

# Changing Business as Usual

## **ASSESSING DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE IN THE SAHEL THROUGH A RESILIENCE LENS**

Peter Gubbels, May 2015



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Photo front page: Famine hit Niger in spring and summer 2010, affecting over 7 million people, roughly half the country's population (Niger, Tiguirimi: Jonathan Bjerg Møller/CARE 2010).

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

*Note: Meanings of Acronyms in French are given in their English equivalents*

AfDB	African Development Bank
AFD	French Agency for Development
AGIR	Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AGRHYMET	Agriculture, Hydrology, Meteorology research center (part of CILSS)
BAD	Bank for Agricultural Development
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme
CILSS	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DfID	Department for International Development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian aid Office
ECOWAP	Economic Community of West Africa Agricultural Programme
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EWS	Early Warning System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Agency
FEWS-NET	Famine Early Warning System Network
FMNR	Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (of trees)
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GHI	Global Hunger Index
HEA	Household Economy Assessment
HFA	Hyogo Framework of Action
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agriculture Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
ICRAF	International Center for Research in Agroforestry
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEA	Household Economy Assessment
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United States)
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
REACH	Renew Effort Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Credit Association
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WFP	World Food Programme

## Key Messages

1. **Substantial humanitarian and development action is urgently needed for the international community's three year Sahel Regional response plan to 2016 and beyond**, enabling over twenty million chronically vulnerable people to break the cycle of hunger and under-nutrition.
2. Despite huge increases in funding, from \$132 million in 2005 to \$927 million in 2013 (in 4 countries), and the overall emergency appeal of \$1.96 billion in 2015 for 9 countries in the Sahel region, **humanitarian assistance alone cannot address the structural roots of vulnerability that are pushing ever more desperate people into chronic crisis**, and keeping them there.
3. **The development paradigm in the Sahel is deeply flawed**. Since 2000, all Sahelian countries experienced robust economic growth, often averaging over 5-6%. At the same time, people needing emergency assistance rose dramatically from 6 million in 2000 to 24 million in 2014. Every year since 2012, whether or not good rains produced above average harvests, over 20 million people suffered from chronic hunger. The benefits of development, including agricultural growth, are not pro-poor. They are not equitable. In particular, development does not address the needs of rural women or small scale farmers in ecologically fragile zones, or reduce their vulnerability to risks. Most importantly, development action does not address longer term stresses affecting rural livelihoods. It does little to prevent recurrent food and nutrition crises in the Sahel.
4. **Without major changes in how development is done**, how existing development resources are allocated, and without changes in development policies, institutions and strategies – particularly to address gender inequity – **the Sahel food and nutrition crisis will not abate. It will intensify**.
5. Resilience efforts, including the European Union's AGIR initiative which aims at "zero hunger" by 2032, rightly place access to food and nutrition security at the heart of development action. **AGIR is a sign of real progress for "changing business as usual"**.
6. **The AGIR initiative faces enormous obstacles in integrating resilience** into existing policies and programmes in the Sahel. These include: Shifting the allocation of resources for development, targeting the most vulnerable, fostering institutional changes required for multi-sectoral collaboration, reaching consensus on indicators to assess progress, mainstreaming gender into resilience initiatives, and ensuring the participation of civil society. Much still has to be done to significantly change the dominant development model to support resilience.
7. **For effective promotion of resilience, the priority challenges are:** overcoming gender barriers preventing women farmers from accessing land, water, savings and credit and appropriate extension services, harnessing agriculture to contribute to improved nutrition, shifting investments to support sustainable and climate resilient farming systems (agroecology), promoting highly promising agroforestry approaches, investing more in Disaster Risk Reduction, and supporting social protection.

In light of these findings, the main recommendations for accelerating change in "business as usual" for strengthened resilience in the Sahel are:

- R1 Remove structural barriers that prevent women farmers from obtaining access to productive resources such as land, water, credit, and tailored extension services**
- R2 Harness the potential of agriculture to improve nutritional outcomes**
- R3 Improve the quality of agricultural spending. Reform policies to better strengthen the resilience of the vulnerable farmers, foster sustainability of farming systems, and enable social equity, by targeting poorer farm households**
- R4 Increase public spending on agriculture. Shift more public spending to support low cost but productive agro ecological farming techniques, such as agroforestry, which are accessible to the majority of poorer rural households in ecologically fragile areas;**
- R5 Improve the transparency of agriculture spending in public budgets. Clearly indicate the amount of funding allocated to support women farmers, and to the more vulnerable farming households**
- R6 Increase development assistance to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation**



**R7 Strengthen institutional capacity of decentralized local governments to undertake multi-sectoral and multi-actor processes for integrating resilience into the design and implementation of development initiatives**

**R8 Invest in productive social protection measures focused on the poorest and most vulnerable households**

*Tiguirimi, Niger,  
Photo: © 2010 Jonathan Bjerg Møller/CARE*

A photograph showing a family in a rural, arid landscape in Niger. A man in white traditional clothing is holding a brown cow. A woman in a blue and white patterned dress is leaning over the cow, possibly administering aid. A young child in a pink shirt stands nearby, holding a bowl. The ground is dry and dusty, and there are sparse trees in the background.

A family tries to get their starving cow back on its feet during the Niger famine in 2010.

# 1. Overview of the Sahel Food and Nutrition Crisis

## 1.1 Continued assistance is critical to 2016 and beyond

Substantial humanitarian and development action is urgently needed in the Sahel until the end of 2016 and beyond. Every year since 2012, whether rains are good

“**CRISES HAVE BECOME CHRONIC, EVERY DAY AND EVERY YEAR EMERGENCIES.**”

or bad, over 20 million people in the Sahel suffer from chronic hunger and are locked in a debt and hunger trap from which they cannot escape. In 2015, the United Nations estimated that 5.8 million children would be at risk of experiencing acute malnutrition.<sup>1</sup> Millions of households across the Sahel are locked in a losing struggle to regain their livelihoods and rebuild their assets in the aftermath of the acute food and nutrition crises of 2005, 2008, 2010, and 2012. The crises have become chronic, “every day” and “every year” emergencies. Vulnerable households are increasingly less able to cope with the greater frequency and intensity of climate shocks, which interact with the longer term structural causes of food and nutrition insecurity.

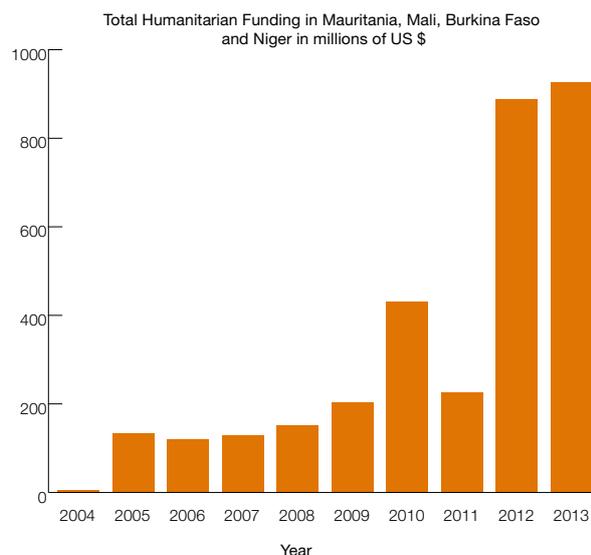


Figure 1: Total Humanitarian Funding in selected Sahel Countries 2004-2013

Recognizing the chronic dimension of the crisis, the United Nations has developed a three-year Sahel Regional strategy. Ending in 2016, the strategy calls on the international donor community to extend commitments to fight hunger and food insecurity by protecting and strengthening the resilience of poor and very poor families<sup>2</sup>. Robert Piper, the UN Assistant Secretary-General and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator highlighted the rationale for providing the resources required for the Sahel by stating “If we are going to break out of this cycle of chronic crises across the Sahel region, emergency assistance to vulnerable farmers and pastoralists has to be considered a top priority. The best way to reduce tomorrow’s emergency case-load is to help households protect their assets today”<sup>3</sup>.

This call was echoed by CARE International and other members of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA)<sup>4</sup> in March 2015. The call emerged from a joint review of the food security situation determined by the regional food crisis assessment approach called the “Cadre Harmonisé” (CH)<sup>5</sup>. Jointly with other agencies participating in RPCA, CARE International advocates for **immediate action** to protect livelihoods of people in the 14 areas heading into an acute food crisis in 2015-2016.

