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Introductory note

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Introduction

For about fifteen years now, and in many countries of the South, rural producer organizations (RPOs) have scaled up their influence in the preparation and implementation of public policies on the rural and agricultural sector. Such progress is particularly perceptible within national political circles, and recently, at supranational level. What is the real influence of RPOs in decision-making circles?

RPO grouping to influence policies

The multiplication of groups at the grassroots and their gradual accession to bigger groupings (unions, federations...) constitute the two main characteristics of recent trends in rural organizations¹. The groups that are set up within national or international policy-making circles are of different kinds (federations or confederations, networks) and may, in many situations, be considered as social movements seeking to influence policy making and implementation².

When organizations are more specialized, relations between more "economically-oriented" and "policy-oriented" organizations are important, especially in crucial situations such as negotiations/lobbying to influence policy³. When organizations are more specialized, for instance in the economic domain, they are nevertheless obliged to ensure that the environment is conducive for their activities: they therefore also see to it that their interests are represented.

In many situations where RPOs are less specialized and perform many functions, groups of RPOs engaged in the preparation of public policies combine, often within the same organizations, an approach of "service delivery to members (and sometimes to non members)" and a representation approach presupposing commitment to defend causes that transcend the strict interests of members, and incorporating an analysis of the place of agriculture in the economy and in society⁴.

It thus seems inappropriate to make a water-tight distinction between organizations that render services to their members (economic, technical) on the one hand, and other advocacy organizations that are more "policy-oriented", on the other hand.

Mainstreaming the linkages between economic and political approaches and analysing RPO coalitions as social movements, helps to avoid considering RPOs as stand-alone stakeholders whose success depends solely on their internal capacities. Developments within national

¹ Mercoiret M-R, 2006, "Les organisations paysannes et les politiques agricoles", in *Afrique Contemporaine (AFD - De Boeck)* Vol.2006-1 n°217, pp 135-57.

² Webster N, 2004, *Understanding The Evolving Diversities and Originalities in Rural Social Movements in the Age of Globalization*, UNRISD - Civil Society and Social Movements - paper n°7 57 pp.

³ Bebbington A, J, Carroll T, F, 2000, *Induced Social Capital and Federations of The Rural Poor*, World Bank (Social Capital Initiative, Working Paper n°19), Washington.

⁴ Mercoiret M-R, 2001, *Rôle des organisations paysannes faitières dans les politiques nationales et régionales de développement agricole et rural dans les pays africains au Sud du Sahara*, Douala, CTA, 27 p. Also see Pesche D. 2006. Dynamique d'organisation des ruraux et renforcement des capacités pour l'élaboration des politiques publiques en Afrique subsaharienne. In *La régulation des marchés agricoles internationaux. Un enjeu décisif pour le développement*, ed. Delorme H, Boussard J.M., pp. 158-68. Paris: Karthala.

political circles and general institutional changes connected with globalisation need to be taken into account to understand the real and potential impact of RPOs on public decisions.

The national level remains decisive

Since the 1980s, States have undergone changes under the combined impact of economic and institutional policies largely imposed on them by the "international community"⁵. Structural adjustment policies and more generally, neo-liberal policies, contributed to weaken States and encouraged the involvement of non-State actors in public policy-making: private business community and the civil society (see annex 1). Since the 1990s, in the post-adjustment era, the role of the State has been once more recognized as important in initiating and supporting agricultural sector reforms⁶.

In many regions, one also notes a two-pronged movement of political decentralization within countries (see thematic session 4) and the establishment of regional groupings bringing together many neighboring countries (WAEMU, ECOWAS, SADEC... in Africa; Mercosur in Latin America). Many challenges call for mainstreaming the international dimension: trade, the environment, conflicts... The multiple levels of governance tend to complicate political decision-making and to increase the number of actors involved. Nevertheless, the national level remains decisive in protecting the interests of rural actors and building their capacity to influence decision-making⁷. Indeed:

- Though many countries have embarked on a decentralization process, there are few local governments that enjoy sufficient political and financial autonomy to influence choices that are still largely determined by national decisions.
- The growing importance of supranational institutions should not obfuscate the fact that it is inter-State interactions/negotiations that govern the vast majority of international institutions and agreements.

