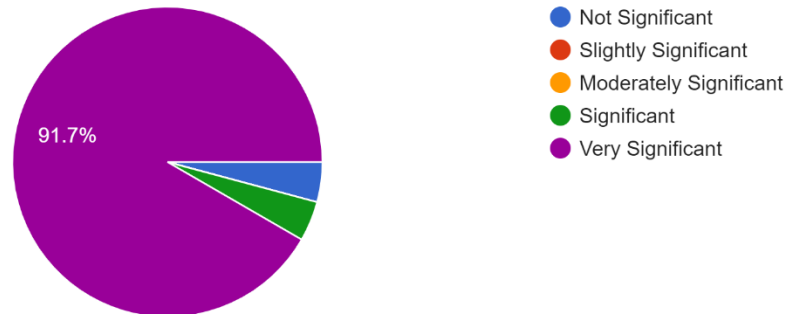
How significant are the following factors in threatening food sovereignty in your country? Loss of traditional farming practices

24 responses



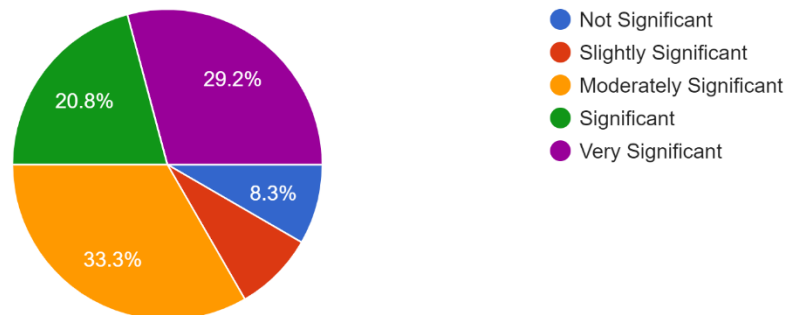
How significant are the following factors in threatening food sovereignty in your country? Climate change impacts

24 responses



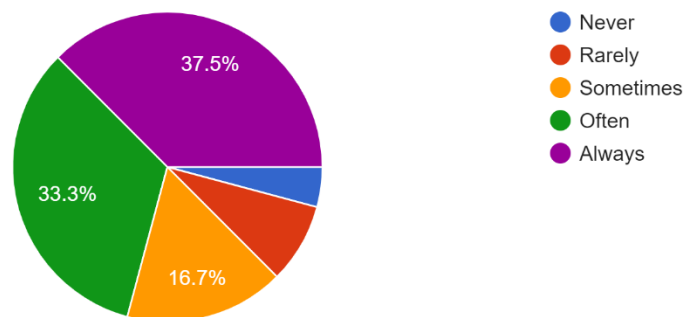
How significant are the following factors in threatening food sovereignty in your country? Policies favouring industrial agriculture

24 responses



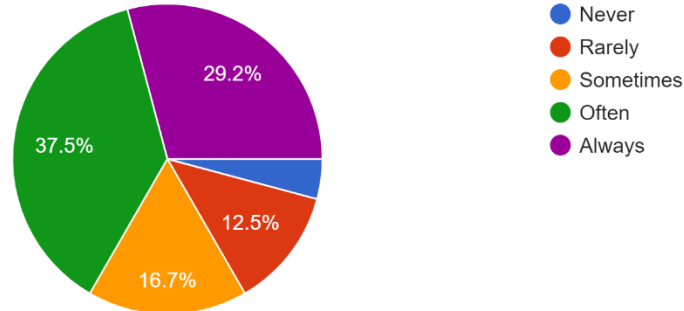
How often does your organization employ the following strategies to promote food sovereignty? Community education and awareness campaigns

