



# Youth in Extension and Advisory Services: Niger

Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) Project

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APCA	Agence de Promotion de Conseil Agricole
CNJN	National Youth Council of Niger
COS/CA	Comité d’Orientation Stratégique du Conseil Agricole
DLEC	Developing Local Extension Capacity
EAS	Extension and Advisory Services
ENISED	Etude nationale d’évaluation d’indicateurs socio-économiques et démographiques
FAFPA	Fonds d’Appui à la Formation Professionnelle et à l’Apprentissage
FISAN	Fonds d’Investissement pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle
HC3N	Haut-Commissariat à l’Initiative 3N
INS	Institut National de la Statistique
LuxDev	Luxembourg Agency for Development Cooperation
MAG/EL	Ministry of Agricultural and Livestock Production
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NYP	National Youth Policy
PADAD	Projet d’Appui au Développement Agricole Durable
SAN/DAD	Food and Nutritional Security and Sustainable Agricultural Development
SIFA	Integrated Site for Agricultural Training
SNCA	National Agricultural Advisory System
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## I Background

Approximately 88 percent of the world's 1.2 billion youth (ages 15-24 as defined by the UN) live in developing countries. By 2050, the global population of youth is projected to rise to 1.8 billion, with 35 percent of that estimated to live on the African continent. This presents a challenge to many developing countries given the need to create economic opportunities for this growing segment of the population. According to the World Bank, even if countries had suitable conditions for growth and economic transformation, the job market in developing countries could not absorb the growing number of youth projected to become eligible for jobs. In addition to the youth bulge, meeting the growing global demand for food and nutrition presents a challenge, with some estimates citing a need to increase food availability by 70-100 percent. At the same time, factors such as an increasingly globalized and connected world, higher global incomes, urbanization and widespread access to digital tools are creating new opportunities in agri-food systems for both youth and other rural actors. Tapping into the potential of youth and creating opportunities for them in agriculture, including in extension and advisory services (EAS), will be key to meeting global food and nutrition needs as well as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Feed the Future's Food Secure 2030 vision. Rural extension and advisory services are defined as all the different activities that provide the information and services needed by farmers and other players in the innovation system to develop and build their technical, organizational and management capacities, so they can improve their quality of life and well-being (Christoplos, 2010).

Governments, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, private sector agri-food companies and educational institutions have all recognized and emphasized the importance of youth in the global economy, and especially farming and food systems, as a major driver of the economy and contributor to agricultural transformation. Some 32 African countries have policies on youth, including Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda. However, youth face many barriers within agriculture such as access to land, finance, education and adequate skills. Additionally, climate change, rural to urban migration trends and increasing population pressures on land will make agriculture even more challenging in the future.

Agricultural extension and advisory services present a unique opportunity to engage youth as both recipients and providers of these services. EAS have an important role to play in youth and leadership development throughout the education system, not just when young people enter the job market. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the Feed the Future Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) Project with the objective to measurably improve extension programs, policies and services by creating locally-tailored, partnership-based solutions and by mobilizing active communities of practice to advocate for scaling proven approaches. The five-year (2016-2021) project is designed to diagnose, test and share best-fit solutions for agricultural extension systems and services across the Feed the Future countries. Led by Digital Green in partnership with Care International, the International Food Policy Research Institute and the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services, DLEC is an action-oriented, evidence-based learning project that generates evidence through diagnostic studies and engagement activities, which in turn are used as a catalyst for mobilizing global and country-level communities of practice to advocate for improved EAS. This report on youth in extension and advisory services in Niger is one such diagnostic study.

## 2 Purpose and Methodology

The overall objective of this youth in extension diagnostic study is to design a pilot engagement in one or two other Feed the Future countries to support and strengthen the inclusion of youth in extension – both as providers and recipients of extension services – as a mechanism to both improve the economic opportunities and livelihoods of youth and increase the effectiveness of extension and advisory service systems.

In Phase 1, DLEC engaged with USAID country Missions that identified engaging youth in agricultural extension as a strategic priority for economic growth and investment. DLEC then identified several countries in which there was buy-in and support from USAID Missions to conduct a diagnostic to develop concrete recommendations for a youth-focused engagement. These countries included Guatemala, Niger and Rwanda.

For Phase 2, the output is this report. DLEC conducted a landscape analysis or diagnostic study employing a local systems approach and utilize USAID's 5Rs Framework (Gray et al., 2018) to analyze the *roles* of certain actors that form a network of *relationships* whose interactions depend on *resources* and produce *results* for youth in EAS. The process of transforming resources into results via interactions of system actors is governed by *rules*.

Methodologies for the information for this report included literature review, key informant interviews, and meetings in Niger to view programs and talk to stakeholders. USAID Mission representatives were interviewed to understand Mission priorities for the current and/or upcoming Country Development Coordination Strategy as they relate to youth engagement in extension and ongoing or planned programs addressing youth in extension. Key informants included USAID country partners, government agencies, private sector and civil society that focus on youth in extension. The report is not meant to give an account of all initiatives in youth and agricultural extension but rather to present a sample of such initiatives, including ones from the main different types of actors: donor-funded projects, government agencies, educational institutions, international organizations, national and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), producer organizations and the private sector.

Finally, in Phase 3, DLEC may co-design and launch an engagement with the Mission that is customized to the country contexts to meet the Mission's needs and DLEC's strategic objectives.

### 3 Introduction to Niger and its Agriculture

The Republic of Niger is one of the largest countries in Africa. The population of Niger was estimated in 2012 at 17 million inhabitants according to the national census. The population annual growth rate is nearly four percent, one of the highest rates in the world. This is due to high fertility (7.6 children per woman on average), which in turn depends on a high rate of early marriage (76 percent of girls aged 20 to 24 marry before the age of 18 and 28 percent before the age of 15), low use of contraceptive methods (12 percent) and relatively low enrollment of girls (Ministère du Plan, 2017). For example, in 2016, the enrollment rate for girls was 70 percent in primary school and only 29 percent in lower secondary school.

The current population growth rate in Niger means a doubling every 18 years. Thus, in 2030, the population will exceed 34 million inhabitants and in 2050, it will exceed 68 million inhabitants. As a result, the population is extremely young, with nearly 69 percent of the population under 25 years of age. In 2012, the median age was 15 years. Children under 15 years of age represent 52 percent and three percent of the total population respectively, while the working age population (15 to 64 years) represents only 45 percent. The result is a very high dependency ratio of 121 potential inactive people per 100 working age population.

Youth, defined by the National Youth Policy (NYP) as all people aged between 15 and 35, live mainly (81 percent) in rural areas. Underemployment is very high, affecting 68 percent of the working population (INS, 2016a) and mainly in rural areas, where it affects 70 percent of the working population. Nearly 24 percent of Nigeriens in the 15-29 age group are unemployed (INS, 2016b).