There can be no let-up therefore, in the flow of external assistance to the Sahel. Vulnerable people in the Sahel need long-term support to break out of this pernicious cycle of hunger and dependency.

## 1.2 Overview of Humanitarian Funding in the Sahel since 2004

Taking the wider Sahel into account, a staggering \$1.96 billion is needed to meet humanitarian needs in the Sahel. This is up from \$1.6 billion in 2012<sup>6</sup>. Unfortunately, the call to support the Sahel regional strategy has not been well heeded. A mid-term review in February 2015 indicated that only 45% of total funding requested for Sahelian countries had been met<sup>7</sup>. This pattern of shortfalls in assistance is one reason why the number of people in the Sahel affected by the food and nutrition crisis has remained persistently high.

Recognizing the critical need for longer term investment in resilience in the Sahel, OCHA and its partners developed a three year (2014-16) Strategic Response Plan (SRP)<sup>8</sup>. It was designed to both provide life saving assistance and to reduce the humanitarian case load in future years. However, support for the SRP has not been adequate<sup>9</sup>. Bukar Tijani, Assistant Director-General of the FAO Regional Office for Africa stated: “Due to funding

“ **THE PATTERN OF INCREASED HUMANITARIAN FUNDING IN THE SAHEL RISKS BECOMING UNSUSTAINABLE, PARTICULARLY IF IT CONTINUES TO RISE.** ”

gaps, interventions that could prevent the food security situation from worsening are delayed and the capacities of vulnerable communities to cope with repeated shocks are deteriorating”<sup>10</sup>.

Despite these significant shortfalls in commitments, the overall pattern of actual funding received has dramatically increased since 2004. Table 1 below shows the evolution of total humanitarian funding actually spent in four selected Sahel countries (Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Niger) within the Consolidated Appeals since 2004.

This data vividly illustrates two insights. First, the pattern of increased humanitarian funding in the Sahel risks becoming unsustainable, particularly if it continues to rise, and also in the wake of other humanitarian crises across the globe. Secondly, despite increased funding, the tragedy of an “every day” chronic food and nutrition crisis is still expanding. It affects the lives and livelihoods of an ever increasing number of people. There is widespread recognition it **takes more than humanitarian assistance to address both the periodic and structural vulnerabilities in the Sahel** which are pushing ever

more people into a chronic food and nutrition crisis and keeping them there.

To end the Sahel crisis, most decision-makers agree that development policies and practices must change. The European Commission, as well as the US Agency for International Development (USAID) have called for “**changing business as usual**”<sup>11</sup>. To initiate this, USAID in the Sahel established a Joint Planning Cell (JPC) to identify new possibilities for layering, integrating, and sequencing a wide range of existing humanitarian and development efforts with new investments, around the shared aim of building resilience among chronically vulnerable populations<sup>12</sup>.

María Damanaki, European Commissioner, has also promoted resilience as a new approach saying, “One thing is sure: we must change. Business as usual is not an option<sup>13</sup>.” Robert Watson, Director of the International Assessment of Agriculture Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) also declared, “If a large part of the world isn’t to go hungry in the 21st century, the focus must be on a more rational, ecologically-based use of scarce land and water resources, an equitable trade regime, and widespread recognition and action on climate change.”

If national governments, regional bodies, multi-lateral institutions, bilateral donors and United Nations agencies do not make major changes in policy, strategy, and deployment of development resources, the current crisis will ravage the livelihoods of millions of people in the Sahel.

## 2. Reviewing the Development model through a Resilience lens

The remedy most often cited as the way to end the chronic crisis is the concept of “**resilience**”.

“Business as usual” consists of providing a humanitarian response when vulnerable groups in the Sahel are hit by drought or other shocks. The implicit assumption is that once emergency and resilience interventions are completed, development actors may resume as usual. The onus has remained primarily on the humanitarian community to enable vulnerable people to restore their livelihoods and get back on the development track.

It has become increasingly clear that humanitarian action alone cannot achieve a reversal of the growing humanitarian case load in the Sahel. **The dramatic growth in humanitarian funding to desperate people reflects that the approach is not working.**

Changing business as usual does not just entail better integration of humanitarian and development action,

it requires **major changes to the development model itself**. The root causes of growing vulnerability and food insecurity are not natural disasters like drought, but a deeply flawed development paradigm that does not address longer term stresses, inequity and marginalization.

Without major changes in how development is done, and in how development resources are allocated, particularly in support of small scale farmers and pastoralists living in ecologically fragile areas, and in support of the livelihoods of rural women, the crisis will not abate. It will intensify.

### 2.1 National Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategies

Currently, the overarching imperative of the development paradigm in the Sahel is **economic growth**. This imperative is reflected in the development policies of national

governments. For example, Mali's main policy document is titled "Strategic Framework for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty" (CSCR in French). The first strategic pillar is "Growth"<sup>14</sup>.

In Niger, the "Economic and Social Development Plan" (PDES) contains a stronger emphasis on **inclusive** growth. This is reflected in two of the main pillars. Pillar 1 entails the "Creation of conditions for sustainable, balanced, and inclusive development". Pillar 4 is entitled "Competitive and diversified economy for accelerated and inclusive growth"<sup>15</sup>. However, substantial barriers impede inclusivity.

## 2.2 Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)

Throughout Africa, economic growth is a policy priority, with a key focus on agriculture. In July 2003, African leaders meeting in Maputo, Mozambique committed their governments to allocating 10% of their national budgets to agriculture by 2008, in order to increase annual agricultural growth to 6% of GDP. Their aim was to eliminate hunger, and reduce poverty and food insecurity<sup>16</sup>. Their assumption was that increased agricultural growth would reduce hunger.

The African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is a platform that brings together key players – including the government, the private sector and civil society – at national, regional and international levels to improve coordination and share knowledge.

Two of CAADP's pillars for increasing agricultural growth are to improve rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for market access, and to increase the food supply required to reduce hunger<sup>17</sup>.

CAADP highlights the need for **increased investment in agribusiness leading to a greater overall food supply**<sup>18</sup> and therefore a reduction of food insecurity.

In 2013, eight African countries, including Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Senegal, reached or exceeded the 10% spending target set by CAADP. Of these, Burkina Faso and Senegal have achieved the target of agricultural growth of more than 6% per annum<sup>19</sup>.

## 2.3 Development policies of bilateral donors: the case of Denmark

The emphasis on economic growth as the main engine to overcome poverty is also strongly promoted by most bilateral donors. Denmark is an interesting example, as two of its priority countries are Mali and Niger.

Denmark's Strategic Framework for Growth and Employment (GE), places its primary emphasis on strong

economic growth as a way to overcome poverty and vulnerability. It recognizes the need to build resilience among poor countries by enabling vulnerable population groups to cope with shocks, and by "*Working with the most vulnerable*". To contribute to a pattern of economic growth that benefits also the poorest households, Denmark seeks to establish safety nets that provide the poorest households with tools to work themselves out of poverty, and to empower the most vulnerable people to become better at coping with risks and external shocks<sup>20</sup>.

Within the related Strategic Framework for Natural Resources, Energy and Climate Change (NEC), Denmark acknowledges that environmentally responsible economic growth is required for resilience. The NEC strategy states that economic growth in countries within the Sahel will be hampered if climate change and resource depletion are not reversed and outlines steps to achieve this<sup>21</sup>.

To implement all of its development strategies for "The Right to a Better Life", Denmark's approach is to **directly engage the Danish business community in fostering growth and employment** in its priority countries.

International development cooperation has sometimes been too broadly focused, with too little attention paid

to private sector development. This will now change. Private sector development will from now on be central to Danish development cooperation. The funds allocated to promote growth

and employment will be doubled. A development strategy focused on, and implemented together with, the private sector will give strong impetus to sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth<sup>22</sup>.

In summary, Denmark's major change in its development cooperation is **to provide much more support to its own business community**. The aim is to enable businesses to invest in developing countries, helping them to increase trade and access to regional and global exports markets, and encouraging them to provide innovative technologies that generate employment and increased productivity.

## 2.4 The G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition

Denmark's approach is similar to that of other bilateral donors and is also consistent with the global "Washington consensus"<sup>23</sup> supported by multi-lateral institutions such as the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and more recently the G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition.

