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# 'A global frontrunner in agroecology' - Experts see unique opportunity to transform West African food systems

*Latest report by IPES-Food points to West Africa's "path to resilience and the SDGs" through agroecology.*

**07 September 2020, DAKAR** - West Africa has all the ingredients to become a "global frontrunner in agroecology", with the dual crises of climate change and COVID-19 creating a unique opportunity to transform the region's food systems.

These are the findings of a report launched today by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems ([IPES-Food](#)).

"Some 90% of West African agriculture is made up of family farms," said lead author Mamadou Goïta, adding that many already use diverse cropping practices.

"West Africa has vibrant social movements defending farmers' access to land, water and seeds. It has investment coming into the agricultural sector. And agroecology and food sovereignty have already been written into national and regional policies."

Speaking on the eve of the 10<sup>th</sup> African Green Revolution Forum\*, Goïta added: "All that is missing is a clear signal from governments, donors and farming leaders that ineffective Green Revolution approaches are consigned to the past, and agroecology is the way forward."

The report - drawing on three years of collaborative research with multiple partners in the region - underlines the vast challenges facing West African food systems today: temperatures are rising 1.5 times faster than global averages; 70-80% of the population in West Africa is living on less than \$2 a day; and the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to plunge millions more into poverty and food insecurity.

The IPES-Food report shows that agroecology provides a compelling response to these challenges:

- Agroecology builds climate resilience in durable and affordable ways;
- it reduces reliance on expensive chemical inputs;
- it builds on farmer-to-farmer and intergenerational knowledge exchange; and,
- agroecology generates employment in rural areas, making it well-adapted to the realities of West African agriculture.

But the experts identified several obstacles holding back agroecology in West Africa. Across the region, farmers face difficulties accessing the land, water, seeds, credit, markets and the financial support they need to shift to agroecological practices, with powerful actors pushing simultaneously to commercialize and industrialize all aspects of West African food systems.

"In parallel to the policies supporting agroecology, other policies are also supporting growth corridors for export commodities, mass irrigation projects and chemical-intensive upscaling," warned report co-lead Emile Frison. "It is time to put an end to this incoherence."

"But the solutions are in our hands," argues Goïta, highlighting the collaborative efforts of the recently-formed Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa (3AO). "These obstacles can be overcome if we harness an increasingly vocal, broad-based and unified agroecological movement."

Goïta added: "Already a viable reality on the ground, agroecology responds to the demands of millions of farmers across West Africa. But we must go further. We need to hold policy makers to the commitments they have made. And we need to show that agroecology is the path to resilience. It is the definition of a systemic response to the COVID-19 and climate crises. And it is the most cost-effective way – perhaps the only way – for West Africa to meet the SDGs."

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Read the **full report**: [\[EN\]](#) [\[FR\]](#) | Read the **executive summary**: [\[EN\]](#) [\[FR\]](#)

*The **International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food)** is an independent, [expert panel](#) that works towards the transition to sustainable food systems worldwide.*

\*The African Green Revolution Forum is taking place from 8-11 September 2020.

\*\*3AO is 'The Alliance for Agroecology in West Africa'. It is a coordination and information platform composed of farmers' organizations, research institutes / universities, international NGOs and social movements. It aims to promote and support an agroecological transition in West Africa to ensure resilient, sustainable livelihoods adapted to local agricultural challenges.

### Experts available for interview:

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| Français (FR)<br><br><a href="#">Mamadou Goïta</a><br>Panel Expert, IPES-Food | English (EN), Français (FR)<br><br><a href="#">Emile Frison</a><br>Panel Expert, IPES-Food | English (EN)<br><br><a href="#">Olivia Yambi</a><br>Panel Expert, IPES-Food |
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