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Agricultural Strategy Development in West Africa

The False Promise of Participation?

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INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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ABSTRACT

Participatory approaches are an increasingly prominent technique for designing agricultural strategies within Sub-Saharan Africa. However, such approaches are frequently criticized for either not involving enough stakeholders or limiting the scope of their participation. By analyzing the role of stakeholder participation in the formulation of agricultural and rural development strategies in West Africa, this paper finds that a lack of broad-based participation in these strategies was not a major problem. Rather, the real challenge lies in transforming the outcomes of participatory processes into policies that can be feasibly implemented. The paper highlights why an emphasis on participatory processes can sometimes result in disappointment among stakeholders and discusses a range of measures to help overcome this dilemma.

Key words: agricultural and rural development strategies; policy processes; West Africa; participation; representative democracy

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program
CET	Common external tariff
CNCR	Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux (Senegal) [National Council of Consultation and Cooperation of the Rural Sector]
COPAGEN	Coalition pour la Protection du Patrimoine génétique africain (Burkina Faso) [Coalition for the Protection of Africa's Genetic Inheritance]
CPF	Confédération des Paysannes du Faso [Confederation of Burkinabè Peasants]
DAPS	Direction de l'Analyse, de la Prévision et des Statistiques (Senegal) [Department of Analysis, Planning, and Statistics]
ECOWAP	Agricultural Policy of the Economic Community of West African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FEB	Fédération des Eleveurs du Burkina [Federation of Livestock Producers of Burkina Faso]
FENAFER-B	Fédération Nationale des Femmes Rurales du Burkina [National Federation of Rural Women of Burkina Faso]
FEPAB	Fédération des Professionnels Agricoles du Faso [Federation of Burkinabè Agricultural Professionals]
FNJPAF	Fédération Nationale des Jeunes Professionnels Agricoles du Faso [National Federation of Burkinabè Young Agricultural Professionals]
GOANA	Grande Offensive Agricole pour la Nourriture et l'Abondance (Senegal) [Great Agricultural Offensive for Food and Abundance]
HIPC	Heavily indebted poor countries
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LOASP	Loi d'Orientation Agro-Sylvo-Pastorale (Senegal) [Agricultural Framework Law]
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
PASA	Programmes d'Ajustement Structurel Agricole (Senegal) [Agricultural Structural Adjustment Programs]
PAU	Politique Agricole d'UEMOA [Agricultural Policy of UEMOA]
PISA	Programme d'Investissement du Secteur Agricole (Senegal) [Program of Agriculture Sector Investment]
PRSP	Poverty reduction strategy paper
PSAOP	Programme de Services Agricoles et Organisations des Producteurs (Senegal) [Agricultural Services and Producer Organizations Program]
ROPPA	Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest [Network of Peasant Organizations and Agricultural Producers of West Africa]
SDR	Stratégie de Développement Rural (Burkina Faso) [Rural Development Strategy]
SP-CPSA	Secrétariat Permanent de la Coordination des Politiques Sectorielles Agricoles (Burkina Faso) [Permanent Secretary for the Coordination of Agricultural Sector Policies]
UEMOA	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine [West African Economic and Monetary Union]
UNPCB	Union Nationale des Producteurs de Coton du Burkina [National Union of Cotton Producers of Burkina Faso]

1. INTRODUCTION

The past two decades have seen a rise of stakeholder participation in policymaking throughout Africa. This trend was promoted by both international organizations and domestic developments, especially the rise of democracy and the emergence of civil society organizations. For those African countries that were accepted as part of the Bretton Woods Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, the process of crafting the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) accorded high priority to participation by key country stakeholders. The trend toward participation is, however, not limited to PRSPs. Within the agricultural sector, the World Bank's strategy, titled "Reaching the Rural Poor," stresses the need for broad stakeholder participation in the development of national rural development strategies (World Bank 2003, 75), and this point is reiterated in the more recent *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development* (World Bank 2007, 249). Between 2003 and 2006, the World Bank supported the participatory development of national and subnational rural development strategies in more than 50 countries.¹ Other international development agencies also support the participatory formulation of agricultural and rural development strategies, and they have agreed to coordinate their efforts in this regard (GDPRD 2006). Reflecting efforts to promote regional integration in East, West, and Southern Africa, the participatory development of agricultural and rural development strategies is now also promoted at the regional level.

In view of the recent food crisis, agricultural development strategies have gained new importance. Therefore, this is an appropriate time to review the role of participation in the formulation of rural and agricultural development strategies. As such, this paper presents case studies of two national and two regional agricultural and rural development strategies in West Africa. To study participatory policy processes at the national level, Senegal and Burkina Faso were selected. Both countries engaged in the participatory development of a major agricultural and rural development strategy. At the same time, they differ in key dimensions, including degree of democratization, economic liberalization, and importance of agriculture to their economies, thereby providing the scope for interesting comparisons. To gain insights on participatory policymaking at the regional level, the formulation of agricultural development strategies by the two major economic communities in West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Union Economique et Monetaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA), was reviewed. With 16 anglophone and francophone member countries, ECOWAS is the larger of the two organizations. UEMOA comprises eight francophone countries, all of which are also members of ECOWAS.

