



# IMPACT REPORT 2021



# SUMMARY

A word from the Director-----	3
Our key achievements-----	4
Marketing of agroecological vegetables -----	5
Start of the PGS («Participatory Guarantee Systems») certification process ---	5
Creation of a business link between the agricultural cooperatives involved in the certification process and the start-up Agrikoo, specialised in the distribution of agricultural products -----	5
Support for agricultural cooperatives -----	6
Organisational capacity building of cooperatives -----	6
Strengthening the resilience of vegetable cooperatives during the COVID-19 pandemic -----	6
Strengthening the ecosystem of evidence generation and use-----	8
Better understand the landscape of evidence use at local authority level -----	8
Supporting the institutionalisation of the use of evidence at local government level-----	8
Setting up the evidence platform-----	8
EPA 2021 Forum -----	9
Developing tools to build the capacity of West African NGOs to use evidence -----	10
Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic-----	10
Better understand the food habits of urban households and supply them with local and healthy products-----	10
Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on urban gardens -----	10
Some publications-----	11
Outlook 2022-----	12
Evaluation of the distributional impacts of programmes that support innovation for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Benin and Senegal-----	12
Promotion of nature-based solutions in the commune of Abomey-Calavi -----	12
Support for strengthening the institutional environment for digital innovations in the agricultural sector -----	12
Training of West African civil society organisations on the use of evidence ----	13
ACED Evidence Helpdesk -----	13
Developing a research agenda on food security and nutrition in Benin -----	13
Financial report 2021 -----	14

# A word from the Director



After a tumultuous year in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and disrupted all plans, we have gradually resumed our activities. The year 2021 allowed us to reimagine how we can ensure this gradual resumption both at the institutional level and above all with our targets, namely small-scale farmers and policy makers. Following our classic intervention approach, we conducted studies to better understand the impact of the pandemic on farmers in order to identify the most relevant solutions to the problems they face. One of the studies showed, for example, that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a renewed interest in healthy local produce, especially vegetables. As a result, we have provided market gardening cooperatives with the seeds of vegetables that are widely consumed by households. This activity has also been reinforced by support for the certification and marketing of market garden produce.

On another level, ACED has made significant strides in promoting the use of evidence. For example, we published a flagship report on the use of evidence for local development, which provided several avenues for strengthening our work in this area. In addition, with our partners USAID, Save The Children and 3ie, we launched a major initiative to build the capacity of West African Civil Society Organisations to access, understand and use evidence to improve the design and implementation of food security and nutrition interventions.

For the year 2022, we hope for a definitive return to normalcy in order to continue our activities and ensure the realisation of the ambitions set out in our Strategic Plan 2020–2024. We will launch new projects, including the Evidence Helpdesk, support policy makers to strengthen the policy, regulatory and institutional environment for e-agriculture in Benin and develop a research agenda on food security and nutrition.. We would like to thank all our technical and financial partners who continue to support our mission.

Enjoy your reading!

**Frejus Thoto**

Executive Director, ACED

# Our key achievements





## Marketing of agroecological vegetables

### Start of the PGS («Participatory Guarantee Systems») certification process

In the framework of the transition towards agroecology, ACED supports agricultural cooperatives in obtaining their PGS certification. To do this, ACED has, in the preliminary stage, completed a rigorous selection of agricultural cooperatives by taking into account the formalisation, the representativeness of women in the management bodies and the seniority of cooperatives. Three agricultural cooperatives out of the 47 involved in agroecological production in the commune of Sô-Ava were selected for the pilot phase of the certification. In the second stage, the three cooperatives were evaluated by the national PGS certification committee in Benin. Four crops were targeted for certification and validation. These were tomato (Padma F1 variety), green pepper (Gbatakin), nightshade (Gboman) and celosia (Sôman). Following this validation, cooperative control groups and survey trinomials were set up. Then, two capacity building sessions were organised for the members of the cooperatives. The first session dealt with the rules and standards of production within the framework of the PGS. The second session dealt with technical production itineraries. Control tools were made available to the control authorities. Two main activities are planned for the year 2022. These are obtaining PGS certification for the three agricultural cooperatives and conduct the capitalisation and evaluation activities of the initiative.