Niger does not yet benefit from the demographic dividend (economic growth generated by the age structure of the population). Projections underline that the window of opportunity for capturing the demographic dividend will open during the period 2030-2035 under average assumption of a Total Fertility Rate of 6.2 children per woman. The achievement of the demographic dividend will also depend strongly on the ability of youth to access decent and remunerative jobs. The Nigerien authorities are aware of this and recognize that difficulties encountered constitute a significant risk of social destabilization (Le Bissonnais, 2010).

The agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector is Niger's main source of economic activity. It employs more than 80 percent of the working population and contributes on average 37 percent to the formation of Gross Domestic Production. The agro-sylvo-pastoral sector plays an essential role in food security and job creation and is the main source of income for most of the rural population (Ministère du Plan, 2017). Agriculture is highly dependent on climatic factors. The government, with the support of international partners, is making efforts to develop irrigation. Niger experiences recurrent food crises linked to climatic hazards, natural resource degradation, land access problems, lack of financing, poor access to quality inputs and equipment, weak agricultural advisory services and difficulties in adding value on agricultural production (LuxDev, 2018).

Nevertheless, the agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector remains the main sector able to offer real opportunities for the creation of thousands of jobs, thus contributing to the reduction of youth unemployment and to economic and social development. Agricultural extension and advisory services have a key role to play in harnessing opportunities of the agricultural sector. In fact, EAS play four essential functions for producers and other actors in agricultural value chains: access to innovation and technology, capacity building, facilitation and support for decision-making processes. Youth can only seize opportunities for employment and wealth creation in the agricultural sector if the EAS, through their various functions, are effective, inclusive and adequately take into account specific needs of youth. Moreover, raising youth's interest in the profession of agricultural advisors is a necessary

condition for the renewal and adaptation of the EAS to the new issues and challenges of the transformation of agriculture in Niger.

## 4 Findings

The diagnostic employs a local systems approach and utilize USAID's 5Rs Framework (Gray et al., 2018) to analyze the *roles* of certain actors that form a network of *relationships* whose interactions depend on *resources* and produce *results* for youth in EAS. The process of transforming resources into results via interactions of system actors is governed by *rules*.

### 4.1 Rules

The first "R" asks what are the rules under which the system functions, such as national policies and strategies that serve to enable or prevent youth's inclusion in EAS, and whether the key actors are able to modify the rules that affect them in a way that make their programs more impactful?

Niger has several national policies and strategies meant to guide public, private and civil societies interventions for youth, and more broadly and agricultural, economic and social development.

#### 4.1.1 The Nigeriens Feed Nigeriens Initiative (I3N)

The Strategic Framework of the I3N Initiative "Nigeriens Feed Nigeriens" for Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agricultural Development (SAN/DAD), was adopted by Decree 2012-139/PRN of 18 April 2012. Its overall objective by 2035 is to "protect Niger's populations from hunger and malnutrition and guarantee them the conditions for full participation in national production and the improvement of their incomes." Specifically, it is to "strengthen national capacities for food production, supply and resilience in the face of food crises and disasters."

It has five strategic axes including: (i) Increase and diversification of agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries production; (ii) Regular supply of agricultural and agri-food products to rural and urban markets; (iii) Improving the resilience of Nigerians to climate change, crises and disasters; (iv) Improvement of the nutritional status of Nigerians; and (v) Creation of an environment conducive to food security, facilitation and coordination of the 3N Initiative.

The 2016-2020 action plan of the I3N provides for a prominent place for youth when targeting the beneficiaries of its support. In addition, its guiding principles state the involvement of youth at all stages of the process of designing and implementing interventions.

#### 4.1.2 The New National Agricultural Advisory System (SNCA)

The SNCA was set up in 2017 with the aim to: (i) federate the disparate mechanisms of the Agricultural Council under the guidance of the State, (ii) strengthen the new actors of the Agricultural Council, (iii) provide relevant guidance for the Council to be complete and meet all the needs of the actors in the supply chains value in all their diversity and (iv) regionalize and adapt interventions to local specificities.

The SNCA is defined as a set of field advisory schemes managed and implemented by various public and private actors, in addition to the transversal mechanisms responsible for coordinating activities, linking research and development, developing technical content and intervention methods and carrying out capitalization studies. Therefore, the National Agricultural Advisory System is not a single structure but a network of institutions and actors all working to strengthen the capacities of producers and their professional organizations.

The SNCA is steered at two levels: (i) the strategic management of the SNCA is ensured by a Strategic Orientation Committee (COS), which is multi-sectoral and brings together all actors concerned with agricultural advice and; (ii) for operational management, an Agricultural Advisory Promotion Agency (APCA) was created to ensure the animation of the SNCA.

SNCA actions are framed by several texts, namely:

- Decree N°2017-664/PRN of 02 August 2017 creating a National Agricultural Advisory System in Niger
- Decree N°2017-666/PRN of 02 August 2017 on the creation, attributions, composition, organization, and operating procedures of a strategic orientation body of the Agricultural Advice, called the Strategic Orientation Committee of the Agricultural Advice (COS/CA)
- Decree No. 2017-667/PRN of 02 August 2017 establishing the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Advice (APCA)
- Decree N°2017-669/PRN of 02 August 2017 approving the statutes Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Advice (APCA)

#### 4.1.3 The National Plan for Economic and Social Development (PNDES)

The PNDES meant for the period 2017-2021 was adopted by the Government on May 2017 as the first five-year plan to operationalize the Niger 2035 Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth Strategy. The overall objective of the PNDES is to “contribute to building a peaceful, well governed country with an emerging and sustainable economy, and a society based on the values of equity and sharing the fruits of progress.” Its specific objective is to “strengthen the resilience of the economic and social development system.” PNDES is structured around five strategic axes: (i) cultural renaissance; (ii) social development and demographic transition; (iii) accelerated economic growth; (iv) improved governance, peace and security and (v) sustainable environmental management.

In its strategic axis dedicated to social development and demographic transition, the PNDES provides for the promotion of youth, in particular by promoting the socio-economic integration of youth through the development of appropriate education and training opportunities, as well as support for youth entrepreneurship. The acceleration of economic growth is also envisaged, in particular through the revitalization and modernization of the rural world. To this end, it is planned to carry out appropriate actions to improve the use of modern farming techniques, access to water and to the value chains of agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries production in line with the I3N Initiative guidelines. This plan pays particular attention to the empowerment of rural women with a targeted literacy program and youth entrepreneurship.

#### 4.1.4 The National Youth Policy (NYP)

The NYP was adopted in 1998 with the vision to “make Niger’s youth an emancipated, responsible and essential pillar of sustainable economic and social development and poverty reduction.” Its overall objective is to contribute to the wellbeing of the Nigerien population and to reduce poverty in all its forms. Specifically, the NYP aims to reduce the vulnerability and improve the well-being of at least 70 percent of Nigerien youth aged 15 to 35 by 2024. Its strategic orientations include improving the legal and institutional framework and advocating for the financing and integration of the youth component into other sectoral development policies and programs in Niger. Advocacy is being extended to national decision-makers and financial partners with the aim of increasing financial resources for the development of the economic and social potential of youth. In the same vein, it also aims to strengthen the partnership between stakeholders in the youth sector with a view to

achieving a better synergy of actions that would generate more impact. The NYP advocates the promotion of the economic integration of youth through the development of their wealth creation skills. The implementation of the NYP has resulted, among other things, in the creation of a National Youth Council of Niger, whose one of the key missions is the regular organization of local and national youth meetings to enable them to consult, express themselves and participate, in a critical and responsible manner, in national development.