The fieldwork for the study was conducted in the summer of 2006. Semistructured interviews constituted the main research method, and stakeholders were chosen according to the principles of "completeness" and "dissimilarity" (Blee and Taylor 2002). Specifically, the selected interviewees were identified as possessing diverse perspectives on, and being highly involved in, the shaping of agricultural policies in their country and in West Africa more broadly. Overall, the chosen stakeholders spanned five major categories: government ministries, research institutes, producer organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector.

The results reveal major challenges associated with the participatory formulation of national and regional agricultural development strategies. A major criticism in the literature on participatory policy processes holds that there is not enough participation, indicating that important stakeholders remain excluded. However, in the cases examined here, this was not the major problem. The intensity of consultations was rather high, and the relatively strong organization of the agricultural and rural population allowed for meaningful participation. Instead, the major challenge was transforming the outcomes of participatory processes into policies that could be feasibly implemented. This disconnect between participation and implementation was influenced by political considerations, financial constraints, fundamental differences in opinion among key interest groups, and a lack of communication by governments on policy decisions taken subsequent to the period of stakeholder involvement.

¹ Personal communication with Jock Anderson of the World Bank's Agricultural and Rural Development Department, August 15, 2008.

To elaborate this argument in detail, the following section reviews the existing literature on participatory policymaking, specifically focusing on the lack of attention to what “participation” actually means and a failure to examine its impact on policy implementation. Subsequently, the national and regional case studies conducted in West Africa are presented. Next, the implications of the case study findings are presented and some policy recommendations are offered. The final section provides concluding remarks.

2. THE PROMISE OF PARTICIPATION

Participation is a common theme in contemporary development policymaking. All of the major international donors highlight the importance of participatory and transparent processes in a majority of their projects. The World Bank, for example, has a “Participation and Civic Engagement Group” to ensure that governments, civil society groups, and its own staff incorporate the citizens of developing countries in the crafting and monitoring of policies and programs.² The World Bank- and IMF-sponsored PRSPs launched as part of the HIPC Initiative represented one of the most publicized attempts to include stakeholders in the creation of government development strategies. Indeed, this was supposed to be indicative of a new path for development agencies that stressed a departure from top-down programs and instead encouraged country-owned strategies arrived at through a national dialogue between governments and their citizens (Booth 2003; McGee, Levene, and Hughes 2002).

The impetus for this emphasis on participation can be traced to multiple factors. First, dating back into the 1970s, critics of the prevailing development paradigms argued that the views and experiences of the poor were rarely taken into account by development professionals (e.g., Chambers 1983). This motivated a shift to methodologies, such as participatory poverty assessments, that were sensitive to measuring poverty not only with numbers but also through the experiences of those who lived it on a daily basis. Second, the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a “wave” of democratization in much of Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. In contrast to earlier democratic transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America, which were often the result of negotiated pacts among elites, these more recent transitions were based on mass discontent, highlighting the role of civil society and the potential for mobilization among everyday citizens (Bunce 2000; Stokes 1993). A growing emphasis on federalism and decentralization during the 1990s is the third factor contributing to the importance of participatory approaches. By shifting responsibilities for service provision away from the centralized state to local governments, the expectation was that citizens could more effectively channel their demands to authorities, thereby augmenting government accountability and local ownership of development projects and programs (e.g., Rondinelli and Nellis 1986).

Yet the emphasis on participation within the development community has become increasingly questioned. One type of criticism, and certainly the most common one, is that donors have failed to promote enough participation. Indeed, this was the major finding of Booth’s (2003) compilation analyzing the crafting of PRSPs among a set of African countries. According to the contributors, stakeholder participation during the process was not broad enough to account for the existing degree of civil society engagement within these countries. A second source of criticism has emerged among those who believe that development institutions have used the idea of participation to their own advantage, thereby sacrificing its true realization for a weaker alternative. For instance, Cornwall and Brock (2005) note that from a discursive perspective, the term “participation” is conceptually vague and its overuse in the development arena makes it substantively vacuous. Likewise, Leal (2007) argues that development organizations have used the idea and discourse of “participation” as a veneer for promoting policies and practices that are decidedly neoliberal, thereby robbing the concept of its ontological foundations. A third and related critique is that donors do not acknowledge the inherently political nature of participatory processes. For instance, based on her research on water resource management, Cleaver (1999) observes that a technocratic emphasis on participatory methods obscures the role of power relations in the development process and ignores the potentially exclusionary nature of participation.

Instead of claiming that donors have failed to push participation far enough or that they use the concept to promote neoliberal goals, this paper draws attention to a different problem: the disconnect between participation in the development policy process on the one hand and the actual policy implementation on the other. The topic of whether greater participation has any identifiable influence on policy outcomes has become a growing concern. For instance, research on civil society organizations has

² See www.worldbank.org/participation/ for more information.

found that despite their growth, there is little evidence of their effectiveness and impact in the policymaking sphere (Chowdury, Finlay-Notman, and Hovland 2006; Court and Maxwell 2006; Robinson and Friedman 2005). By focusing on agricultural policy, this paper arrives at a similar conclusion. While participatory policymaking offers a form of legitimacy for a ruling government, policy implementation involves making trade-offs between alternative policy options. The cases of Senegal and Burkina Faso show that resource-poor governments often place disproportionate emphasis on participation but lack adequate financial resources or face political pressures that can hamper actual implementation. While these same challenges likewise exist at the supranational level, producer organizations also felt that West Africa's regional economic organizations eschewed concerns about domestic food self-sufficiency in favor of promoting an agricultural strategy that stressed improving access to international export markets. The cases collectively highlight that the more participation is stressed, the greater stakeholders' expectations about their influence on the ultimate policy outcome and the larger the chance for unfilled expectations. Thus, after presenting these cases, some fundamental conceptual questions about participation are asked and policy recommendations offered that could potentially prevent participatory exercises from creating false hopes.