“ CAADP HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR INCREASED INVESTMENT IN AGRIBUSINESS LEADING TO A GREATER OVERALL FOOD SUPPLY<sup>18</sup> AND THEREFORE A REDUCTION OF FOOD INSECURITY.

“ **THE AIM IS TO ENABLE BUSINESSES TO INVEST IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, HELPING THEM TO INCREASE TRADE AND ACCESS TO REGIONAL AND GLOBAL EXPORTS MARKETS.** ”

This new “cooperation framework” was launched at the 2012 G8 Summit in the United States and strengthened at the 2013 Summit in the United Kingdom. It now covers 10 African countries (including Burkina Faso, Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria) and brings over 100 business companies to the table as donors, in addition to the G8 governments and the European Union.

The New Alliance initiative “*aims to accelerate responsible investment in African agriculture and lift 50 million people out of poverty by 2022*” through a partnership that includes specific commitments from African leaders to refine policies in order to improve investment opportunities and drive their country-led plans on food security. Private sector companies have collectively committed more than \$3 billion in increased investments, including purchases of productive land in Africa.

## 2.5 Is Economic Growth in the Sahel Equitable and Inclusive?

Despite repeated shocks and food crises, most countries in the Sahel have experienced significant and relatively consistent economic growth for the last 10 years. Growth often comes from the extractive sector, such as mining, but also agriculture, through export crops such as cotton.

Table 2 provides real GDP growth rates for Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, including the most recent projections for 2015. The average growth rate ranges between 6.4% for Burkina Faso and 4.5% for Mali. This is much higher than current rates in the US or Europe. These are respectable rates of economic growth even when population growth is taken into account.

However, the stark reality is that even though Sahelian countries are achieving strong economic growth, the food and nutrition crisis persists and **inequalities between households are deepening.**

Household Economy Assessments (HEA) undertaken in Mali and Niger, including those conducted by CARE International, indicate a major gap between the better off and poorest households in agricultural, agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihood zones.

### THE “UNFEMINIZATION” OF AGRICULTURE

A particular challenge is that **gender barriers for women** to make their livelihoods more resilient remain strong. In CARE International’s Strategic Framework for West Africa gender injustice has been highlighted as one of the main

underlying factors causing vulnerability. With population increase, and less land available per household, rural women tend to be denied access to farming land, (and other productive assets). This phenomenon is referred to as the “unfeminization of agriculture”<sup>25</sup>.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) in a recent study noted that the laudable and impressive growth witnessed in the Sahel and the rest of Africa is not matched with a significant reduction in unemployment and poverty. More worrisome is the persistence of high levels of inequality<sup>26</sup>. The African Union in its 2012 Economic Report confirmed the presence of wide income inequality in Africa. This report shows that sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest growth-poverty elasticity in the world. In Africa, a 1% increase in growth reduces poverty by only 1.6%, compared to 4.2% in Eastern Europe and Western Asia<sup>27</sup>.

Clearly, the benefits of economic growth in the Sahel are not reaching the poorest, who become food insecure and fall into a debt–poverty trap. The key economic development policies (in agriculture, agro-forestry, food security climate change adaptation, and environment) are not generating inclusive economic benefits. Nor are they effective in strengthening resilience.

An effective strategy for resilience in the Sahel must overcome barriers preventing the poorest and the most vulnerable groups from improving their livelihoods. These barriers are inherent to the existing political economy of Sahelian states, and enhanced by the traditional class system and hierarchy

Year	Burkina Faso	Mali	Mauritania	Niger
2005	8.7	6.1	5.4	7.2
2006	6.3	5.3	11.4	5.8
2007	4.1	4.3	1.0	3.1
2008	5.8	5.0	3.5	9.6
2009	3.0	4.5	-1.2	-0.7
2010	7.9	5.8	4.7	8.4
2011	5.6	2.7	3.6	2.3
2012	9.0	-1.2	7.0	11.1
2013 (e)	6.9	5.0	6.8	3.6
2014 (p)	7.0	6.7	6.9	6.0
2015 (p)	6.3	5.6	7.3	6.2
<b>Average</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.7</b>

Table 2: Real GDP Annual Growth Rates for Selected Sahel Countries 2005–2015

Source: African Economic Outlook 2014 <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/statistics/><sup>24</sup>

e) - estimates and (p) = projections.



Aman Bader, Maradi region, Niger  
Photo: © 2015 Agnes Otzelberger/CARE

Rain gauges are installed in CARE ALP program villages

of Sahelian rural societies. This is a “good governance” issue, rather than essentially a “drought” or natural disaster one.

### 2.6 Has Investment in Agriculture benefitted Small-scale Farmers?

The AfDB advocates increased support to small scale agriculture as the best way to achieve inclusive, “green growth”<sup>28</sup>. The World Bank indicates that growth in the agriculture sector is 2.5 times as effective at reducing poverty as growth in other sectors<sup>29</sup>.

In May 2014, the African Union Joint Conference of Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Development, Fisheries and Aquaculture adopted a resolution endorsing seven “Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation Goals.”<sup>30</sup> At this conference, delegates renewed their commitment to dedicate 10% of their national budget to agriculture, as part of the CAADP<sup>31</sup>. Several countries, in-

cluding Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, have ostensibly met their commitment.

However, the rhetoric of supporting small-scale food production for domestic markets is often not put into practice by governments, aid programmes and international institutions. Reviews of National Agricultural Investment Plans, fostered by CAADP itself, indicates that **little has been done to help the most marginalised farmers, particularly women**. An example comes from Burkina Faso. The commitment to develop and rehabilitate irrigated land in the Bagré Growth Pole Project is mostly reserved for large-scale agribusiness investors. Only 22% (2,790 ha.) of the land is available for small-scale farmers. Usually these farmers are granted only 1 to 4 ha. of land, with hardly any opportunity to scale up<sup>32</sup>.

Spending on agriculture is only moderately pro-poor. It

## “ RESILIENCE PLACES FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY, NOT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROFITS, AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENT ACTION.

has had only limited impact on resilience and poverty reduction<sup>33</sup>. The bulk of agricultural spending goes to areas of high agricultural potential, for example suited to cotton or irrigated rice production. In many cases, a sustained increase in agricultural spending goes hand-in-hand with worsening nutrition<sup>34</sup>.

### THE GREEN REVOLUTION: A DEPENDANCY TOWARDS TRANSNATIONAL AGRIBUSINESS COMPANIES?

Governments and donors tend to support a farming model called the “**Green Revolution**”, advocated by agribusinesses such as Syngenta, and foundations such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). This approach claims that larger-scale, export oriented, monocropping agriculture, the use of subsidized-but-still-expensive nitrogen based fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides

and hybrid seeds are the most productive and therefore most rational methods “to feed the world”.

Many policy makers see this Green Revolution approach as the solution to Africa’s low farm productivity and in 2012, Burkina Faso developed an agreement with the G8 New Alliance. The aim was to improve food and nutritional security by helping 1.6 million people emerge from poverty by 2022. This was to be achieved in part through a partnership with six international companies and ten Burkina Faso companies, with financial support from the Burkina government and international donors.

However, civil society organisations, including farmers’ movements in Africa and international NGOs have been highly critical of this agreement in Burkina Faso<sup>35</sup>. Many agencies, including CARE<sup>36</sup>, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS)<sup>37</sup> and the Aprove network argue that the Green Revolution will lead to poor farmers’ dependence on transnational corporations<sup>38</sup>. There is strong scepticism about major agribusiness investment as the main way to ensuring increased access to food by the poorest rural households.

## 3. Departing from Business As Usual: Resilience and AGIR

### 3.1 Resilience places food and nutrition security at the heart of development

The underlying assumption from the 1970s to 2000 was that hunger would eventually be eliminated through economic growth and a steady rise in agricultural production<sup>39</sup>. The focus was on increasing the **supply and availability of food**, not on food access, stable prices, or nutrition.

The 1973 crisis in the Sahel started to chip away at this idea, and the persistence and deepening of food and nutrition crises since 2005 show the failure of development policies as the households and communities targeted fall into crisis even with mild shocks. The model that separated development (aimed at preventing crises) from humanitarian action (aimed at overcoming crises) is increasingly seen to be outmoded<sup>40</sup>. The recurrence of food crises in the Sahel demonstrates that food and nutrition security must be addressed in a more resolute, integrated and lasting manner<sup>41</sup>.

In the context of chronically vulnerable areas, resilience places **food and nutrition security**, not economic growth and profits, at the heart of development action. The emphasis must be on multi-sector initiatives.

