STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE DEFINED FOLLOWING THE TRAINING COURSES

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THREE STRATEGIES IS PROVIDED BELOW:

1. Strategy defined by a regional FO
2. Strategy defined by a national Professional Agricultural Organization
3. Strategy that may involve ECOWAS countries and a combination of stakeholders

1. STRATEGY DEFINED BY A REGIONAL FO

For example, below is the strategy devised at the end of the training workshop carried out in Dapaong, Northern Togo, in 2014 *(42 participants, including 22 farmer leaders who are members of the partner farmers' organization, the Regional Union of Cereal Producers of the Savannah Region - UROPC-S - and some 20 technicians from various organizations).* It included the following activities:

1. Better understand the reasons why farmers use pesticides and veterinary drugs. This will make it possible to provide more suitable advice and achieve a reduction in the use of the most hazardous products.

2. Develop training modules and organize training courses together with farmers at the level of all communities or the canton.

3. Improve the skills of project employees and UROPC-S members with regard to identifying the main pests and key points of their biology, and raise farmers' awareness for these issues.

4. Make an inventory of existing traditional practices that reduce or eliminate the use of the most dangerous pesticides, test them, validate them with the support of research structures (e.g. ITRA) and then disseminate them.

5. Make an inventory of existing traditional animal care practices, test them, validate them and disseminate them.

6. With the support of ITRA, test some bio-pesticides produced by some NGOs (in this case, the NGOs ARFA and AGIDE) and determine the economic viability of treatments.

7. Use various media to inform farmers about the proper use of registered pesticides.

8. Identify where registered products are sold and inform producers.

9. Include sellers of registered products in upcoming training courses.

10. Support and promote thegrouped supply of pesticides by UROPC-S to sellers of registered products (the aim being to obtain better prices but also to reduce the use of unregistered products of dubious quality from Ghana).

11. Partner with registered pesticide vendors to develop a packaging management system within the UOPC *(cantonal member unions of UROPC-S).*

Note: Due to the short duration of the EU- and FGEF-funded projects (3 and 4 years respectively) and the insufficient involvement of ITRA and a number of farmer leaders, this strategy was only partially implemented at the level of men's plots. On the other hand, it has been much better integrated and implemented in the vegetable growing plots managed by women.

2. STRATEGY DEFINED BY A NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION LIKE RECA NIGER

In terms of pest control, more effective management of pesticides and promotion of more agro-ecological alternatives, the national network of Niger's chambers of agriculture produces numerous technical sheets and guides (see https://reca-niger.org/spip.php?article686) and provides **training on pesticides and alternatives for the chambers' agricultural advisors, as well as for farmers' training courses**, which run 2 to 3 half-days per week over 4 to 5 months (300 male and female farmers are trained per year).

Training for **farmer monitors** has been recently carried out at various vegetable growing plots in order to be more familiar with pest cycles and, in particular, to promote reflection together with the farmers both regarding the **use of pesticides** (organic or not) and **crop calendars** *(interaction between these two topics being very substantial).*

Network exchanges via Whatsapp are used by RECA Niger advisors to identify pests and share control methods.

3. STRATEGY THAT MAY INVOLVE ECOWAS COUNTRIES AND A COMBINATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

This guide, as well as the training tools designed by RECA Niger, the Malian CNOP, etc., and the resulting training, could become major elements of “better territorial management for agroecological transition”.

These tools aim to train a new generation of technicians and professional managers. They are firmly established within the framework of the efforts required to renew the importance of agronomic and environmental sciences and agro-ecological practices in all their facets: scientific, technical, health, environmental, socio-economic, and regulatory.
These tools could also be made available to all agricultural education institutions.

A **regional network** such as the Alliance for agroecology in West Africa (3AO) could support these approaches by taking into account the very different problems of the three agro-climatic zones of West Africa: Sahelian, Sudanian and Guinean.

Created in 2018, this platform already brings together nearly 70 members, including farmers' organizations, research institutions and NGOs, including AVSF, all involved in actions to promote and support the agro-ecological transition in various West African countries.

The alliance, whose secretariat is handled by ROPPA[59], is a relevant representative body for multiple stakeholders that assumes a coordinating role, provides information, and promotes synergies between organizations and levels of action for increasing the impact of agroecological initiatives in the subregion.

Beyond the members, this platform is attracting the interest of public authorities such as ECOWAS, which is expected to support the alliance within the framework of its agroecology program implemented with the technical assistance of the AVSF-IRAM-INADES international consortium. The evolving action plan of 3AO is organized around different priorities such as the strengthening of training and farmer learning systems, the consolidation of the agroecological network and the mobilization of civil society, the development of participatory research and the combination of science and farmer know-how.

The members are committed to being involved in the implementation of the collaborative action plan, through the animation and support of various initiatives within the framework of these priority axes and according to their own objectives and means. To date, the action plan does not include a specific initiative on the reduction of pesticides and training in agroecological alternatives.

Such an initiative could be proposed by AVSF, with the support of other members working in this field (Gret, Agrisud, CARI, CIRAD, etc.), in order to launch an initial test phase for the implementation of training, which would enable the adaptation and improvement of the guide's content.

The system should also include producers' organizations (representative, technical and economic) such as RECA Niger or CNOP, as well as public services (research institutes, outreach services, plant protection, animal and human health).

Although this initiative’s core work would continue to be **training** on the key topic of reducing pesticide use and promoting alternatives in animal and plant production, the regional focus and the link to ECOWAS could also make it possible to address issues at the local, national and regional levels of **enforcement of regulations, their application and control of pesticide markets.**

These activities could be based on the international code of conduct established by the FAO for the distribution and use of pesticides. This code provides a framework for the life cycle management of pesticides and was drafted for the attention of governments, the pesticide industry and other stakeholders involved in pest control and pesticide management to prevent harm to pesticide users, the public and the environment[64].

[63] Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (Network of Smallholder Farmer Organizations and Agricultural Producers of West Africa)[http://roppa-afrique.org/spip.php?article552]
[64] http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/documents/Pests_Pesticides/Code/Annotated_Guidelines_FR.pdf

NOTES