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The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

ENHANCING GROWTH THROUGH REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL INPUT SYSTEMS (EnGRAIS) PROJECT FOR WEST AFRICA

NEWSLETTER APRIL—JUNE 2021

TOP STORY »

EnGRAIS staff and key partners held their first in-person meeting in June to strategize on updating and streamlining plans that were impacted by COVID-19 restrictions over the past year.

At right: Patrice Annequin, Intermediate Result 1 Team Leader, making a presentation at the meeting.



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STRATEGIZING FOR BETTER COLLABORATION AND EFFICIENCY

After more than a year's suspension of physical meetings due to COVID-19 challenges, EnGRAIS and its key partners, including the West African Fertilizer Association (WAFA) and AfricaFertilizer.org (AFO), finally held their first in-person meeting June 1-3, 2021, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The meeting focused on updating and streamlining joint work plans that have been inactive and prioritizing activities with the highest impact for each partner. The aim was to achieve better collaboration for efficiency going forward.

EnGRAIS has partnered with WAFA over the years to strengthen the West African regional fertilizer sector to benefit key stakeholders, particularly smallholder farmers whose livelihoods depend on quality and affordable fertilizers and other agricultural inputs.

Some strategic decisions were made to help achieve objectives for EnGRAIS's private sector development, agricultural input package (AIP) dissemination, and fertilizer quality control regional policy and regulation activities, which are the project's Intermediate Results 1-3, and to support the implementation of WAFA's five-year strategy, which was approved in 2019.



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Participants from EnGRAIS, WAFA, and AFO at the meeting.

Those decisions include the following:

- EnGRAIS and WAFA agreed to review the financial access situation in the sub-region, learning from the 2019 West Africa Fertilizer Financing Forum, the 2020 ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development program, and most recent in-country fertilizer offers, to be better prepared for the next fertilizer procurement season.
- EnGRAIS will assist WAFA in promoting ECOWAS regulations by co-organizing a training workshop for laboratory technicians on enforcing ECOWAS regulations. EnGRAIS will support WAFA in sharing ECOWAS regulations with all its members, and those that have laboratories will receive ECOWAS testing protocols.
- Having completed laboratory assessments in Senegal, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire, EnGRAIS will conduct similar assessments in Nigeria and Ghana in July and August 2021. The aim is to strengthen and upgrade reference laboratories for fertilizer testing across West Africa.
- EnGRAIS will assess the impact of using poor quality fertilizers. Results of this study will be disseminated to WAFA members, and WAFA will use these results to write policy briefs and guidelines for self-regulation.
- WAFA and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) will participate in the development of a fertilizer blending guidelines manual being produced by EnGRAIS to streamline solutions for fertilizer quality issues and will subsequently use the manual to train its members, as well as for lobbying and self-regulation.
- WAFA will support efforts to promote the Fertilizer and Seed Recommendations for West Africa Map (FeSeRWAM) and the dissemination of AIPs targeted to reach 600,000 farmers across West Africa.
- AFO and WAFA will organize a Fertilizer Technical Working Group meeting and Cost Build-Up workshop in Benin in August 2021 and will validate data on apparent fertilizer consumption, importation procedures, and costs for Benin, Niger, and Togo. WAFA will support data collection through its members.
- WAFA, EnGRAIS, and AFO will update the West Africa Fertilizer Business Information Guide (WAFBIG) and develop a revenue generation strategy for AFO and WAFA through the publication. The three partners will also hold a launch event for the WAFBIG to popularize it among sector stakeholders.
- WAFA will resume sharing AFO fertilizer prices and market components for six countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Mali, and Burkina Faso), with the possibility of adding other countries later.
- EnGRAIS will support WAFA in holding its in-person General Assembly meeting by the end of 2021, assuming COVID-19 permits, approaching additional donors, and developing its revenue-generating strategy.

AFRICA FERTILIZER CONFERENCE 2021

Several EnGRAIS staff and WAFA members were among the 380 delegates who participated in the second edition of the virtual Africa Fertilizer Conference on June 28-29, organized by AFRIQOM and the Arab Fertilizer Association, in partnership with the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership. The theme of the meeting was "Decoding Africa's Fertilizer Matrix."