3. AGRICULTURAL POLICY PROCESSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Senegal and Burkina Faso provide useful cases to explore national policymaking processes in the arena of agricultural policy. Although a sizable share of the population in each country depends on the agriculture sector for its livelihood, the two countries nonetheless exhibit a number of structural differences that enable a more nuanced examination of which factors inhibit policy implementation and how.

3.1. Reviewing the National Context

Senegal is one of the few African countries to have experienced a relatively long period of multiparty democracy. In 1976, the country began a transition from one-party rule, and in 2000, voters ousted the long-ruling Parti Socialiste in favor of Abdoulaye Wade's Parti Democratique Sénégalais. Senegal also rates highly on levels of political freedom, as measured by such renowned indices as those of Freedom House and Polity (see Table 1). By contrast, Burkina Faso's current president, Blaise Compaoré, came to power via a bloody coup in 1987, and while he has gradually allowed more political freedoms over the past two decades, he and his party, Congrès pour la démocratie et le progrès, retain political control.

Table 1. Comparison of Burkina Faso and Senegal

Indicator	Burkina Faso	Senegal
Agriculture value-added as a share of GDP (%), 2006 ^a	31	16
Average agricultural growth (%), 1996–2006 ^a	6	2.5
GDP per capita (2000 constant USD), 2006 ^a	262	499
Share of population in agricultural sector (%), 2004 ^b	92	72
Political rights ranking, 2008 ^c	5	2
Democracy score, 2006 ^d	2	8

Sources: ^a World Development Indicators, World Bank; ^b calculated from the *State of Food and Agriculture* (Rome: FAO 2007); ^c Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2008*; ^d Polity IV.

Note: The political rights rankings are on a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 representing “most free” and 7 representing “most restricted.” By contrast, the democracy score, which captures how institutionalized democracy is, ranges from 0 to 10, with 10 representing full institutionalization.

Although the countries share relatively low levels of GDP per capita with sizable shares of their populations living below the poverty line, agriculture constitutes more than twice the share of GDP in Burkina Faso than in the more urbanized Senegal. While this certainly implies that the sector should be accorded priority in Burkina Faso's development, it also indicates that there are even fewer resources to invest in agriculture from industry and services.

Along with a number of other African countries, Senegal and Burkina Faso share a history of Bretton Woods–sponsored structural adjustment programs, which have had important implications for collective action. Neoliberal agricultural policies left smallholder producers with minimal access to necessary inputs, including fertilizers and seeds (Oya 2006). In response, smallholders responded by collectively organizing in autonomous producer groups oriented around different production lines.³ In Senegal, the major producer confederation is known as the Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux (CNCR). Established in 1993, CNCR currently encompasses 22 federations spanning livestock, fisheries, forests, women's rights, and agriculture. The confederation has two main objectives: (1) improve the level of communication and cooperation among existing producer groups; and (2) ensure that producers speak with a single voice when engaging with the state and other development partners.⁴

³ Interview with official from the World Bank Senegal Country Office, June 27, 2006; interview with representative of CNCR, June 28, 2006.

⁴ Interview with member of CNCR, June 28, 2006.

In Burkina Faso, one of the earliest producer groups was the Fédération Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (FENOP), which emerged from a conference of peasant organizations in 1994 and became formalized in 1996.⁵ The Confédération des Paysannes du Faso (CPF) emerged in 2002 with assistance from the government (World Bank 2004). Since CPF concentrates on promoting export, commodity-oriented agriculture, which contrasts with FENOP's focus on smallholder, family farms, FENOP did not join CPF and transformed itself into an NGO that today works with around 250 peasant organizations focused on cereal, fruit, and vegetable production (Bingen 2003).⁶ CPF consists of five major producer federations and benefits from institutional links with the Ministry of Agriculture.⁷ Indeed, officials from the Ministry of Agriculture confirmed that the ability of producers to access the technical and political structures surrounding agricultural policymaking is very important, and as such, the ministry organizes annual consultations with farmers' organizations to learn about their opinions on various issues. In addition, there are frequent consultations (*cadres de consultations*) for specific subsectors that extend from the village to the national levels.⁸

These producer groups have proven to be pivotal stakeholders in the crafting of national agricultural policies that have aimed to be highly participatory. Yet, by focusing on the Loi d'Orientation Agro-Sylvo-Pastorale (LOASP), the Senegalese case reveals how an emphasis on participatory policymaking in a democratic context can hinder the actual task of policy implementation, especially when trade-offs among priorities could alienate particular political constituencies. In Burkina Faso's more circumscribed political environment, the major hindrance to the implementation of the country's Stratégie de Développement Rural (SDR) is the lack of adequate resources. Both cases illustrate how elaborate processes of participatory policymaking can be a misplaced use of scarce resources when the necessary implementation of these policies remains absent.