The influence of RPOs is felt in three major types of national decisions:

- Sub-sector policies, concerning agricultural or livestock product sectors. There are many examples of organizations that have been able to relatively succeed to argue their points of view (Cotton in Mali and Benin, Irish potato in Guinea, coffee in Columbia⁸...)
- Cross-cutting policies concerning a particular aspect of the rural world: land, agricultural services, rural funding... Here too, strong RPOs may play a role in decision making and implementation (agricultural service reform in many African countries⁹, CNCR stance concerning land in Senegal...)
- Broader agricultural and rural policies that lay down general guidelines and determine major choices for the future. Such is the case of agricultural laws recently

⁵ We shall use these generic terms to describe bilateral and multilateral aid agencies.

⁶ Morrison J, Murphy S, 2004, *Agricultural Trade and Poverty Reduction: Opportunity or Threat?*, DFID (Agriculture and Natural resources Team), Why College, IATP, London, page 3.

⁷ De Janvry A, Sadoulet E, 2003, *Organisations paysannes et développement rural au Sénégal*, Université de Californie - Berkeley, Banque Mondiale, Washington, 81 pp 7.

⁸ See the example of the federation of coffee farmers of Columbia in case study No. 3

⁹ See especially the lessons drawn from the four draft reforms on agricultural services backed by the World Bank: Diaz J, Le Coq J-F, Mercoiret M-R, Pesche D, 2004, *Le renforcement des capacités des organisations paysannes et rurales : enseignements de l'expérience de la Banque Mondiale*, Banque Mondiale, CIRAD-TERA 40 pp.

prepared in Senegal and Mali: in both cases, RPOs played a decisive role through an in-depth consultation process (see case study in annex 2).

Several key points deserve special attention in analyzing the role of RPOs in public decisions, namely:

- The institutional forms of representation of the interests of rural actors at national level may vary depending on the nature of the relations between institutions and public authorities: more or less autonomy vis-à-vis the State, more or less decentralization of operations¹⁰. The nature of the political system and the mode of operation of the State also influence the manner in which rural actors would organize themselves to defend their interests.
- The importance of political and financial autonomy: the former is often easier to attain than the latter. Here, the diversification of partnerships is the best bet for securing autonomy by policy-oriented RPOs.
- The importance of alliances both within the rural world (the example of the CNCR) and with other actors of the civil society or the private business community (example of cotton in Cancun).
- The importance of using the machinery of democratic processes: role of the media in supporting the cause of rural actors, of parliamentarians...
- The importance of understanding the logistics and communication constraints, which are still very strong in many situations: a coalition of RPOs engaged in lobbying public decision-making should be able to communicate rapidly with its members (Bingen, 2004, p 21). Here, the rapid development of new information and communication technologies (Internet, mobile phone) is an important asset even if such tools cannot replace face-to-face consultation which is so necessary in the life of a movement.
- The importance of strong leadership, which plays a central role in the construction of a strategic project for RPOs and allows for (1) the establishment of strong alliances, (2) the mainstreaming of the necessarily diversified interests of rural actors, and (3) improvement of the conditions of political dialogue (consultation forums, agendas...). This last point raises the delicate issue of relations between farmer movements and political circles: here, situations differ from country to country and from continent to continent.

The need for RPOs to intervene at supranational level

There are two levels:

- The regional level where agricultural policies with growing importance for change are developed (WAEMU, ECOWAS, Mercosur...)
- The international level where trade negotiations and agreements on environmental issues, etc. are made.

In all cases, the recent involvement of RPO networks at these levels has been marked by undeniable success. Such success has been thanks to their ability to rally and mobilise RPOs in different countries on common themes and to build broad-based coalitions involving other civil society actors¹¹.

¹⁰ See in annex X... some elements on the different approaches for interest representation.

¹¹ As it is the case with ROPPA, which has gradually constructed its positions around the key notions of family farming and food sovereignty and which was able to secure broad-based coalition during WTO negotiations in Cancun. See ROPPA web site <http://www.roppa.info/>.

As was the case in Europe with the advent of a common agricultural market, one should underscore the importance of new alliances between national RPO platforms and their States (case of cotton negotiations in Cancun¹²). For RPOs, the numerous levels of governance are translated concretely by the multiplication of decision/lobbying circles: the fragmentation of public decision-making circles complicates lobbying¹³ and calls for new alliances. The involvement of RPOs in international negotiations can strengthen their influence at national level¹⁴.