EnGRAIS participated in this conference to discover key developments in the fertilizer industry to better serve its stakeholders. Some notable information obtained from the meeting included:

- The International Fertilizer Association (IFA) confirmed that the West African fertilizer market shrank in 2019, with a total of 1.4 million metric tons of nutrients consumed, and had a weak rebound in 2020 due to low prices and government initiatives to mitigate COVID-19 impacts. A significant reduction in consumption is expected in 2021 due to high prices.
- A sustained 5% annual growth rate is needed to achieve IFA's goal of doubling application rates by 2030 and tripling them by 2040.
- WAFA's 1st Vice-President, Innocent Okuku, emphasized the need for infrastructure and financial investments, enhanced regional integration, removal of government interference, and positioning of subsidy-related interventions at the farm output level.

ENGRAIS REVIEWS PROGRESS AND STRENGTHENS PROJECT TEAM FOR BETTER EFFICIENCY

Twice a year, the EnGRAIS project team holds a staff retreat. The mid-fiscal year (FY) 2021 meeting took place in Akosombo, Ghana, on April 20-23. Attendees included all full- and part-time EnGRAIS staff from six countries (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo) as well as two representatives of AFO, which collaborates extensively with EnGRAIS on Intermediate Result 1. IFDC's Regional Director of North and West Africa, Dr. Oumou Camara, also participated remotely in the retreat.

This meeting sought to strengthen the project team, as it provided a forum to discuss budgets and project management issues, talk about the future of EnGRAIS and its staff, review accomplishments against planned activities, fill gaps and make adjustments for the

remainder of FY21, and evaluate EnGRAIS-partner relationships and performance.

During the retreat, EnGRAIS was found to be somewhat behind in achieving some of its expected results and accomplishing activities for FY21 due to unavoidable factors, including COVID-19 restrictions and additional requirements for travel. The meeting resulted in an action plan for the remainder of FY21 that will improve performance and ensure priority activities are completed while others are deferred to early FY22.

As recommended during the retreat, the EnGRAIS Chief of Party arranged several meetings with the project donor, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and key implementing partners, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to improve project implementation efforts.

VIFAA NIGERIA DASHBOARD LAUNCHED

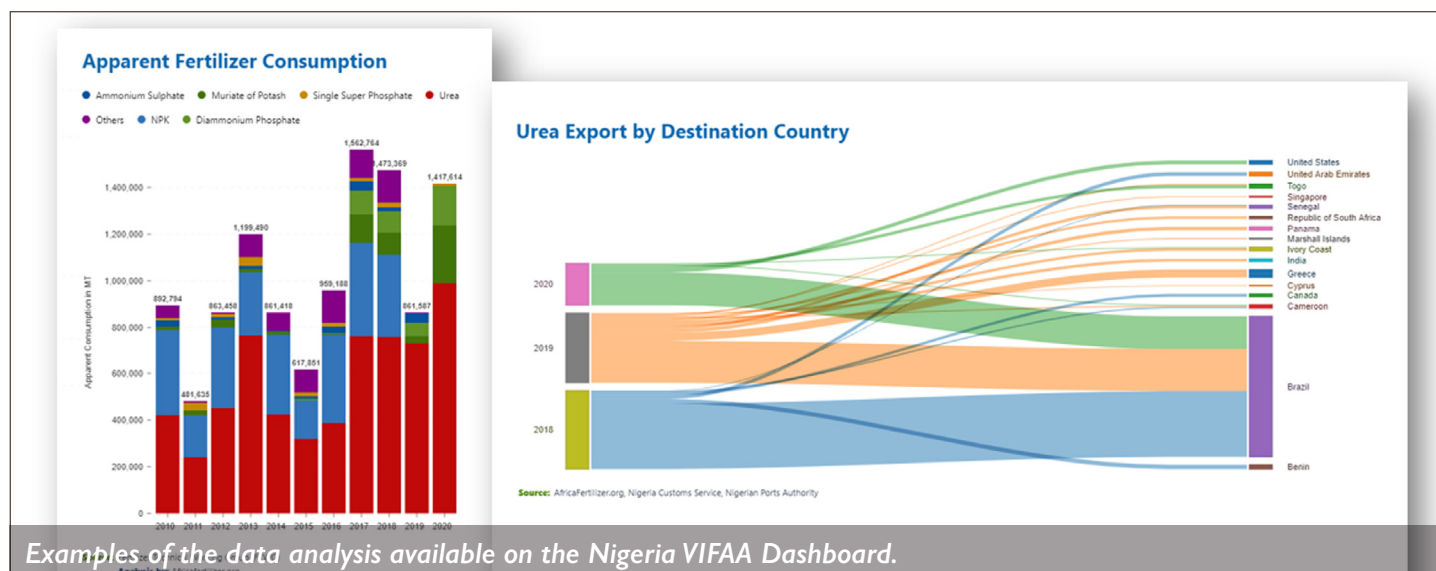
As a key partner of AFO, EnGRAIS participated in the official launch of the Nigeria Visualizing Insights on Fertilizer for African Agriculture (VIFAA) dashboard on June 24, 2021, in Abuja, Nigeria. Development Gateway and AFO developed the VIFAA dashboard to fill key fertilizer information gaps, increase data-driven policy and investment decisions in the fertilizer sector, and provide comprehensive fertilizer data through a user-friendly tool. The goal is to support development partners and the private sector to respond efficiently and effectively to changes in the fertilizer market, ensuring that sufficient appropriate fertilizers reach farmers at the right time for planting.

