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Sustainable Bioenergy Development in UEMOA Member Countries

Foreword

In the arid and semi-arid regions of Africa that encompass most countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)—Bénin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinée Bissau, Mali, Niger, Sénégal, and Togo—the challenges of land degradation and desertification, compounded by the lack of access to energy and effects of climate change, are alarming. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that Africa will be among the regions of the world most affected by climate change, and land degradation remains a substantial threat to Africa's ability to realize its potential in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The current crises in the energy and agricultural sectors have brought into focus the daunting challenges facing the UEMOA region. The region's heavy dependence on oil imports is absorbing most of its export earnings, while the sharp increase in food prices has exacerbated the already fragile food security situation. Access to modern energy sources in UEMOA countries is limited; rural electrification remains below five percent. Despite the rapid urbanization that has taken place in all the UEMOA countries, the transition of urban dwellers to modern fuels remains slow. Traditional biomass still accounts for more than seventy percent of end-use energy consumption in the region, putting further pressure on the environment and impacting negatively on human health. The ability of small farmers to improve their livelihoods in the face of these energy constraints has been further compromised by the surge in both energy and grain prices globally over the last two years.

Land degradation and desertification influence agricultural production, food security, and energy security on a continent that remains a net food and energy importer. Responding to these threats and maintaining economic growth requires a strengthening of policies and institutions in ways that improve and protect agricultural capacity, and the adoption of coherent strategies to broaden energy access and address climate change, land use, and food security.

Managing these challenges requires action on several fronts. Fighting rural poverty and improving food and energy security will require not only an increase in agricultural production and industrial productivity, but also a diversification and expansion of the rural economy through the creation of new products and markets. Sustainable energy security requires diversifying supplies and developing alternative energy options within countries. Addressing climate change certainly involves reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and developing adaptation capacities, but for the arid and semi-arid regions the most pressing concern is reversing the trend of desertification and land degradation. By integrating and strengthening both their agriculture and energy policies, the UEMOA countries should enhance agricultural productivity and food security, increase rural energy access, and build capacity to adapt to climate change impacts.

West African countries have a range of opportunities for addressing many of their social, economic, and environmental development needs by incorporating modern bioenergy and sustainable energy services into their energy sectors. The UEMOA countries have the potential to

grow both food and energy crops, to develop non-food sources of biomass for energy use, and to adapt biomass energy technologies to modern efficient uses while improving rural incomes and farm productivity.

I am pleased to note that this report was commissioned by the Hub for Rural Development in West and Central Africa in order to better assess the potential of bioenergy and reduce the policy uncertainty faced by governments in the region. This is in accordance with the Hub's mission of offering policy and analytical services to governments, regional organizations, and organizations of producers to formulate and implement rural development policies, with a view to advancing the sustainable development of bioenergy.

This report, led by the UN Foundation, in partnership with the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development and the Energy and Security Group, identifies opportunities, assesses constraints, identifies trade-offs, and outlines key policy issues for promoting sustainable production and use of bioenergy in the eight member countries of UEMOA. It also provides appropriate data to guide governments and international organizations as they consider smallholder production schemes to broaden the use of bioenergy as part of a comprehensive agriculture sector strategy, while reducing poverty and arresting environmental degradation.

The Millennium Development Goals serve as important near term targets for countries to measure their progress on sustainable development. Achieving these goals is critical for Africa—and for the West African countries studied in this report. Success in meeting these goals and addressing climate change and its potential consequences demands well-integrated agriculture and energy policies if progress is to be sustained and strengthened. It is my hope that, in addition to shaping energy policy in the UEMOA region and bringing all stakeholders and partners, including UN Energy Africa, on board, this assessment will provide a new view of the potential of agriculture to help bring millions of Africans out of the dark and out of poverty.



Kandeh K. Yumkella

Director-General

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Letter from the Rural Hub

The philosopher Ortega y Gasset said that all the possible changes could be classified into two main categories: the first relates to the fact that something changes in the world, and the second to when the world changes. The aim of this report is not “to change something” in West Africa but rather to deeply change West Africa.

This report’s objective is to provide West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) policymakers a framework within which to promote and implement public policies aimed at reducing rural poverty by broadening access to bioenergy. The report is the result of a close collaboration between the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, the United Nations Foundation, and the Rural Hub. Also, this analysis could not have been possible without the valuable and effective contribution of the Energy and Security Group, which did its utmost to make the report technically useful for policymakers.

By making the most thorough analysis possible of the “energy–agriculture” issues, drawing on existing data and analysis, and setting up the basis for bold, well-thought-out public policies related to biofuels in the region, the report offers concrete proposals for action to public, national, and regional decisionmakers.

The scope of the issue is enormous. How we address the challenge of energy security, which is the other side of food security, will determine the future of our populations and the credibility of our politicians and institutions.

We know how fragile the process of defining and implementing public policies is in West Africa. This topic has been well studied by the academic world and multilateral institutions. One of the unanimous conclusions relates to the shortage of available, reliable economic and agricultural data due to inadequate public information systems. While bearing in mind these limitations, the report aims to provide a rational, objective effort to define the substantial potential that exists, ways of producing bioenergy that would be economically useful and technically feasible, and the principles that would shape an optimal regulatory framework.

The implementation of strategies for using energy for development in our region will necessarily imply an evolution in public governance, which will see a committed leadership join forces with a strong, engaged civil society through producers’ organizations making their voices heard and defending their interests.

Our development cannot be achieved without innovation and creativity at all levels: the report is a pledge to this. Under the leadership of the UEMOA, the Rural Hub will commit to ensure that the implementation of these recommendations is conducted realistically, progressively, and in a sustained way.

The need for well-balanced public policies in this domain has been reaffirmed by the UEMOA, which has built a coherent regional strategy with respect to bioenergy. The UEMOA now intends to create the same dynamic at the national level. The report seeks to support this process.



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Acknowledgments

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