

Evaluation summary

Support programme for the transition of fair trade sectors in West Africa *Équité 2*

Countries: **Multiple countries**

Topic: **Biodiversity**

Assessed by: **GRET**
Assessment date: **2 February 2024**

Key FFEM support data

Project name: Support programme for the transition of fair trade sectors in West Africa

Project number: CZZ2674

Amount financed by the FFEM: €2,500,000

Project grant date: 1 November 2019

Duration: 4 years (extended to 57 months)

Context

The push for agroecological transition, led by the *Équité* programme, derives from the major challenges of the current agricultural crisis that has resulted from loss of ecosystem fertility in West Africa, compounded by the impacts of climate change. A number of initiatives are being rolled out to restore soil fertility in the face of these multiple problems. Family farms are having to implement practices to counter these mounting pressures, the costs of which can be overwhelming. The ability to maintain these practices is thus conditioned by the need for more profitable outlets. This conclusion formed the starting point for the programme, which has focused its activities on strengthening existing virtuous practices or encouraging the emergence of new ones.

Participants and operating methods

The *Équité 2* programme is jointly managed by Commerce Equitable France (CEF) and Agronomes et Vétérinaires sans Frontières (AVSF). The project has also attracted other partners (national fair trade platforms, accreditations, etc.).



Objectives

Overall objective: Contribute to sustainable economic development, fight poverty and strengthen family-run agriculture by supporting the development of climate-resilient fair trade sectors in West Africa through:

Support to help establish fair trade professional organisations (POs) and sectors

Capacity-building in fair trade cocoa cooperatives across Côte d'Ivoire

Consolidating fair trade institutional ecosystems

Employing fair trade as a driver of ecological transitions in production and processing methods that could ultimately yield organic certification

Promoting gender equality and attracting young people into these sectors

Performance appraisal

Relevance

The components of the *Équité 2* project are deemed relevant and complementary. As marketing is a major challenge for cooperatives, it seems valid to support them in developing their technical capabilities through the management of a fund scaled to each cooperative's size. In terms of getting POs into the markets, it seems appropriate to also take secondary action to support national fair trade platforms and accreditations in order to help build national producer networks. The overall structure encourages networking among the various stakeholders to address these common issues.

Coherence

The logical framework demonstrates project coherence and the coordination of these complementary components. However, it remains too broad and difficult to make operational reality, with certain result indicators appearing more like implementation indicators. Coordination with local governments and other funding partners could be tightened.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness appears to be good, with average implementation rates for components 1 and 2 estimated at 95% and 70% respectively. While the project has supported cooperatives reasonably well, the effectiveness of the support for platforms and accreditations has been more limited. Effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation system is also limited. Considering the tightness of the schedule for such an ambitious multi-country and multi-sector project, the level of implementation is considered satisfactory.

Efficiency

For a project requiring regular support on the ground, efficiency has been satisfactory, although HR resources do seem insufficient to meet monitoring and reporting needs along with the cumbersome and ever-evolving administrative requirements. In light of the new techniques adopted locally, the facilities budget has largely been used efficiently.

Impact

The project has had a significant positive impact on the resilience of the economy and preservation of biodiversity. Positive impact was more limited in the areas of social well-being, gender equality (with a more accommodating and non-transformative approach) and governance. It is difficult to gauge the impact on the commercial growth of fair trade products. *Équité* helped enhance the services of national fair trade platforms, without being able to ensure their sustainability.

Viability/sustainability

At this stage, the positive repercussions of this project on fair trade sectors remain uncertain. While national platform activities have certainly been of interest, they have been relatively disjointed in terms of building greater momentum with convincing results in the institutions concerned. Accreditations have lacked traction at a global scale. The viability of cooperatives depends on their size. However, the cooperatives do appear to have adopted the new production techniques for the long term.

Added value of AFD and FFEM support

The AFD has added value to the *Équité 2* project by focusing on developing innovative initiatives, so contributing to sustainable practices throughout the agricultural sector. Not only does this enable capacity-building within producer organisations, it also paves the way for incorporating cross-cutting issues such as social inclusion, gender equality and on-boarding of young people. The positioning of the AFD and the FFEM in these sectors is particularly relevant and should be strengthened further in close coordination with the activities of other funding partners in Team Europe. However, the evaluation does not attribute all positive results solely to the *Équité 2* project.

Recommendations & learnings

The *Équité 2* project takes a holistic approach to enabling effective capacity-building in cooperatives, and their adoption of new agroecological techniques. The facilities (financial endowments managed by the POs themselves) have been vital in furthering the technical and management skills of associations, as well as the services they are able to offer. However, the cooperatives' economic models remain fragile and rely on external financing, with limited access to markets.

In terms of multi-actor networking, support by platforms remains limited, while scope exists to strengthen relationships between fair trade actors to enable effective entry into the market.

Identified as a key need, business development support could have been further enhanced. Access to fair trade markets for these cooperatives is a significant challenge, critical to both their sustainability as accredited cooperatives and to the activities they are developing.

Despite geopolitical crises, the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation, the programme has continued to be effective on the ground and to positively impact beneficiaries.

