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HARNESSING AFRICA'S FLR SPIRIT

THE AFRICAN FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION INITIATIVE (AFR100 INITIATIVE)

CURRENT SITUATION, OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC ROLE OF FOREST AND AGRICULTURE PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS (FFPO) IN AFRICA

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I. CURRENT SITUATION OF THE AFRICAN FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION INTIATIVE (AFR100 INITIATIVE)

The AFR100 Initiative was launched in December 2015 to address the environmental, social and economic challenges that affect the sustainable management of natural resources in Africa. It is a Pan–African initiative implemented at the national level by 34 African countries[i] in collaboration with 39 technical partners and 13 financial partners. Its main objective is to restore 100 million hectares of degraded forests and lands by 2030. Currently the 34 countries have committed to restore 129.5 million hectares, which means that the initial commitment has been exceeded by 29.5 million hectares. Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) is a process that restores ecosystem services and landscape functionality, boosts and stabilizes land use productivity, and enhances resilience to climate change through the restoration of degraded forests and lands (WRI, NEPAD, BMZ, World Bank, undated)[ii]. At the regional level, the AFR100 initiative contributes to the African Initiative of Resilient Landscapes (ARLI); the African Union Agenda 2063; the Action Plan for African Landscape (ALAP); the African Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI). At the international level, the AFR100 initiative contributes to the Bonn Challenge; the Paris Agreement on Climate; the New York Declaration on Forests; the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN); and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17.

The first phase of the AFR100 initiative (2016 – 2021) focused on:

a) securing political commitments whereby 34 member countries pledged to restore 129.5 million hectares of degraded forests and lands by 2030 ;

b) resource mobilisation from governments, the private sector and financial institutions ;

c) creation of a monitoring working group and elaboration of the AFR100 monitoring platform ;

d) knowledge generation, communication and advocacy.
The second phase of the AFR100 initiative (2022–2026) put a major emphasis on the acceleration of forest landscape restoration on the ground to help countries meet their pledges by 2030. That is why smallholder farmers, communities, minorities, marginalized groups, women and youth entrepreneurs and associations have a major role to play.

The objectives of this information note are to:

a) discuss few opportunities offered by the AFR100 initiative;

b) discuss few challenges faced by the AFR100 initiative;

c) highlight the important role of Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations (FFPO).

II. OPPORTUNITIES OF RESTORATION AND THE AFR100 INITIATIVE

Forest landscape restoration (FLR) and the AFR100 initiative offer the following opportunities:

II.1) Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) pays for itself: Studies have shown that One dollar invested in FLR provides between $7 to $30 in economic benefits. This implies that the private sector (large and small) and financial institutions need to be sensitized regularly in order to motivate them to invest in FLR.

II.2) Forest landscape restoration allows to elaborate win-win business models for the private sector using multifunctional landscapes: These win-win business models will provide environmental, social, economic and livelihood benefits. The first win is based on the environmental (ecological) benefits, and the second win encompasses the social, economic and livelihood benefits.

II.3) The win-win business models will be based on win-win value chains developed for local communities to enable them get more green jobs and incomes throughout the year so that they protect forests and natural resources for their own livelihoods and ensure local ownership to establish long-term partnership.

II.4) Forest landscape restoration will have the following impacts at local and national levels:

- *Increase in forest cover and carbon sequestration* to combat climate change.

Climate change is a real threat in AFR100 countries. The AFR100 initiative has lot of potential in combating climate change in order to enhance human well-being and the health of the planet[iii].

- *Improvement in biological diversity*;

Four levels of biodiversity are important to the AFR100 initiative: species biodiversity; genetic biodiversity; ecosystem biodiversity and global biodiversity. Biodiversity is very important because of what it provides to human, and for the value it has for its own right[iv]. Human populations obtain the following services from biodiversity: food, fuel, shelter, medicine. Other important services biodiversity provides in the ecosystems are pollination, seed dispersal, climate regulation, water purification, nutrient cycling and control of agricultural pests[v]. However, the main threat to biodiversity are habitat loss and fragmentation, over exploitation of resources or unsustainable resource use, invasive species, pollution and climate change[vi].