24 responses



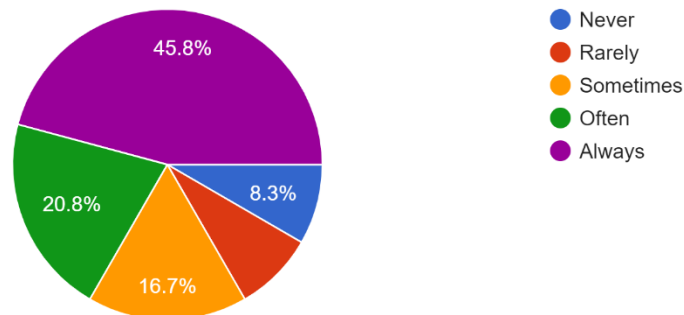
How often does your organization employ the following strategies to promote food sovereignty? Policy advocacy and lobbying

24 responses



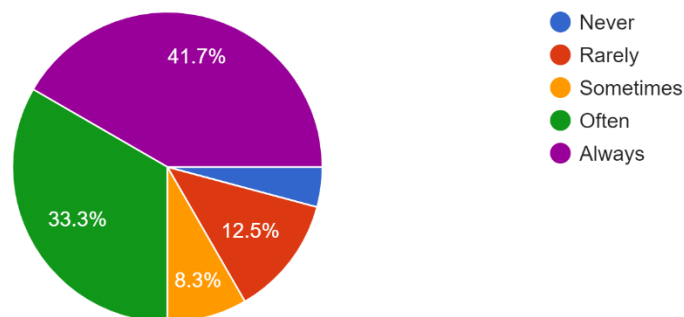
How often does your organization employ the following strategies to promote food sovereignty? Capacity building and training for small-scale farmers

24 responses



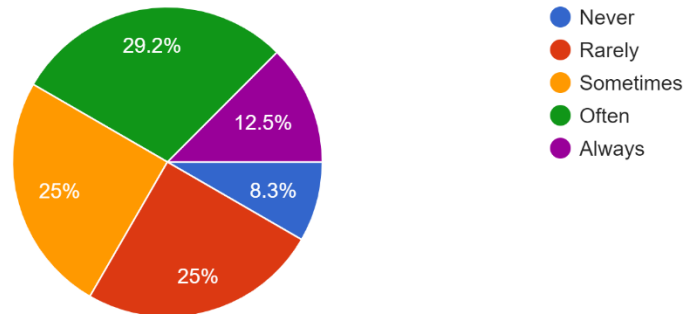
How often does your organization employ the following strategies to promote food sovereignty? Collaboration with other CSOs and regional alliances

24 responses



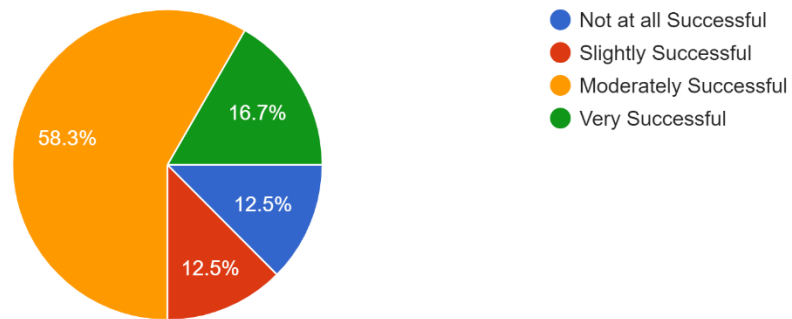
How often does your organization employ the following strategies to promote food sovereignty? Research and documentation of food sovereignty issues

24 responses



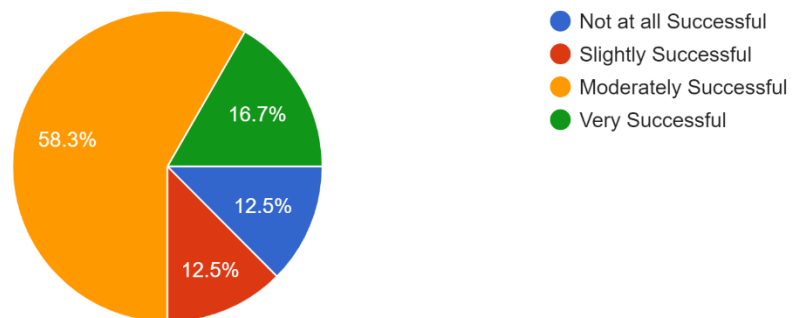
To what extent has your organization been successful in implementing these strategies?