#### 4.1.5 The National Employment Policy (NEP)

The NEP was adopted in 2009. Its overall objective of the is to place job creation at the center of the development objectives of economic and social policies at national, regional and local levels that will lead to sustainable poverty reduction and improved living conditions for all Nigerians. Its specific objective is to create more employment opportunities and decent incomes for vulnerable groups such as women, youth and the disabled. This policy identifies five priority areas for additional programs and action projects to promote decent, productive and gainful employment. These are the following areas: (i) agriculture and livestock; (ii) construction and public works; (iii) information and communication technologies; (iv) the modern sector including tourism and crafts. Several actions envisaged under this policy are likely to have an impact on the issue of youth in agricultural advisory services. These planned actions include the development of youth entrepreneurship, strengthening their employability, and diversification of training opportunities, particularly in the field of agriculture and livestock. In addition, it is planned to improve the access of the Nigerien population to information and communication technologies, this could have positive effects on youth's access to agricultural advisory services.

## 4.2 Roles

The second "R" examines what roles government ministries and agencies, educational and research institutions, private sector and civil society play in engaging and employing youth in agricultural extension.

During our field mission to Niger, we interviewed 28 people representing different categories of stakeholders: young users of agricultural advisory services, young agricultural advisors, service provider organizations, development project, Ministry of Agriculture, I3N Initiative and USAID. It emerged that these different actors through their activities contribute directly or indirectly to the strengthening of youth as providers or users of EAS. We identified the following main types of roles related to the issue of youth and agricultural advice: (i) advocacy for adequate policies and investments; (ii) provision of agricultural advisory services; (iii) financing of agricultural advisory/youth integration schemes; (iv) capacity building of agricultural advisory providers; (v) coordination of interventions and facilitation of interactions between actors; and (vi) support for youth installation. The current section deals only with some of these roles. The sections on rules, resources and results provide more information on roles that are not addressed here.

### ***Advocacy and policy dialogue for better consideration of youth***

Advocacy and policy dialogue are fundamental to the inclusion of youth in the development and implementation of agricultural investments and policies in general and in agricultural advisory services in particular. The National Youth Council was created for advocacy and ensures a good representation of youth in policy processes and implementation. Certainly, the National Youth Council plays an important role in advocacy. However, several actors find that this organization has now become highly politicized and no longer adequately defends the problems of young people, especially those in the agricultural sector. In the agricultural sectors, advocacy and strategic dialogue with policymakers, development

partners and other rural development actors are conducted mainly by Regional Chambers of Agriculture (CRA).

The Regional Chambers of Agriculture are governed by Act N° 2000/15 of 21<sup>st</sup> August 2000. They represent the interest of the whole agricultural profession within their territorial jurisdiction. Their main missions are to: (i) raise awareness of the concerns of the various categories of rural producers and to present their views in the context of development; (ii) inform rural producers in all areas that concern them and facilitate their access to services and resources by providing them with guidance and adequate advice; (iii) assist rural producers in the promotion and implementation of their projects, by promoting their organization and facilitating the mobilization of technical and financial support financial needs and (iv) defend the interests of rural producers. The regional chambers of agriculture are grouped into the National Network of Chambers of Agriculture (RECA) to improve their capacity to make proposals and undertake the study and implementation of joint projects. RECA also has the function of coordinating activities of the Regional Chambers at national level. In addition, RECA represents the Regional Chambers of Agriculture before public authorities or any public, private, national or international institutions.

Advocacy and strategic dialogue to raise the sensitivity of agricultural investments and policy to youth issues are not only carried out by CRA and RECA. Other actors including apex producer organization such as FCM-Nya, Mooribeen, and AREN are involved (Hinnou and Mahamadou, 2016). These organizations were involved in institutional reforms such as those that led to the national agricultural advisory system and the creation of the APCA. Furthermore, these organizations are active in the provision of EAS to producers.

### ***Provision of agricultural advisory services***

Over the past two decades, there has been a high diversification of providers of agricultural advisory services in Niger. The various functions of agricultural advice, which include connection to relevant information and knowledge, facilitating interactions with stakeholders, support to decision-making processing and continuous capacity building, are carried out by three main categories of actors. These are the agricultural profession (producer organizations, particularly apexes; CRA and RECA), governmental services (various technical divisions/directorate of ministries in charge of rural development) and private providers (consulting firms, local NGOs, service delivery center, etc.). The distribution of agents involved in the provision of agricultural advice indicates 31 percent for government services, 39 percent for the private sector and 30 percent for the agricultural profession.

The public technical services have repositioned themselves more on their sovereign functions, but with some continuity in EAS intervention. New EAS actors have emerged. These are in particular producer organizations that have become professionalized and now provide advisory services, but also other actors, such as Advisory Service Groups (ASG), Service Delivery Centers (SDC) or Local Private Veterinary Services (SVPP). Through the establishment of the Regional Chambers of Agriculture, the State facilitate the strengthening of these "professional" and "private" advisory services. A formal national system of EAS was set up with an agency for the promotion of the EAS (see sections on Rules and Resources).

The State has played a decisive role in the emergence of private providers of agricultural advice services through several national projects and programs who were signing service provision contracts. The use of e-extension was observed with one EAS provider, RECA.

### ***Capacity building, training, and coaching***

The agricultural and rural training system in Niger is subdivided into four levels of training (Kodjo and Adamou, 2018):

- higher education leading to a diploma, provided in the Faculties of Agronomy of public universities and in private higher institutes;
- formal diploma training, for youth with a minimum of General Certificate of Education which takes place in Technical and Vocational Training Centers, agricultural high schools (private and public) and the Practical Institute for Rural Development (IPDR de Kollo);
- non-formal vocational training, leading to a certificate of completion of training, for out-of-school and out-of-school young people living in rural areas. It takes place in the Centres de Formation aux Métiers, the Integrated Agricultural Training Sites (SIFA), the Service National de Participation and on community agricultural training sites reaching an average of 50,000 young people per year;
- continuous training, which concerns an average of two million agricultural producers per year. Continuous trainings are generally conducted by various EAS providers.

Coaching and mentoring are used to ensure the success of young entrepreneurs in some projects. In some schemes like the one set-up by LuxDev through its projects PADAD II in Dosso, EAS providers (NGOs, consulting firms, Regional Chambers of Agriculture) are engaged and paid by the project to assist youth in the development and implementation of the project. Due to cultural barriers, coaching and mentoring are still an issue for women, particularly young women, as their husbands are often reluctant to let them work freely with male extensionists. The coaching and mentoring of young women entrepreneurs are done by other women entrepreneurs that well-known in the community.