- *Improvement in soil fertility*;

Soil fertility has a positive effect on carbon sequestration. Promoting agroforestry activities by integrating nitrogen-fixing legumes into existing farming systems is a good approach to promote in AFR100 countries. Legumes such as Gum arabic (*Acacia senegal*), Caliandra (*Caliandra colothyrsus*),

Leucaena (*Leucaena leucocephala*), Cadd (*Acacia albida*), and Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)[vii] improve soil fertility . In Africa, soil erosion is among the major challenges caused by forest and land degradation that result in loss of soil fertility and productive lands. FLR will significantly improve soil fertility and enhance land productivity for rural communities, hence increase income and improve food security and nutrition.

- *Enhanced ecosystems and ecological functions of the forests;*

Ecosystem function is the capacity of natural processes and components to provide goods and services that satisfy human needs, either directly or indirect[viii].

- *Improvement in air and water quality;*

Improved air and water quality is very important for the health of the populations. Forest landscape restoration improves air and water quality to enhance the well-being of rural and urban populations.

- *Reduction in dust, especially in the Sahel;*

The Sahel of Africa is threatened due to increased dust causing serious health problems.

- *Increase in employment opportunities for rural communities by providing green jobs to women, youth and marginalized groups;*

Forest landscape restoration will allow rural communities to get green jobs with restoration activities through the different value chains that will be developed. In many AFR100 countries, women and youth constitute the majority of the population. Therefore, the AFR100 initiative is a good source of green employment for them.

- *Increase in rural incomes;*

The revenues generated by selling AFR100 products, i.e., products coming from the restoration of degraded forests and lands need to be estimated and disaggregated by gender. Investments made from restoration revenues need also to be documented. For example, restoration revenues can be used to pay children's school fees and their school materials; restoration revenues can be used to purchase food to improve household food security and nutrition. That is why the links between the AFR100 initiative and the SDGs and Agenda 2063 of the African Union need to be investigated.

- *Improvement in food security and nutrition;*

According to FAO, "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life"[ix]. Furthermore, according to FAO, food security has four pillars : availability, accessibility, utilization and stability[x]. Access to food is very important.

However, it is unfortunate to realize that despite an increase in the world's food supply, between 690 and 780 million individuals faced hunger in 2022[xi]. One important issue to consider is the purchasing power needed in order to be able to purchase food or to get access to land to grow its own food. Therefore there is a need to address poverty and social inequalities in order to improve food security in the world and in Africa. The world food production can triple and there will still be hungry people if these issues are not addressed correctly.

It is important to note that despite countless resolutions in the world, the situation of food security and nutrition in Africa has not improved while there is an increase in diet-related non-transmissible diseases. Furthermore, the coverage of food-energy needs in Africa is the lowest in the world[xii].

Nutrition is definied as the process by which an organism procures its nourishment, the supply of nutrients required by its body and cells to stay alive. Nutrition is of two modes namely, autotrophic and heterotrophic. Plants exhibit autotrophic mode of nutrition[xiii]. Both animals and human beings are called heterotrophs, as they depend on plants for their food[xiv]. There are five types of nutrition : Carbohydrates whose main function is to provide energy ; Protein whose main function is to build and repair tissue ; Fats whose main function are to provide backup energy ; Vitamins and Minerals whose main function is to maintain optimal health ; and Water[xv]. In West Africa, the number of undernourished people increased from 50.3 million people to 59.4 million, while the number of food insecure people increased from 43.9 million people in 2015 to 67.4 million in 2019 (FAO et al., 2020)[xvi]. For Central Africa, the number of undernourished people increased from 43.5 million people in 2015 to 51.9 million in 2019 (FAO et al., 2020).

- *Reduction in gender inequality; and reduction in discrimination against marginalized groups.*

FLR will empower women and give them more power in the households. Furthermore, marginalized groups are also involved in the restoration of degraded forests and lands which will improve their food security and nutrition, and give them incomes by selling AFR100 products.

III. CHALLENGES OF RESTORATION AND THE AFR100 INITIATIVE

III.1) Resource mobilization to increase the access to finance for smallholder producers: Funding for FLR needs to be mobilized from government budgets, the private sector and financial institutions and through innovative financial mechanisms[xvii].

III.2) Monitoring FLR implementation to inform governments, technical and financial institutions on country progress towards achieving their pledges to the AFR100 Initiative. AUDA–NEPAD/AFR100 Secretariat elaborated an AFR100 monitoring framework drawing on the methodologies developed by AFR100 technical partners. This consists of a monitoring framework with indicators and performance metrics to track restoration progress across three thematic areas – Nature, Economy and Governance. The nature pillar of the AFR100 monitoring framework provides guidance for the development of a web–based GIS platform that uses earth observation data to track and verify change in forest and tree cover including trees outside of forests, biodiversity and other nature related metrics. Its survey functionality allows users to capture information from the ground on impact of income, jobs, food security and land tenure[xviii].