Observations, concerns and future prospects

Two aspects appear to be decisive:

1. The conditions for balanced dialogue and negotiations are rarely met. How may conditions for such dialogue be improved to avoid situations of disengagement or conflict? How can one reduce the asymmetries between actors who are supposed to participate in public decision-making?

- Generally, priority is given to consultation processes and participation (see annex 1). One should however admit that RPOs are increasingly expressing their views though these are not necessarily heeded to.
- The evolution of international relations changes relations between actors at national level. In Latin America, the signing of free trade agreements with the USA (ALCA) led to a rapprochement between some governments and their civil society, including rural social movements¹⁵.
- The highly technical nature of political debate, particularly at international level, tends to give a leading role to specialists (jurists...)¹⁶, thus obfuscating the political dimension of the issues addressed. Paradoxically, the abundance of information is sometimes accompanied by increasing opacity of the decision-making process.
- Apart from the formal public debate processes, powerful actors act secretly to influence decisions (private business community, religious actors...). To limit such practices, it seems important to set up mechanisms to institutionalize dialogue in accordance with modalities negotiated with the main actors, including RPOs.
- It is also important to build the capacity of government services to organize consultation and to feel committed by the decisions taken and monitor implementation.

2. A great amount of information is rapidly disseminated through new technologies. However, can one **facilitate the processing of such abundant information, and**

¹² Pesche D, Nubukpo K, 2004, "L'Afrique du coton à Cancun : les acteurs d'une négociation", in *Politique Africaine* n°95, pp 158-68.

¹³ This observation is also valid for non State actors seeking to influence public policies (Brock K, McGee R, 2004, *Mapping trade policy: understanding the challenges of civil society participation*, IDS Working Paper n°225, Brighton,

¹⁴ What some people call the boomerang effect: see Newell P, Tussie D, Eds, 2006, *Civil Society Participation In Trade Policy-making in Latin America: Reflections and Lessons*, IDS, Working paper n°267, Brighton, 88 pp

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Brock and McGee, 2004, p 52 et 53.

transform it into intelligible knowledge useful to stakeholders engaged in policy-making processes?

- It is important for RPOs to generate their own information and knowledge and to make better use of data: recourse to qualified and independent expertise (see case study No. 1 which illustrates the importance of expertise in the agricultural policy-making process), creation of independent observatories...
- The importance of independent research, particularly on the impact of agricultural and rural policies developed during the past 15 years. How can we make policy choices without an independent and documented reference base on the impacts of past policies?¹⁷
- The importance of formal education (long term impact) and professional and continuous training suited to, and understood by RPOs: understand the environment, build on its experience... (short- and medium term impact).

To conclude, we shall lay emphasis on the fact that effective participation of rural actors in the preparation and implementation of policies affecting them, leads to greater relevance and efficacy of such policies, and by extension to greater ownership. One may consider that representation of the interests of rural actors is thus a "quasi public"¹⁸ good. One may also consider that more balanced forums for dialogue and negotiations between actors are key factors for social peace. These two arguments demonstrate the need to set up lasting funding mechanisms for RPOs, which would permit them to benefit from public assistance (both national and international) in the long term while still preserving their political autonomy.

¹⁷ This main claim of ROPPA and many other civil society organizations has never been acted upon.

¹⁸ De Janvry A, Sadoulet E, 2003, *Organizations paysannes et développement rural au Sénégal*, Université de Californie - Berkeley, Banque Mondiale, Washington, 81 pp. 6.

Annex 1: Civil society and democratization: greater participation in public policy-making

In most developing countries, the structural adjustment era (1980s) was marked mainly by the design of policies that were largely imposed on States causing them to withdraw from many sectors/functions. The 1990s marked a turning point in public policy-making. Indeed, the international community recognized (1) that in spite of the criticisms leveled against them, States must play a role in instituting new policies/rules¹⁹ and (2) non-state actors must be involved in the preparation of these new policies. This new perspective corresponds to the growing recognition of the role of civil society in political processes²⁰.

Civil society organizations are perceived as capable of playing a key role in democratic processes for the following reasons:

- They scale up citizen participation in policy-making processes, beyond the “traditional” elite
- They improve State accountability vis-à-vis the citizen
- They provide civic education in democratic practice²¹.