3.2. Senegal's Loi d'Orientation Agro-Sylvo-Pastorale

LOASP represents Senegal's most current agricultural framework and the culmination of almost four decades of shifts in agricultural policymaking. Indeed, after an expensive period of state intervention in the agricultural sector between the 1960s and 1980s, the country adopted in the mid-1980s and 1990s the Nouvelle Politique Agricole and the Programmes d'Ajustement Structural Agricole (PASA). These programs promoted market liberalization by reducing state support to producers and transferring the management of production, processing, and marketing to the private sector. A key development during this period was the privatization of the formally state-run groundnut company, Société Nationale de Commercialisation des Oléagineux du Sénégal, which was intended to stop the company's mounting losses (Oya 2006; Sène 2005).

PASA, however, did not achieve the government's agricultural growth objectives. As such, Senegal entered its third period of agricultural policy in 1998 with the objective of encouraging productive rural investments through an approach of partnership and decentralization and the implementation of the Programme d'Investissement du Secteur Agricole (PISA). By 1999, the Senegalese government decided to reinforce PISA by signing an agreement with the World Bank and IMF known as the Programme de Services Agricoles et Organisations des Producteurs (PSAOP) (World Bank 2006).⁹ The overall aim of PSAOP is to foster stronger synergies among rural producers, research institutions,

⁵ Interview with FENOP representatives, July 6, 2006.

⁶ See also the ROPPA website, <http://www.roppa.info>, accessed July 25, 2006.

⁷ These are the Fédération des Eleveurs du Burkina (FEB), Fédération Professionnels Agricoles du Faso (FEPAB), Fédération Nationale des Jeunes Professionnels Agricoles du Faso (FNJPAF), Fédération Nationale des Femmes Rurales du Burkina (FENAFER-B), and Union Nationale des Producteurs de Coton du Burkina (UNPCB).

⁸ Interview with officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, July 4, 2006.

⁹ Interviews with official from DAPS/Ministry of Agriculture, June 23, 2006, and World Bank Senegal Country Office, June 27, 2006.

and the agricultural/rural extension services, and it is viewed as the umbrella program for macroeconomic reforms within the agricultural sector.¹⁰

After the historic elections in March 2000, newly elected President Abdoulaye Wade announced that to complement PSAOP, Senegal needed a grand vision for its agricultural sector. This vision was to be constructed through a vast process of consultation that ultimately resulted in LOASP, which is Senegal's vision of how to modernize the agricultural sector over the next 20 years and provides legal recognition for the institutional reforms associated with PSAOP.¹¹ The major principle of LOASP is to contribute to the reduction of poverty and diminish inequalities between urban and rural populations.

The construction of LOASP involved more than two years of negotiations with development partners, civil society organizations, producer groups, and other ministries within the government. These consultations occurred via multiple channels, including workshops, public testimonies in the media by university professors and celebrities, and a vast letter-writing campaign in which citizens could share their views on the country's agricultural policy. Since this was a novel and momentous undertaking, every contribution to the process was archived by the government. This consultative process also confirmed the government's concern with upholding the tenets of its decentralization program and the importance of local decision making.¹²

Along with the country's two major agricultural research institutes—the Institut Sénégalais de Recherche Agricole and the Institut de Technologie Alimentaire—the producer organizations within CNCR played a key role in this participatory process. To ensure that LOASP reflected the views of smallholders, CNCR held 35 consultations at the local level, 11 at the regional level, and one at the national level. This activism had a large impact since according to one CNCR member, 9 out of 10 of the propositions within the finalized LOASP had been recommended by CNCR.¹³

In 2004, LOASP was finally submitted to the National Assembly, where it was accepted and later promulgated. Thereafter, the Ministry of Agriculture engaged in a vast communication campaign that involved the distribution of both the finalized law as well as an adapted text with illustrations and pedagogical explanations translated into the country's six main indigenous languages—Jola, Mandinke, Pulaar, Serer, Soninke, and Wolof.¹⁴ However, laws in Senegal cannot be implemented until the president issues a series of executive orders, known as *décrets d'application*, which specify exactly how a law will actually be applied in practice. Despite approval of LOASP in 2004, a series of *décrets* was not issued until mid-2007 (CNCR 2008; Diop 2008).

Stakeholders speculated that the delay was linked to a key point of ideological contention between organizations such as CNCR and the Senegalese government. Specifically, since 1964, land in Senegal officially has been under control of the state (Pigeaud 2003). However, articles 22 and 23 of LOASP stipulate the need to privatize land in order to encourage private investment and allow producers to use ownership of their land as collateral for obtaining credit (DAPS 2004). This would allow outside investors and those with the requisite financial resources to gain access to land. By contrast, CNCR has long advocated that land should be transferred to smallholders based on a right of usage, thereby formally acknowledging their rights to the land on which they already live and farm (Pigeaud 2003). Likewise, many civil society participants at a workshop about LOASP expressed anxiety that privatizing land might disadvantage poor smallholders by favoring outside investors and more affluent domestic producers (CNCR 2003). Given this controversy, some stakeholders suspected that President Wade purposely delayed issuing the *décrets* until after the February 2007 presidential and June 2007 legislative elections to avoid alienating potential voters, a majority of whom are smallholders.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Interview with official from DAPS/Ministry of Agriculture, June 23, 2006.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Interview with member of CNCR, June 28, 2006.

