ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

WORLD BANK GROUP

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP
GROUPE DE LA BANQUE AFRICAINE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

PRESS RELEASE

Scaling Up Investments to Drive West Africa's Rice Agenda

Turning ambition into action through robust regional collaborations, anchored in national strategies to drive job creation and a more resilient rice economy

ACCRA, June 3, 2026. West African leaders and partners ended the West Africa Rice Investment Roundtable with a clear and strong message: the region needs more investment in rice to boost food security, cut imports, and create jobs.

The two-day event –organized as part of the AgriConnect Initiative, convened by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank, and hosted by the Government of Ghana— brought together ministers, 15 country delegations, investors, agribusiness leaders, and technical experts. Their goal was to support the sourcing of concrete financial and technical partnerships to support their National Rice Investment Action Plans. With demand for rice rising faster than local production, participants stressed the need for large, coordinated investment to help West Africa move closer toward rice self-sufficiency by 2035.

Targeted Investment Areas. The roundtable focused on practical investment opportunities across the rice value chain. These included irrigation, seed systems, machinery, milling, storage, transport, and trade. A major outcome was the presentation of a strong regional pipeline of projects based on national rice strategies. Participants also called for better policy coordination, risk-sharing tools, and stronger public-private partnerships to turn plans into real projects.

Regional Collaborations. The meeting also strengthened commitment among governments, regional bodies, development partners, and the private sector to work more closely together. Participants backed stronger follow-up through regional coordination platforms, including the ECOWAS Rice Observatory, and built the momentum for a Regional Rice Investment Compact to guide the next steps.

By bringing key public and private actors around one regional agenda, the roundtable showed development value, commercial and job creation potential for the rice sector. It also highlighted the importance of strong partnerships to build a more competitive, resilient, and inclusive rice economy in West Africa.

Launch of Ghana's AgriConnect Compact. On the sidelines of the event, the Government of Ghana, supported by the World Bank Group, launched its AgriConnect Compact on June 3. This country-led initiative puts agriculture at the center of Ghana's economic transformation, job creation, and resilience agenda. It aims to create more than 2.6 million jobs, improve food and nutrition security for nearly 3 million people, and attract a $3.5 billion investment program over five years. The Compact focuses on priority value chains such as rice, maize, cocoa, oil palm, and poultry, while supporting reforms to raise productivity and attracting private investment. With a systems approach that includes irrigation, mechanization, climate-

Official Use Only

smart agriculture, and digital innovation, the initiative shows Ghana's commitment to modern, market-led agriculture and offers a strong example for the region.

QUOTES:

Her Excellency Prof. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana:
"The challenge before us is not just about growing more rice, but also about mobilizing the scale of capital required to transform agriculture from a subsistence sector to commercial production, and from fragmented production to integrated value chains. We must therefore also see rice as a strategic economic asset. It is about jobs for young people, incomes for farmers, and strengthening the resilience of our economies against future global shocks."

Dr. Omar Alieu Touray, President of the ECOWAS Commission:
"*Our ambition is clear: to build more competitive, inclusive, and sustainable agrifood systems that strengthen food sovereignty, create economic opportunities, contribute to shared prosperity, and progressively achieve regional rice self-sufficiency by 2035. This Roundtable must therefore serve as a catalyst for action. It must strengthen investor confidence, reinforce partnerships, accelerate financing for bankable opportunities, and help build a more competitive, resilient, and self-sufficient regional rice economy."*

Guangzhe Chen, World Bank Group Vice-President for Planet:
"West Africa has both the pipeline and leadership to accelerate real transformation in the rice sector. Ghana's AgriConnect Compact demonstrates how this agenda can deliver jobs, strengthen resilience, and drive inclusive growth at scale."

Mr. Richard Ofori-Mante, Director, Agricultural Finance and Rural Development, African Development Bank:
« Agriculture must no longer be treated as a social sector; it must be recognized as a productive economic sector capable of driving growth, creating jobs, and powering industrialization. At the center of this transformation is Africa's youth. The rice value chain offers substantial opportunities across irrigation services, mechanization, processing, logistics, digital agriculture, and agribusiness entrepreneurship. Harnessing this potential is essential to turning Africa's demographic growth into an economic dividend."

Media contacts:

- ECOWAS Commission: Joel Ahofodji, Director of Communications, jahofodji@ecowas.int
- Ministry of Finance, Ghana: Emmanuel K.B. Ansah, Head of public affairs, EAnsah@mofep.gov.gh
- Ministry of Agriculture, Ghana: Opoku Gyamfi, Head of public affairs, opokugyamfi2207@gmail.com
- World Bank Group: Kennedy Fosu, Communications and External Relations Officer, kfosu@worldbank.org

For more information on the event, please visit: https://roundtable.torusguru.com/

Official Use Only