It is widely recognized that increased participation in policy-making improves the quality of such policies and their impact on the country:

“The checks and balances of participatory democratic regimes—and the procedures for consensus building— limit the scope for rent seeking and drastic policy reversals, offering a much more reliable and sustainable path to development. Participatory political regimes are associated with more stable growth —very important for poverty reduction, given the highly adverse effects that shocks have on poor people (chapters 8 and 9). There are several reasons for this association. First, participatory political processes encourage the use of voice rather than violence to negotiate conflict”²²

What is the role of rural and producer organizations in this new order? On the one hand, some RPOs focus on advocating economic interest and operating in connection with other economic interest groups: here they can be considered as belonging to the private sector²³. On the other hand, some RPOs play the role of producer representatives and participate actively in political debates to make the voice of the rural actors heard: such groups can be considered as social movements operating like other civil society organizations within the political sphere. Indeed, these two visions are not necessarily contradictory if we consider that RPOs are hybrid organizations embracing several logics: they are both “*membership organizations*” seeking to respond to the demands of their members and advocacy

¹⁹ Bebbington A, J, Thompson J, 2004, *Use of civil society organizations to raise the voice of the poor in agricultural policy*, DFID (Agriculture and Natural Resources Team), Manchester University, IIED, London, 35 pp.

²⁰ World Bank. 2001. World Bank-Civil Society Collaboration: progress report for fiscal year 2000- 2001. In *La société civile en question*, pp. 106-7. Paris: La documentation française. See also Bernard A, Helmich H, Lehning P, dir, 1997, *La société civile et le développement international*, Paris: OCDE, 157 pp. The « turning point » in this domain seems to be the 1997 World Bank Report which partly rehabilitates the State’s role in improving the functioning of societies.

²¹ Blair H., «La société civile et la construction de la démocratie : enseignements tirés de l’expérience des donateurs internationaux», in Bernard A et al, 1997.

²² World Bank, 2000/2001, “Attacking Poverty”, chapter 6, “Making State Institutions More Responsive to Poor People », p 108 to 113

²³ Bosc P-M, al., 2002, *The Role of Rural Producers Organizations (RPOs) in the World Bank Rural Development Strategy*, CIRAD TERA, ODI, MAE, DFID 157 pp....

organizations engaged in political dialogue²⁴. They thus contribute to enhancing democracy through various training they provide to their leaders and their negotiation partners (representatives of the State, private companies, NGOs or service providers, local governments...).

The notion of civil society however remains connected with widespread opinion according to which States and their Governments cannot single-handedly design policies. In Africa, the glorification of the civil society can often be related to a justified criticism of authoritarian post-colonial states, but can also be due to a denigration of the State: " *the notion of civil society as vector of better governance and of greater accountability of the leaders is not neutral (even if it so pretends). Indeed, it reflects and confirms a "liberal interpretation" of reality articulated around normative opposition between the State meaning constraint and the civil society meaning freedom*"²⁵. The debate on civil society as on many other subjects is still dominated by the view points and experiences of the North²⁶.

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²⁴ Pesche D. 2006. Dynamique d'organisation des ruraux et renforcement des capacités pour l'élaboration des politiques publiques en Afrique subsaharienne. In *La régulation des marchés agricoles internationaux. Un enjeu décisif pour le développement*, ed. Delorme H, Boussard J.M., pp. 158-68. Paris: Karthala

²⁵ C Newbury, 3Introduction : Paradoxes of Democratization in Africa », African Studies Review, 37 (1), 1994, quoted by DGCID, Otayek René, Dir., 2004, *Les sociétés civiles du Sud : un état des lieux dans trois pays de la ZSP, Cameroun, Ghana et Maroc*, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, 163 pp

²⁶ Mitlin Diana, « Le secteur des ONG : son rôle dans le renforcement de la société civile et dans la garantie d'une bonne gestion des affaires publiques », in Bernard A ; et al, *op. cit.* Voir aussi Offerlé M, Dir., 2003, *La société civile en question*, Paris: La documentation Française (Problèmes politiques et sociaux), 124 pp.

Annex 2: Different modalities of representation of the interests of rural actors depending on the political context.

The agricultural advocacy and representation mechanisms often rely highly on the type of political system. In Africa, French-speaking countries prefer a form of representation and advocacy through dialogue (or confrontation) with government and public authorities. English-speaking countries for their part seem to prefer advocacy-based channels and modalities that are less exclusive and more open. This situation however varies from one country to the next: the mechanisms for representing the constituency of rural actors in Senegal and Mali for instance are more open than in Chad and Togo.