24 responses



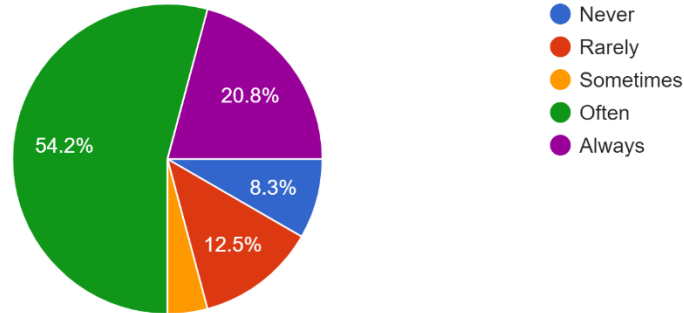
To what extent has your organization been successful in implementing these strategies?

24 responses



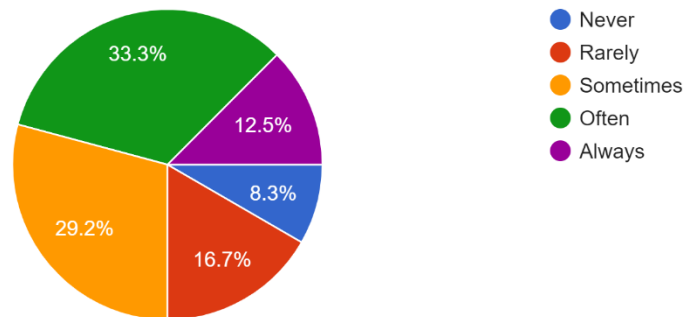
How frequently does your organization engage with the following stakeholders in your food sovereignty efforts? Local communities

24 responses



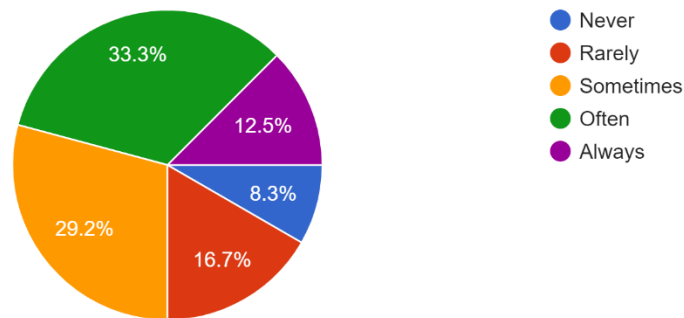
How frequently does your organization engage with the following stakeholders in your food sovereignty efforts? National government agencies

24 responses



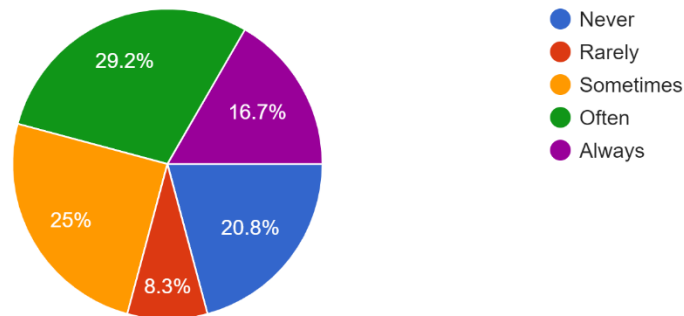
How frequently does your organization engage with the following stakeholders in your food sovereignty efforts? National government agencies