### ***Provision of integrated services to producers***

These are the platforms through which producers can not only benefit from agricultural advisory services, but also buy quality inputs and access other support services (financing etc.). Projects such as the LuxDev funded PADADAD in the Dosso region (see next section on Resources) already provide this type of integrated support to youth by facilitating access to training, inputs and EAS. There is also the interesting case of the Maison du Paysan (the Farmer's House) which have a similar vocation but offer a wider range of services. La Maison du Paysan is an integrated and multifunctional set of infrastructures and services located at the communal level to improve the supply of support services to producers and agricultural enterprises to support their efforts to increase agro-pastoral production and productivity. Its purpose is to contribute to improving the availability and regular access to production factors and to promote the use of innovative technologies that have been proven and adapted to local context. La Maison du Paysan has four sectoral sub-components, namely: (i) a communal food security stock warehouse; (ii) a communal agricultural inputs supply center; (iii) a communal livestock feed supply center; and (iv) an agricultural equipment repair and rental center. In addition, it has a vocational training center, a community radio station and a decentralized financial system.

The added value of La Maison du Paysan lies in the provision of local services to producers in areas where they are not available. It is also very useful in the search of a better articulation between support mechanisms for agro-pastoral activities and households needs. It uses a value chain approach with a focus on both production and marketing linkages, and takes into account the ongoing decentralization process in Niger. It is planned to provide each of Niger's 266 communes with a Farmer's House, but to date only about 30 Farmer Houses are functional. The slow deployment of these centers is mainly due to their high

cost, about 300 million CFA francs per center, financed so far mainly by development projects.

### 4.3 Relationships

The third “R” from the framework looks at the *relationships* between actors and to what extent they collaborate or overlap their programs.

There are more or less strong relationships between stakeholders engaged and concerned with youth in EAS in Niger. These collaborations are mainly developed within the framework of project implementation. This is the case with the PADAD II/NIG 025 project, which has adopted a multi-stakeholder approach. In this project, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock provides capacity building at central and regional level and support for monitoring activities of the Investment Fund for Food and Nutritional Security (FISAN by its, French acronym<sup>1</sup>). The FISAN operational approach is articulated around three complementary facilities described under the Resources section. The Dosso Regional Council provides support for the organizational aspects of the activities of FISAN Facilities 2 and 3. The Regional Chamber of Agriculture is responsible for the technical support for the follow-up of the youth's career path, from identification to successful installation (Facility 3). The Niger Agricultural Bank supports young farmers through a credit-based subsidy (Facility 1). The National Agency for the Financing of Investments by Local Authorities also contributes by providing subsidies for the installation of public agricultural infrastructure (Facility 2).

There are also some attempts at institutionalized collaborations, but generally at the regional level. For example, the NGO SwissContact has set up consultation frameworks for vocational training stakeholders in the regions of Dosso, Maradi and Agadez. These consultation frameworks are composed of representatives of the Regional Council, the Ministry in charge of the training of professionals, NGOs, universities and training centers. They meet twice a year.

Strong collaboration among actors are still lacking. FISAN and the Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund (FAFPA), who are both involved in the funding of agricultural vocational training, apprenticeship and youth support, have a weak relationship. It was reported that there is a consultation framework meant to bring together development partners involved in vocational training and the government. But this framework is dormant, development partners are often reluctant to come and prefer to launch their own projects dedicated to youth apprenticeship/vocational training or agripreneurship instead of using existing schemes like FAFPA.

In the absence of strong collaborations, the interventions of various actors are not always harmonized or coordinated. Good practices are not fully valued or scaled up due to a lack of synergies, capitalization and sharing of experiences.

In the framework of the recent reform of EAS in Niger, two important decisions were taken to improve the recognition and consideration of pluralism of EAS providers and strengthening the coordination and harmonization of interventions. The objective is to ensure that the pluralism of EAS actors is harnessed and managed adequately leading to a greater contribution of EAS in the achievement of national agricultural, economic and social development objectives. In this framework, the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Advice was established in 2017 with the mission to ensure the operational coordination of extension and advisory services nationwide. APCA is responsible, *inter alia*, to plan and program the implementation of the Agricultural Advice's strategy on the entire national

<sup>1</sup> Fonds d'Investissement pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle

territory and to coordinate and animate the National Agricultural Advisory System, in relation with all the structures concerned. APCA also has the role to build and strengthen synergies between public and private organizations in EAS.

Parallel to the creation of APCA, a Strategic Orientation Committee for Agricultural Advisory Services (COS/CA) was set up by decree N°2017-666/PRN<sup>2</sup>, and is attached to the Office of the President of the Republic. The COS/CA is responsible for ensuring the strategic management of the National System of the Agricultural Council. In this capacity, it is responsible, among other things, for proposing the strategic orientations of the SNCA, ensuring the implementation of the SNCA in line with the National Strategy for Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agricultural Development and ensuring balanced spatial coverage of access to the Agricultural Advice. Its mandate is also to promote the establishment of stronger linkages between research and development and to assess the relevance, quality and results of agricultural advisory schemes. The texts of its creation stipulate that the secretariat of COS/CA meetings is ensured by a representative of HC3N, a representative of RECA and a representative of APCA.

#### 4.4 Resources

The fourth “R” is concerned with what resources such as programs, institutions and budgets exist to support youth in extension programs and what the capacities are to engage youth.

##### 4.4.1 The Programme to Support Sustainable Agricultural Development

The Support Programme for Sustainable Agricultural Development in the Dosso region specifically aims to increase economic opportunities in the agricultural sector for youth. The program has developed a strategy for the integration of youth that includes training, provision of EAS and support agripreneurship through the provision of credit to put in place a sustainable agricultural project right. This project funded by the Luxembourg development cooperation has a duration of 51 months (October 2016 to December 2020) with a budget of EUR 13.4 million. Its objective is aligned with the sectoral policy of rural development, namely the “Nigeriens Feed the Nigeriens” Initiative (I3N). It aims to protect the Nigerien population from recurrent famines, guarantee them the conditions for full participation in national production and improve their income.

The project had set a target of 10,000 youth to be trained throughout its duration. To date, the number of trainees has risen to more than 8,000, 57 percent of whom are women. This high percentage of women is linked to the existence of training on themes related to processing of agricultural products, which is essentially a female activity. Considering only training related to production, the percentage of women drops to 30 percent. This is due to the difficult access of women to land ownership. The choice of beneficiaries includes the following criteria: they must agree to remain in the area after training, (ii) be between 18 and 35 years of age, and (iii) have land available, including through rental, loan or family gift. The touring training centers cover an average radius of 4 km to reduce the risk of learners dropping out due to distance from the training centers. The training uses the competency-based approach, and the average size of each batch is 15 youth per center.