As the second dashboard of three (the Kenya dashboard is operational and Ghana's is planned for the end of September), the Nigerian dashboard relies on several sets of data (prices, statistics, and costs) collected or generated by AFO and EnGRAIS, in partnership with a broad range of private and public fertilizer stakeholders.

Thanks to its Innovation Fund, VIFAA is now using satellite imagery and artificial intelligence (AI) tools developed by Quantitative

Engineering Design (an organization that builds data systems and AI for human health and agriculture) to estimate real-time crop coverage in Nigeria, hence providing a better estimate of the rate of fertilizer use across the country.

The dashboard contains 14 core indicators, including fertilizer retail price, cropland under production, and monthly product imports, to highlight and visualize key aspects of Nigeria's fertilizer supply chain. With support from EnGRAIS, AFO will gather, validate, and update the data on a regular basis.



Examples of the data analysis available on the Nigeria VIFAA Dashboard.

MALI UPDATES AIPS AND PLANS DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

Two major challenges facing many West African smallholder farmers' productivity are the use of inappropriate agricultural inputs and poor agricultural practices. EnGRAIS and the Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED) project developed and launched the FeSeRWAM and its AIPs in September 2020 to help address these challenges. Key stakeholders were invited to meet with EnGRAIS and PAIRED on May 26-28 in Bamako, Mali, to update national data on Malian AIPs, which had been collected for the FeSeRWAM platform and the later dissemination of the AIPs to respond appropriately to the needs of stakeholders in that country.



Doua Demba Diallo of EnGRAIS presenting the Objectives of the meeting.



Participants reviewing AIPs in a group work session.

To ensure accuracy of the data, participants updated and revised the recommended contents of AIPs for the country by including new inputs recently marketed by the private sector as well as national interest additional crops. They also discussed the AIP dissemination plan for Mali and tested messages to be used to reach the various stakeholders who will be involved in the AIP/ FeSeRWAM dissemination process. The number of AIPs developed and validated for Mali increased from the original 50 to the final total of 66 (see Table 1).

Potential key partners took advantage of the meeting to present their current activities and elaborate on the extent to which their networks of extension agents can help disseminate the AIPs and promote the FeSeRWAM across the country.

Table 2 is a tentative road map for the implementation of activities toward the dissemination of the AIPs in the country.

Table 1. Number of AIPs developed and validated for Mali pre- and post-review

CROP	BEFORE REVIEW	AFTER REVIEW	NEW AIPS IDENTIFIED
Cotton	4	7	3
Potato	0	3	3
Maize	4	7	3
Millet	6	6	0
Sorghum	3	4	1
Fonio	0	3	3
Cowpea	5	5	0
Peanut	9	9	0
Sesame	0	2	2
Rice	13	14	1
Wheat	6	6	0
Total	50	66	16

Table 2. Schedule of activities for dissemination of AIPs

ACTIVITY	JUL	AUG	SEP
Select organizations			
Identify national partners			
Validate AIPs, intervention areas, and objectives			
Establish contact with agro-dealers			
Conduct national training and launch activities			
Train extension agents and input dealers			
Conduct cascade training with farmers			
Monitor activities			
Prepare report			
Hold closing meeting and end Phase I			



Fertilizer inspection training.