¹⁴ Interview with official from DAPS/Ministry of Agriculture, June 23, 2006.

¹⁵ Interview with representative from Réseau Interface, June 27, 2006. Interface is a network of CEOs and investors from small and medium agribusiness enterprises in Africa that invests in agricultural research and collaborates with farmers' organizations.

In addition to this conflict, there are at least three reasons why the ultimate significance of LOASP remains questionable despite the highly participatory and transparent manner in which LOASP was crafted. First, LOASP is really a legal framework that affirms the tenets of PSAOP. As such, the implication is that *after* PSAOP was adopted and implemented, it was decided that reforms within agriculture needed to be embedded within a grander and more inclusive vision for the sector. Second, interview respondents from civil society believe that the Ministry of Agriculture in particular does not have sufficient technical expertise or financial resources to implement the vision captured by LOASP.¹⁶ Third, in the wake of riots over rising food prices in Dakar during early 2008, President Wade rapidly announced another initiative, known as the Grande Offensive Agricole pour la Nourriture et l'Abondance (GOANA), to improve Senegal's food self-sufficiency. According to a statement issued by CNCR, the initiative poses extremely ambitious objectives to be achieved over a very short period, and the organization was not consulted by the government before the program was devised. Rather than GOANA, CNCR argues that the government should remain focused on LOASP (CNCR 2008).

3.3. Burkina Faso's Stratégie de Développement Rural

Burkina Faso's agricultural policy trajectory mirrors the Senegalese case in many ways. In 1992, Burkina Faso also adopted an agricultural structural adjustment program, which aimed to modernize and diversify production, reinforce food security, and improve the management of natural resources. Some of the program's main achievements included the liberalization of agricultural trade and prices for agricultural inputs, the privatization or liquidation of public enterprises involved in agricultural production, and the reorganization of agricultural extension services (SP-CPSA 2004).

Yet because of the state's low institutional capacity and dearth of human resources, the program's impact on agricultural growth and poverty reduction was negligible. By 1997, the government shifted its focus to crafting a long-term strategy for generating sustainable growth in the agricultural and livestock sectors. Through the elaboration of the Document d'Orientations Stratégiques and the Plan Stratégique Opérationnel, priority program areas were identified and action plans for each producer area were created. The overall objectives of this approach were to increase agricultural production from 5 to 10 percent over the next 10 years, contribute to the growth of revenues for agricultural producers by at least 3 percent per person per year, create favorable conditions for the availability and accessibility of the population to food that is sufficient to provide 2,500 kilocalories per person per day, and improve rural communities' management of natural resources (SP-CPSA 2004). However, insufficient harmonization among government ministries hindered the implementation of these strategies, resulting in unnecessary duplication in some areas and neglect in others.¹⁷

These lessons influenced the creation in 2002 of the Secrétariat Permanent de la Coordination des Politiques Sectorielles Agricoles (SP-CPSA) and the crafting of the country's SDR. Originally, a Comité de Coordination de Politique Sectorielle Agricole was established that met once or twice per year to ensure the coherence of agricultural policies and consisted of 13 national ministries, the 13 governors of Burkina Faso, and representatives of all the associative civil society structures. After two meetings of the committee, it was decided that a permanent secretary was essential for this large task. A third structure, known as the Comité Régional de Coordination de Politique Sectorielle, was also established in 2005 to harmonize sectoral policies within each of the 13 states. Although SP-CPSA is located within the Ministry of Agriculture, its creation was spearheaded by the ministries of animal resources, the environment, and agriculture.¹⁸

SP-CPSA is the main body responsible for the formulation of SDR, which represents the government's vision for the rural sector until 2015. SDR's main objective is to ensure growth within the rural sector that contributes to the fight against poverty, reinforces food security, and promotes sustainable development (SP-CPSA 2004). In creating SDR, a participatory process was used that first

¹⁶ Interview with member of CNCR, June 28, 2006.

¹⁷ Interview with official from SP-CPSA, July 7, 2006.

¹⁸ Ibid.

required examining the various existing programs and priorities within the different ministries to discover where common objectives could be found. Over the course of almost two years, starting in 2002, a long, consultative process involving technical and regional workshops allowed a number of actors, particularly CPF but also NGOs and agricultural researchers, to validate the harmonized text.¹⁹ Accordingly, the government adopted SDR in December 2003 (SP-CPSA 2004).

Since then, SP-CPSA has embarked on a vast information campaign to further increase awareness about SDR. Specifically, the strategy was translated into 12 national languages, and SP-CPSA has been working with local NGOs that can communicate best with populations at the local level. Moreover, SP-CPSA publicized the strategy through the use of television and radio as well as created a virtual library where Burkinabè can access SDR. In 2005 and 2006, SP-CPSA also distributed CD-ROMs on SDR, and it plans to have a number of conferences and workshops in each region.²⁰

However, limitations on financial and human resources continue to hinder the implementation of both SDR as well as the comprehensive communication strategy that SP-CPSA envisions. For instance, SP-CPSA decided to establish a focal point in each of the country's 13 regions who will be responsible for collecting information on performance indicators and determining how they have evolved over time. Yet the biggest problem remains the lack of good candidates for this job given the high level of human capacity required. An official from SP-CPSA also noted that his organ functions only because of funds from donors such as the European Union, GTZ, and DANIDA and hopes that the Burkinabè government will be able at some point to provide more money.²¹ An official from the Ministry of Agriculture noted that in general, the low level of government investment in agriculture is not commensurate with the sector's contribution to the economy.²²