24 responses



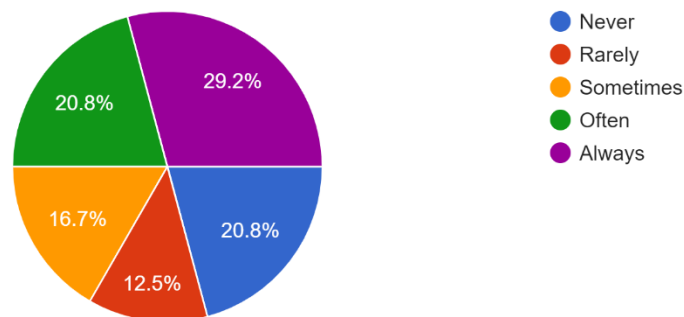
How frequently does your organization engage with the following stakeholders in your food sovereignty efforts? Regional coalitions/alliances

24 responses



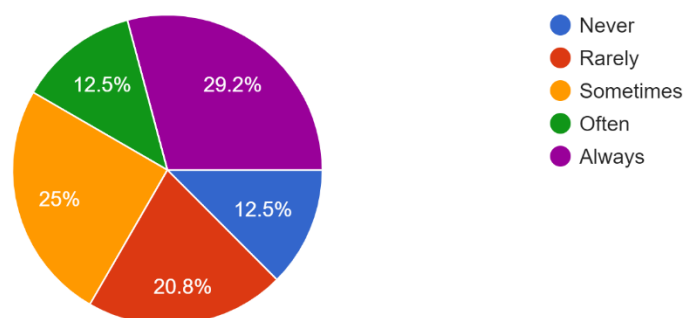
How frequently does your organization engage with the following stakeholders in your food sovereignty efforts? International organizations

24 responses



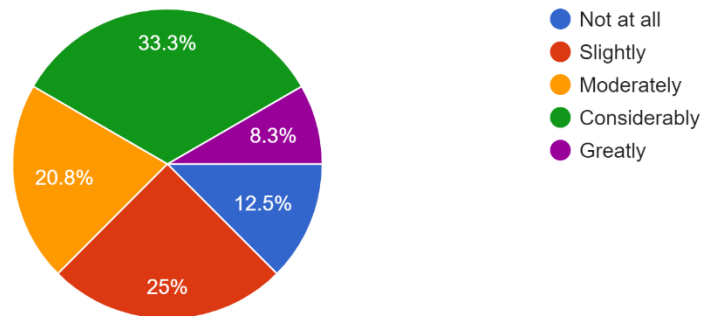
How frequently does your organization engage with the following stakeholders in your food sovereignty efforts? Media outlets

24 responses



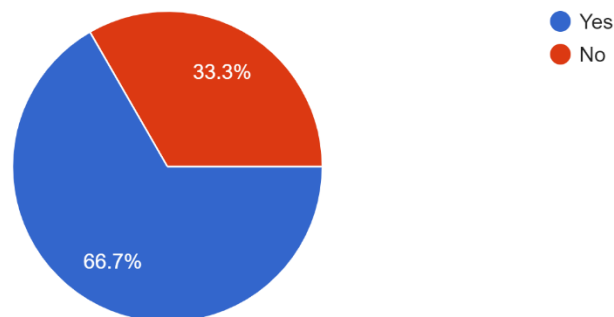
To what extent do you believe your organization's advocacy efforts have influenced national government policies on food sovereignty?

24 responses



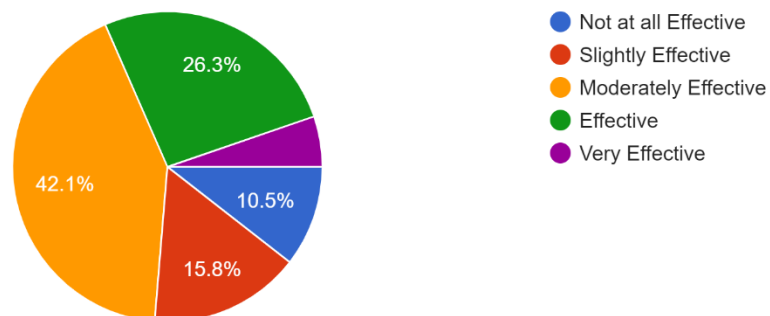
Is your organization part of any regional coalitions, movement or alliances focused on food sovereignty?