The provision of EAS to trained youth is achieved by the same service operators who provide the training. Agricultural advisory services are delivered after the training (for the case of market gardening and rice production) or simultaneously (for groundnut and cowpea production). Services are focused on production, processing or marketing. The follow-up-

<sup>2</sup> Décret N° 2017-666/PRN du 02 aout 2017 portant création, attributions, composition, organisation et modalités de fonctionnement d'un organe d'orientation stratégique du Conseil Agricole, dénommé Comité d'Orientation Stratégique du Conseil Agricole, en abrégé « COS/CA ».

production advice concerns the application of the themes taught during the training and for a minimum period of three months in the young person's farm with at least one visit per week. The preparation of a credit application file is part of the activity and includes a technical assessment of the project. In the field of processing and marketing, the advisory follow-up is of short duration and focuses on the preparation of credit application files.

Agricultural extension activities are also financed within the framework of a Partnership Agreement signed with the Regional Council. These activities include: (i) capacity building of service providers in charge of the agricultural extension service; (ii) signing of the contract between the Regional Council and the operators for a single cropping season; (iii) granting each young applicant an “agricultural extension voucher” (worth 65,000 CFA Franc for training related to production, and 30,000 CFA Franc for themes related to processing, marketing or agricultural products). The learner gives this voucher to any accredited services providers of his or her choice. Moreover, operators are evaluated by the Regional Chamber and the Regional Directorate of Agriculture.

#### 4.4.2 The Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund

The Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund (FAFPA by its French acronym<sup>3</sup>) is a public social institution with administrative and management autonomy. It was created on 3 July 2007 by Act No. 2007-24 and placed under the technical supervision of the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Education and under the financial supervision of the Ministry of Finance. The mission of the FAFPA is to contribute to the implementation of the government's policy on continuing vocational training and short-term learning for the socio-economic development of the private sector. It has eight branches in the main towns of the eight administrative regions of Niger. The Fund is administered by a tripartite Board of Directors, in which the State, employers and employees are represented equally (respectively four seats per college, for a total of 12 seats).

FAFPA is the main public financing mechanism for vocational training, including in the agricultural sector. The FAFPA's resources come mainly from: the apprenticeship tax (3 percent of the wage bill, 60 percent of which is allocated to FAFPA) collected and paid by the General Directorate of Taxes; the State subsidy for operations; the support of development partners such as the World Bank, the European Union, or LuxDev; and the contribution of beneficiaries, which is set at 10 percent of the cost of training, that is, an average of 10,000 to 15,000 CFA francs per trainee. The 2019 budget is estimated at nearly 15 billion CFA francs<sup>4</sup>, double the 2018 budget (which was 7.1 billion). In this budget, the share of the apprenticeship tax is 4.7 billion (31 percent), the government subsidy is 3 billion (20 percent), and the technical and financial partners contribute 7 billion. The significant increase in the budget between 2018 and 2019 is explained by the fact that the portion of the budget coming from the apprenticeship tax had not been fully consumed in 2018. In addition, 2019 saw the launch of two new projects that brought additional financial contribution. Overall, resources available are insufficient in relation to demand, for training the 30,000 youth who drop out of school each year. The average cost of apprenticeship training is 800,000 CFA francs per youth.

#### 4.4.3 The Integrated Agricultural Training Sites (SIFA)

This approach is promoted by SwissContact, a Swiss foundation that has been active in Niger since 2005 to help reduce poverty by promoting youth's access to employment and job creation in the eight regions of the country. It implements a range of training and support for socio-professional integration that provides continuity between basic education, vocational training and the labor market.

<sup>3</sup> Fonds d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle et à l'Apprentissage

<sup>4</sup> Nassirou Alio, Chef de Département Ingénierie de Formation au FAFPA (pers. comm.)

SwissContact is active in the fields of basic education, rural vocational training, information and guidance on agricultural entrepreneurship opportunities and socio-professional integration. In the field of agricultural vocational training, a training system called the "Integrated Agricultural Training Site (SIFA)" has been developed. It is a short qualifying training course, which allows youth to quickly master and implement new agro-sylvo-pastoral activities on his or her own family farm, in order to increase or diversify family's income. The SIFA is a "no wall" training space, located directly on a cultivable land, where agro-sylvo-pastoral training is held. Each SIFA welcomes a batch of about 25 rural youth.

The objective of the SIFA is to contribute, through agricultural vocational training, to the emergence of young rural entrepreneurs who will take over the management of the family farm in the future. It is a question of moving from a negativist and resigned vision regarding family farming to a vision that shows that agriculture is a "real profession" that allows people to earn a decent living.

The SIFA is managed by a producer organization in the framework of a delegation of power from the town council. The land is provided by the town council. SwissContact takes care of the operational costs and provides training for trainers, capacity building for the management committee, provides equipment (infrastructure and equipment) and develops training curricula. A SIFA can train up to 150 youth per year. There are currently 26 SIFAS, 12 in Dosso, 12 in Maradi and two in Agadez. From 2013 to 2018, nearly 5,000 young people were trained in SIFA, with 48 percent of trainees being women.

Training programs are developed using the competency-based approach and are largely based on the promotion of agroecology. The main areas of training are: (i) crop production; (ii) livestock production and, (iii) processing of agri-food products (groundnuts, cereals, market garden products, dairy products, fruit, etc.). A SIFA generally has four trainers, covering the following fields: crop production, animal production, food processing and literacy.

The key criteria for admission in a SIFA include: (i) be aged between 18 – 35 years; (ii) have a piece of land for agricultural activities. The training cycle is eight months, including four months of on-site training and four months of practical support on the youth's personal farm. During the second phase (practical), SwissContact gives a sum of 20,000 CFA francs to each youth for the purchase of farm inputs (fertilizers, seeds, treatment products, etc.) necessary to start agricultural activities. For the four months of field practice, each batch of 25 youth people is followed by an extension agent who conducts 2-3 visits per week to help find solutions to challenges or issues arising from the implementation of the project.

Key challenges faced by SIFA are related to lack of management capacity of the producer organization and the management of products produced by the trainees. This translates a lack of marketing capacity and the fact that advisory services are focused most on the production, and don't yet consider enough issue related to farm management and marketing.

#### **4.4.4 The Investment Fund for Food and Nutritional Security**

The Investment Fund for Food and Nutritional Security (FISAN by its French acronym<sup>5</sup>) was established by Decree N°2017-663/PRN of 2 August 2017 in the framework of the operationalization of the 3N Initiative. FISAN aims to improve provision of financial services to producers and other actors in agriculture value chains (suppliers, processors, exporters, etc.). It has three objectives: (i) support the transformation of agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries production systems at the level of family farms and agricultural enterprises; (ii) support the modernization of systems for processing and marketing of agricultural and agri-food products at the level of cooperatives and small and medium enterprises; and (iii)

<sup>5</sup> Fonds d'Investissement pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle

support structuring investments by local authorities and rural communities (development work and infrastructure for agricultural, pastoral, forestry or fisheries purposes). FISAN also aims to ensure greater coherence in financing practices to promote better coordination of fundraising, channeling of funds mobilized through sustainable mechanisms and the use of funds mobilized through common principles and practices, or even rules. To promote efficiency, FISAN relies on existing funding mechanisms to reach beneficiaries.