SUPPORTING NATIONAL EFFORTS ON TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES FOR FERTILIZER INSPECTION AND QUALITY CONTROL: RECENT SUCCESSES IN NIGERIA

Poor fertilizer quality and suitability (balanced formulas aligned with soil conditions) are partly responsible for low yields and low incomes for many hard-working smallholder farmers across the West Africa region. No matter how good seeds and agricultural practices are, farmers' efforts will fail to produce the desired results without appropriate fertilizers. Compounding these problems is the absence of national mechanisms to control the quality of fertilizer distributed.

Considering that agriculture plays a major role in the economies of many West African countries as well as in the well-being of many vulnerable populations across the region, regional and national institutions must develop and enforce fertilizer quality control standards to support farmers' access to and use of appropriate, quality fertilizers to increase their yields and improve their general well-being.

Although Nigeria passed its National Fertilizer Quality Control Law in December 2019 to improve the quality of fertilizer traded and to protect farmers and food security in the country, enforcement of this law has been a major challenge to this point.

To help address this issue, EnGRAIS has been supporting the Federal Government of Nigeria to develop policies and strategies in line with Regulation C/REG.13/12/12, which governs fertilizer quality control in the ECOWAS region. Beyond this, EnGRAIS, in partnership with the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP), conducted a Training of Trainers (ToT) program in Kano for a group of 19 fertilizer inspectors from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) Farm Inputs Support Services (FISS) department on techniques and procedures for fertilizer inspection and quality control.

FISS then used the material and teaching techniques employed by EnGRAIS at the ToT to conduct three cascade training sessions. An EnGRAIS staff member participated in one of the step-down activities to ensure that the knowledge and skills that top-level trainers acquired in Kano were transferred adequately. Through these activities, EnGRAIS indirectly trained 111 inspectors through the cascade trainings conducted by 19 trainers from the ToT across the country, improving their skills and professional output, so they can effectively regulate fertilizer markets across Nigeria.

"When we are trained, we are empowered. Thus, I would like to thank all the partners who made this training possible for giving us the tools to ensure that farmers receive quality fertilizers to ultimately improve food security in our country," said Akpan Christiana Michael, a beneficiary of the ToT program.

As a result of the training program, FMARD officials are now equipped with a better understanding of the provisions of the existing legislation on fertilizer quality control, the inspection modalities, and procedures, as well as the required tools and materials, and will be able to train other fertilizer inspectors in the country.

EnGRAIS continues to support ECOWAS Member States in implementing Regulation C/REG.13/12/12 and its legal instruments to regulate fertilizer quality across the region through strategic partnerships with key stakeholders and national governments, with the aim of making quality and appropriate fertilizers available for farmers to increase their productivity and improve their livelihoods.

PLANNED KEY ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER (JULY–SEPTEMBER 2021)

- Conduct field work for fertilizer cost build-up studies (update Accra, Lome, Abidjan, and Dakar ports/corridors and add trade corridors in Benin and Nigeria).
- Hold a workshop in Cotonou, Benin in August 2021 to validate FTWG statistics for Benin, Niger, and Togo with AFO, WAFA, and local partners. (August 2021).
- Complete preparation of the West Africa Blending Guidelines.
- Continue developing the Fertilizer Cost Simulator with IFDC Headquarters.
- Finalize AIP updates for FY21 with new AIPs developed during the year for Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo.
- Conduct annual update of the FeSeRWAM platform for FY21 to make it more user-friendly and have better user experience to facilitate the dissemination of AIPs.
- Complete FY21 booklet covering 110 AIPs as a supporting tool to support AIP dissemination efforts.
- Conduct a regional Training of Trainers on AIPs and FeSeRWAM and complete plans for national training programs in various countries.
- Plan and complete training of national trainers in selected countries for AIP/FeSeRWAM dissemination in those countries.
- Disseminate AIPs and FeSeRWAM across countries in the region.
- Conduct preliminary work and studies to monitor implementation and evaluate impact of application of “smart” guiding principles on performance of fertilizer subsidy policies/ programs in selected ECOWAS/UEMOA Member States.
- Strategize with Regional Economic Communities on establishment of the West Africa Committee for Fertilizer Control and facilitate organization of its launch and first statutory meeting.
- Conduct laboratory capability assessments in Nigeria, and complete Ghana and Nigeria reports.
- Plan and hold project retreat to prepare for a Joint EnGRAIS/ PAIRED Advisory Committee Meeting (ACM) and plan and execute the ACM in September 2021.
- Continue to explore possibilities of buy-ins and cost-share with various donors across the region.

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