Although they confirmed their participation in the elaboration of SDR, civil society organizations and producer groups noted their ignorance of what has happened with the strategy and emphasized that in any case, the version of SDR finalized in December 2003 does not reflect their contributions at the workshops to which they were invited. CPF, for instance, believes that too much emphasis was placed on agro-business and stressed that it has its own vision for the rural world that is different from that of the government's.²³ Members of the NGO Coalition pour la Protection du Patrimoine Génétique Africain similarly argued that their participation in drafting the SDR was not reflected in the finalized text and admitted they were unaware of the political process involved for approving the final SDR.²⁴

The failure to implement a strategy fully within a given time period is problematic in a country like Burkina Faso, where ministers and ministerial priorities easily change. This predicament, along with other concerns, prompted SP-CPSA to consider embarking on yet another revision of SDR in 2007.²⁵ Thus, despite recognizing the importance of harmonizing sectoral policies and spearheading a broad, consultative campaign to determine SDR's contents, the strategy has yet to be implemented, and input from some of the country's main civil society actors was believed to have been ignored.

¹⁹ Interviews with officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, July 4, 2006, and SP-CPSA, July 7, 2006.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Interview with official from the Ministry of Agriculture, July 5, 2006.

²³ Interview with CPF representatives, July 1, 2006.

²⁴ Interview with members of COPAGEN, July 4, 2006.

²⁵ Interview with official from SP-CPSA, July 7, 2006.

4. AGRICULTURAL POLICY PROCESSES AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

Additional challenges emerge with respect to participatory strategy design that involves a majority of West African countries. In particular, when the locus of policymaking shifts to the supraregional level, the degree of participation should ideally be enlarged to account for the greater number of affected stakeholders. At the same time, however, when countries have disparate agricultural priorities, as well as varying socioeconomic and democratic conditions, incorporating the views of civil society stakeholders can be perceived as an additional constraint to arriving at a consensus on the content of a regional agricultural strategy.

One of the main civil society actors at the regional level is the Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (ROPPA), which consists of 10 national farmers’ organizations, including Senegal’s CNCR and Burkina Faso’s CPF.²⁶ Established in 2000 with the mandate of increasing the value of smallholder agriculture in West Africa, the organization is highly outspoken on policy issues both within the subregion and on the broader continental scale. Yet, as detailed with respect to two regional agricultural strategies, its participation in the policymaking process has not always translated into the desired impact.

4.1. La Politique Agricole d’UEMOA

The first agricultural strategy is the Politique Agricole d’UEMOA (PAU), which was adopted in December 2001 by the leaders of UEMOA’s eight member states. PAU’s three main objectives were to (1) achieve food security by reducing food dependency and making agricultural markets more operational; (2) increase agricultural productivity and production in a sustainable manner; and (3) improve the living conditions of producers through the enhancement of their income and social status and the development of the rural economy (UEMOA 2002).

In drafting PAU, UEMOA adopted a participatory process involving a series of consultations. First, a baseline study was conducted by a mixture of international and regional consultants who met with a broad range of stakeholders in each member country to uncover key concerns and priorities. After a draft document was completed, it was submitted to a scientific board made up of high-level African and European researchers. The scientific board’s report was subsequently submitted to the three main organs of UEMOA, who incorporated their comments into the report. Between July and August 2001, a national workshop was held in each of the eight states, and in October 2001 a final report was presented at a regional workshop in Ouagadougou, where ROPPA offered extensive comments. Finally, a draft bill that included the objectives and intervention areas of PAU was submitted to experts and ministers in charge of agricultural and animal resources and ultimately adopted by the Conference of Heads of State and Government.²⁷

ROPPA confirmed that it was very involved in the crafting of this policy and that its representatives presented two main demands during the regional workshop, both of which were incorporated into PAU: an emphasis on family farming and the establishment of a regional fund for agricultural development. Yet ROPPA was generally displeased with the adoption of this common agricultural policy *after* the implementation of a common external tariff (CET) within the UEMOA member states in January 2000. The CET stipulates the adoption of a uniform tariff structure whereby the maximum import tariff is 20 percent, lower than what most states previously applied. As such, the producer organizations believed that the goals of UEMOA are undermined because farmers are more vulnerable to the importation of lower-priced, subsidized goods from overseas (ROPPA 2001).²⁸

²⁶ The other eight are the Fédération des Unions de Producteurs du Bénin, Association Nationale des Organisations Professionnelles Agricoles de Cote d’Ivoire, National Coordinating Farmers of Gambia, Conseil Nationale des Organisations Paysannes–Guinea, Plate-forme Nationale des Organisations Paysannes–Guinea Bissau, Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes du Mali, Plate-forme Paysanne du Niger, and Coordination Togolaise des Organisations Paysannes.

²⁷ Interview with officials from UEMOA, June 30, 2006.