Faced with the relative failure of food security policies, characterized by the repetition of food crises, a broader

approach addressing other aspects of vulnerability, not only economic, but also social, ecosystem management and weather-related has started to take root in development thinking and practice.

One example is the “Partners for Resilience” (PFR) initiative in Mali, to which CARE International contributes. The PFR alliance works with communities in the Inner Niger River Delta regions of Timbuktu and Mopti, and has introduced a range of simple techniques such as drought-resistant seeds, rehabilitation of wells, vegetable gardens, food banks, saving and loan groups, and improved building of water dykes combined with tree planting. A looming threat to livelihoods in participating communities is the major irrigation schemes upstream, which are financed by foreign investors. These schemes could reduce water flow of the Niger River by up to one third. This would have a disastrous impact on millions of people in the delta; the land available for rice farming will decrease. Wetlands may be lost, along with vital resources.

### HELPING COMMUNITIES LOBBY FOR FAIR ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

Through its support for ecosystems research, including cost-benefit analysis, PFR is developing an evidence base

that enables affected communities to advocate extensively with water managers and land-use planners upstream for fair and judicious allocation of water, in order to safeguard both livelihoods and ecosystems further downstream<sup>42</sup>.

Initiatives such as the PfR that take a more comprehensive approach to addressing chronic vulnerability highlight the need to integrate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and adaptation to climate change (particularly Community Based Adaptation) within an agro-ecosystems approach.

This inclusive, multi-sectoral, integrated and coordinated resilience approach is strongly promoted by the European Union in the framework of the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR). Attention has also been given to cash transfer programs, either as conditional, (cash-for-work, or adopting nutrition behaviours) or as unconditional (relief), spread out over time to sustainably improve household resilience. This approach is saluted by most partners, even skeptics, as real progress in departing from “business as usual”.

### 3.2 Signs of progress: the AGIR Initiative in the Sahel

AGIR grew out of a consultation organized in June 2012 in Brussels on the food crisis in the Sahel. In light of the chronic vulnerability affecting a large portion of the population in this region, the Sahelian decision-makers and their partners in the North, decided to launch AGIR to “put an end to the cycle of hunger and malnutrition”.

AGIR’s aim is to eradicate malnutrition within two decades, by targeting three segments of the population<sup>43</sup>:

- The most vulnerable farmers
- Agro-pastoralists and transhumant livestock herders
- Poor workers in urban and rural areas

AGIR does not seek to replace existing policies, rather to “inject” resilience into existing programs.

For example within agriculture, resilience should be integrated mainly through Pillar 3 of the CAADP that aims at “increasing the resilience [of] vulnerable populations in Africa by reducing risks of food insecurity and creating linkages for participation in agricultural growth”<sup>44</sup>. This pillar provides for a regional agricultural investment plan targeting the most vulnerable populations.

Although AGIR has strong guidelines, it is not a program in its own right; the initiative proclaims a set of action principles, but without any binding force. Nor will AGIR itself “release” any additional funding, contrary to

initial hopes and what some declarations seemed to imply.

However, AGIR coincides with the development of the European Development Fund (EDF) for the period of 2014 to 2020<sup>45</sup>. The priorities identified by AGIR have been integrated into the new EDF, particularly as agriculture and food security have been selected by many countries as areas on which to concentrate EuropeanAid, unlike in the previous EDF.

### A REFERENCE FOR MANY INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

Many international NGOs are engaging with the AGIR process. They use it as a starting point in their strategies, and contribute their experience to larger national efforts to address resilience. CARE International, for example, states in its Sahel Resilience Strategy that AGIR “represents a promising opportunity for CARE to work with other civil society organizations to influence the debate and direction of resilience discussions, policies and plans at national, regional and international levels”<sup>46</sup>.

One of the key pillars of CARE’s resilience strategy in the Sahel is to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of governance at all levels in order to ensure the equal rights of citizens. This includes enabling marginalized groups to have a voice in decision-making structures that support resilience and support for them to engage in conflict-sensitive preparedness, response and recovery. CARE’s important program contributions to resilience in the Sahel include:

1. **Adaptation Learning Program (ALP):** This initiative has developed innovative approaches to Community-Based Adaptation (CBA). ALP has generated good practice models that strengthen the voice of local communities and civil society organisations in decision-making on adaptation to climate change, giving particular attention to provision and use of climate information
2. **Building Resilience through Women’s Empowerment:** The Mata Masa Dubara (MMD - Women on the Move) movement in Niger and Musow Ka Jigiya Ton (MJT— Women’s Hope) movement in Mali are a Village Savings & Loans and women’s leadership approach. The powerful combination of building women’s financial independence and leadership skills has been highly successful in bringing enabling vulnerable women, their households and communities to absorb, adapt and thrive in the face of recurrent shocks; gain greater economic freedom and diversification of household

“ RIGIDITIES UNIQUE TO INSTITUTIONS OFTEN LIMIT REFORM

livelihood activities; strengthen self-confidence and knowledge of their rights

By engaging in AGIR, CARE International is contributing its lessons learned and experience to resilience, (particularly linked to gender change), to wider national efforts.

### 3.3 Challenges in applying the AGIR framework

#### 3.3.1 Integrating various aspects of resilience into existing policies and programmes

There are major challenges to integrate resilience into existing policies. The first is that these policies were often designed and formulated without having a resilience lens. An example is that of ECOWAP (ECOWAS's agricultural policy) the major vehicle for implementing the CAADP. The implementation guide for Pillar III of the CAADP specifies, "It is important to note that Pillar III does not attempt to address all sources and types of vulnerability and food insecurity. Instead, Pillar III activities target vulnerable populations most likely to be able to contribute to, and directly benefit from, increased agricultural growth<sup>47</sup>". ECOWAP therefore, is above all an **agricultural growth program**, not well designed for resilience.

To facilitate the process of integration, AGIR developed an "Analytical Grid for Policies and Programmes contributing to Resilience<sup>48</sup>". In support of the AGIR Regional Roadmap, this grid provides a common methodological framework for the analysis of "pro-resilience" policies programmes and projects in terms of their actual contribution to building resilience. This analytical framework is being applied to each participating country in the Sahel.

Although this process is still in progress, an analysis of Chad's policies and programmes was commissioned by Concern Worldwide in June 2014. From a review of policies examined in this report, it emerged that the resilience criteria most weakly reflected in Chad's policies and their implementation were<sup>49</sup>:

- Reaching the most vulnerable (targeting)
- Performance effectiveness as related to resilience measures
- Understanding and applying a resilience lens in designing the approach and strategies
- Inter-sectoral analysis, planning, design and coherence
- Inclusiveness, participation, equity and gender
- Transparency of public finances
- Governance (a sufficient configuration of interests and political factors in support of resilience, and decentralized analysis, planning and decision-making )

The report noted that livelihood promotion was not sufficiently gender and equity focused. Nor did such devel-

opment interventions adequately differentiate or consider the special needs of the poorest households.

Although Niger's and Mali's policies are generally more progressive than those of Chad, similar issues exist, particularly in terms of implementation on the ground.

#### 3.3.2 Targeting the most vulnerable

To be effective, a resilience approach must "focus like a laser" on the most vulnerable groups. There is still much debate about whether the most vulnerable should be the only targets. Often, the nature of the resilience sensitive activity determines the target. If it concerns adaptation to climate change, all households in a community may be targeted. In contrast, in the fight against malnutrition, the focus will be on those households with malnourished children.

In the agricultural sector, the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), one of the main driving forces behind the AGIR initiative, emphasizes targeting the most vulnerable, using objective measurements of vulnerability.<sup>50</sup> However, a case can be made that a resilience-fostering approach could also target farm families who have not yet become vulnerable: those who will need to sell their remaining animals and assets to withstand the next crisis, depriving themselves of the means to withstand the crisis after that.

#### POOR INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Some institutions promoting AGIR – again notably ECHO – insist on decentralization as a way to differentiate approaches based on local situations. But in many Sahelian countries, the institutional capacity of local governments to undertake multi-sectoral and multi-actor processes of context specific analysis, design, planning and implementation of resilience sensitive programme interventions remains very weak.<sup>51</sup> Centralised national planning and action still dominates.

Despite these concerns, it remains clear that targeting within resilience interventions must differentiate between different livelihood strategies, based on gender and socio-economic status and other criteria within communities. For example, the very poorest households may need assistance in the form of social protection, until they can "graduate" into self reliant livelihoods.