The FISAN operational approach is articulated around three complementary facilities. Facility 1 is “Support for Agricultural Financing.” It relates to support for private investments through credit and other forms of financing (guarantees, investment, etc.). It promotes the financing mechanism of the private banking sector, including commercial banks and decentralized financial systems involved in agricultural financing, guarantee institutions and investment companies. Facility 1 support focuses in particular on medium-term investment credits for the acquisition of productive equipment.

Facility 2 deals with “Financing of Agricultural Structuring Investments. It relates to infrastructures and other structuring actions of public and non-profit nature. It promotes the financing mechanisms for local authorities set up by the National Agency for the Financing of Local Authorities.

Facility 3 is the one that directly concerns the provision of EAS. It is entitled "Financing agricultural advisory services, applied agronomic research and capacity building." This Facility enables the financing of agricultural advisory programs and applied agronomic research by various actors and strengthens know-how in this field. It values in its functioning the bodies set up within the framework of the National Agricultural Advisory System. Facility 3 support concerns the financing of non-material services, in particular, the dissemination of knowledge through information, demonstration and training, EAS in all its diversity, experiments and demonstrations, applied agronomic field research or research for development, specific studies and expertise, the structuring of the agricultural profession and capacity development of farmer organizations for the provision of services to their members.

FISAN Facility 3 funding can be accessed through two modalities:

- Modality A: through the financing of the micro-projects of eligible structures in the above-mentioned areas;
- Modality B: through the financing of services to meet the concerns of producers at the grassroots level, channeled through producer organizations and their umbrella structures.

#### 4.4.5 The Association for the Revitalization of Animal Husbandry in Niger (AREN)

AREN is an umbrella organization created in 1992. Its objective is to promote breeding and ensure the defense of the cattle farmers strategic interests. It has 10,000 grassroots groups and 400,000 individual members. AREN carries out several capacity building actions for youth. The training topics are: (i) pastoral practices; (ii) practices resilient to climate change; (iii) the introduction of new production techniques and (iv) legal advice. Depending on the themes, the trainers mobilized to facilitate the capacity building sessions may be producers, livestock professionals and/or experts. The approach used is the Farmers' Livestock Initiative Scheme (DIPE), which is the very similar to the farmer field school approach in the case of crop production. AREN has set itself the objective that youth and women should represent at least 30 percent of the participants in each training session.

AREN collaborates with several projects, including PRODAF, to support youth agripreneurship. AREN is also developing activities to support youth as agricultural advisors. In collaboration with the public authorities, it selects through its dismemberments in the field and in consultation with local communities out-of-school youth with at least secondary

education level. These young people receive a one-month training on animal health and nutrition. At the end of their training provided by state services, they set up their own businesses in rural areas and undertake to market quality veterinary products, livestock feed and livestock advice in collaboration with veterinary services. This scheme, which has been in place since 2002, enables youth to find employment, but also helps to increase the availability of livestock advisory services in rural areas. Each year about 10 young para-veterinarians are trained. This system is supported by several international partners including the EU, Care International, Action Against Hunger, which provide youth trained with the first equipment and products in the form of working capital.

The problems often encountered in this system relate to the lack of seriousness of some people in managing the working capital offered to them at the time of their launching of their business. In addition, it appeared that quite often young extensionists do not have good marketing skills and are less proactive than their elder colleagues who have several years of professional experience.

In addition, AREN has developed a system for training and mobilizing youth in conflict prevention and mediation, particularly in the organization of awareness raising campaigns, particularly in areas where tensions between pastoralist and farming communities are recurrent. Young mediators are selected on the basis of their righteousness, their ability to facilitate and to rise above partisan interests and the recognition and credibility they have within their community.

#### **4.4.6 The Climate Risk Sensitive Agriculture Support Project (PASEC)**

The Climate Risk Sensitive Agriculture Support Project is a project funded mainly by the World Bank with the support of the Millennium Challenge Cooperation (MCC). PASEC's development objective is to increase resilience to climate risks and improve agricultural productivity in targeted communities.

As part of its intervention strategy, PASEC has set up for a cost-shared funding mechanism. One of the components of this mechanism specifically targets women and/or youth groups involved in some form of productive or value-added activity in the agricultural sector. Groups must meet one of the following three criteria in order to be eligible for grant funds: (1) be duly accredited as a women's or youth group (18 to 35 years of age); or (2) be recommended by an NGO or Micro-finance institution (MFI) of good reputation as a women's group, women's investor group, credit group or youth group (youth groups may also be recommended by an educational institution of good reputation); (3) in the absence of accreditation or recommendation by an NGO or MFI at the time of application, they should register during the application process and be subject to an assessment of their commitment to the project (this commitment may include demonstrating previous commercial activities as a group). If a women's or youth group has received an institutional recommendation (from an NGO, MFI, or educational institution), it can submit a project for funding without the obligation to demonstrate previous activities in the agricultural sector as a group.

Five (5) categories of micro-projects are eligible for PASEC funding: (i) Rain-fed crop production systems based on cereals and legumes in pure or combined form; (ii) Irrigated production systems based on horticultural plants, irrigated cereals and legumes, (iii) livestock production systems that make optimal use of crop residues and play a significant role in improving agricultural productivity such as fattening, dairy farming, breeding or poultry farming; (iii) processing of agropastoral products and (v) supply and distribution of agricultural or zootechnical inputs. The minimum and maximum total grant provided by the Fund for each sub-project may not be less than 2,000,000 and 20,000,000 CFA francs respectively. The beneficiaries of the funding also receive technical support and advice from a technical operator recruited by the project.

#### 4.4.7 The Federation of Unions of Peasant Groups of Niger (FUGPN/Mooriben)

The Federation of Unions of Peasant Groups of Niger is an umbrella organization created by farmers in 1988 and legalized in 1993. It operates mainly in 2 regions (Tillabéri and Dosso) with occasional support in the other regions of Niger. Mooriben’s vision is “Poverty is over.” It has 29 Unions, 1,524 grassroots organizations, 57,624 individual members of which 63 percent are women, and 15 percent are youth. Mooriben has set up its own agricultural advisory support system composed mainly of endogenous facilitators who are placed at the level of Unions and relay producers who are in charge of supervising other producers on crop management practices. There are agricultural engineers who train endogenous facilitators who in turn train relay producers.