24 responses



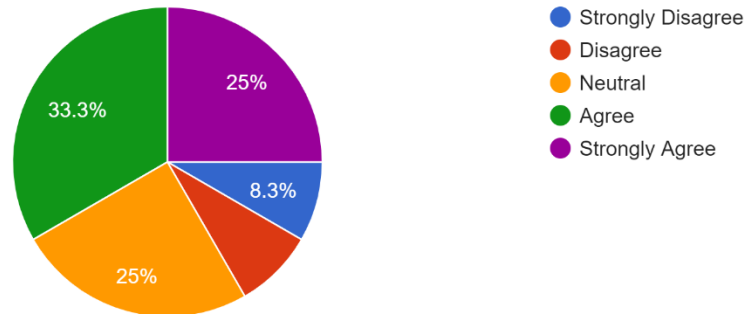
If yes, how effective have these collaborations been in advancing food sovereignty in West Africa?

19 responses



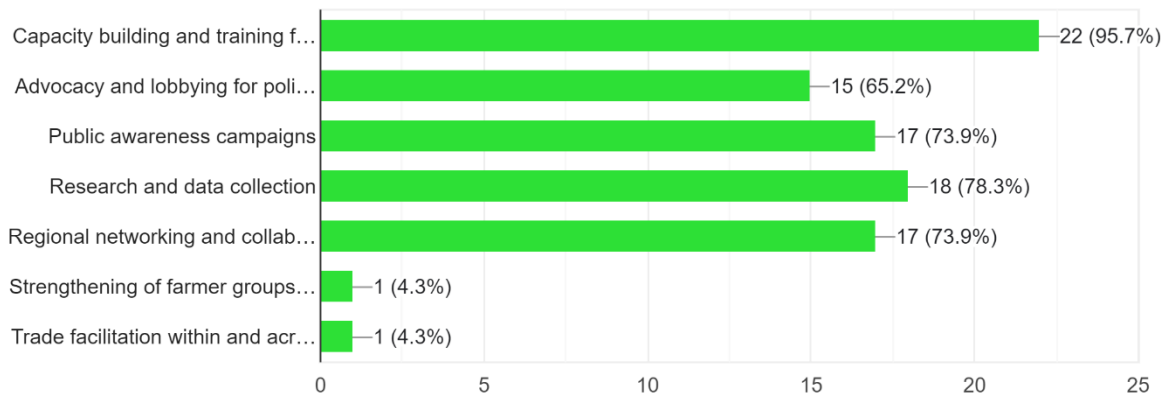
To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "ECOWAS plays a crucial role in advancing food sovereignty in the region."

24 responses



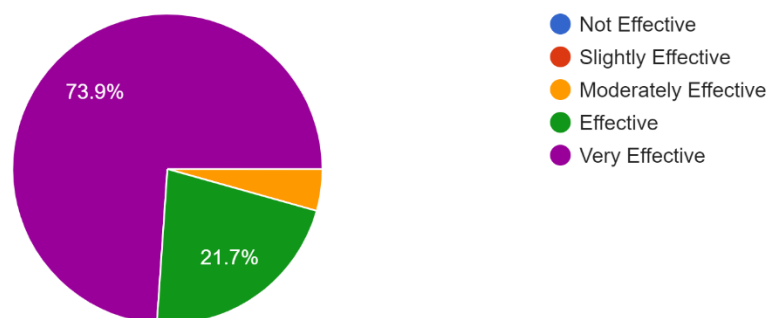
What activities do you think are most crucial for the success of the "Movement and Capacity Building for Food Sovereignty in ECOWAS" project? (Please select all that apply.)