#### 3.3.3 Institutional Compartmentalization

The task of integrating resilience, in all its many dimensions, into regional and national policies is directly linked to, and affected by governance. The AGIR initiative is intended to enter existing structures rather than create new frameworks. However, this requires finding a way to overcome barriers between traditional sectors and the tendency of various ministries and departments to work within government "silos".

Beyond government, the “resilience” approach requires a shift in culture for all development partners. The rigidities unique to institutions – whether international agencies, governments, regional institutions, or large NGOs – often limit reform. The tendency is to go back to “business as usual”. Change becomes cosmetic, consisting of re-packaging existing activities under the new banner of resilience.

Emergency relief actors and development aid actors in the Sahel have started efforts to integrate operations through joint programs and various collaborative mechanisms. However, there is still a large divide between those who are “agriculturally-focused” and those who are “nutrition-focused<sup>52</sup>». The worlds of relief and development aid still remain largely distinct.

### 3.3.4 Difficulties in obtaining long term support

Donor mentalities are not adequately shifting. Resilience depends on long-term initiatives and projects that do not necessarily have immediate results. For this reason, it is less “sellable” to policy-makers and their constituents than is emergency humanitarian relief. It demands long-term projection that is more challenging in times of financial constraints, multiple emergencies, and in light of the growing influence of “value for money<sup>53</sup>».

### 3.3.5 Indicators for assessing progress in achieving resilience

The “resilience” approach requires in-depth knowledge of livelihoods and close monitoring of the parameters that can affect them at the local level. Good indicators are vital to assessing and possibly adapting the resilience sensitive projects being implemented.

Some progress in this area has been made. The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) plays a driving role through the AGRHYMET Regional Center, which is in charge of both collecting information (weather, harvests, food security) and in supporting the technical services in ECOWAS countries. AGRHYMET has set up a system to collaborate with FEWS-NET, USAID’s early warning system, and the data collection being done by FAO, the WFP, CARE, Oxfam, Save the Children and other international NGOs. This system consists of pooling food security data collected by each organization in its area of specialty.

This type of collaboration forms a shared framework that involves all the partners with the aim of producing a complete diagnostic shared by the main protagonists working to prevent food and nutrition crises.

The main challenge is to establish effective joint analysis of these data. In West Africa, it is still very difficult to set up a framework for in-depth, detailed and up-to-date analysis that could provide timely and relevant information to fuel dialogue on the resilience agenda.

### 3.3.6 AGIR’s limitations to mainstream gender into resilience programmes and policies

The AGIR Roadmap has a section analyzing gender disparities. AGIR notes that women have limited control over productive assets, and recognizes that this has a negative impact on agricultural productivity, community resilience and economic growth. AGIR’s roadmap notes that women in the Sahel lack autonomy and decision-making ability where agricultural production is concerned. AGIR notes that women have limited control over the use of income, and are frequently over-burdened with the majority of household tasks.

AGIR also understands that these issues stem from women’s lack of empowerment. Women do not get support from men to take up leadership positions in their communities. Social norms often hinder equitable participation and resource allocation between men and women, and do not encourage the equitable participation of women at all levels of decision-making. In light of this, AGIR’s road map makes it a priority to mainstream gender empowerment across all these types of action and levels of resilience interventions (local, national and regional).

These insights are confirmed by CARE International studies, which highlight the increased role of women in the resilience of their households, and the critical importance to support gender change as a condition for strengthened resilience.<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, AGIR own analytical grid to assess policies and programmes through a resilience lens does **not include adequate criteria for gender analysis<sup>55</sup>**.

Gender is not mentioned once in this document. Women are mentioned very briefly twice. This lack of a strong gender focus in AGIR’s primary process to review policies and programmes for resilience in the Sahel is a glaring omission, given the emphasis rightly accorded in the AGIR road map to women’s empowerment.

### 3.3.7 Participation of Civil Society, Farmers Organisations and Women’s Associations

The resilience agenda has been limited by the perception that the agenda comes above all from donors. The initial discussions happened at the level of the UN, European Commission and USAID. Farmers’ organizations and local communities felt they were at risk of once again being the end recipients of an approach in which they had no voice.<sup>56</sup>

The feeling that resilience was being discussed over the heads of vulnerable people is all the more ironic since the concept rightly emphasizes their central role in strengthening their adaptive capacity. This concern is enhanced by representatives of Farmer Organisations and pastoral communities who feel that they have already been “doing resilience” for a long time.





*The Village Savings and Loans Associations in Niger has prompted a regular women's movement called Mata Masu Dubara – Women on the Move  
Photo: © 2010 Josh Estey/CARE Niger*

At the same time, climate change, which notably has manifested itself in a more rapid succession of droughts, has compromised these traditional endogenous responses and coping mechanisms. This is why innovative forms of resilience strengthening efforts are so necessary.

### 3.4 Conclusions

The concept of resilience and the AGIR process in the Sahel are helping to shift development thinking, action, and deployment of resources. There is an apparent growing consensus about the principles, objectives, indicators and processes for reforming development, and the way institutions work.

Some of the most important flaws in the dominant development paradigm in chronically vulnerable areas implicitly recognized by the AGIR process are:

- Overwhelming focus on economic growth and return on investment with insufficient attention given to pro-poor equitable forms of livelihood promotion for the most vulnerable groups, particularly women
- Investment in export oriented, larger scale commercial agriculture based on high external inputs in favourable areas with very little being done to promote agroecological farming adapted to climate change, and sustainability of the natural resource base, and improved nutrition
- Inadequate integration of disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation within development initiatives
- Lack of investment in productive social protection measures for the most vulnerable groups, and multi-sectoral initiatives to end child undernutrition

The AGIR road map seeks to address these flaws by systematically assessing all development policies through a resilience lens. However, the pro-resilience discourse and action faces formidable obstacles when it comes to operationalization – in other words, reforming the policies and institutions of development action to enable vulnerable communities and groups become more resilient to shocks and long term stresses.

As documented above, the neo-liberal development paradigm, focused primarily on economic growth, and on the “Green Revolution” model for agricultural development, buttressed by the funding of AGRA, Syngenta, Monsanto and national local agribusiness, remains powerful. The development policies of bi-lateral and multi-lateral donor agencies have become even more strongly in favour of public private partnerships, which are not suited to the specific needs of the most vulnerable households.

While there is a growing consensus for resilience, a number of sensitive political, economic and institutional issues have yet to be tackled. These relate to govern-

ance, shifting development funding priorities, achieving multi-sectoral coordination, sharing of roles among donor states, agencies and governments, targeting the vulner-

able, overcoming discrimination, investing more in Disaster Risk Reduction, and achieving better integration of humanitarian and development action for resilience.

## 4. Priorities to Change “Business as Usual” for effective Resilience

### 4.1 Gender and Agriculture

Over the last few years, unparalleled attention has been given to the issue of food security and the importance of small scale agriculture, with particular recognition of the role of women farmers.

The 2011 FAO flagship report, *The State of Food and Agriculture*, focused on the vital role of women in agriculture. The global momentum around this theme was also in the 2009 UN International Assessment on Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology (IAASTD) report. All of these emphasise changes in women’s involvement in agriculture.

Major investments are needed in women farmers, but not only for equity reasons. It is estimated that if women simply had the same access to productive resources, such as land and seed, as men, they could increase crop yields by 25%-30% and reduce the level of hunger by 12%-17%.<sup>57</sup>

“WE NEED TO INVEST IN WOMEN FARMERS IN ORDER TO INCREASE PRODUCTION, AND TO REDUCE HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION”

“We need to invest in women farmers in order to increase production, and to reduce hunger and malnutrition,” says Fatou Mbaye, with the NGO ACORD. “We definitely need, at national level, some really strong frameworks that support women farmers – especially in terms of land reform.”<sup>58</sup> She goes on to state that: “We realised that, after analysing [agricultural] investment plans, **we could not find any specific budget that goes to women**”<sup>59</sup>. In its 2012 report, Aprove, a European NGO network, asserts that while women constitute the majority of farmers in West Africa, they receive only lip service in CAADP programmes.<sup>60</sup>

Unfortunately in the Sahel, despite the discourse, only limited progress has been made on this issue. Women still face greater barriers in farming than men. They still have significantly less access to land, extension and credit services and local markets. In national budgets for agriculture, women are largely invisible. Although national

government policies have started to emphasise support to women farmers, gender commitments often are not translated into reality.