### Creation of a business link between the agricultural cooperatives involved in the certification process and the start-up Agrikoo, specialised in the distribution of agricultural products

To ensure a sustainable and hassle-free market for agroecological vegetables, the start-up Agrikoo has been identified to market the produce of market gardeners. This start-up guarantees a remunerative price and a secure market for the majority of the agricultural cooperatives' production.

To ensure fairness in the sharing of margins, the operating accounts of each party were established, and the prices for the transfer of vegetables by the producers and for sale

to consumers were defined by Agrikoo and the market gardeners.

## Support for agricultural cooperatives

### Organisational capacity building of cooperatives

The market gardeners were trained in marketing techniques and financial management. This activity trained 50 market gardeners who represented the market gardening groups of the commune of Sô-Ava. The training focused on financial management tools for cooperatives, marketing, commercial negotiation techniques and collective sales. The activity also made it possible to evaluate the practical possibilities of marketing and group sales of agroecological market garden products. These trained market gardeners in turn trained their peers. This triggered a group dynamic in the marketing of market garden products.

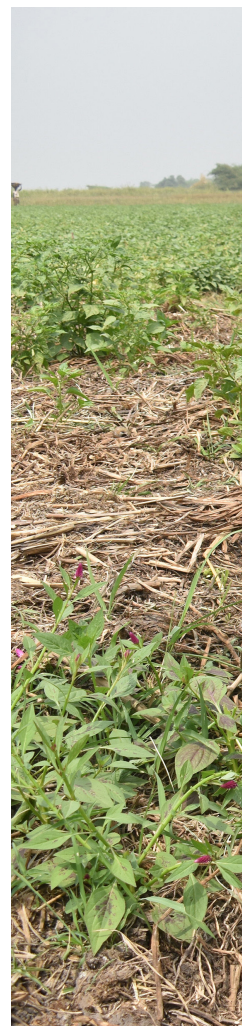
To strengthen these capacities, two sales points were set up in the markets of Akassato (Abomey-Calavi) and Ahomey-Gblon (Sô-Ava). These points were chosen to serve as wholesale and retail outlets for market garden produce. The proximity of sales points to consumers reduces the sales circuit and allows market gardeners to sell their products at a fair price that allows them to remunerate their production efforts and encourage joint sales.

### Strengthening the resilience of vegetable cooperatives during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic and measures to control the virus spread have created distortions in food supply chains. These distortions have reduced the availability of agricultural inputs and food products to the population and caused widespread inflation in the prices of agricultural and food products. As a result, there has been a resurgence of interest in local produce, particularly vegetables.

To take advantage of this market opportunity, ACED supported market gardeners in the production of vegetables for mass consumption. In practice, a study of urban household food habits was conducted to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the diet and food behaviour of households in the cities of Porto-Novo, Abomey-Calavi, Bohicon and Comè. This study reports that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent response measures significantly reduced the dietary diversity of urban households. However, fruits and vegetables were regularly consumed, providing a market opportunity for market gardeners.

Based on these results, ACED provided market gardeners with seeds for staple vegetables (tomato, round and long pepper, amaranth, nightshade and okra), with the aim of transforming the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity and increasing the resilience of market gardeners' cooperatives. This support has enabled 1,000 market gardeners in the commune of Sô-Ava to boost local market garden production and gain market share.





## Strengthening the ecosystem of evidence generation and use

### Better understand the landscape of evidence use at local authority level

We conducted investigations in 2019 and 2020 to better understand the evidence use landscape at local and central levels. This has generated knowledge relevant to promoting evidence use. The report was published to provide an overview of the culture of evidence use in food and nutrition security at the local government level in Benin. It shows that policy makers, especially local authorities, very often use civil society organisations, hospitals and the National Institute of Statistics and Demography (INStaD) to obtain evidence. However, policy makers rarely turn to the research community, which is the main producer of evidence. This is because researchers usually align themselves with the interests of external donors rather than adapting their research questions to the priorities and real needs of local communities. Moreover, the data produced are not generally disseminated to potential users.