23 responses



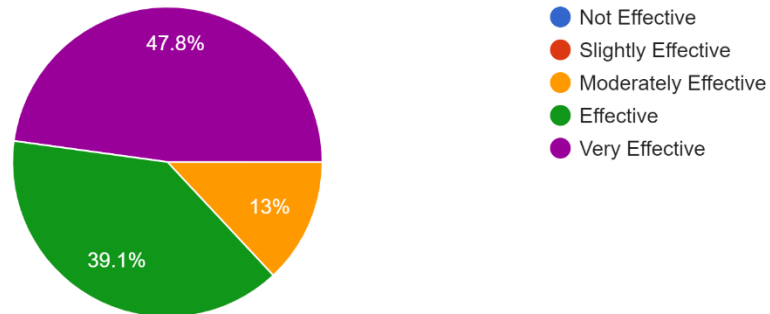
How effective do you think the following advocacy strategies would be in influencing ECOWAS policies on food sovereignty? Regional campaigns and public mobilization

23 responses



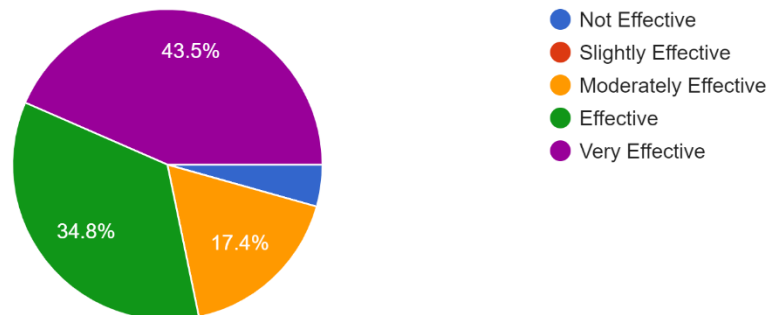
How effective do you think the following advocacy strategies would be in influencing ECOWAS policies on food sovereignty? Policy briefs and reports

23 responses



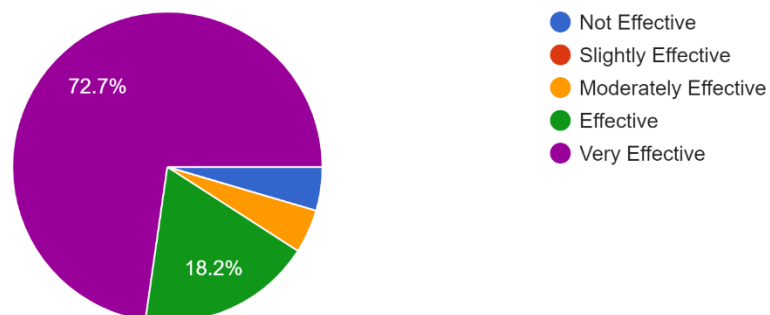
How effective do you think the following advocacy strategies would be in influencing ECOWAS policies on food sovereignty? Direct engagement with ECOWAS officials

23 responses



How effective do you think the following advocacy strategies would be in influencing ECOWAS policies on food sovereignty? Collaboration with regional media

22 responses



Conclusion, Strategies and Policy Recommendations

The benefits of achieving food sovereignty in Africa and West Africa are far-reaching, touching on every aspect of life, from economic empowerment and environmental sustainability to social justice and cultural preservation. By prioritizing local control, sustainability, and equity, food sovereignty offers a pathway to a more resilient, just, and thriving future for the people of West Africa. Food sovereignty is a gift of nature, an identity, a defence, and a tool for control in various profound ways:

Food sovereignty is fundamentally tied to the natural resources—land, water, seeds, and biodiversity—that sustain human life. These resources are a gift of nature, entrusted to communities for sustenance. Food sovereignty honours this gift by promoting the sustainable use and preservation of these resources. It recognizes that food production should be in harmony with nature, respecting ecological cycles and biodiversity. When communities control their food systems, they can ensure that this natural wealth is managed in a way that supports both current and future generations.

Food sovereignty is deeply linked to cultural identity. The types of food people grow, prepare, and consume are central to their cultural practices, traditions, and heritage. By having control over their food systems, communities can preserve their culinary traditions, agricultural knowledge, and food-related rituals. This connection to food as an expression of identity is especially important in West Africa, where diverse cultures have unique relationships with the land and their food. Food sovereignty allows communities to maintain and celebrate these identities in the face of globalization and industrial agriculture, which often threaten to homogenize diets and erode cultural diversity.