²⁸ Also, interview with ROPPA members, July 5, 2006

Officials from UEMOA claimed that the next step is actually to implement PAU and that they are in the midst of creating a Regional Agricultural Development Fund to finance it.²⁹ This conclusion is rather surprising considering that during the time of this research, the policy was at least five years old. Nonetheless, it was confirmed by a number of interview participants who were aware of the strategy's existence yet unsure of its practical meaning. Perhaps due to the controversy over the tariff rate reductions, one interviewee even believed that the policy's main focus was agricultural trade rather than an identification and achievement of regional agricultural objectives.³⁰

4.2. CAADP in West Africa: ECOWAP

By January 2005, the heads of state and government of the ECOWAS member countries had accepted another agricultural policy for the subregion, known as the Agricultural Policy of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAP). This policy is the West African version of the broader Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) implemented under the auspices of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This strategy also affirms the centrality of family farms and emphasizes each country's ability to exercise its sovereignty with regard to achieving food security. The operation plan to implement ECOWAP was adopted in May 2005, and a program of investment is currently under way (ECOWAS 2005).³¹

ROPPA was not very supportive of the broader CAADP strategy and argued that the vision, orientation, and strategies of NEPAD were not sufficiently discussed and negotiated with family farmers and the organizations that represent them. In particular, ROPPA believed that NEPAD was too oriented around improving access to export markets rather than emphasizing the importance of improving provision for, and access to, domestic markets (ROPPA 2003). With respect to ECOWAP in particular, ROPPA's members were disappointed to learn that in January 2006, the heads of state and government of ECOWAS decided to extend the CET for UEMOA to the ECOWAS states. That decision was taken to promote further regional economic integration as well as to preclude smugglers from benefiting from differential tariff rates within the ECOWAS zone. In the opinion of producer organizations, however, the decision undermines ECOWAP's emphasis on food self-sufficiency and increasing small farmers' incomes because it may facilitate the importation of food imports. ROPPA's Burkinabè member, CPF, also expressed displeasure with the lack of transparency in the process of making this decision. Indeed, the choice to adopt the CET was not debated in the parliaments of any of the ECOWAS states.³²

Nevertheless, ECOWAS has proceeded with designing a roadmap for the introduction of the CET, which was expected to become operational in January 2008. The objective is a four-band tariff regime that will range from 0 to 20 percent for certain categories of goods imported from non-ECOWAS countries. Contrary to ROPPA's fears, it is also anticipated that additional taxes will be applied to certain goods that threaten the subregion's agricultural and industrial sectors (ECOWAS 2006).

²⁹ Interview with officials from UEMOA, June 30, 2006.

³⁰ Interview with member of Senegal's National Biosafety Committee, June 24, 2006.

³¹ Also, interview with CORAF representatives, June 22, 2006, and with ROPPA members, July 5, 2006.

³² Interview with ROPPA members, July 5, 2006.

5. ANALYSIS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Contrary to the common criticisms in the participation literature, the four cases presented above all highlight that broad-based participation in the creation of agricultural and rural development strategies has featured prominently in West Africa. The substantial degree of participation at both the national and regional levels certainly was aided by the organizational capacity of agricultural producers, including small-scale farmers and rural women. Given that other countries in the region, such as Ghana, do not have umbrella farmers' organizations with coverage similar to CNCR in Senegal, and FENOP or CFP in Burkina Faso (Agricord 2008), this level of organization among agricultural producers and the rural population should not be taken for granted.³³ Instead, the cases revealed that large-scale, participatory processes may not result in either the strategies stakeholders originally advocated or any substantial policy implementation on the ground. A number of common themes among the cases highlight why this problem may occur. First, and most significantly, the role, function, and justification of participation in the policy process was undefined, leading to disappointment among some stakeholders. Participation does not imply consensus because distinct interest groups will frequently favor different priorities. As discussed, small-scale farmers believed that their vision was not incorporated into Burkina Faso's strategy and felt that the adoption of tariff reductions by UEMOA and ECOWAS ignored the challenges they faced from international markets. In the case of Senegal, disagreement over the proper approach to land reform among different interest groups and the fear of alienating potential voters might have possibly contributed to the delay in issuing a presidential decree for implementing LOASP until after the 2007 elections.

The fact that participatory processes are ultimately dominated by different interest groups leads to a fundamental, normative question of policymaking: Under which conditions will the participation of organized stakeholders create more legitimate outcomes than other policy processes, such as deliberations in parliaments and formation of policy positions within political parties? In democratic countries, such as Senegal, the members of the assembly are democratically elected by the entire population, whereas stakeholder organizations still represent specific, nonelected interest groups. In West Africa, institutions of representative democracy also exist at the regional level: UEMOA has an interparliamentary committee, and ECOWAS has a parliament. Certainly, parliaments in African countries are still emerging, even in countries with relatively high democracy scores. A study on legislatures in Africa still rates the independence and strength of the Senegalese parliament as weak (Barkan, Ademolekun, and Zhou 2004). Nevertheless, there is a need to clarify the fundamental relationship between stakeholder participation and the institutions of representative democracy, such as parliaments and political parties. Even in well-developed, Western democracies, participation typically has functioned only to give citizens "a voice, but not a vote," based on the premise that ultimate legitimacy rests with elected bodies.³⁴

A second theme among the four cases was the lack of communication by governments about the decisions taken subsequent to the period of stakeholder involvement. This ranged from complete ignorance regarding the fate of an agricultural strategy to not understanding why certain provisions contrary to what smallholder organizations originally advocated were nonetheless eventually adopted. This highlights the need to create accountability for participatory processes, including a commitment by the organizers of such processes to clarify to participants at the outset what the expected role of their involvement will be. Moreover, participants should subsequently be informed of which suggestions were ultimately incorporated or excluded in the finalized strategy and why. Particularly at the regional level,

³³ In countries where farmers and the rural poor are less well organized, it would be useful to consider formats of participation other than stakeholder workshops. In fact, a wide range of possibilities exists for citizen engagement, such as consensus conferences and citizen juries, which can be considered forms of "deliberative democracy" (Button and Ryfe 2008). So far, such options have remained largely unexplored for the purpose of developing agricultural strategies and policies, and it would be useful to start experimenting with them.