III.3) Consolidation of the relationships between member countries and the AFR100 Secretariat through AFR100 Focal Points. In fact, AFR100 Focal Points, appointed by the African governments involved in the AFR100 Initiative, play a central role in defining national restoration goals, setting the direction of AFR100 activities at national level, and outlining technical and financial support priorities. Furthermore, AFR100 Focal Points are central to mobilizing the broad range of in-country partners in all sectors, levels of government, civil society, the private sector, and academia to realize countries' ambitious restoration target. For that reason, the AFR100 Secretariat is always committed to consolidate and strengthen the relationships with AFR100 Focal Points and member countries. For example, the AFR100 Focal Points participate at regional workshops organized by the AFR100 Secretariat and at the Annual Partnership Meeting that is organized each year on a rotative basis in respective AFR100 regions.

III.4) Sustainability of the AFR100's national stakeholder platforms

A. Main reasons for setting up AFR100 national stakeholder platforms

AFR100 national stakeholder platforms are set up for the following reasons :

i). Lack of coordination of FLR activities carried out at national and landscape levels. Indeed, FLR activities need to be coordinated at landscape, regional and national levels. This requires a strong leadership from the Ministry of Environment through the AFR100 Focal Point designated.

ii). Duplication and unhealthy competition between partners for lack of coordination and inefficient use of human and financial resources.

iii). Absence of a forum to share good practices on FLR to facilitate their scaling up at national, regional and landscape levels.

iv). Lack of coordinated effort in monitoring FLR implementation at the national and landscape levels. The right articulation is to have one AFR100 national stakeholder platform, several AFR100 platforms at regional level and several AFR100 platforms at landscape level. The republic of Togo is the only member of the AFR100 initiative where such an articulation has started, thanks to GIZ-F4F. The Technical Assistance Platform (TAP) conceptualized by AUDA-NEPAD[xix]could easily resolve this situation.

Monitoring FLR implementation is very important as stated in section III.2 above. However, it could have a much bigger impact if it starts from landscape to regional to national levels. The information from the different landscapes should be aggregated at regional levels in order to inform the national monitoring effort. Governments, AFR100 technical and financial partners need to get the progress in FLR implementation (monitoring) on a continuous basis which will enable them to better evaluate the **number of hectares restored against the total number of hectares pledged** by each of the 34 countries member of the AFR100 initiative.

v). Absence of common language and vision.

vi). Low level of private sector involvement to accelerate FLR activities on the ground. The private sector (national and international) is a key actor in FLR to enable countries reach their restoration goals by 2030. Private sector needs to be sensitized about the profitability of FLR and to provide them with win-win FLR business models in order to attract their investments as mentioned in section II above. However, improving the legal and institutional framework is very important in order to secure the investments made by the private sector.

vii). Insufficient mobilisation of investments for AFR100 implementation.

B. Need to ensure the sustainability of AFR100 national stakeholder platforms

In order to sustain the AFR100 national stakeholder platforms, African governments, the private sector and financial institutions need to support continuously the activities of these platform aimed at improving coordination at landscape and national levels. During the first two years of implementation, AFR100 national stakeholder platforms need to get financial support from government budgets and from contributions of technical and financial partners of the AFR100 initiative. However to ensure their long term sustainability, the AFR100 national stakeholder platforms should mobilize their own financial resources by writing proposals in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment/forests, The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Finance in AFR100 member countries.

III.5) Need for more African countries as members of the AFR100 initiative

After more than seven years since its launching, the AFR100 initiative has attracted 34 countries out of 55 members of the African Union (62%). More countries have expressed their willingness to join. For that reason, the AFR100 Secretariat need to continue to contact these countries on a regular basis to speed up the membership process for the overall benefit of the African continent.

IV. STRATEGIC ROLE OF FOREST AND AGRICULTURE PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE AFR100 INITIATIVE

Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations which belong to the **small private sector** are very important for forest landscape restoration. Their members are composed of smallholder producers, cooperatives, producer groups and associations, women and youth entrepreneurs and startups, minorities and indigenous groups. They restore small areas of degraded forests and lands which when aggregated become extremely important. This constitutes their powerful contribution.

