



Concept note

Digital Technologies and Tools for sustainable and resilient Agriculture and Food Systems in West Africa

Date: 31st March 2023



1. Background and description of AGriDI and Variwwa

The project *Accelerating inclusive green growth through agri-based digital innovation in West Africa (AGriDI)*¹ is premised on the idea that taking a ‘food systems’ approach, which looks at various segments from production to consumption², coupled with applications of digital transformations, could be one of the ways to address the twofold challenge of feeding a growing world, and not least, the African population and, of reducing negative externalities on the environment and human health.

Also, another assumption is that digital technologies/innovations will offer innovative ideas that make it possible to better understand and analyze food environments and co-design agro-food ecosystems. These innovations will also inform governments of sustainable food systems, while enabling better management of waste and natural resources to promote a green economy, and a better understanding and handling of the interactions of biotic and abiotic stresses on plants, animals and humans, and of political, social and economic risks.

Overall, the project intends to achieve a conducive environment for the development and use of agri-based digital innovations, especially for women and youth farmers, which eventually will lead to accelerating inclusive green growth in West Africa.

AGriDI is implemented in five countries of ECOWAS, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria through the deployment of ten local projects that are promoting digital technologies. To this effect, a baseline study was conducted to assess the ecosystem of digital technologies in the five countries. The main finding of the baseline study is that the rate of development of digital innovations in agriculture is closely linked to the efforts of each country in providing policies and strategies enabling access by the population (and especially by those living in rural area) to basic connectivity infrastructure (electricity and Internet). For example, the Mobile Connectivity Index (MCI)³ in the five countries is still below 60, with the highest values recorded in Ghana and Nigeria that promote innovations more actively. Interestingly, all five countries have acknowledged the need to embrace a digital economy and developed either a separate document outlining their Strategic Digital Agriculture Plan (Benin and Nigeria) or embedded such strategies in their national development plans (Burkina Faso, Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire).

VaRRIWA – Valorising Research Results and Innovation in West Africa assumes that links between academia, the public and private sector, and civil society will be when strengthened will ensure that the results of research and innovation (R&I) are readily accessible and effectively disseminated, exploited, and used.

VaRRIWA's activities will promote a dynamic Research and Innovation ecosystem that will enable actors who are active upstream (identification of R&I needs and

¹ AGriDI and VaRRIWA have received a grant from the ACP Innovation Fund, part of the OACPS Research and Innovation Programme, a programme implemented by the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States with the financial support from the European Union (<https://oacps-ri.eu/en>).

² Mbow, C., C. Rosenzweig, L.G. Barioni, T.G. Benton, M. Herrero, M. Krishnapillai, E. Liwenga, P. Pradhan, M.G. Rivera-Ferre, T. Sapkota, F.N. Tubiello, Y. Xu, 2019: Food Security. In: *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems*.

³ GSMA The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2022 (https://www.gsma.com/r/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-State-of-Mobile-Internet-Connectivity-Report-2022.pdf?utm_source=website&utm_medium=download-button&utm_campaign=somic22).

development of solutions) as well as downstream (economic exploitation and application of solutions) to create value and fully benefit from research products. VaRRIWA is active in 4 ECOWAS countries (Senegal, Bénin, Burkina Faso, and Togo) and is running 14 third-party projects which provide training, Incubation and networking to final beneficiaries carrying out R&I valorization. Most of the R&I valorization projects that are being Incubated are agriculture-related projects.

2. Objective of the webinar

This webinar aims at sharing information on the status of digital technologies in the agricultural sector with focus on challenges and opportunities in the West-African countries.

The public webinar is expected to draw lessons on digital technologies and or innovations from the third-party projects of *AGriDI* and *VaRRIWA* as well as of other country or regional initiatives.

3. Structure of the webinar

The webinar will focus on the thematic issues related to the status of digitalisation in the field of agriculture, and key challenges and opportunities at regional level. The baseline studies conducted by *AGriDI* and *VaRRIWA* will be presented to provide specific status of different countries.

4. Participants

The webinar targets all stakeholders interested by the digitalization of agriculture sector in Africa in general and West Africa in particular. We expect the participation of farmers, NGO workers, private sector, policymakers, and research scientists. To this effect, the language of communication will be as simple as possible to allow all participants to get the message from guests or presenters.

5. Expected outputs of the webinar

This webinar will lead to the following outputs:

- A summary report from the discussion on the ecosystem of digital technologies in agriculture in West-Africa
- Visibility of the project *AGriDI*, *VaRRIWA* and the project-implementing consortium, as well as the OACPS and the EC
- Exchange of ideas to develop new partnerships or initiatives (including other webinars) promoting digital technologies in Africa

6. Date and time

The webinar is planned on **March 31st, 2023**, from 10:00am Dakar time; 11:00am Beninese, Nigerian and Brussels time and 13:00pm EAST (East Africa Standard Time).

7. Registration and the meeting link

The link for registration and meeting (zoom) is provided below. Kindly register before the meeting.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcscuqopiMrHdbJ3ypM4I5BvY6J62vUYXgp>