



To address the crises affecting West African family farmers and the systemic crisis of COVID 19, the combined farming movement has gathered and is setting up

A Monitoring and Action Committee

Mission, organization and operation



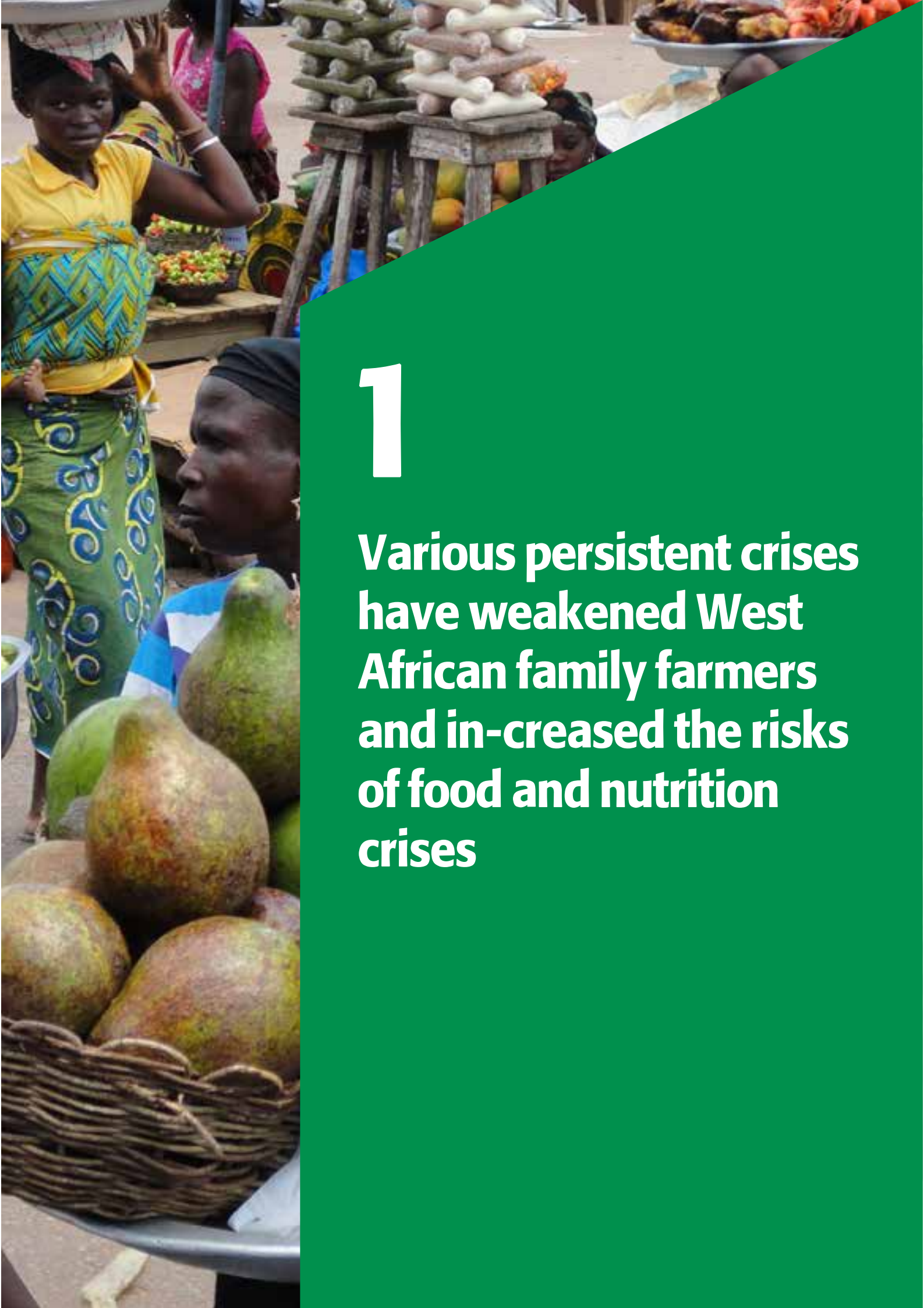
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Various persistent crises have weakened West African family farmers and increased the risks of food and nutrition crises

1.1. Continuing and long lasting crises that have undermined the resilience of family farming, as well as rural communities

Over the past five years, West Africa has experienced repeated crises : recurrent environmental and climate crises, persistent socio-political crises, endemic conflicts with regard to the use of natural resources, namely pastoral resources, conflicts and violence caused by the proliferation of armed groups, community conflicts ..., and now a health and systemic crisis with the outburst of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Some of these numerous crises, especially their overlay, are sources of worry, uncertainty desolation and a sense of loneliness and helplessness, even disarray, for the agropastoral, rural and faming communities in general.