In Togo, there are 550000 members of Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations[xx]. Togo and other ROPPA (Network of Farmers' Organizations and Producers in West Africa) countries (such as Burkina Faso, Senegal and Ghana) can contribute significantly to the AFR100 initiative by helping countries fulfill their restoration objectives by 20230. **Table 1** below shows this importance.

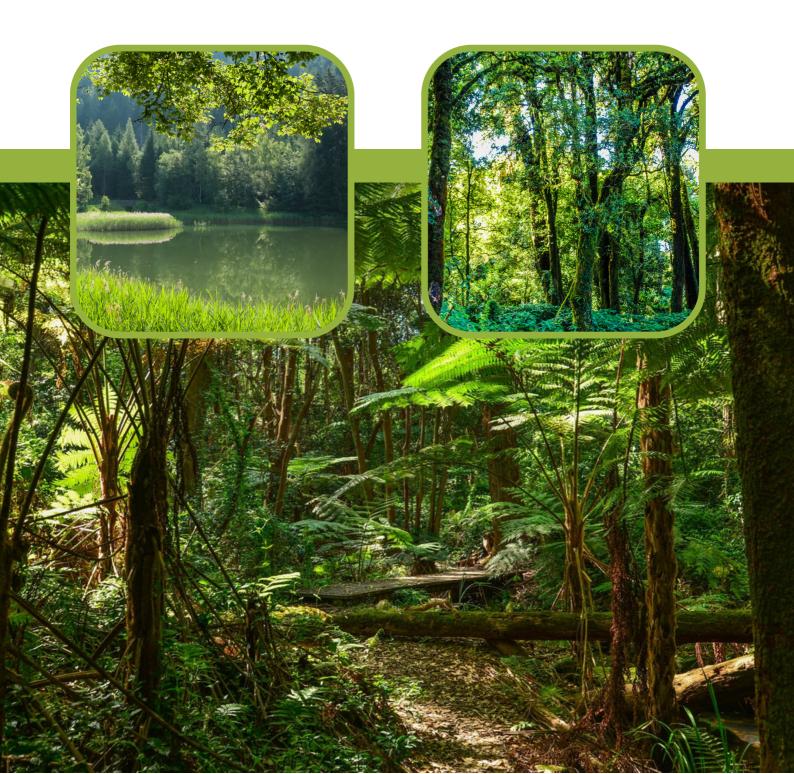**Table 1. Restoration Potential of Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations in selected ROPPA countries**

Number of members in the Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations in Togo	Scénarios of number of hectares restored by each member	Total number of hectares restored	Percentage of the area committed by Togo
550000 members	1.5 hectares restored	825000 hectares	58.9 %
550000 members	2.0 hectares restored	1100000 hectares	78.6%
550000 members	3.0 hectares restored	1650000 hectares	117.9%
Number of members in the Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations in Burkina Faso	**Scénarios of number of hectares restored by each member**	**Total number of hectares restored**	**Percentage of the area committed by Burkina Faso**
2345000 members	1.5 hectares restored	3517500 hectares	70%
2345000 members	2.0 hectares restored	4690000 hectares	93.8%
2345000 members	3.0 hectares restored	7035000 hectares	140.7%
Number of members in the Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations in Senegal	**Scénarios of number of hectares restored by each member**	**Total number of hectares restored**	**Percentage of the area committed by Senegal**
3000000 members	1.5 hectares restored	4500000 hectares	225%
3000000 members	2.0 hectares restored	6000000 hectares	300%
3000000 members	3.0 hectares restored	9000000 hectares	450%
Number of members in the Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations in Ghana	**Scénarios of number of hectares restored by each member**	**Total number of hectares restored**	**Percentage of the area committed by Ghana**
350000 members	1.5 hectares restored	525000 hectares	26.25%
350000 members	2.0 hectares restored	700000 hectares	35%
350000 members	3.0 hectares restored	1050000 hectares	52.5%

SOURCE : ROPPA AND OWN COMPILATIONS

As the table shows, Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations (FFPOs) in Togo, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Ghana can play a very important role in helping their countries fulfill their commitments to the AFR100 initiative.This shows that the restoration potential from FFPOs is enormous. That is why the second phase of the AFR100 initiative (2022–2026) put major emphasis on the acceleration of FLR on the ground and Forest and Agriculture Producer Organizations could make a very significant contribution.

