

DAKAR DECLARATION ON IRRIGATION

“Building resilience and accelerate growth in Sahel and West Africa by boosting irrigated agriculture” 31 October 2013

WE, the representatives of the governments of the six Sahel countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad met at Dakar on October 31, 2013 at the invitation of the Government of Senegal, the Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the World Bank, for the High Level Forum for boosting irrigation in the Sahel countries, along with African Union Commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and in the presence of representatives from international organizations, research and regional organizations, civil society organizations, producers' organizations, the private sector and technical and financial partners,

RECALLING:

- African Union Declaration on agriculture and food security in Africa, July 2003 at Maputo where countries confirmed their commitment to contribute towards eradication of hunger and poverty by urgently implementing the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and its Pillar 1 related to the sustainable management of land and water management,
- The establishment of the African Partnership for agricultural water, AgWA (Agricultural Water for Africa) in 2010, and TerrAfrica 2005 under the aegis of the African Union, to facilitate the implementation of CAADP Pillar 1,
- Call for African players in irrigation launched in 2007 at Ouagadougou urging the authorities of African countries to recognize the contribution of irrigated agriculture in growth and poverty reduction and to act for the cost-effective and sustainable development,
- Launch of Global Coalition on Water activities in Sahel by CILSS Heads of State and Governments during their 15th conference in March 2010 to mobilize all the skills and resources for water control in Sahel.

NOTING:

- food and nutrition vulnerability that sometimes results in acute crises, the predominance of low and unstable incomes, and poverty that undermine a big part of the population of the Sahel, especially in rural areas, and accentuates emigration and rural exodus;
- the predominance of rainfed agriculture subject to well-known impacts of climatic vagaries and degradation of agricultural land on agricultural production and prices, as well as their large impact on vulnerability;
- the continued fragility of the agricultural sector and recurring difficulties despite increased solvent urban demand, especially for rice and market garden produce;
- the effects of population growth in the Sahel causing overuse of land on one hand, and increased demand for agricultural products and livestock on the other, making it henceforth necessary to increase the agricultural productivity and to take

up this challenge,

- limited financial resources for agricultural investment in the Sahel countries, which contrasts with the big amount still dedicated to the import of food products.

AWARE that:

- Irrigated agriculture contributes directly and indirectly to economic growth, reduction of rural poverty, food and nutritional security and balanced regional development,
- There is immense and diverse potential for agricultural land development by various forms of water management in Sahel, particularly for individual or collective facilities of water and soil conservation, low cost individual equipment and village zones, large public zones requiring high financial state involvement supported by well-targeted private investments,
- The huge margin to develop local irrigated production in substitution for import has increased and the rice irrigated in the Sahel valleys is produced at cost only slightly higher than the imported rice and the effort to reverse this trend is within reach,
- The private sector plays a key role in achieving the objective of increasing resilience. The combination of private initiatives and appropriate public policies can make the most of natural resources and human potential available in the principles of sustainability and social inclusion of all segments of the population. This involves the construction of competitive and profitable sectors allowing producers to capitalize from one year to the next the development of their operations and enhance their resilience in the Sahel,

RECOGNIZING that:

- Despite the fact that irrigation's potential contribution to agricultural and rural economies of the region covers only 2% of cultivated land in the Sahel, less than 20% of it's potential is exploited,
- Investment in irrigation in the Sahel has been weak in the past 20 years and remains modest despite recent revival of investment, and a significant proportion of areas equipped for irrigation are underutilized,
- The support interventions to the irrigation equipment distribution channels suitable for small producers are often sketchy and not supported well in the long-term,
- Some investment operations could create problems in having access and sharing of land and water resources,
- Capacity building and support to agricultural water users associations are inadequate in the long run,
- Policies, strategies and plans for agricultural water for all Sahel countries involved require sustained support and increased cooperation for their implementation,

WE DECLARE OUR COMMITMENT TO:

- Ensure that all hydro-agricultural development will be based on appropriate sectorial policies and strategies, integrated into a network and based on a rational

and sustainable use of available resources,

- Develop a reliable system of land governance, affordable access to finance for small farmers and investors, knowledge and skills suitable for all involved, infrastructure and supply chains, effective and fair marketing,
- Implement a set of strategies and diversified investment programs to exploit the development potential offered by a range of possible hydro-agricultural management systems, namely : (1) improvement in the mobilization of rainwater for agricultural purposes, (2) individual irrigation of agricultural products of high added value, (3) small and medium irrigation systems managed by village communities for household food needs and local markets, (4) modernization and expansion of existing major public irrigated zones, including rice production, and (5) irrigation for commercial use (domestic or export markets) based on public-private partnerships (PPP) and enlisted in growth areas,
- Support the revitalization of existing large facilities to enable greater accountability of producers by strengthening the capacity of WUAs on the one hand, and promote the adoption of low cost technologies and irrigation systems suitable for smallholders on the other hand,
- Promote the recourse to private investors and commercial finances in addition to public investment, drawing on various recent innovative projects that have been successful in Africa and elsewhere in the world and based on sustainable, fair and impartial partnerships previously held in which farmers (including women and youth) are involved in decision-making on shared information basis,
- Conduct a sustained capacity building activity at regional, national and local levels for each key category actor in the sector by: (a) the creation or strengthening of training centres for agricultural water management, including regional or national centres of excellence, (b) collaboration with the private sector on expertise in the execution of irrigation projects, (c) the implementation of on-going capacity building programmes for farmers, and (d) support for the training and reorientation of private operators interested in investing in the sector,
- Implement the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management in the context of international river basins and organizations in charge of their management, and seize the opportunity presented by cross-border cooperation established to promote the development of interventions in the management of agricultural water,
- Encourage strong and continuous efforts to further promote regional trade, sustainable land management and related infrastructure developments, which are prerequisites for successful operations,

CALL ON governments of Sahel countries, supported by their development partners and the private sector adhering to the terms of this declaration:

- Increase substantially investment in agricultural hydraulic to go from 400,000 hectares to 1,000,000 hectares by 2020, at an estimated total cost of more than seven billion U.S. dollars,
- State this goal into comprehensive programs accelerating the implementation of sectorial policies, institutional reforms, legal and organizational arrangements related to water and rural management, irrigated production and, if necessary, concerned agricultural sectors following the negotiated process,

- Ensure transparency and fairness in the distribution of costs, operation and maintenance of irrigation systems, while strengthening the capacity of farmers' organizations who are stakeholders in their management, based on an adapted regulatory framework,
- Intensify support for regional initiatives aimed at improvement and development of irrigation in Sahel and West Africa, such as related to the implementation of CAADP Pillar 1, the African partnership for Agricultural water AgWA under the auspices of the African Union and the Global Coalition on Water in Sahel.