In **Kenya** for instance, the increasingly important role played by parliamentarians in policy-making since the new presidential mandate (2002) should be noted. Several commissions or parliamentary groups openly defend certain policy options (such as the privatization of the tea sector for instance). It seems that parliament is seeking to endow itself with a scientific committee to enable it dialogue better with other actors (particularly the Government) in the policy-making process (with clearly significant assistance from some donors: USAID, DFID). Similarly, NGOs are sometimes recognized as being more competent to represent the interests of the rural poor, for instance, producer organizations. The umbrella organization of producers and rural actors, KENFAP, is a member of KEPISA, the Kenyan private sector alliance, and this confers on the KENFAP greater legitimacy during negotiations with ministers other than the Minister of agriculture. The Kenyan institutional system thus seems to be more open and multi-agency than in some French-speaking countries where we sometimes have the feeling of witnessing a more or less functional face-to-face between FOs and public authorities²⁷.

In a study carried out for the FAO²⁸, Jim Bingen, compares the functioning and impact of three advocacy models: one para-statal model (Chambers of agriculture in **Mali** and in **Togo**), one model of representation through an autonomous organization (the CNCR in **Senegal**) and one Local fora model focused on the issue of agricultural services (Farmer's Fora in **Uganda**).

This paper compares three different models for representing farmer interests in development policies and programs: the "Chambers d' Agriculture model" introduced in several French-speaking West African countries; the "CNCR model"²⁹ from Senegal; and, the "Farmers Fora model" used in Uganda. These three models share several common features, including decentralized decision making and planning with local government bodies. Through these features, each model seeks to improve the delivery of services to farmers, accommodate to their concerns, and sometimes their policy interests.

The models also differ significantly from each other: the Chambers d'Agriculture focus on consultative information sharing and are closely associated with national

²⁷ Data collected during a mission to Kenya: Pesche D and Wennink B., *Politiques agricoles et organisations de producteurs*, CIRAD et KIT, octobre 2005, 38 pages.

²⁸ Bingen J, 2004, *A Comparative Review of Multi-stakeholder Arrangements for Representing Farmers in Agricultural Development Programs and Policy-making in Sub-Saharan Africa*, FAO, Michigan State University, Rome, 41 pp

²⁹ *Le Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux*, CNCR, The National Council for Rural Dialogue and Cooperation.

government policy. Moreover, the Chambers are constituted on the principal of universal membership. Individuals do not “join” to become members (or adherents) of a Chamber. Instead, the Chambers have a legal mandate to represent the constituency of all farmers and herders.

In contrast, the CNCR is an independent, non-governmental policy advocacy federation that emerged over several years from a local grassroots movement to one that includes several types of organizations and unions representing diverse membership groups in Senegal's agricultural, livestock and fisheries sectors. Similar to the Chambers, the CNCR depends heavily upon funding from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies.

The Farmers Fora have less of a policy orientation than either the Chambers or the CNCR, and they rely directly upon decentralized government offices to improve the delivery of various extension services. Similar to the Chambers and the CNCR, the Fora also rely upon significant donor support. However, in contrast to the Chambers and the CNCR, the Fora serve small scale rural producers in marginal areas, thereby representing a more focused constituency than either the Chambers or the CNCR.

Concerning the first two models (Chambers of agriculture and CNCR), Bingen underlines the practical difficulties they encounter in terms of internal communication and building their positions without incurring the commonly heard criticism of weak leadership.

“However, both models have very weak mechanisms of coordination and communication between the national offices and their member or regional representatives. In both, serious communication and logistic constraints significantly impede the effective exchange of ideas and concerns between the national leadership and those at the local and regional levels. While this does not necessarily mean that the national leadership is cut off from its grass roots, it does pose challenges for holding the leadership accountable and responsive to local conditions. This is especially the case given the different interests expressed and linked to different agro-ecological regions in each country” (page 21)

In Burkina Faso, there are other examples of institutional frameworks. The national Union of Cotton Producers of Burkina Faso (UNPCB) is a national cotton producer organization that masters the sector management mechanisms: it holds 10% of the shares of the national cotton company, Sofitex, and participates actively in the Interprofessional forum that manages the whole sector. This is another form of interest representation where the organization is partly linked to its “partners”: the advantage is that it is at the core of decision-making which it can thus better leverage: the disadvantage being that its independence may be threatened particularly if its funding depends on agreements between partners in the sector.