V. CONCLUSION

The African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100 Initiative) is very important for the African countries members of the African Union. That is why several countries would like to become a member. One major goal is to have all 55 members of the Africa Union join the AFR100 initiative, which is a win-win initiative that provides environmental (ecological), social, economic and livelihood benefits for people and improve the health of the planet. In that sense, forest and agriculture producer organizations in Africa could play a more important role in the initiative. The second phase of the AFR100 initiative (2022–2026) is a very good opportunity to rely on forest and agriculture producer organizations to accelerate FLR in Africa, and develop sustainable value chains so that the restoration business becomes a reality in the continent.

VI. END NOTES

[i] Several other Africa Union member countries have expressed an interest to joint the AFR100 initiative. Therefore it is expected that this number will increase over the years.

[ii]World Resources Institute (WRI), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation Development (BMZ), and the World Bank (undated). African Forest Landscape Initiative, Overview.

[iii] See Ousseynou Ndoye and Meseret Shiferaw (2023). The AFR100 initiative : A nature-based solutions to address the climate crisis in Africa. Information note October 2023. AUDA-NEPAD/AFR100 Secretariat.

[iv]https://www.amnh.org/research/center-for-biodiversity-conservation/what-is-biodiversity

[v]https://www.amnh.org/research/center-for-biodiversity-conservation/what-is-biodiversity

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[vii]https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01811789.1988.10826901.

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[ix]https://www.google.com/search?
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QABiABDIHCAYQABiABDIHCAcQABiABDIHCAgQABiABDIHCAkQABiABNIBCTE3MTY4ajFqN6gCALAC
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BTIJCAAQRRg5GIAEMgkIARAAGEMYigUyBwgCEAAYgAQyBwgDEAAYgAQyCAgEEAAYFhgeMggIBRAA
GBYYHjIICAYQABgWGB4yCAgHEAAYFhgeMggICBAAGBYYHjIICAkQABgWGB7SAQkxNDAyNmowajeo
AgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 ;

[xi]Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture (FAO), Fonds International de développement agricole (FIDA), Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance (UNICEF), Programme alimentaire mondial (PAM), Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS), 2023. L'Etat de la Sécurité Alimentaire et de la Nutrition dans le Monde, Rome, Italie.

[xii]Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture (FAO), Fonds International de développement agricole (FIDA), Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance (UNICEF), Programme alimentaire mondial (PAM), Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS), 2023. L'Etat de la Sécurité Alimentaire et de la Nutrition dans le Monde, Rome, Italie.

[xiii]https://www.google.com/search?q=nutrition+definition&oq=nutrition&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqBwgJEAAYgAQyCQgAEEUYORiABDINCAEQLhjHARjRAxiABDIHCAIQABiABDIHCAMQLhiABDIHCAQQABiABDINCAUQLhjHARjRAxiABDIHCAYQABiABDIHCAcQABiABDIHCAgQABiABDIHCAkQABiABNIBCTIxMDA4ajBqN6gCALACAA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.

[xiv]FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2020). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020: Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets. Rome, FAO.https://www.google.com/search?q=modes+of+nutrition&oq=modes+of+&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqDAgBEAAYQxiABBiKBTIGCAAQRRg5MgwIARAAGEMYgAQYigUyBwgCEAAYgAQyBwgDEAAYgAQyBwgEEAAYgAQyBwgFEAAYgAQyDAgGEAAYQxiABBiKBTIHCAcQABiABDIHCAgQABiABDIHCAkQABiABDIHCAoQABiABDIMCAsQABhDGIAEGIoFMgcIDBAAGIAEMgwIDRAAGEMYgAQYigUyBwgOEAAYgATSAQg1MzczajBqMagCALACAA&client=ms-android-samsung&sourceid=chrome-mobile&ie=UTF-8.

[xv] The AFR100 Secretariat will conceptualize soonest an innovative resource mobilisation approach based on national solidarity.

[xvi] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2020). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020: Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets. Rome, FAO.

[xvii] The AFR100 Secretariat will conceptualize soonest an innovative resource mobilisation approach based on national solidarity.

[xviii] See draft Manual elaborated by Shery Quail (2023). ''The AFR100 Monitoring Framework V1. African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)-AFR100 secretariat, May.

[xix] The Technical Assistance Platform (TAP) was conceptualized by Clement Adjorlolo of AUDA-NEPAD.

[xx] Mécanisme Forêts et Paysans (FFF). Atelier régional sur la participation des organisations de producteurs forestiers et agricoles à la restauration des paysages forestiers (RPF) dans le cadre de l'initiative AFR100. Termes de référence atelier régional Sokode, Togo, 26-28 Septembre 2023.