Mooriben has developed a strategy to support the inclusion of youth in agriculture. In this framework, Mooriben encourages and supports young people trained by PADAD II to organize themselves into POs, which will benefit from capacity building actions and will gradually join the Mooriben Member Unions. In addition, Mooriben recruits the best youth trained under PADAD II and mobilizes them as mentors for other young farmers. The tasks of these young agricultural extensionist consist in particular in supporting the development of business plans and loan application files to facilitate the acquisition of credits for cash crops (groundnuts, cowpeas, etc.). The percentage of young people among POs members has increased significantly, and stands at around 11-12 percent compared to only one percent five years ago. However, there are still very few young people in the decision-making bodies of POs because of some cultural constraints that prevent young people from coveting the same positions with their elders. In this context, Mooriben has taken a decision to reserve 30 percent of the seats in the decision-making bodies of unions for young people in the medium term, this presupposes that young people join POs beforehand, or even create their own POs which will then join the unions. The difficulties encountered by youth mobilized by Mooriben as agricultural extensionist are mainly related to: (i) the lack of experience at the beginning of their careers and (ii) the low recognition or even reluctance of producers to ask them for support because of doubts about their skills.

#### 4.4.8 USAID funded projects

The USAID funded two major agricultural project in Niger including the Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Accelerated Growth (REGIS-AG) and the Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER)<sup>6</sup>.

The **Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Accelerated Growth (REGIS-AG)** (\$34.4 million) used “pull” strategies to link more market-oriented producer organizations with the companion REGIS-ER Project, which focused on production-level “push” strategies. The project operated in both Niger and Burkina Faso with implementation by employee teams from eight organizations. The project targeted three value chains: cowpeas, small ruminants and poultry. REGIS-AG worked with 748 producer organizations, with over 30,000 households in. Activities included: training value chain actors, training producers, monitoring and coaching producer organization members, and fairs. A planned next step will be educating farmers on pesticide risks using trained input suppliers and public sector EAS.

Commercial linkages should increase likelihood that value chain activities will be maintained, but sustainability still may be questionable for many activities. The chief constraint to-date has been low production levels that do not allow producer organizations to satisfy rapidly developing national and regional-level demand for products. But production issues are not

<sup>6</sup> This information comes from the report Developing Local Extension Capacity Project (2019). Strengthening Private Sector Extension and Advisory Services Portfolio Review. Developing Local Extension Capacity Project. USAID, Washington D.C.

included in the REGIS-AG mandate. This was to be the responsibility of parallel projects, but those have focused principally on food security and reducing malnutrition, reducing attention on production for markets.

Evaluators concluded that the project was successful in: training producers in organizations to get better prices on group sales; helping vulnerable producers build social networks to access markets; testing models for community-based veterinary services; and building capacity of producer organizations and commune governments to support value chain activities. Participating producer organizations faced a steep learning curve requiring at least two agricultural years to improve and become more organized and able to play required roles in year three.

The **Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER)** project aimed to increase the resilience of vulnerable populations in the Sahel region by upgrading competitiveness and inclusiveness of pro-poor value chains (cowpea, small ruminant and poultry). The project works through Community-Based Solution Providers and Local Resource Persons, supporting them in commune-level platforms to cluster, network, and diversify available goods and services. Community-based solution providers receive support from agro-dealers to market agro-dealers' products. In the two countries, there are 93 “promising community-based solution providers”, 159 Auxiliary Veterinarians in networks of local private veterinarian services, and at least 99 other CBSPs. Entities, which do business with 63 input suppliers. The project provided kits for 80 livestock auxiliaries and 60 poultry vaccinators. The project encouraged community-based solution providers to expand marketing efforts to grow their businesses. Local radio ads have been effective in promoting awareness of availability of inputs. Nearly 57,000 clients benefitted from the products and services provided by these CBSPs, whose sales revenues exceeded \$522,000. The project also trained government extension leadership in the districts.

## 4.5 Results

The final “R” looks at what has worked thus far and what gaps emerge from existing results that could be addressed by a DLEC engagement (pilot activity) in the country.

### 4.5.1 The use of WhatsApp has boosted e-extension and improved access to farm advisory services for youth

The Call Centre dedicated to Agricultural Advisory Services, led by RECA and their partners, is the first tool of an e-extension system set up in Niger. It was set up in 2017 with the contribution of the Support Project for Climate Smart Agriculture and the West African Agricultural Productivity Project.

RECA's e-extension activities are oriented toward all the actors of the pluralistic EAS system and focus in particular on access to and dissemination of information. The development of e-extension is hampered by several factors, including the low penetration rate of mobile phone in rural areas. Only four percent of women have a mobile phone compared to 23 percent of men. This explains the very low number of calls from women. Nevertheless, the number of users of e-extension services has increased steadily over the years. This increase is largely due to the use of WhatsApp. In 2018, the number of calls made by WhatsApp was eight times higher than the number of calls made by telephone. The WhatsApp effect is due, among other things, to the sending of WhatsApp elements from radio broadcasts, which makes it possible to review the old broadcasts most requested by producers. The themes addressed mainly during the calls were related to plant protection (40 percent of calls), market gardening prices (23 percent), inputs (mainly seed and fertilizer) (16 percent). Other calls were related to topics such as livestock, vaccination or irrigation (14 percent). Off-topic calls represented 7 percent.

The use of ICTs makes the job of an agricultural extensionist more attractive to youth and makes it possible to reach a wider audience, hence achieving greater impact. Nevertheless, the call center agents interviewed during the mission insisted on the fact that a good call center agent must first have good field experience to make a good diagnosis and propose relevant solutions. In addition, it is important that the e-extensionist goes frequently in the field to renew his or her knowledge and gain a more concrete understanding of the issues raised by producers during telephone calls or WhatsApp.

**4.5.2** The production and distribution of technical and economic data sheets with local references are very helpful for the development and implementation of youth installation projects.

For several years now, the National Network of Agricultural Chambers, in synergy with the Regional Chambers of Agriculture, has been involved in the production and wide dissemination of technical and economic data sheets for crop production. These documents include technical information, economic analysis and risk analysis. The technical and economic references used in these sheets are based on data generated locally from the monitoring and follow-up of farms involved in Management Advice for Family Farms, an advisory approach used in the region to strengthen entrepreneurial skills). Therefore, data presented are realistic as they were generated under the current conditions of producers. These data sheets are very useful for young agripreneurs in developing their projects and benchmarking their results, but also for microfinance structures that need to assess applications agricultural credit, and actors and promoters of contract farming.

**4.5.3** Touring training centers facilitate youth access to agricultural advisory services and support the emergence of local EAS providers

The approach of touring training centers adopted by the PADAD project in the Dosso region and described above, is based on the use of existing infrastructure, unlike other approaches where interventions start with the construction of physical infrastructure to serve as a training centers. Mobile training centers that move according to demand reduce the distances that learners have to cover thus facilitate access for youth, including those living in remote areas, to the training and support they need to start their own agricultural business.

Operators or service providers responsible for providing training in these mobile centers and accompanying youth in developing their installation projects are often recruited locally following guidelines that focus in particular on the experience, availability and adequacy of human resources in relation to the themes of the training. This approach has led to the emergence of private structures of service providers (NGOs, consulting firms) and the expansion of the clientele of existing structures. The increase in demand for EAS is leading provider organizations to recruit new staff, including many youths who just graduated from agricultural training schools and colleges. The certificates issued at the end of the training courses in these mobile training centers are signed by the Regional Directorate of Vocational and Technical Education. This official recognition of the skills acquired is often used by youth when preparing their credit application files or when applying for a job on farms or agro-industrial sites.