Case study n°1: Analysis of ROPPA's involvement in the design of regional agricultural policies in West Africa

Shortly after its creation in 2000, ROPPA launched an initiative aimed at making its voice heard within WAEMU which was preparing its agricultural policy (WAP).

After drawing up the terms of reference of the study on the determination of the major guidelines of WAEMU's agricultural policy (May 2000), a multidisciplinary team made up of experts from Europe and WAEMU, carried out initial work in late 2000, which culminated in the drafting of tentative documents that were submitted to a seven-man scientific committee (December 2000 and February 2001). A process of validation by regional institutions (WAEMU, BCEAO, WADB), began with national consultations and consultation of other partners (donors, other regional agricultural organizations). This process culminated in the preparation of an additional Act approved by WAEMU Heads of state in December 2001³⁰.

ROPPA then proceeded with two exercises:

- An appeal to WAEMU to modify the schedule and secure approval of the principle of greater involvement of farmer organizations in the process rather than just simple attendance of review meetings on the study of experts. Specific financial resources were necessary to support such farmer-organization involvement process.
- Organization of broad-based consultation of national farmer organization platforms that make up ROPPA. For eight (8) months (from March to October 2001), ROPPA gradually put together a gamut of consensus proposals and defended its vision, orientations, and major constraints regarding agriculture and the institutional instruments for their implementation. Such elements made it possible for ROPPA to efficiently argue its case during the WAEMU sub-regional workshop to validate WAP (October 2001).

In December 2001, ROPPA strengthened its advocacy by mobilising over 500 family farmers and submitting a memorandum to the Heads of State summit. Such action permitted them to partially influence the content of WAP:

“Indeed, family farming was recognized as having special importance (articles 2 and 8 of the additional Act No.03/2001). The Heads of State committed to set up a Regional Fund for Agricultural Development from 2005 (article 13). Lastly, rural income, status and living environment were considered as WAP objectives (article 3). Conversely, ROPPA's proposals relating to the key nature of family farming, protection of the sub-regional market, preservation of genetic pool and of local know-how, were not given much consideration”³¹.

ROPPA then endeavored to monitor the NEPAD process, particularly its agricultural component. ROPPA hosted the RPO regional platforms' consultation (East Africa – Central Africa – South Africa) which made it possible to prepare and voice the view points of RPOs on NEPAD and CAADP.

³⁰ <http://www.hubrural.org/pays/uemoa.php?lang=fr>

³¹ ROPPA, 2005, *Bilan d'étape du parcours du ROPPA 2000-2005*, Ouagadougou, 92 pp 36.

ROPPA was also quick to anticipate on the future preparation of ECOWAS agricultural policy and succeeded to convince authorities to participate in the Task Force that will conduct the process. A reference document proposing an agricultural policy framework for West Africa (ECOWAP) was prepared in July 2004 by a gamut of consultants combining diversified human resources (Europe, USA, ECOWAS countries). By mobilising Anglophone RPOs and building on WAP acquired experience, ROPPA in association with RECAO organized a unified pole for the representation and involvement of RPOs.

The originality of the reference document preparation process lies in the fact that policy scenarios were elaborated rather than proposing policy areas that would later be subject to consultation. The focus in the process was to endeavor to clearly formulate many policy scenarios thus enabling policy-makers and other stakeholders to make informed choices. According to one of the experts involved in the process, ECOWAS willingly opted for a diversified team of experts of differing skills, nationalities, and sensitivity. Such concern is connected, among other things, with ECOWAS' desire to preserve its independence vis-à-vis financial donors. Similarly, the steering committee of the process was much more open and diversified than the scientific committee that supervised WAP expert work.

ROPPA thinks it has improved its lobbying and advocacy capacity in the course of the process partly because of its involvement in the work of steering bodies, and partly because of the experience acquired working on WAP.

“The participation of ROPPA (in the steering bodies of the process) also contributed to better mainstreaming peasant farming. ECOWAP lays special emphasis on, and gives priority to family farming over agribusiness, and to regional market over exports. ECOWAS has also adopted the principle of guaranteeing the food security of the people of the sub-region by exercising its right to food sovereignty.

