



AFRICA DAYS – SOS SAHEL 2019 - SENEGAL

FORUM 25 to 27 APRIL 2019

Sahel: towards intensive and modern agriculture

How to intensify family farming?

How to facilitate the transition to modern family farming?

Forum:

**Developing support to smallholder to facilitating the transition
towards modern family farming**

In sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture is the source of more than 60% of jobs. In Sahelian countries, which are still very rural, agricultural jobs are even more prevalent. As such it occupies an increasing importance in the States' economic and political agendas, as well as in international agendas related to climate, to security, to the environment. SOS SAHEL works directly within this space and is capable of providing a novel solution to these issues.

1. The African vision of modernised and productive agriculture

African countries have only recently come to prioritise agriculture and integrate it within their development strategies. In 2003 in Maputo, African States made a commitment to spend at least 10% of their national budget on this sector, and developed the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Within its 2063 Vision, the African Union called for "*modern and productive agriculture, using science, technology, innovation and indigenous knowledge. The hand hoe will be banished by 2025 and the sector will be modern, profitable and attractive to the continent's youths and women.*"

The collective roadmap for implementing the 2063 vision specifies that African countries are committed to **consolidate the modernisation of African agriculture and agro-businesses, through scaled up value addition and productivity.** In the minds of African leaders, the idea is to improve **the introduction of modern agricultural systems, training and technological practices,** including putting an end to the use of the hand hoe.

2. The necessity of supporting smallholder and local markets

Initially, agriculture was considered as a tool to boost growth and exports through largescale agriculture and the agri-food industry. **With experience and thanks to lobbying carried out by producer organisations, the CAADP strategy was made more inclusive.** Thus the 2015-2025 CAADP programme¹ makes clear reference to family farming, and to the potential of agriculture in employment and satisfaction of internal and regional markets. The first strategic priority of the 2015-2025 programme is as follows:

- Enhancing the support to smallholders towards sustainable intensification in order to facilitate their transition into modern family farms. *Here family farming could be considered as the cluster of players with the highest potential for increasing productivity from its present level and for creating activity with an efficient use of limited natural resources (realising economies of scale);*

3. SOS SAHEL's vision of a dynamic and successful agricultural economy

In the Sahel, a predominantly rural region, **SOS SAHEL supports a vision of a dynamic agricultural economy based on competitive family farming, which is able to feed a rapidly growing population** and provide a range of quality jobs, within the context of climate change. In these arid regions, agricultural activities are successfully carried out under frequent extreme conditions thanks to agricultural systems that are adapted to the range and vagaries of the climate. These successful agricultural systems were developed thanks to extensive experience in these extraordinarily dynamic agricultural societies.

For a long time, **these agricultural societies were denigrated and ignored,** forced to develop and evolve on their own. SOS SAHEL, which was founded in 1976 under the initiative of President Senghor following major droughts, was created to support family farming, agricultural activities, the whole rural economy and territorial development, with regard to food security, nutrition and the fight against poverty. SOS SAHEL has translated its experience into an efficient development model built around the technical and social dimensions of change and the long-term transformation process of societies.

¹ The Programme of Work Operationalising the Malabo Declaration on African Agriculture and CAADP Implementation Strategy and Roadmap "Africa's 2015-2025 Vision and Goals on African Agriculture"

Thanks to a wide network of partners, **SOS SAHEL supports change on the ground across 11 countries in the Sahel**, working with vulnerable households, especially women, young children, producers, small local businesses, municipal authorities and State technical services. **SOS SAHEL is developing a provision of services** which allows producers to work more efficiently and safely, and also strengthen the local economy and value chains.

In 2018, the Africa Days forum underlined **the potential of local production** to supply urban and rural populations in Africa with healthy and nutritious food as part of a dynamic local economy that provides a considerable number of jobs. The forum also underlined **the essential role of a coalition of stakeholders, including private sector companies** and the importance of promoting long-term partnerships for the production of high-quality products. Participants in the forum enjoyed the diversity of experiences and the innovative nature of the solutions put forward.