The environmental and climate crises of the 1970's had already

increased pressure on natural resources and degradation of soil fertility, thus affecting sound agricultural practices and the yields of the agropastoral production systems and artisanal fishing activities. Since then, the region has experienced a sucession of food and nutrition insecurity cycles sometimes famines and frequently pastoral crises in the most vulnerable herders communities. Most of the family farms have experienced a long process of lack of capital which barred them from being food self-sufficient, even in rural and urban communities in their countries. The observations carried out by the three West African agricultural farmers, animal breeders and fish farmers networks (APESS, RBM, ROPPA), have demonstrated that over the last decades a differentiation has been created

and strengthened between the three family farmers based on their production capacities and meeting the food consumption needs of their families : family farmers who are constantly in food surplus precarious family farmers and constantly food deficit family farmers.

In recent years, these challenges have been added to crises linked to violence and human rights violations (socio-political conflicts, armed conflicts, organized delinquency, etc.). These crises were the main cause of youth frustration and fuelled a wave of migration to cities and then to European countries and America. These crises, including attacks by terrorist groups, have led to large movements of families within their own countries in the region, mainly in Sahel countries. Hundreds of thousands of families have left their villages, their territories, for relatively secured main and secondary towns. Thousands of farmers have been killed by

practising their trades in their fields, on the paths of pastures and transhumance, in the fisheries. Many families have seen their children join armed groups and disappear or be killed. Many families have lost or abandoned their crops, herds and property due to attacks and looting attributed to armed groups. Many families, who were once food self-sufficient, now depend on humanitarian aid to meet their basic needs. The three Sahelian countries mostly affected by these crises (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger) have several million of internally displaced people with dramatic consequences, notably for women and children. As of February 2020, Burkina Faso had 765,000 internally displaced people, 2.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 318,000 children who were no longer attending school (UNOHA - February 2020). During the same period, Mali had 218,531 internally displaced people (UNHCR - February 2020).

These multiple crises have prevented thousands of family farms, drawing most of their livelihoods from agro-food and fisheries production, from carrying out their production, marketing and natural resource monitoring functions. With family farms more vulnerable and less resilient, all rural communities are vulnerable and endangered.

Despite the efforts made by the States and regional institutions, despite reforms since the early 2000s, these multiple crises have highlighted the limitations and fragility of development policies and services provided by public institutions. Most of them, including armed conflicts and the actions of terrorist groups, stem mainly from the consequences (accumulated for decades) of the failure in gover-

nance, the lack of relevance and consistency in public policies, and the lack of commitment to sovereign funding for their implementation. Policy-makers, who do not always have enough consideration for the work of peasants, the employment of young people, have not seen or did not want to see the warning signs of these crises and have not been able to anticipate them until they break out. The scale and evolution of these crises are such that humanitarian and security initiatives implemented are now far from sufficient to meet the current challenges facing our region. An approach incorporating appropriate development guidelines and strategies, taking into account the conditions necessary for food and nutrition security, is now absolutely necessary.

1.2. A new escalation of risks with the COVID 19 pandemic

In this degraded context, the COVID 19 pandemic is straining national and regional development policies and strategies. It also highlights the low level of preparedness of our States and our region and the limited means at their disposal to deal with a health crisis with unpredictable consequences. Most countries do not know how to deal with the increasingly difficult trade-offs between health, security and food emergencies.

Beyond the food and public health challenge, this new crisis, if not contained and eradicated promptly, could amplify the effects and consequences of previous crises, including worsening the resilience of family farms and rural communities, and leading to an unprecedented food crisis and nutritional deficits. The risk to be feared is the collapse of local economies and agri-food systems in the region.

Faced with such a paradoxical situation where many countries are still subject to massive food imports despite regional potential, limiting mobility within our countries, within our region and internationally, linked to the COVID 19 pandemic, will inevitably exacerbate the problems of food availability and access for both urban and rural communities. Public measures of containment, curfews, lockdowns, quarantines and market closures to stop the spread of the pandemic are causing some concern and affecting the marketing of some agricultural products, including perishable products (market gardening products, fruit, milk, fish, etc.) and the live livestock trading. According to studies 60-90% of the food consumed in the region passes through territorial markets (FAO, CIRAD 2015) while most of these markets are at risk of being closed with the spread of the pandemic. This will lead to a decrease

in the incomes of farmers in many production basins. While the vast majority of peasant families are already struggling to live or survive, these income losses are likely to have dramatic consequences and increase the number of people on the poverty line.

As the 2020/2021 agro-crop and fisheries production season approaches, the efforts and resources of the States and regional institutions are mainly focused on emergency issues. The resources, usually devoted to support services to family farms necessary for the successful operation of the 2020/2021 agro-food and fisheries campaign, are at risk of disappearing and of lacking support for the production and marketing of agricultural and food products. How can we avoid or mitigate shocks to the region's family agropastoral and

fisheries production systems and the marketing of products from these farms?