Food sovereignty serves as a defense against external forces that threaten local food systems and the well-being of communities. These threats include multinational corporations that seek to control seeds and agricultural markets, international trade agreements that undermine local food production, and policies that prioritize export crops over food for local consumption. By asserting control over their food systems, communities can defend themselves against these encroachments. Food sovereignty is also a defense against the loss of traditional agricultural practices and the erosion of biodiversity, both of which are crucial for resilient and sustainable food systems.

Food sovereignty empowers communities by giving them control over their food systems. This control extends to decision-making about what is grown, how it is grown, who has access to land and resources, and how food is distributed. It is a tool for resisting the commodification of food and the concentration of power in the hands of a few corporations. By exercising control over food systems, communities can prioritize their needs, promote equity, and ensure that food production is aligned with social, environmental, and economic goals. This control is essential for achieving food justice and creating food systems that serve the interests of people rather than profit.

Unfortunately, these benefits that food sovereignty brings which includes food security in West Africa, and other parts of the World, especially the Global South, is under serious orchestrated threat from a complex interplay of global, regional, and local factors. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to promote policies and practices that support local food systems, protect the rights of smallholder farmers, and ensure that communities have control over their food production and distribution. ECOWAS and her member states have a core responsibility to protect her citizens and economies from international shocks, and guard against exploitations from international corporations - that put their profits motive, ahead of the lives and environmental health

of local biodiversity. By addressing the threats of food sovereignty and indirectly tackling the root causes of food insecurity, West Africa can move closer to achieving true food sovereignty, ensuring that its people have the right to healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. This will require CSOs taking more strategic approach in the advocacy and movements for food sovereignty, as well as pressing forward policy recommendations at local and regional approach for ECOWAS to lead and inform their implementation.

Strategies for CSOs to Work Better in the Demand for Food Sovereignty

A. Building Alliances and Partnerships

- **Join and Form Coalitions at National and Regional Levels:** join existing coalitions at national and regional level; create coalitions with farmers' groups, environmental NGOs, and human rights organizations to present a unified front for food sovereignty.
- **Engagement with Political Parties, Traditional leaders, Religious heads and Health Professional groups:** Work with political parties, religious leaders and health professional to include food sovereignty in their manifestos, campaign agendas, teachings and cultural mandates.
- **Engage Progressive Politicians:** Identify and partner with politicians sympathetic to food sovereignty to champion the cause within government, shape policy, and advocate for necessary reforms.
- **Personalized Engagement:** Engage politicians individually with tailored advocacy aligned with their interests and constituencies to build personal relationships crucial for influence.
- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Create multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together government, civil society, farmers, and the private sector to discuss and develop strategies for food sovereignty.

B. Policy Advocacy and Reform

- **Influencing Policy Agendas:** Actively participate in policy formulation processes, providing evidence-based recommendations that prioritize local food systems, support smallholder farmers, and protect community rights.
- **Lobbying and Advocacy Campaigns :** Use targeted lobbying and advocacy campaigns to influence policymakers through direct engagement with legislators, presenting policy briefs, organizing workshops, and participating in public hearings.

C. Raising Awareness and Education

- **Educating Politicians:** Organize educational sessions, workshops, and field visits to help politicians understand the importance of food sovereignty for national development, food security, and poverty reduction.
- **Citizen-Led Advocacy:** Mobilize citizens, especially in rural areas, to demand food sovereignty from elected representatives as grassroots pressure can effectively hold politicians accountable.
- **Community Dialogues:** Organize dialogues where politicians can hear directly from farmers and citizens about the importance of food sovereignty.

- Public Awareness Campaigns: Mobilize public support for food sovereignty through campaigns that highlight the importance of local food systems to pressure politicians into adopting pro-food sovereignty policies.

D. Accountability and Transparency

- Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of agricultural policies and hold politicians accountable for their commitments to food sovereignty through reports, scorecards, and public forums.
- Social Audits: Conduct social audits to assess the impact of government policies on food sovereignty, exposing discrepancies or failures that create pressure for reform.

