



## West Africa Regional Economic Bulletin | June 2022

Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

Natural resources are vital to our existence, and these resources need to be managed and conserved to serve their purpose. Failure to do so leads to catastrophic effects on wildlife and other resources, and other social and environmental effects. In this latest edition, we highlight our partnerships to preserve wildlife, empower women in West Africa, support the power and energy sector, promote food security, and improve the livelihoods of farmers.

You can view this month's edition on our website as well as stay abreast with other [previous editions](#).

Enjoy, and continue to stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Rockfeler P. Herisse, Ph.D.

Acting Director

USAID/West Africa | Regional Economic Growth Office (REGO)

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## THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

### Harnessing Shea for Employment and Sustainability



*U.S. Ambassador to Togo Elizabeth Fitzsimmons engaging with a trader at the Shea Expo in Lomé. Photo Credit: GSA*

**Lomé, Togo: June 7-** Attracting hundreds from around the globe, The Global Shea Alliance (GSA) held its Annual Conference, Shea 2022, themed ‘Growing the Future: Strengthening Resilience and Restoration’. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the conference by funding the Sustainable Shea Initiative (SSI). SSI, in partnership with the private sector, brought together experts, manufacturers, entrepreneurs and most importantly, women shea collectors to discuss the future of the industry.

Opening the conference, the Ambassador of the United States of America to Togo, H.E. Elizabeth Fitzsimmons, celebrated the enterprising women who have kept the industry alive through their hard work of collecting and processing shea. Across the northern regions of Togo, there are over 200,000 women who are employed in shea – making the shea industry an important sector for employment and revenue generation. The U.S. Ambassador visited and engaged with vendors from across West Africa who showcased their goods at the Shea Expo, which provided an opportunity for small producers to make international business connections within the shea industry and sell their products.

The three-day event hosted more than 300 participants who benefited from shared learning exchanges from a diverse range of presenters. The GSA’s Business to Business meetings connected small businesses with industry experts and provided business training for start-up entrepreneurs. Many conference participants also took part in the Shea Village Experience, which demonstrated the step-by-step shea

butter making process, and a field visit to the main shea processing factory in Togo and to the Port of Lomé.

The GSA advocates for the promotion of industry sustainability, quality practices and standards, and the demand for shea in food and cosmetics. Learn more [here](#).

## **ECOWAS Prepares for the 19th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Conference**



*The CITES CoP18 held in Geneva, Switzerland in August 2019.*

**Abuja, Nigeria: June 2-** The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with support from the USAID-funded West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development Program ([WABiLED](#)), convened a meeting of Management Authorities responsible for the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The participants, members of the ECOWAS Member States, deliberated on West African proposals and positions ahead of the 19th CITES Conference of the Parties (CITES CoP19), which will be held in Panama in November 2022.

The Management Authorities reviewed and debated the various COPI9 proposals submitted by individual countries as well as those prepared by several countries unified by a collective interest. As expected from sovereign states with different priorities, the process of proposal dissection was vigorous, with countries passionately debating varying positions, while working together to find common ground. The proposals were collectively reviewed by the group to identify common positions to effectively regulate wildlife trade and conserve the region's biodiversity.

Learn more about the preparatory meeting and future expectations from an interview with the CITES focal person for Liberia [here](#).

## Seventh Statutory Meeting of the West Africa Regional Seed and Seedling Committee (WARSSC) Held



*Key speakers at the seventh WARSSC Meeting.*

**Cotonou, Benin: June 8-10** - The West Africa region is making commendable efforts for the implementation of the harmonized regional seed regulations. Under the aegis of the Commissions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the seventh WARSSC meeting reviewed the status of the implementation of harmonized regional seed regulations in the Member States of the ECOWAS-UEMOA-CILSS region. Specifically, the meeting provided experts an opportunity to assess the progress made both at the regional level and within the member States.

Held both virtually and in-person, 20 out of the 21 statutory members participated, including the representatives of the National Seed Committees of the Member States and representatives of the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions. Additionally, about 30 observers composed of representatives of producers' organizations, the private seed sector, and international organizations participated, with representatives of the USAID-Regional office in Accra and the USAID mission in Benin.

The meeting recognized USAID's commitment and continued support to the transformation of agriculture in the region, especially the improvement of the agricultural input sector.

Read the full report and key recommendations formulated at the meeting, [here](#).

## **Power Africa Connects 200,000 Households and Small Businesses in Senegal**



*Power Africa, USAID, Senelec, the Ministry of Petroleum and Energies of Senegal, and other stakeholders in a group picture following a formal review of Power Africa's efforts with Senelec. Photo Credit: PAWAEP*

With Power Africa's technical assistance, Senelec (the national electricity utility of Senegal) has connected more than 200,000 households and small businesses to the electricity grid over the past year. This effort forms part of Power Africa's contribution to the Government of Senegal's objective to provide all citizens with access to reliable and affordable electricity by 2025 via its Universal Access to Electricity Program.

Power Africa organized capacity building workshops for Senelec staff on various themes, from conducting technical feasibility studies to economic and financial analysis, including monitoring, marketing, and gender mainstreaming in electrification projects to ensure sustainability of the action plan. The plan identifies the localities to be electrified, estimates cost, time and equipment needed to extend the grid to those places, as well as vulnerable households who need financial support to overcome the connection cost barriers.