A particular concern is that women often lack rights to the land they till. In the Sahel, land rights tend to be held by men or kinship groups controlled by men. Women have access mainly through a male relative, usually a father or husband. Even then, women are routinely obliged to hand over the proceeds of any farm sales to a male. They often have little say over how those earnings are used<sup>61</sup>. There are only a few programs, including CARE’s innovative IFETE<sup>62</sup> (Women and Land Initiative) program in the Maradi region of Niger, which have directly and explicitly tackled land access for women and documented the lessons of success.<sup>63</sup>

Crucially, one of these key lessons is that agriculture programmes in the Sahel need to better differentiate between the needs of women and men farmers, reflecting the varied gender roles on the ground. The reality in the Sahel is that agricultural extension and advisory (and climate information) systems are overwhelmingly gender-blind. Inequitable access to and control of productive inputs, land, water and other natural resources is another persistent problem stifling adaptive capacity for resilience.

A more effective way of harnessing agriculture for resilience requires explicitly targeting women-specific needs, not only in land access but in extension services, subsidy programmes, credit schemes, nutrition, and agricultural research.

If not, agricultural programmes in the Sahel will continue to bypass women and their needs.

### 4.2 Integrating Nutrition into Agriculture

For too long, malnutrition has been the Achilles’ heel of development in the Sahel– with insufficient attention paid to its impact on children’s health and development, as well as its consequences for national economic growth. One of the main manifestations of development failure in the Sahel is the persistent, near emergency levels of acute and chronic child malnutrition.

According to UNICEF, in 2013, an average of 39% of children under five suffered from chronic malnutrition in West Africa<sup>64</sup>. In the Sahel, one child in five dies before

the age of five. Half of these deaths are attributable to malnutrition<sup>65</sup>.

The mantra of the dominant development paradigm is that agricultural growth will help reduce food and nutrition insecurity. This is manifestly not working in the Sahel. For example, Maradi and Zinder regions are the breadbasket agricultural areas in Niger. However, these regions have the highest levels of chronic malnutrition in Niger.

A similar situation exists in Sikasso region in Mali where high agricultural production is frequently accompanied by high rates of chronic malnutrition among young children. This is caused by poor food diversification, caused by the focus on cotton production, and a lack of

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“ **AGRICULTURE PROGRAMMES IN THE SAHEL NEED TO BETTER DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE NEEDS OF WOMEN AND MEN FARMERS, REFLECTING VARIED GENDER ROLES ON THE GROUND.** ”

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child care due to a heavy agricultural workload. Agricultural intensification has led to a concentration on grain production and commercial crops such as cotton. This has crowded out nutrient-dense crops like pulses, fruits, and vegetables.

Reducing chronic and acute malnutrition is the central priority and a key indicator in AGIR's approach to resilience. To achieve this, there is a growing consensus that agriculture must not remain primarily focused on increasing production and productivity, but be harnessed to improve nutrition. Many national agricultural investment plans, policies and programmes in the Sahel do not yet adequately include improving nutrition as an explicit strategic objective within agriculture, with well defined indicators (for example, linked to diet through a measure of food diversity). Only some countries such as Niger, have integrated the goal of improving child nutrition in their CAADP plans.

#### **4.3 Shifting resources to sustainable and climate resilient agriculture (agroecology)**

The dominant perspective in the Sahel of “modern agriculture” is to use hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, mechanization and where possible, large scale irrigation. The aim is to either increase national level food production (to reduce the grain deficit) or to earn foreign exchange through export crops like cotton.

This approach is criticized in the IAASTD report which assessed the state of global agriculture, its history and

its future. Its report, *Agriculture at a Crossroads* was prepared by more than 400 scientists, stemming from all continents and a broad spectrum of disciplines.

The IAASTD report noted that the convergence of the climate, energy, food and economic crises urgently called for reorienting food and agricultural systems towards sustainability, health, bio-cultural diversity, ecological resilience and equity. The IAASTD report concluded that chemical-intensive industrial agriculture has degraded the natural resource base on which human survival depends. It also threatens water, energy and climate security.

The report warned that continued reliance on simplistic and often expensive technological fixes is not a solution to reducing persistent hunger and poverty and could exacerbate environmental problems and worsen social inequity. The report also noted that technologies such as high-yielding crop varieties, agrochemicals and mechanization, for example, have primarily benefited transnational corporations and the wealthy, rather than the poor and hungry of the world.<sup>66</sup>

Instead, the IAASTD report advocates a shift to agroecological farming. This includes low cost green manures, soil and water conservation, agroforestry, crop diversification and rotation, simultaneous fallow, mixed cropping, and integrated pest management techniques.

This is not consistent with the Public-Private Partnership investment in agricultural development, promoted by the G8. This approach instead favors larger commercial farmers, and agribusiness companies. It concentrates investment in monocropping in highly productive agricultural areas, where financial returns will be higher. The focus on increased production and productivity detracts resources and support for a more multi-functional approach to agriculture, focused on small scale farmers in more risk prone areas, which is essential for strengthening resilience.

Agricultural policies and CAADP investment plans guide the prioritisation of agricultural production. To change business as usual, there needs to be a reorientation of agricultural programmes to support agroecological farming. Despite a large body of evidence showing the effectiveness of agroecological techniques,<sup>67</sup> the call to invest in an alternative agricultural paradigm remains largely unheeded.<sup>68</sup>

A political economy analysis of agriculture in the Sahel by the Institute of Development Studies, commissioned by CARE International, describes **a triple effect of:** agriculture as a sector; the needs of small-scale farmers in marginal areas ill-served by green revolution technologies; and neglect of an alternative, multi-functional approach to agriculture better adapted to millions of dry land farmers. This analysis states that this neglect persists because of the lack of political will, the lack of ca-

capacity of small-scale farmers to exert a strong demand for appropriate agricultural services, and ineffective strategies to address the complexities involved in scaling up agroecological innovations.<sup>69</sup>

### A 'SuPER' approach

In light of this analysis, CARE International advocates for a new paradigm of agricultural development and global food system, to be backed by sustained investment, in order to achieve an adequate and nutritious diet for all. By promoting its **Sustainable, Productive, Equitable and Resilient (SuPER)** approach<sup>70</sup>, CARE's aim is to strengthen sustainable small-scale agricultural systems to improve food and nutrition security for farmers, workers and consumers.

CARE's new approach is based on its recognition that the primary shortcoming of a conventional agriculture paradigm, including Climate Smart Agriculture, is its failure to address the pervasive inequity of the current food system. CARE's approach seeks systemic change at multiple levels to improve the food security and adaptive capacity of poor farm households.

In particular, CARE's SuPER approach addresses structural and persistent gender inequalities that underpin vulnerability to climate change. This goes beyond changing gender relations in individuals or households. It also critically examines agricultural institutions and structures and the ways in which they determine disadvantage and privilege as well as mediate strategies for adaptive capacity.

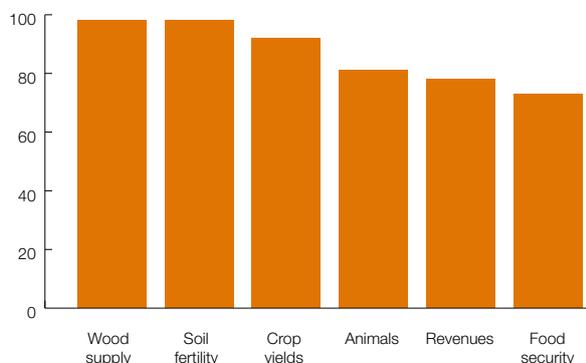


Figure 3: Percentage households reporting improvements in livelihood since FMNR adoption

### 4.4 Agroforestry and Resilience

Agroforestry is not considered as a major sector by governments or donors in the Sahel for policy formulation. It often is neglected, (in a similar pattern to nutrition which is treated as a minor activity within health), because it falls into a policy vacuum, between agriculture and forestry/ environment.

There is compelling evidence however, drawn from many of Africa's drylands, that a specialized form of agroforestry, "Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration" or FMNR, has the potential to make an enormous contribution to strengthening resilience in the Sahel.

The underlying principle of FMNR is simple: trees, unlike cereal crops and pasture, are highly resistant to drought.