E. Strategic Communication

- Crafting Effective Messages: Develop clear messages that resonate with politicians and the public by framing food sovereignty as an issue of national security, economic independence, and social justice.
- Use of Media: Utilize traditional and social media to amplify the message of food sovereignty, highlight the role of politicians, and create public demand for policy change.

Policy Recommendations and Actions for ECOWAS to Restore Food Sovereignty

1. Strengthen Local Food Production

- Promote Agroecological Practices: Encourage member states to adopt agroecological-farming methods that enhance biodiversity, improve soil health, and reduce dependency on chemical inputs.
- Support Smallholder Farmers: Increase funding and resources for smallholder farmers, ensuring they have access to credit, training, and markets to boost local food production.

2. Enhance Regional Food Security Reserves

- Operationalize the Regional Food Security Reserve: Ensure that the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) is operational and effectively managed to provide timely support during food crises.
- Develop Local Storage Solutions: Invest in community-level storage facilities managed by local organizations to ensure quick responses to food shortages.

3. Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

- Create Multi-Stakeholder Platforms : Establish platforms that bring together governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), farmers, and the private sector to collaboratively develop strategies for enhancing food sovereignty.
- Engage with Regional Institutions: Work closely with regional bodies like the African Union and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to align efforts and share best practices.
- End toxic alliance with agro-corporations that seek on to maximise their profit making aims

4. Implement Policy Reforms

- **Revise Agricultural Policies:** Encourage member states to revise national agricultural policies to prioritize food sovereignty, focusing on local production and sustainable practices.
- **Strengthen Trade Policies:** Develop trade policies that protect local farmers from unfair competition while promoting intra-regional trade in agricultural products.

5. Increase Investment in Agricultural Research

- **Fund Research on Indigenous Crops:** Invest in research programs that focus on indigenous crops and traditional farming practices that are resilient to climate change.
- **Enhance Agricultural Innovation:** Promote innovation in agriculture through partnerships with universities and research institutions to develop sustainable farming technologies.

6. Raise Public Awareness

- **Conduct Awareness Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to educate the public about the importance of food sovereignty and local food systems, encouraging communities to support local agriculture.
- **Engage Youth in Agriculture:** Create programs aimed at engaging young people in agriculture through education, training, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

7. Monitor and Evaluate Progress

- **Establish Monitoring Mechanisms:** Develop robust monitoring systems to evaluate the implementation of food sovereignty initiatives across member states.
- **Report on Food Security Status:** Regularly publish reports on the state of food security in the region, highlighting successes and areas needing improvement.

8. Strengthen Land Rights Policies

- **Secure Favourable Land Tenure Systems for Farmers:** Advocate for policies that secure land tenure rights for smallholder farmers, ensuring they have stable access to land for sustainable agriculture.
- **Promote Community Land Management:** Support community-based land management practices that empower local communities in decision-making about land use.

9. Develop Sustainable Financing Mechanisms

- **Create Agricultural Investment Funds:** Establish regional funds dedicated to financing sustainable agricultural projects that promote food sovereignty.
- **Encourage Microfinance Initiatives:** Support microfinance programs that provide small loans to farmers for purchasing seeds, tools, and other necessary resources.

10. Enhance Gender Equality in Agriculture

- **Implement Gender-Sensitive Policies:** Promote policies that ensure equal access to resources, training, and markets for women farmers.

- Support Women's Cooperatives: Facilitate the formation of women-led agricultural cooperatives that empower women economically and socially.

11. Facilitate Climate Resilience Initiatives

- Encourage practices that enhance resilience against climate change impacts, such as crop diversification and water conservation techniques.
- Support Disaster Risk Reduction Programs: Implement programs aimed at reducing vulnerability to climate-related disasters affecting food production.

12. Advocate for Regional Policy Harmonization

- Standardize Agricultural Regulations: Work towards harmonizing agricultural regulations across member states to facilitate trade and cooperation in food production.
- Align National Policies with Regional Goals: Ensure that national agricultural policies align with ECOWAS's regional goals for food sovereignty and security.

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