Because it integrated NEPAD's CAADP, contrary to WAP, ECOWAP was accompanied with an Action Plan over the period 2006-2010, which identifies priority and relevant programs for achieving such major objectives as food security, decent income and social and environmental sustainability.

In addition to this project manager role, ROPPA participates effectively in ECOWAP sub-regional monitoring mechanisms and enjoys observer status within ECOWAS statutory organs.

Generally, ECOWAP was better conducted and achieved greater progress for APOs. This was due, firstly, to the enhanced capacities of ROPPA leaders, greater participation of national platforms during national workshops – where ROPPA positions are echoed or serve as reference – and careful preparation. Secondly, ROPPA was able to include APOs from Anglophone countries even if the work is still to be completed in Nigeria and to be started in Liberia and Cape Verde. The outcomes were also more important than those of WAEMU agricultural policy negotiations. Indeed, apart from recognition of family farming, ROPPA was able to secure enshrinement of the principle of food sovereignty in the legal instruments. The need for protection was reasserted. Lastly, ECOWAS accepted ROPPA's suggestion to set up a “Rural Development Council” (instead of the sector committees instituted by WAEMU).” (ROPPA, 2005)

Like many other observers, ROPPA recognizes that one of the weaknesses of its action is process monitoring. Once official instruments are finalized, implementation of the policies in general takes more time because of the complexity of the actions envisaged and because of limited financial resources available for the implementation process. It is therefore difficult

for an organization like ROPPA with limited staff, to monitor closely the many processes, breakthroughs (or failures) and negotiations.

In January 2006, under the impetus mainly of Trade ministers, ECOWAS adopted the WAEMU CET, thus confirming a dwindling tendency towards protectionism, as opposed to the choices made by adopting ECOWAP. There is of course some flexibility afforded by the various exceptional measures that can allow for targeted protection of this or that product for a given period of time. However, this example demonstrates the complexity of the process, the multitude of negotiation places and issues, the fragmentation of the processes and their interdependence.

The development of "multiple-level governance"³² makes it difficult to involve advocacy organizations, especially as the international agenda (negotiation of EPA, WTO...) requires regular mobilization by ROPPA on sensitive and important issues relating to the future of agriculture in West Africa.

³² Grossman E, Saurruger S, 2006, "Les groupes d'intérêts au secours de la démocratie ?" in *Revue française de science politique* Vol.56 n°2, pp 299-321

Case study No. 2: Analysis of RPO involvement in two agricultural framework law-making processes (Senegal and Mali)

In late 2002, the Government of Senegal decided to prepare an agricultural framework law that would lay down the major guidelines of the agricultural and rural sector for the next twenty years. A first draft of the bill was published in March 2003. This publication generated heated debate particularly on the land issue about which it envisaged measures to facilitate rapid acquisition of land for well-to-do people. Government quickly retracted on the issue and organized broad-based consultation of different government services and non state actors (NGOs, financial donors, RPOs, political parties...). The CNCR undertook broad-based consultation of its members in a process which, for four months, mobilized over 3000 farmers in all the regions of the country. The process led to the organization of a national workshop and the preparation of an alternative bill in October 2003. Public authorities then incorporated some of the proposals of the CNCR in a tentative version tabled in parliament (early 2004) and then enacted into law in June 2004.

The CNCR's involvement in the process enabled it to influence a public decision and this was due to the following factors:

- Its previous contribution to the reflection of the farmers' movement on a holistic vision for Senegalese agriculture (since at least 1996, several framework documents on Senegalese agriculture had been drafted by FONGS and CNCR) ;
- Recent work on land tenure that enabled the CNCR to determine the complexity of the subject and to initiate in-depth consultations on the future of agriculture with its members in all regions (2000-2003);
- In spite of a rather hostile political environment, it benefited from the support and complicity of a number of persons belonging to different institutions (NGOs, financial donors, local representatives...) including within the government: these networks enabled the CNCR to rapidly establish a coalition thus giving it greater power of influence³³.