4. The forum to building the transformation process on a larger scale

Beyond the successful stories, the question lies today in how innovation can be scaled up.

How can we progress from the improvements in a few villages to the transformation of an entire region? How can the practices developed on a local level be scaled up in order to fulfil the sustainable development goals and permanently remove the countries of the Sahel from the situation of food insecurity and economic and environmental fragility they are locked into?

This is the current focus of SOS SAHEL and its partners, particularly as part of the Green Initiative that has been developed alongside Welthungerhilfe, a German organisation with longstanding experience in Africa. **The vision of SOS SAHEL and its partners is strategically aligned with the orientation of the African Union.** The aim is to modernise and increase the efficiency of family farming as a tool for inclusive economic development, job creation and food security.

The Africa Days forum represents an opportunity as part of the process aimed at constructing largescale solutions, reaching the largest possible number of people in order to improve food security, job creation and economic growth. The forum, acting as a springboard to further implementation of the African Union's Vision, will be focused on two themes:

- **How to develop support for smallholders and increase productivity of sustainable agriculture:** what approach should be adopted, which stakeholders should be involved, what should be the institutional framework,...
- **Which technologies should be used to accelerate the transformation process and to facilitate the transition towards modern family farms:** at what stage of the transformation process, under what conditions, alongside which partners, with what aim,...

5. How to develop support for smallholder with regard to increased productivity of sustainable agriculture?

From the South, where agricultural zones are suitable for annual crops or agroforestry, to the Northern Sahel-Sahara region where vast pastures are conducive to pastoral farming, across the entire Sahelian region, family farming is arduous and labour intensive, involving little, if any machinery. **For a long time, family farming has been viewed as inefficient, small-scale and a source of very little surplus.** The households and societies involved in this form of farming remain low-income or poverty stricken and are often subject to food insecurity and climate variations.

Yet the wide range of farming techniques specifically adapted to the environmental and climatic constraints of the Sahel is the fruit of centuries of experience and improvement. More recently, systems involving rain-fed crops, flooding and receding flood waters, small scale private irrigation, and a wide diversity of seeds and animal breeds have sustained the demographic, economic and climatic change. Agronomists, who first considered family farming methods rudimentary, now regard **these agricultural systems as appropriate solutions for farming in arid and hostile environment, maximising the advantages of this environment while responding to the ongoing climatic variations.** The economic performances of these systems remain modest, but they are not very energy intensive, they are the source of a large number of diverse jobs and are particularly relevant today in a context where the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is a priority. Family farming systems, as denigrated as they may have been, have allowed the level of cereal production per person to sustain and even increase despite the severe climate crises in the region. They could also be seriously examined in terms of adaptation and sustainability. In macroeconomic terms, these family systems that represent 80% of food production, have allowed for imports of food to remain below the 7% threshold across all the countries in the region. **It should not be forgotten that these systems have evolved without support from scientific and economic assistance,** in an economic context where agricultural inputs are rare and of varied quality, where markets are not well structured and where infrastructures are insufficient.

Despite all of this, **the challenges related to demographics, climate change and the regression of biodiversity that are at the forefront require agriculture to be ever more efficient.** In order to meet these challenges in a way that is economically viable as well as sustainable in terms of the environment, it seems essential to accelerate improvements in family farming, to provide consistent and diverse support to producers, based upon their local systems and adapted to the diversity of the natural environment. The aim is to provide these local systems with the benefits of scientific progress and to supply stakeholders in the agricultural industry with the materials and services they require in order to improve these farming methods, optimise their performance, integrate complex markets and adapt these methods to climate change.

These are complex issues and their technical, social economic and political dimensions need to be taken into account. The response to these issues are as subtle and diverse as the production systems, agro-climatic environments and societies.

SOS SAHEL, with its partners, raises the following issues:

- Which kind of intensification should be promoted,
- What stakeholders should be involved on a local, national and international level,
- According to the scale of work to be completed, what approach should be implemented?
- What institutional and political frameworks need to be established?