### Supporting the institutionalisation of the use of evidence at local government level

ACED has continued the process of institutionalising the use of evidence at the local government level. We have gone from two decrees taken by the commune of Aguégus, in 2020, to 8 decrees taken by the communes of Aguégus, So-Ava, Porto-Novo and Sème-Podji (i.e., two decrees per commune). For each commune, one decree stipulates that decisions and planning processes related to development issues must henceforth be based on evidence, and the other decree designates two persons responsible for coordinating activities and serving as an interface between ACED and their municipality in this area. Thus, the institutional environment has become stronger, allowing us to effectively initiate the next steps.

These are important steps forward, but they are not enough. It remains for the municipalities to move from decrees to action, but also to have the decrees adopted by the other communes. In this context, ACED is about to sign an agreement with the National Association of Beninese Communes in order to extend the process more effectively to the 77 communes of Benin.

### Setting up the evidence platform

During the year 2021, ACED set up the Evidence Platform, which was born out of the observation that policy makers (central government and municipalities) and development practitioners (non-governmental organisations, development partners, private sector, etc.) find it difficult to access research results produced by researchers in universities, research centres and institutes. The Evidence Platform therefore aims to connect all actors involved in the ecosystem of production and use of research results and evidence in the fields of agriculture, food security,

nutrition and environment. It provides a repository of research results based on syntheses produced by our experts, which are directly usable by policy makers and practitioners. It also provides an opportunity for policy makers and practitioners to formulate queries by expressing their evidence needs. The experts will process the queries and produce quick answers based on the available research results. The platform will be officially launched and made available to policy makers and practitioners in 2022.

## EPA 2021 Forum

The Evidence – Policies – Actions (EPA) Forum is an initiative of the EPA network, coordinated by ACED. The 2nd edition of the EPA Forum was organised on 2nd and 3rd December 2021 and designed in a hybrid format under the theme «Connecting data and research to policies to transform the agricultural sector in Benin». The objectives of the EPA 2021 forum were to create a space for dialogue and knowledge sharing between research actors, policy makers and practitioners on the use of evidence in the formulation and implementation of policies and interventions in agriculture, food security and nutrition.

For two days, public sector officials, researchers, development partners, international organisations, non-profit organisations, private sector actors and producer organisations discussed the need to strengthen the ecosystem of evidence generation and use in Benin. During the forum, ACED launched an initiative to formulate 100 critical and current research questions on food security and nutrition in Benin. The report of the EPA 2021 forum is available here: <https://www.acedafrica.org/evenement/forum-epa-2021>



## Developing tools to build the capacity of West African NGOs to use evidence

With support from USAID and Save The Children through the IDEAL (Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning) initiative, ACED, in partnership with 3ie, launched a new initiative for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in West Africa. This initiative aims to build the capacity of NGOs to access, understand and use evidence to improve the design and implementation of food security and nutrition interventions.

As the first step, a study was conducted on the current capacity of NGOs to access, understand and use evidence when designing and implementing interventions in the food security and nutrition sector. The report is being prepared for publication in 2022. As the second step, the capacity building needs of NGOs were identified, and a practical guide and an online course were developed to strengthen the capacity. The practical guide is now available. The online course platform is under construction, and the course content (videos, texts, infographics) is being developed.

## Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

### Better understand the food habits of urban households and supply them with local and healthy products

Like all countries in the world, Benin was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Sanitary and restrictive measures were put in place during the first wave, notably the establishment of a sanitary cordon isolating the communes most affected by the pandemic. To assess the impact of these measures on the food situation of households, ACED conducted an exploratory study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the diet and food behaviour of households in the cities of Porto-Novo, Abomey-Calavi, Bohicon and Comè. The study looked specifically at the effects of the sanitary cordon on the diet and dietary behaviour of urban households. The main findings of the study are that the diets, monthly incomes, and shares of income allocated to food expenditures of urban households within the sanitary cordon were more affected than those of households outside the sanitary cordon.

### Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on urban gardens

In 2021, ACED conducted a second study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security in rural and urban settlements in Benin, with a particular focus on the role played by community gardens. This study (The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security in rural and urban settlements in Benin: do allotment gardens soften the blow? (researchgate.net)) was conducted in partnership with the Free University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and found that the presence and accessibility of community gardens significantly contributed to mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the household food crisis.

## Some publications

- Degrees of formalization of agricultural entrepreneurs: going beyond registration: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08276331.2021.1980681>
- The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security in rural and urban settlements in Benin: do allotment gardens soften the blow? : <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/13/7313/htm>
- COVID-19 and food and nutrition security in Benin: <https://www.acedafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Impact-COVID-19-sur-habitudes-alimentaires.pdf>
- The use of evidence for better decision-making by local governments: <https://www.acedafrica.org/en/publication/the-use-of-evidence-for-better-decision-making-by-local-governments>
- Roadmap for strengthening the vegetable sector in Benin: <https://www.acedafrica.org/publication/feuille-de-route-pour-le-renforcement-du-secteur-maraicher-au-benin>

Find all our publications at <https://www.acedafrica.org/en/publications/>



# Outlook 2022

## **Evaluation of the distributional impacts of programmes that support innovation for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Benin and Senegal**

This initiative aims to better understand the performance and distributional impacts of innovation support programmes for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Benin and Senegal. ACED and IPAR (in Senegal) will conduct studies on the SME support ecosystem and partner with SME support institutions to assess the impacts of their programme. The final objective is to generate knowledge that will enable policies to strengthen the SME support ecosystem so that enterprises can better contribute to socio-economic development. This initiative is supported by IDRC's Evidence for Innovation programme.

## **Promotion of nature-based solutions in the commune of Abomey-Calavi**

With the support of the Small Initiatives Programme (SIP) of the IUCN French Committee, ACED is implementing a nature-based solutions initiative that aims to contribute to the renaturation of Abomey-Calavi into a green and biodiverse city. It aims to support the city of Abomey-Calavi on the one hand in the transformation of administrative land reserves into productive green spaces (community farm gardens) and non-productive green spaces (nature and recreational corners) and on the other hand, in the development of a canopy plan, an urban forestry policy instrument and a decision-making and action support tool for the effective and sustainable management of the city's tree heritage. This initiative is part of a larger initiative called "Trees in the City" implemented by ACED and supported by the Ministry of Living Environment and Sustainable Development.

## **Support for strengthening the institutional environment for digital innovations in the agricultural sector**

The ecosystem of digital innovations for the agricultural sector in Benin is currently characterised by a myriad of digital applications and solutions. However, these are not interoperable, evolve in silos and in an uncoordinated manner, and have a very low level of synergy and complementarity. Support to policy makers to improve the institutional environment is therefore necessary to strengthen the synergies between actors and facilitate the development and scaling of digital innovations relevant to the agricultural sector. ACED aims to provide this support in two ways. First, the initiative will enable stakeholders to better understand the ecosystem of digital innovations in the agricultural sector in Benin. This will be achieved by mapping the digital innovations, actors and institutional factors that influence digital agriculture (e-Agriculture). Second, it will support policy makers to develop the necessary policy instruments to harmonise the ecosystem and facilitate the development and scaling of digital innovations relevant to the agricultural sector. Policy makers will then be able to fulfil their role as facilitators and catalysts in the ecosystem of digital innovations in the agricultural sector.