Moreover, this mobile training center approach allows for rapid interventions and more efficient geographical coverage of demand. However, it is conditioned by the existence of physical centers and the existence of qualified local operators. The sustainability and scaling up of the positive effects of this approach require that private operators be able to develop dynamic and sustainable business models, in order to be able to remain active or even grow

after the project is completed. These economic models should enable them to broaden their clientele, by moving beyond the institutional demand supported by the projects, to identify new requests for agricultural advice that can be supported by producers themselves or other actors. In order to diversify incomes, some EAS providers also invest in the marketing of agricultural inputs and equipment. In the medium term, this situation might lead to conflicts of interest if ethical measures are not developed and implemented.

#### 4.5.4 Collaboration between the banking institutions and EAS improve youth's access to credit and the quality of their projects

Collaboration between the banks and EAS improves access to and management of credit by youth, especially women. The PADAD project funded by LuxDev in Dosso region engaged agricultural advisory services providers to support youth in preparing their credit applications. In addition, operators are also requested by The Niger Agricultural Bank to provide technical advice on credit application files. This approach does not only facilitate youth and women's access to credit, it also improves the technical quality of projects and consequently their ability to generate the expected outcomes and impacts. At the end of 2018, 1,383 projects had been financed, 40 percent of which were led by women (LuxDev, 2018).

#### 4.5.5 Youth's demands for EAS are still not yet adequately addressed

Youth engage in agriculture for livelihoods, diversification of revenue or self-employment. They generally prefer agricultural value chains with high potential and quick return of investment (market gardening, cattle fattening, etc.). Key challenges they face include unavailability and/or difficulties to access EAS, despite the diversity of EAS providers. The extensionist to producer ratio is still too low (one extensionist for 1,000 producers) despite increasing improvements thanks to the increasing involvement of producer organizations in particular (HC3N, 2016). This ratio also varies greatly from one region to another, and from one socio-professional category to another. For example, women producers, herders and young people have less access to EAS. In the medium and long term, the SCNA will have to achieve a supervisory ratio of one advisor for every 250 producers considering the standards recommended by FAO (HC3N, 2016).

Furthermore, youth also face difficulties to access resources necessary to start and run their agricultural activities, including land, farm inputs and loans and insurance (particularly for climatic hazards). Even when facilities exist to access bank loans, some youth still hesitate to apply because they consider agriculture as too risky. They believe that poor management of the contracted loan and/or climatic or market shocks can make them lose their investments and become poorer. Furthermore, some youth consider that the existing subsidies to support youth agripreneurs are not adequate. These subsidy schemes tend to give priority to acquisition of equipment or initial inputs while youth think what is essential is the working capital. Producer organizations, particularly apex (federation or unions) play an important role for access to EAS as they generally have an internal EAS scheme. The presence of youth in the membership of producer organizations is still very low, less than 20 percent in general. Socio-cultural barriers are part of the reason (e.g. it is difficult to challenge the leadership of elders; youth are more interested in cash crops while senior/elders are more involved in production of staple crops). Also, existing EAS providers are too focused on production techniques, while youth are more interested in agripreneurship and business development.

## 5 Recommendations

## 5.1 Recommendations for USAID Mission/DLEC Engagement in Niger

The engagement of Niger USAID Mission and DLEC for strengthening youth in agricultural extension could be around the following four axes:

- Improving accessibility of youth to extension. This will be achieved through the promotion of EAS methods and tools, and particularly ICT-based extension (especially videos) that have high positive impact on the access of youth to services. In this framework, partnerships could be developed with RECA which is already delivering ICT-based extension services, but also with Access Agriculture which is specialized in producing thematic videos for agricultural production, in widespread local languages in Niger like Hausa and Germa. Furthermore, the promotion of ICT-based extension will consider: (i) the production and dissemination of success stories of youth as farmers and/or EAS provider and; (ii) capacity development of youth-led EAS organizations in the production and use of video for capitalization and sharing of good practices. Actions to raise regarding accessibility of youth to EAS will prioritize women interested in agripreneurship and areas where 'there is no extensionist.'
- Capacity development of youth organizations providing EAS services. This will be done as a means to support the scaling and sustainability of outcomes generated by USAID agricultural projects in Niger. Capacity development activities will include training on modules/topics of high priority to youth (e.g. agripreneurship, farm creation, climate change, sustainable land management, constitution and running of cooperatives). Development of sustainable business model for EAS organizations is also one of the top priority topics that shall be considered when planning capacity development.
- Support youth agripreneurship in areas of USAID-funded projects (e.g. REGIS AG & ER) through stronger partnerships and expansion of the LuxDev model (which include training, facilitation of access to credit, coaching and touring training centers).
- Across all of the above, Integration of climate-smart practices and sustainable management of natural resources in agribusiness projects developed and implemented by youth. Awareness raising and capacity development to support youth to integrate climate smart practices in their projects is needed.

## 5.2 Recommendations for policymakers and donors

- Support the scaling and sustainability of successful models of youth in extension and in agricultural in general. This will consist primarily in developing and implementing a strategy for scaling of the integrated LuxDev approach (training + farm creation + coaching) that has demonstrated potential and can be expanded. It should also include adding animal husbandry to its thematic coverage.
- The government and development partners should set up functioning framework for greater coordination, partnership and synergy among various actors.
- Increase investments in community-based infrastructure for the development of agricultural activities (warehouses, markets) with a priority for areas lacking agricultural infrastructure and hampering youth engagement in agriculture.
- Support deployment of Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Advice activities with influence on youth. This includes the creation of a national system of accreditation of accreditation for agricultural extensionists. Such a process facilitates and improves the recognition of the competencies of young extensionists by EAS clientele. Furthermore, the APCA in its role of facilitation and backstopping to EAS

providers should conduct capacity development activities for EAS for a greater integration of youth concerns in their activities.

- More attention should be given to operational funds / working capital and not only to investments (acquisition of equipment and infrastructure), when supporting youth agripreneurship. This is an issue of sustainability.

### 5.3 Recommendations to EAS providers

- Adapt EAS approaches and tools adapted to the aspirations of youth. Particular attention should be given to ICTs (applications on smartphones, WhatsApp groups, social networks, etc.) that offers good opportunities for youth.
- Pay higher attention to aspects related to youth agripreneurship and farm creation for crop production or animal husbandry. This includes formulation of start-up projects, access to land and credit, and management of start-ups. EAS providers should be encouraged to include at least one indicator on access to quality EAS in monitoring and evaluation of interventions. Furthermore, youth should be encouraged and supported to organized themselves into producer organizations and register with apex organizations from whom they can get more access to EAS.
- Develop dedicated programs or refresher courses for the acquisition of soft and managerial skills (farm management, agribusiness, marketing etc.)

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