In order to provide producers with a full range of services SOS SAHEL needs to **perfect family farming systems and offer them a role in economic growth, job creation and food security in the region.**

6. What technology needs to be called upon to speed up the transformation process and facilitate the transition towards modern family farms?

For a long time, African States have put an emphasis on major agricultural projects, concentrating resources in privileged areas that have favourable agro-pedo-climatic conditions. Although not negligible, the results obtained by this approach have not always matched expectations. **The concentration of State interventions has been carried out to the detriment of the majority of producers** spread over the national territories, providing the vast majority of jobs in a multitude of villages with diverse socio-cultural characteristics and operating in a range of natural environments.

It now seems clear that the diversity of rural stakeholders, scattered throughout national territories, is more effectively taken into account by regional and national political approaches, following the recommendations of the African Union. Put simply, **reaching the greatest number of producers and supporting them in the transformation of their practice remains a challenge across all of the countries concerned**. Several types of agricultural extension approaches were tried out in the past but they rarely achieved the desired results. Since that time, a great deal of technical progress has been made, notably in terms of information and communications technology (ICT). Several factors have also significantly changed including demographics and knowledge of local agricultural practices. The question of spreading good practice and accelerating the transformation of agricultural systems in rural African societies is therefore raised in an atmosphere conducive to reflection and an updated institutional framework.

Several experiments have been carried out on an intermediate scale, which showcase progress and make use of the explosive growth in information and communications technologies in Africa over the last two decades. SOS SAHEL asks itself and invites its partners to share their experiences in terms of:

- The most effective approaches to accelerate and scale-up family farming systems and the rural economy in the Sahel,
- The place and the role of information and communications technology within this process,
- The stakeholders and the resources that need to be mobilised, from a local level to an international one,
- The institutional and political frameworks that need to be established,

It is important to accelerate the transformation of family farming and to involve the greatest number of stakeholders across the entirety of national territories, to benefit economic growth, job creation and the food and nutritional security of the countries in the region.

7. The program

April 25, 2019 - preparation workshops

One of the objectives of the Africa Days is to introduce the solutions brought by SOS SAHEL and partners based in Africa or with wide experience in the Sahelian Africa. These solutions address the two issues related to the theme of the forum:

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To do this, the participating structures will present successful experiences in intensification and modernization of family farming as well as tools to accelerate this process. 12 examples will be exposed in the form of a Market Place.

During the day of preparation, the holders of solutions will be divided into three workshops to discuss and to share their respective experiences. The conclusions of the working groups will come to feed the panels of the forum scheduled the next day.

April 26, 2019 - Forum and Market Place presentation

The forum is held on the second day, in line with the work carried out by the holders of solutions. Wider, it brings together a variety of actors from national and regional institutions, technical and financial partners, the private sector and organizations of civil society concerned by the development of the Sahelian region, the issues of food security and nutrition, employment and agricultural economy, the use of information and communication technologies. The forum will be organized around panel of discussions on specific issues.

Three panels will convene holders of solutions and external partners. Each panel will discuss one of the two themes of the Africa Days and will be introduced by a facilitator. The panelists will be invited on the basis of their experience in one of the two themes, so as to represent a range of responses from different origins: actors on the ground (producers' and civil society organisations), government and regional institutions, technical and financial partners, companies of the private sector involved in the agricultural or food sectors, research institutions. Holders of solutions will also nominate their panel members responsible for submitting to the audience the synthesis of their work from the previous day. Each panel will ask the panelists to discuss three by three, one of the two themes. Discussions will be then engaged with the Assembly of participants. In total each issue will be addressed during 45 minutes, interspersed with short interludes. Indeed, in order to make the forum more dynamic, external partners will be invited to intervene between each panel. These interventions, wanting to be short will be to present an experience or a tool or to take a position on one of the themes.

At the end of the forum, the Market Place initiated the day before, will be open to all the participants.

A synthesis will be published presenting the solutions and the recommendations of the forum.