In Mali, the government also engaged in the preparation of an agricultural framework law. Producer organizations (CNOP) were encouraged to hold broad-based consultations which culminated in national proposals (from November 2004 to September 2005). A producers' memorandum validated in September 2005 contained (1) a policy statement (2) a summary of farmers' consultations (the current situation, proposals and reflections for the preparation of the Agricultural framework law (LOA) and its implementation) and (3) a preliminary draft of the farmers' agricultural framework bill³⁴. The Agricultural framework law was finally adopted by the national assembly in August 2006.

³³ This information is derived from research work being finalized, carried out in 2006 by two CNEARC students, Magali Ruello and Anne Chaboussou, under the supervision of Denis Pesche. The final copy of this report will be ready in early December 2006.

³⁴ This information is got from an Internet site of the "Axe Formation" association that has supported producer organizations (CNOP) in their consultation process. The site contains a lot of information including all the contributions of producers, it is a remarkable capitalization tool <http://loa.initiatives.net/ml/sommaire.php3>

Case study No. 3: The Colombian Coffee Growers' Federation³⁵

This old (1927) and very renowned organization is usually cited as an example because of its economic and technical work in the coffee sector. It has contributed to the development of rural areas where coffee plantations were established: construction and maintenance of roads, schools... It can be considered as a real company, which from 1946 acquired a fleet of ships to facilitate exportation of coffee, a farm bank in 1953 and a network of coffee warehouses in the 1960s to better influence supply fluctuations. The FNCC (Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia) has had the same passionate and successful history thanks mainly to an original social and political structure.

"Although the main founders were elites, they were not elitist. They allied themselves with peasant farmers and saw their competitors as the foreign companies that dominated the export trade and often paid Colombian growers only half of the international price for coffee" (p 5).

The authors identify several reasons that may explain such alliance between big and small-scale farmers:

Federation members' hypotheses:

- *as labour was scarce and land abundant, elites were less interested in appropriating land and killing labourers than in El Salvador, for example;*
- *the founders of the Federation were idealists who believed in liberal democracy;*
- *Colombian elites and smallholders were united in their determination to present a solid front to drive out North American middlemen.*

Bates (1997a) suggests that:

- *elites needed smallholders as a political constituency for votes in national elections.*

Thorp and Durand (1997) suggest that:

- *elites were interested in smallholders as clients in a traditional social hierarchy;*
- *coffee's high transaction costs and economies of scale in storage stimulated cooperation between large- and small-holders;*
- *the coffee economy grew gradually, so the elites sought good conditions for both the productivity of coffee and for the rest of the economy;*
- *the Colombians needed to deal collectively with Brazil, which was trying to restrict supply in order to raise prices;*

As demonstrated by the ties between leaders of the federation and the authorities, the experience shows that performance also requires alliances between different categories of farmers.

"The Federation is a powerful organization. One of the Federation's early managers later became the president of Colombia, and other Federation leaders have held high posts in the Colombian government". (p 8).

This type of structure is well analyzed by the World Bank in its report on the fight against poverty in 2000:

"Pro-poor coalitions that link the interests of the poor and the non-poor are important for poverty reduction (...) To build political support for public action against poverty,

³⁵ Information got from Bentley J. and Baker P., 2000, "The Colombian coffee growers' federation organized, successful smallholders farmers for 70 years, ODI Agren n°100, 16 p.

*governments have to enhance the perception of common interests between the poor and the non-poor (...) Groups that are politically connected or better educated have a natural advantage over others in influencing public policy*³⁶.

Close relations with the State are established with some degree of independence thanks to huge financial resources (which the FNCC has no doubt accumulated from its activities with the approval of the Government). Among the three success factors identified by the authors (experience and competence, financial autonomy, stability of leaders), one may underline the factor on the stability of its managerial staff:

“Since 1927, the Federation has had only eight general managers; indeed since 1937, there have been only three general managers. Other staff members also tend to make a career of their work with the Federation”.

This remark plus the one concerning the importance of professional skills acquired by the Federation, may prompt reflection on orders very often issued by external actors to producer organizations to elect new officials. It is obvious that every organization needs an internal democratic process. However, it is also obvious that under the pretext of democracy, some external actors may destabilize an organization by effecting uncontrolled changes in its leadership. The availability and stability of financial resources are also prerequisites for the recruitment of competent managers, capable of managing sustainably the activities of the organization.

³⁶ World Bank, 2000/2001, “Attacking Poverty”, see especially chapter 6, “Making State Institutions More Responsive to Poor People », p 108 to 113.

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