We are at risk of a major and unprecedented food and nutrition crisis if appropriate support is not provided in a timely manner by governments, their OIGs and their partners, and by the OP and CSO networks. Measures to preserve food systems should at least maintain the production and marketing capacity of family farms, but also of those involved in agri-food processing, the supply of production factors and services (inputs, credit, agricultural advice, etc.). In particular, the region should learn from the management of the 2008 food crisis, notably by avoiding overly isolated national recovery policies and strategies, without an approach of mutualization and regional consistency across the three OIGs (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS).









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**OP and CSO networks
are mobilizing for
appropriate and
sustainable research
and implementation of
solutions**

2.1. The foundations and the need for a Monitoring and Action Committee by the OP and CSO networks

If already vulnerable communities were to suffer from severe food and nutrition deficits and be further weakened, they would become an even more favourable breeding ground for the spread of the virus. The vitality of the region's agricultural and food systems, which guarantees food and nutrition security, is crucial in pandemic management strategies with its short- and medium-term socio-economic impacts. Family farms, which are the main segment of agricultural and food systems, are key players in the management of this unprecedented health crisis.

The emergency measures developed in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic must not overlook the fundamental issue of food and nutrition security.

Yet hunger and malnutrition weaken the immune systems and also contribute to the spread of the disease, which also contributes to the worsening of food and nutrition crises. In the face of this vicious circle, it is important to build plans for recovery, management and, when the time comes, recovery that mobilize the world of the agro-sylvopastoral and fisheries sector of our countries.

In defining emergency measures (humanitarian, security, health emergencies) and beyond, attention to the mobilization of socio-professional stakeholders and the conditions under which their activities are necessary for their sustainability is crucial. OP and CSO networks are essential for sustainable exits from crises. They can provide services and

information to their members to strengthen their capacity to cope, maintain their activities and livelihoods. The solidarity systems carried out by these networks, the mutualization at the level of their members and the analysis of collective responses at their level are also necessary and useful in crisis management and recovery

plans. Finally, governments and regional institutions need to have detailed information on the challenges facing Family Farms and grassroots communities and emerging solutions at their level, in order to put in place appropriate measures and plans for sustainable management and exit from the crisis.

Very concretely the context requires **reflection and action to take care of three major issues** :



a) The commitment and mobilization of the various socio-professional organizations and rural communities alongside the efforts of local authorities, States and regional institutions to help stop the spread of COVID 19 ;



b) The restoration of the production capacity of hundreds of thousands of family farms, pastoral, agropastoral and fisheries through the implementation of appropriate instruments and measures, especially for the 2020/2021 campaign, which is coming very soon ;



c) Global recovery in the land and countries by putting in place appropriate policy measures and instruments, drawing on experience and lessons learned from these crises, to stimulate and, when the time comes, to establish and implement economic, social, inclusive and sustainable development in the land, to create wealth and jobs.

Awareness of the importance of agricultural and food issues, and the necessary coordination, mutualization and consistency between national and regional initiatives and strategies, is based on the responsibility and commitment of all groups of key players engaged in development in West Africa.

In view of all this, the three networks (APESS, RBM, ROPPA) are committed to setting up a Monitoring and Action Committee which aims to be a space to encourage and structure cooperation between all THE OP and OSC networks in the face of the current crises; a framework for work, exchanges and consultation to deepen reflections and generate anticipation at the level of OP and CSO networks and to support the initiatives of public institutions. This committee will bring together the initiatives of the OP and CSO networks with those of other stakeholders and institutions in a fight to address and overcome current crises.



2.2. Objective, missions, actions and operating procedures envisaged for the Monitoring and Action Committee



Objective

The Monitoring and Action Committee aims to engage networks of farmers, farmers, pastoralists and civil society alongside states and regional institutions in effective crisis management, including that born out of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Concretely, it will be a question of organizing a watch and forward-looking reflections, on the one hand, and of producing messages and proposals, on the other hand by capitalizing on the experiences and success stories of the actors at different scales: local, national, regional and international communities. It will also promote the production of THE specific monitoring and information devices of the PROs in the RPCA and other national and regional consultation / consultation frameworks. In particular, the Monitoring and Action Committee will develop arguments/evidence to feed the regional task force being built by ECOWAS at the last meeting of ECOWAS agricultural Ministers in April 2020.