³⁴ An example of this principle is the Aarhus Convention of the European Union. While being one of the most ambitious efforts to promote citizen participation ever undertaken at the regional level, the convention gives citizens a voice, not a vote (EU 2003).

institutional mechanisms that link civil society groups with the heads of ECOWAS and UEMOA member countries may facilitate the flow of information from stakeholders to decision makers and vice versa.

Third, despite extensive stakeholder workshops and forums, a common trend in all cases was that the agricultural or rural development strategy was not implemented even years after the participatory processes were conducted. Often, the lack of implementation was attributed to a dearth of financial resources. Yet, instead of viewing agricultural and rural development strategies as programs that can only be implemented with additional resources, they should represent policy documents that guide the spending of existing resources. Ideally, agricultural and rural strategies should be considered in every annual budget process at the regional, national, and subnational levels, and, if donors have not moved to general budget support, they should inform all development projects in the agricultural and rural sector. However, the strategy documents are often far too general to serve that purpose. For instance, Burkina Faso's strategy revolves around seven objectives: increase diversity and intensify agricultural, pastoral, and forestry production; reinforce the links between production and the market; increase and diversify revenue sources; improve the provision of potable water and sanitation; ensure a sustainable management of natural resources; reinforce the capacity of actors and create a favorable institutional framework; and ameliorate the economic situation of women and youth in the rural sector (SP-CPSA 2004). Although these are deemed "strategic axes," they generally amount to a broad list of issues that the strategy aims to address.

A few solutions could help address this problem. One option is for policymakers to adopt action or investment plans as a second step, subsequent to participatory, strategy development. In the case of Burkina Faso, SDR offers suggestions about how the state, technical partners, NGOs, and the private sector could all financially contribute to the strategy. However, those suggestions are relatively vague, noting for example that the state could borrow money, engage in fiscal reforms to raise the necessary resources, and offer smallholders lines of credit (SP-CPSA 2004, 124–25). With respect to UEMOA's agricultural policy, specific donor contributions are elaborated but how exactly the money will be used is not detailed (UEMOA 2002, 42). ECOWAP represents the only one of the four cases to have an investment plan for implementing its strategy (ECOWAS 2005).

Developing more refined strategies that do not simply reflect every stakeholder's wishes represents a second option. This may require the use of rigorous methods for priority setting, which can be well integrated into participatory processes. The use of multicriteria analysis is an example (Stirling 2006). This method makes it possible to rank development options according to several criteria, which can be assigned different weights. The method has considerable potential for priority setting in agricultural strategies given that agricultural development options need to be assessed against multiple criteria, such as income generation, food security, and environmental sustainability. In addition to the use of such techniques, the introduction of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the implementation of rural and agricultural strategies should create more accountability for strategy implementation.

Involving at the outset the major bodies responsible for decision making, such as parliaments, in the participatory strategy formulation process may also help reduce the disconnect between participation and implementation. For example, participatory processes to develop agricultural strategies could be steered by parliamentary committees in charge of agriculture. Likewise, political parties with a rural membership base could engage in consultations with their members to develop a position on contested issues within agricultural strategies. Although international development agencies tend to stay away from parliaments and political parties because they fear this may be inconsistent with their "apolitical" mandate, international agencies need to recognize how their promotion of participatory processes can strengthen, rather than undermine, emerging institutions of representative democracy in Africa. Nongovernmental organizations could play a stronger role in this regard, especially with regard to those activities, such as working with political parties, where governmental development agencies face certain limits.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Providing the space for stakeholders to contribute their voices to the formulation of policies directly relevant to their lives is extremely important. Particularly in Africa, where a number of countries transitioned to democracy only in the 1990s, the move toward participatory approaches at both the national and regional levels is highly laudable. Yet, contrary to the conventional wisdom, more participation does not automatically result in better outcomes, and any type of strategy making will be inherently political, influenced by different interest groups with differential levels of power. Indeed, the four cases presented in this paper reveal that the formulation of agricultural and rural development strategies in West Africa was not hindered by a lack of participation by key stakeholders. Instead, major challenges included false expectations about the role participation would have on policy outcomes and the failure to link strategies resulting from participatory processes with actual decision making on agricultural policies and spending.

Given earlier theories of collective action and urban bias that questioned the capacity of rural dwellers to come together and advocate policies favorable to their own interests (e.g., Bates 1981), the strength of autonomous farmers' organizations in West Africa today represents an important advance. Development agencies should ensure that such organizations do not waste their scarce resources on strategy formulation processes that have little impact on the real agricultural policies that governments implement. Otherwise, even highly participatory processes may ultimately create a lack of trust and disillusionment among agricultural and rural stakeholders.

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