Through following, the centuries old traditional practice used by farmers to restore soil fertility in the Sahel, trees and shrubs serve as a nutrient pump, pulling up nutrients from the subsoil. In the form of leaf litter, trees restore organic matter, mulch the soil, prevent wind and water erosion, improve moisture retention, and shade the soil from extreme temperatures. Through specialized tree management techniques in farm fields, FMNR mimics these natural processes to enable a low cost method to improve soil fertility, adapt to climate change, and sustain the environment.

Promoting resilience and food security through agriculture in such conditions is not feasible unless the productive resource base – the land and soil fertility – can be restored. FMNR has the potential to achieve this. In Niger, through FMNR (protecting and growing trees on their own land), small-scale farmers are producing an estimated additional 500,000 tons of grain a year, enough to feed about 2.5 million people.<sup>71</sup> The World Bank estimates the annual production value of new trees in Niger is at least \$260 million dollars. This economic benefit flows directly back to farm families, either as income or as produce.<sup>72</sup>

The relatively rapid and widespread adoption of FMNR in Niger indicates that it is accessible to poorer farm households. There are no expenditures beyond additional labour.<sup>73</sup> For these reasons FMNR is considered as a cost effective means of enhancing food security and increasing resilience.

### 4.5 Social Protection

Social protection has moved rapidly up the policy agenda in the Sahel in recent years, driven by a need to address deepening food insecurity and vulnerability. The main

“ AGRICULTURE MUST NOT REMAIN PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON INCREASING PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY, BUT BE HARNESSSED TO IMPROVE NUTRITION

driving force is the recognition that a growing proportion of households are chronically food insecure for structural reasons, not because of occasional shocks. Such households are unable to get out of a vicious downward spiral caused by exploitative debt and loss of assets.

There is growing evidence that social protection measures can be livelihood promoting/poverty reducing, and help reduce risk and vulnerability. There is increasing interest in exploring public interventions that can achieve positive synergy between social protection and pro-poor economic growth, by supporting people through short term crises while also reducing their long term vulnerability in a comprehensive and systematic way.

## 5. Recommendations

Based on an analysis of the record of development policies and programmes to prevent food and nutrition crises in the Sahel, and strengthen resilience, the following recommendations are made:

### **R1 Remove structural barriers that prevent women farmers from obtaining access to productive resources such as land, water, credit, and tailored extension services**

National Governments should:

- Apply a much stronger gender perspective in agricultural policy-making, including targeting investments specifically to women farmers, establishing gender-based budgeting and producing gender disaggregated data to record the gender impact of agricultural and other policies aimed at resilience
- Invest in agricultural extension services that are better attuned to women's particular schedules and needs, notably in support of crops grown by women
- Invest more in low cost labour-saving devices, being sure to involve women in research design and dissemination
- Reform credit schemes to target larger numbers of small-scale women farmers
- Reform input subsidy programmes, where appropriate, to have better targeting to ensure that women have at least equal access

African Union and ECOWAS should:

- Revise the AGIR criteria in the Analytical Grid for Policies and Programmes contributing to Resilience used for assessing policies for a much stronger pro-equity and gender perspective
- Set specific gender goals for each CAADP pillar and produce gender-disaggregated data in monitoring

### **“ TO CHANGE BUSINESS AS USUAL, THERE NEEDS TO BE A REORIENTATION OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT AGROECOLOGICAL FARMING**

Despite this growing interest in Africa, the social protection debate has been slow to start in the Sahel. There is still little political will to engage seriously with social protection. Many governments in the Sahel continue to have strong reservations about introducing social protection mechanisms.

- support women and the effectiveness of policies
- Encourage a greater focus on support for women farmers in agriculture spending and policy by requiring specific budget lines to them
- Take measures designed to enable women to improve their secure access, control, or ownership of land

### **R2 Harness the potential of agriculture to improve nutritional outcomes**

National Governments should:

- Better integrate nutrition goals with specific indicators (i.e. diversity of local diets) into agriculture sector plans and regularly assess progress
- Support rigorous impact evaluations and studies to build a richer evidence base of what works with nutrition-sensitive approaches in agriculture
- Maximize impact of household income on nutrition and food security by increasing discretionary income of women farmers
- Enable women to diversify the production of seasonally available nutrient-rich foods and green vegetables, particularly locally-adapted varieties, chosen based on local nutrition issues and marketing potential to achieve both income diversification and improved household diets
- Reduce seasonality of food insecurity through diversification throughout the year, through dry season market gardening, improved storage and preservation
- Incorporate nutrition education to improve consumption and nutrition within agricultural programmes and through women savings and credit and other rural community based groups
- Train agricultural extension agents to communicate nutrition messages

*VSLA groups are able to quickly respond to the needs of the most vulnerable. Mali*  
 Photo: © Helene Hansson/CARE



**R3 Improve the quality of agricultural spending. Reforming policies to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable farmers, foster sustainability of farming systems, and enable social equity by targeting poorer farm households**

National Governments should:

- Integrate sustainability, climate resilience, and inclusivity into national agriculture plans
- Adopt a 'right to food' approach for developing agricultural investment plans and policies, putting food security at the centre of strategies and supporting measures needed to strengthen farmers' own investments in their agriculture
- Shift more resources into supporting agroecology and low cost innovations as recommended by the IAASTD, including agro-forestry, conservation agriculture, integrated soil fertility management, rainwater harvesting, micro-irrigation, dry season market gardening, composting, soil and water conservation, crop rotation, inter-cropping, integration of livestock
- Ensure spending on agriculture addresses the diversity of small-scale farmers, particularly women, location specific agroecological conditions, local markets and production systems, with a particular focus on the needs of more vulnerable farmers
- Develop a wide range of approaches for resilience in agriculture and rural livelihoods, including the development of short cycle drought resistant seed varieties, robust extension services, weather information and early warning systems, cereal and seed banks, and on-farm quality seed production
- Reorient agricultural research services to ensure these are driven by the imperative to increase food and nutrition security and improve livelihoods and are relevant for women producers
- Ensure the broad participation of small-scale farmer groups in agricultural research by fostering partnerships involving collaboration among poor farming communities, extension services, and agricultural scientists

AU and ECOWAS should:

- Develop improved policies to support climate change adaptation, with a particular focus on decentralized Community Based Adaptation (CBA)
- Develop robust and strategic measures to address climate change, mainstreaming and integrating into CAADP policy reform agenda

**R4 Increase public spending in support of agro-ecological farming. Shift more public spending on low cost, productive techniques, such as agroforestry (Farmer managed Natural Regeneration of tree**

**= FMNR) that are accessible to the majority of poorer rural households in ecologically fragile, risk prone areas**

National Governments should:

- Increase agriculture spending and investments through transparent and accountable budgets to reach 10% of national budget targets allocated for agriculture, and set timelines for doing so
- Identify mechanisms, including budget readjustments and reallocations, to mobilise additional domestic resources needed to support inclusive, pro-poor agricultural growth
- Step up public investments to enable larger number of small-scale farmers to transition to agro-ecological farming systems that reduce dependence on expensive chemical inputs, address the loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, water pollution associated with industrial agriculture, while ensuring increased productivity and sustainable economic returns
- Make significant investments in training extension agents, including women, to ensure that advice and training is provided on the issues that matter to small-scale producers
- Strengthen community managed agricultural extension by supporting farmer organizations to undertake farmer to farmer training, organize farmer field schools, provide input and manage community seed banks

AU and ECOWAS should:

- Adopt a target-based timeline and mechanism for monitoring progress towards reaching 10% budget commitments to agriculture

**R5 Improve the transparency of agriculture spending in public budgets**

National Governments should:

- Require ministries in the agriculture sector to be more accountable for results of resilience, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, improved nutrition, and support for women farmers rather than on overall national production alone
- Invest in improving internal systems to track and disseminate information about public agriculture spending and detailed gender disaggregated data
- Invest more in adequate staff training and capacity building in the agriculture sector and improve coordination between and among Ministries by learning from best practices elsewhere, including the knowledge of farmers themselves

**R6 Increase development assistance to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation**

**R7 Strengthen the institutional capacity of decentralized local governments to undertake multi-sectoral and multi-actor processes for integrating resilience into the design and implementation of development initiatives**