## **Training of West African civil society organisations on the use of evidence**

In 2022, capacity building for civil society organisations (CSOs) in Francophone West Africa will continue on how to access, understand and use evidence to improve the design and implementation of food security and nutrition interventions. The CSO capacity assessment report on the use of evidence is being developed and will be published in 2022. CSO capacity will be strengthened through an online course platform and webinars.

## **ACED Evidence Helpdesk**

Activities within the framework of improving the ecosystem of evidence production and use in Benin include the capacity building of policy makers and practitioners to access, understand, and use evidence. In 2022, ACED will launch its helpdesk, which aims to facilitate access to evidence in response to specific and precise user requests. It will use a language that can be easily understood and assimilated by policy makers and practitioners.

## **Developing a research agenda on food security and nutrition in Benin**

The initiative to formulate 100 critical and current research questions on food security and nutrition in Benin, launched in 2021, will begin its operational phase in 2022. The research questions obtained at the end of the process will be presented during the EPA 2022 forum.

# Financial report 2021

ACED is an organisation that receives its resources through grants from different donors ranging from private foundations to bilateral and multilateral organisations. During the year 2021, we mobilised a total of 246,022,035 CFA Francs as grants and an inflow of 143,916 CFA Francs from Social Security. The main financial partner of ACED is the Hewlett Foundation. All the resources are used to implement several initiatives in Africa and mainly in Benin in line with our 2020–2024 Strategic Plan.

## RESOURCES BY ORIGIN

At the international level	Amount in CFA Francs
Hewlett Foundation	172 902 000
Save The Children / USAID	16 220 965
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, Netherlands	15 142 767
Fondation de France / CFSI	11 807 226
European Union	11 501 191
Amsterdam Centre for World Food Studies (ACWFS)	8 879 690
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands	6 566 129
AgroFood	1 311 914
LixCap	609 913
ACBF	555 480
<b>Total 1</b>	<b>245 497 275</b>
<b>At the national level</b>	
AgriBiz	524 760
<b>Social security</b>	
CNSS	143 916
<b>Total 2</b>	<b>668 676</b>
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES</b>	<b>246 165 951</b>

## EXPENSES BY DESTINATION

Labels	Amount in CFA Francs
Purchases	23 178 644
Transport	10 079 594
External services	5 689 403
Other external services	81 138 898
State, tax and duty	722 237
Donations	765 700
Staff expenses	12 214 911
Depreciation and amortisation	5 087 471
Other costs	9 046 792
<b>TOTAL EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>147 923 650</b>

Below is a presentation of the main lines of our balance sheet from January to December 2021 in accordance with the OHADA Accounting System (SYSCOHADA).

ASSETS	AMOUNT IN CFA FRANCS	
	N	N-1
Intangible assets	9 690 110	1 000 000
Property, plant and equipment	46 550 788	45 172 277
Financial assets	300 000	4 449 892
<b>TOTAL FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>56 540 898</b>	<b>50 622 169</b>
Miscellaneous debtors	2 230 251	14 618 806
Prepaid expenses	177 205	
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>2 407 456</b>	<b>14 618 806</b>
Investment securities	37 904 531	
Cash in hand	86 263	85 918
Banks, postal cheques, cash and similar	209 658 287	136 032 901
<b>TOTAL CASH AND ASSETS</b>	<b>247 649 081</b>	<b>136 118 819</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>306 597 435</b>	<b>201 359 794</b>

LIABILITIES	AMOUNT IN CFA FRANCS	
	N	N-1
Capital	8 860 371	143 853 477
Retained earnings	181 199 526	
Net result	-80 418 614	46 206 420
Investment grant	24 054 152	8 530 889
<b>TOTAL EQUITY AND SIMILAR RESOURCES</b>	<b>133 695 435</b>	<b>198 590 786</b>
FINANCIAL DEBTS AND SIMILAR RESOURCES		
Other debts	172 902 000	
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>172 902 000</b>	<b>2 769 008</b>
<b>TOTAL CASH AND LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>306 597 435</b>	<b>201 359 794</b>

Accounts certified by SYECA-AFRIQUE

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