The activities deployed by Power Africa have connected households, small businesses and community infrastructure, including schools, health care centers, drinking water systems, and public lighting systems. The long-term implementation of the action plan will connect 160,000 more households to achieve the 2025 Universal Access to Electricity Program targets.

## USAID-Sponsored Conservationist Helping to End Wildlife Crime in Niger



*Dr. Abdoul-Aziz Seyni (left) with the steering committee meeting formed to draft the West Africa Strategy for Combating Wildlife Crime. Photo Credit: Edudzi Nyomi/WABiLED*

Five Nigerien officials, led by a head of the wildlife and forestry brigade, helped foil an attempt to traffick 1,700 python skins from Niger, in line with the country's commitment to building its enforcement capacity and improving coordination to successfully combat the illicit trade in wildlife. The intercepted python skins were concealed in a large batch of corn husks and were being transported illegally to Chad, where they would have been refined to produce bags, shoes, and more.

Dr. Abdoul-Aziz Seyni, Project Manager of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN's) Regional Partnership on Water and Environment in West and Central Africa (PREE), and the former head of the division of hunting under the Ministry of Environment's wildlife hunting and protected areas department, made this bust possible. He is one of 13 West Africans sponsored by USAID to embark on a master's degree program at the University of Andalucia in Spain in 2016. The program trains cohorts on the regulatory and scientific aspects of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an international agreement between governments to regulate international wildlife trade and ensure that the trade in wildlife species or goods does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild.

Abdoul-Aziz Seyni is on a mission to ensure that Niger complies with its international commitments. He has trained multiple authorities in Niger on the wildlife trade, legal requirements, and signs of trafficking to look out for. Read the full article [here](#).

## Feed the Future (FtF) Collaborates with Regulators to Address Fertilizer Quality Challenges



*A group of participants in a practical activity to determine the quality of fertilizer. Photo credit: IFDC*

**June 13 – 22:** Fertilizers are unavailable and unaffordable to many smallholder farmers, so the use of high-quality fertilizers can be a challenge. For a better nutrient use efficiency that will result in higher yields, the Feed the Future (FtF) Enhancing Growth through Regional Agricultural Input Systems (EnGRAIS) project has trained Fertilizer Quality Inspectors in Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria to update their skills to increase the quality of fertilizers for agricultural producers across the West African region. The follow-up training addressed severe nutrient shortages in locally-manufactured blends and imported NPK compounds, as well as frequent and severe bag weight shortages, which issues were identified in studies conducted by the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) on fertilizer quality in the region.

With over 60 blending plants in operation in the region, with an annual output capacity above 10 million tons, blending high quality fertilizers, crop and soil specific grades is possible but requires self and public control mechanisms, supported by the ECOWAS regulations ratified in 2012. EnGRAIS selected Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria for the update of these studies because of the initiatives taken by these countries to address the challenges and make quality fertilizers available and accessible to agricultural producers. The selected fertilizer inspectors received updated knowledge and skills for efficient field inspection in their respective countries.

After mastering the procedures and processes in fertilizer quality assessment, the Inspectors will share the new knowledge on the field to promote access and use of quality fertilizers to the benefit of agricultural producers.

## Ferme Semenciere Ainoma (FSA) Empowers Women Farmers in Niger



*Female farmers in Niger receive training and support from FSA. Photo Credit: FSA*

[Ferme Semenciere Ainoma](#) (FSA), a large, woman-led agricultural producer in Niger, is assisting 400 female farmers to grow tomatoes, peppers, and onions, as planned under the USAID/West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (WATIH) project. Launched in September 2021 with a grant of \$461,527, FSA's co-investment partnership with the Trade Hub will not only support the female farmers to grow crops, but will also allow the company to scale up its production area and install an irrigation system. The irrigation system will enable the producers to be weather-independent, maintain their jobs, and generate revenue throughout the year, leading to a 30 percent increase in their monthly income through the production of an additional 3,733 tons of fresh vegetables.

The company has trained 400 farmers on good irrigation practices; installed irrigation systems on 80 percent of the expected 100 hectares of land; acquired a van, a truck, and two tricycles; and hired 27 additional staff to ensure the smooth execution of activities.

FSA is working to finalize the construction of its three storage facilities and the cold room, deploy the irrigation system on the remaining 20 hectares of land, and launch the process to buy the harvested vegetables of the 400 farmers.

## **The West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development (WABiLED) Program Discusses Armed Conflict and Natural Resource Management**



*A group of elephants. Photo Credit: USO/Getty Images*

In WABiLED's latest podcast episode, three experts discuss armed conflicts and natural resource management in communities in West Africa, with focus on the dynamics of armed conflicts, natural resources, and conservation. Inadequate forest security, specifically transboundary forests, has led to catastrophic effects on wildlife and natural resource management, resulting in violence, conflict, and detrimental environmental effects.

Listen to the [podcast](#) on recent happenings in West Africa and how they have influenced wildlife and forest communities.

### **Call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for Loans or Partial Credit Guarantees for Agricultural Enterprises in Ghana**

The United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is seeking Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from private financial institutions for a loan or a partial credit guarantee to mobilize lending to agricultural micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Ghana. DFC anticipates signing a direct loan or partial credit guarantee agreement with one or more successful parties, subject to due diligence and the availability of funds.

Deadline for submissions is July 22. [Learn More](#)

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