**R8 Invest in productive social protection measures focused on the poorest and most vulnerable**

## References and Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> OCHA (Feb 2015) Sahel – A call for Humanitarian Aid Responding to the needs of people affected by crises in the Sahel
- <sup>2</sup> Relief Web (July 25) UN says more support urgently needed to tackle growing food insecurity in the Sahel p.1 <http://reliefweb.int/report/mali/un-says-more-support-urgently-needed-tackle-growing-food-insecurity-sahel>
- <sup>3</sup> Relief Web (July 25) UN says more support urgently needed to tackle growing food insecurity in the Sahel p.1 <http://reliefweb.int/report/mali/un-says-more-support-urgently-needed-tackle-growing-food-insecurity-sahel>
- <sup>4</sup> Created in 1984, the RPCA is an international network for co-operation and co-ordination under the political leadership of ECOWAS and UEMOA and co-animated by CILSS and the SWAC/OECD Secretariat <http://www.oecd.org/site/rpca/aboutus/>
- <sup>5</sup> The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of standardized tools that aims at providing a “common currency” for classifying the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. <http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-about/ipcinfo-partnership/en/>
- <sup>6</sup> Data retrieved from OCHA’s Financial Tracking Service on October 27th 2014, for the countries of Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria. <http://fts.unocha.org>. See also IRIN Oct 2014 op.cit
- <sup>7</sup> OCHA (Feb 2015) op.cit. See also data retrieved from OCHA’s Financial Tracking Service for the countries of Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria. <http://fts.unocha.org>
- <sup>8</sup> The Strategic Response Plan combines the Consolidate Appeal Process (CAP) countries of Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Mauritania and also the humanitarian strategies of non-CAP countries in the region (Cameroon, The Gambia, Nigeria and Senegal) which have common context/situation analysis; strategic goals and objectives; and performance indicators
- <sup>9</sup> Relief Web (July 25) UN says more support urgently needed to tackle growing food insecurity in the Sahel p.2 <http://reliefweb.int/report/mali/un-says-more-support-urgently-needed-tackle-growing-food-insecurity-sahel>
- <sup>10</sup> Relief Web (July 25)
- <sup>11</sup> David Beckmann December 2012 Resilience: Safety Net for Reducing Hunger and Malnutrition Bread for the World <http://blog.usaid.gov/2012/12/resilience-safety-net-for-reducing-hunger-and-malnutrition/>
- <sup>12</sup> Joint Planning Cell Annual Report
- <sup>13</sup> Maria Damanaki, European Commission (June 2014) Closing remarks at DISPA biannual meeting: “Resilience as a challenge for the Public Sector” [http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/damanaki/headlines/speeches/2014/06/20140606\\_speech\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/damanaki/headlines/speeches/2014/06/20140606_speech_en.htm)
- <sup>14</sup> Republic of Mali (August 2013) Annual Review of the 2012-17 PRGSP Implementation Report, 2012 <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/prsp.aspx>
- <sup>15</sup> Republic of Niger. Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES) 2012-2015 <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/prsp.aspx>
- <sup>16</sup> The Guardian (Feb 2014) Poverty Matters Blog. Has Africa’s focus on farming borne fruit? <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/feb/14/africa-farming-caadp-agriculture>
- <sup>17</sup> For more information see: <http://caadp.net/implementing-caadp-agenda.php>
- <sup>18</sup> The key principles outlined in CAADP are those of dialogue, policy review, accountability and partnerships with farmers, agribusiness and civil society. Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have signed ‘compacts’ with CAADP and completed ‘roundtable’ processes, which involve reaching consensus among key stakeholders to define national strategies and investment plans for reducing hunger and increasing agricultural productivity
- <sup>19</sup> The Guardian (Feb 2014) Poverty Matters Blog. Has Africa’s focus on farming borne fruit?
- <sup>20</sup> DANIDA GE strategy p.29
- <sup>21</sup> DANIDA International Development Cooperation (September 2013): Strategic Framework For Natural Resources, Energy and Climate Change p.3
- <sup>22</sup> DANIDA GE strategy p.4-5
- <sup>23</sup> The term Washington Consensus was coined in 1989 by English economist John Williamson to refer to a set of 10 relatively specific economic policy prescriptions considered the “standard” reform package promoted for crisis wracked countries by the World Bank, the IMF and the US Treasury Department. The term has come to be used fairly widely in a second, broader sense, referring to a more general orientation towards a strongly market-based approach (sometimes described neoliberalism)
- <sup>24</sup> Sources used: AfDB Statistics Department, various domestic authorities and AfDB <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/statistics/>
- <sup>25</sup> CARE West Africa Regional Management Unit (October 2013) Building resilience in the Sahel A Strategic Framework for CARE in West Africa. p.9-10
- <sup>26</sup> Kanu et al (2014) AfDP p.3
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid
- <sup>28</sup> Kanu et al (2014) AfDP p.1, 4-5
- <sup>29</sup> The World Bank, (2012) “Africa Can Help Feed Africa: Removing barriers to regional trade in food staples,” <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRICA/Resources/Africa-Can-Feed-Africa-Report.pdf>
- <sup>30</sup> African Union June 2014 AU Summit in Malabo: Moving Agricultural Development and Food Security Forward <http://ecdpm.org/talking-points/au-summit-malabo-moving-agricultural-forward>
- <sup>31</sup> African Union (June 2014) Press Release NO 11/23rd AU Summit Unanimous call to re-strategise for Agricultural transformation
- <sup>32</sup> Oxfam (2014), For Whose Benefit? The G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Burkina Faso [www.oxfam.org/en/grow/policy/whose-benefit](http://www.oxfam.org/en/grow/policy/whose-benefit)
- <sup>33</sup> Inter-réseau Développement Rural (March 2013) p.6
- <sup>34</sup> Inter-réseau Développement Rural (March 2013) p.5
- <sup>35</sup> Progress in the New Alliance? Not in support of small-scale Food producers. Call of G8 Civil Society Organizations to their Governments on the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa. See also: -OXFAM (May 2014) For Whose Benefit? The G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Burkina Faso; Global Policy Forum (June 2013) - Global African Civil Society Groups Reject “New Alliance” <https://www.globalpolicy.org/the-dark-side-of-natural-resources-st/water-in-conflict/52418-african-civil-society-groups-reject-new-alliance-plan.html> -African Centre for BioSafety 2013 Statement by African Civil Society. Modernising African Agriculture: Who Benefits?

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- <sup>37</sup> Watt, Robert (2012) Adopt or adapt: the political economy of ‘climate-smart agriculture’ and technology adoption among small-holder farmers in Africa. Institute of Development Studies, Brighton Aug 2012
- <sup>38</sup> Action Aid (May 2013) Fair Shares Is CAADP Working? p.12
- <sup>39</sup> Inter-réseaux Développement Rural (January 2013) Promoting Resilience in the Sahel: New Approach or New Fad? No 8 Food Sovereignty Brief p.1
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid
- <sup>42</sup> Partners for Resilience <http://www.partnersforresilience.nl/countries/mali>
- <sup>43</sup> Global Alliance For Resilience – AGIR (April 2013)– Sahel And West Africa Regional Road Map p.11-12
- <sup>44</sup> Inter-réseaux (Jan 2013) p.6
- <sup>45</sup> Inter-réseaux (January 2013) p.4
- <sup>46</sup> CARE West Africa Regional Management Unit (October 2013) Building resilience in the Sahel. A Strategic Framework for CARE in West Africa
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- <sup>48</sup> AGIR (September 2013) Analytical Grid for Policies and Programmes contributing to Resilience
- <sup>49</sup> Peter Gubbels (August 2014) Chad National Policy Review using a Resilience Lens. Unpublished report for Concern Worldwide
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid p.6
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- <sup>56</sup> Inter-réseaux (January 2013) p.5
- <sup>57</sup> The Guardian (Feb 2014) Poverty Matters Blog. Has Africa’s focus on farming borne fruit? p.2
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*Mariam Chaibou of Maigochi, Niger, received two sheep through the small ruminants initiative, she now owns four. Maigochi, Maradi region, Niger  
Photo: © 2015 Agnes Otzelberger/CARE*





**i** Founded in 1945, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty and providing lifesaving assistance in emergencies. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to help lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty.

Last year, CARE worked in 90 countries around the world to assist more than 72 million people improve basic health and education, fight hunger, increase access to clean water and sanitation, expand economic opportunity, confront climate change, and recover from disasters. To learn more, visit [www.care-international.org](http://www.care-international.org).

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POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS AND PRACTICES,  
PARTICULARLY TO ADDRESS  
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