Missions

To do this, **the main missions and actions recommended are :**

A

Mobilize the engagement of OP and CSO networks to contribute to the implementation of emergency and barrier measures and response plans and to ensure effective crisis management, including that related to the COVID 19 pandemic. This mission will be based on the following main actions :



- **Relay and disseminate messages to inform, raise awareness and mobilize** their members and rural communities to support effective implementation of emergency, response and crisis management measures. To this end, the members of the Monitoring and Action Committee will mobilize the various internal communication tools and those of their development partners ;



- **Organize a monitoring** in agro-sylvopastoral and fisheries production basins and within communities on the socio-economic and environmental effects and impacts of crises, including the current health crisis, on family farms ;



- **Support and participate in the targeting and/or support**, and even management of humanitarian aid in different countries ;



- **Produce regular notes on the situation** and development of crises.

The Committee will build on a joint secretariat set up by the three OP networks (APESS, RBM, ROPPA). This secretariat will provide comprehensive coordination of the activities of the crisis committee. The networks will also mobilize the technical teams of their members for the implementation of actions at the national level. These members at the national level will be encouraged and supported for the establishment and/or strengthening of coordination/concertation frameworks.

B **Supporting the implementation of measures and instruments by national services, OP and CSO networks and development partners** to maintain or restore agro-crop and fisheries production capacity for hundreds of thousands of crisis-affected family farms, including in the very short term for the 2020/2021 season. Two main actions are recommended :



- **Organize a monitoring and needs assessment** in the affected production basins and family farms ;



- **Follow the support/support of family farms** farms by national public services during the 2020/2021 agrosylvopastoral and fisheries campaign, including the food shortage and lean period ;



- **The OP and CSO networks will use their observation and knowledge-generating devices for this monitoring**, cobservation of family farms and preparation of the campaign. The secretariat of the crisis committee will ensure that the production of the various networks are harmonized and strengthened.

C **Conduct forward-looking thinking to stimulate and/or support the development and implementation of recovery plans by national and regional public institutions.** The aim is to analyze the implications and serious socio-economic consequences of the current crises for family farms and rural communities in the region and to take action to help strengthen public policies and strategies to reinforce the resilience of family farms and communities and the prevention and anticipation capacities of the States and regional institutions.

Two main lines of action are recommended :



- **Establish a task force to conduct forward-looking reflections** on the various crises, including the COVID 19 pandemic. The Monitoring and Action Committee will develop TDRs to clarify the content and course of the reflections for this task force. The task force will initially work remotely, taking advantage of the opportunities offered today by ICT and will hold meetings as soon as sanitary conditions if the region makes it possible ;



- **Implement political dialogue actions through** the OP and CSO networks to support the implementation and/or strengthening of appropriate policy instruments and measures, enabling global recovery at regional and national level. The OP and CSO networks will also monitor the implementation of sustainable crisis exit solutions and recovery plans.

2.3. Composition and operation of the Monitoring and Action Committee

The Monitoring and Action Committee launched by the three OPRs (APESS, RBM, ROPPA) aims to be a dynamic and open space for reflection and dialogue aimed at inspiring, encouraging, supporting and coordinating strategic and operational actions. These three OPRs will involve other OP and CSO networks in the region by co-opting in the 18-member Monitoring and Action Committee.



The Monitoring and Action Committee will also set up bodies and groups of resource people that will accompany it in its strategic directions and activities :

- **A joint technical secretariat for the three OPRs.** It will be responsible for managing and coordinating the overall implementation of the day-to-day activities. This secretariat will bring together 5 people who will work remotely and through physical encounters when health conditions make it possible.

- **A group of resource people.** The three OPRs will also mobilize the support of resource people engaged in West Africa development. The Monitoring and Action Committee and its joint secretariat will be accompanied daily by the Rural Hub.
- **An advisory group.** This group of European CSO leaders and OP network partners will provide advice and experience in the guidelines adopted by the Monitoring and Action committee and in the conduct of its activities.
- **A task force to conduct forward-looking thinking.** It will be made up of leaders of the OP and CSOs networks in the region and elsewhere, resource people and development partners.

During the lockdown and quarantine period, the Monitoring and Action Committee will work remotely using computer tools and media. It will be able to organize physical meetings when necessary and when the health conditions are favorable. These working arrangements will also be at work for the resource group, the advisory committee and the task force.

The Monitoring and Action Committee, the involved networks and their members in the various countries will work interactively with relevant ministries and public services and regional institutions.

The Committee will also establish collaborations, networks and exchange relationships with other international structures working on food security and nutrition issues such as the CSA.

2.4. Draft Agenda for The Implementation of Activities

Activities	Timeline											
	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
Exchanging around the establishment of the Monitoring and Action Committee												
Finalizing guidance												
Launching of the Monitoring and Action Committee												
Implementing initiatives to support public measures												
Tracking the ASPAH campaign outcomes												
Monitoring the COVID 19 crisis development												
Forward-Looking task force Reflections												
OPR and OSC Advocacy Actions												
Review of Monitoring and Action Committee												



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