The regional initiatives and policies are worth being encouraged, along with more ambitious political means and instruments. National and regional strategies have been defined within the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). These policies must now be put into motion, by reinforcing the coordination and complementarity between the national and regional levels, and by endowing themselves with institutions and adequate monitoring mechanisms (regional agencies, regional funds, monitoring-evaluation systems in which the various stakeholders are involved). At the same time, it is important to reduce the inequalities among countries through solidarity mechanisms, in order to compensate the potential losses the LDCs (least advanced countries) might suffer from their integration into a more liberalised regional market. In order to guarantee the working out and implementation of policies that are of public interest, participation by professional organisations and civil society must be reinforced. While these latter can represent a real driver of social change, they still too rarely take part in decision-making and are considered as partners for policy implementation, even though they have direct ties with the local economic agents and are deeply involved in the issues linked to the development of the continent.

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**Undernourishment affects 37% of East Africans and 12% of West Africans. The continent’s food needs will continue to increase sharply over the coming decades, due to demographic growth and to expected improvement in living standards. Trade between African countries can help meet this need and at the same time strengthen the roles of family agriculture and local products in domestic economies. However, intra-African trade is still very weak compared to imports from the rest of the world and represents only 10 to 20% of the continent’s trade exchanges. Its development entails suitable agricultural and trade policies that further the development of local production and marketing value chains.**

**Focusing on intra-African trade**

It is very much in the interest of Africa to rely above all on its family farms and its businesses from the agri-food sector to produce its food:

- it has agronomic potential and the natural resources needed;
- the development of local agri-food value chains would make it possible to consolidate the outlets for family farms and to create new jobs in the urban and rural sectors;
- the food crisis and upsurge in prices in 2008 showed all the risks that Southern countries take when they abandon their food independence to make their agricultural trade exchanges. Its development entails suitable agricultural and trade policies that further the development of local production and marketing value chains.

**Impediments to intra-regional trade**

There are still several challenges to take up:

- Insufficient agricultural production. The main reason why Africa imports some of its food is that its agricultural production remains insufficient. West Africa imports between a third and half of the rice it consumes, despite the many support programmes for rice-production development set up since 2008. The causes of this insufficiency are many in number and vary depending on the value chain (lack of control of water, difficulties in access to production factors and to services, low level and volatility of prices paid to producers, etc.).

- Inadequate infrastructures. The main obstacles are the poor quality of roads and the lack of complementary infrastructures (water, energy, information, etc.).

- Inefficiency in agri-food value chains. The conditions of storage, processing of products and marketing are often inefficient, that is, the food chains do not reach their full efficiency. This is the case, for example, in transborder markets where traders are at the mercy of the quality of the services they receive from the countries of transit, and the price of intermediate goods.

- Value chains that are often inefficient, lack of services and infrastructures. The conditions in which storage, processing of products and marketing are carried out lead to prices for producers that are low and unstable, as well as competitive, compared to imported products. Reasons for this include the inefficiency of certain processing systems; the large number of intermediaries; the poor state of communication infrastructures, which isolates some regions and cut them off from sales markets; or the high price of services (such as energy or credit). It costs less to have a container shipped to Abidjan from Le Havre than from Dakar.

Traders complain of the lack of services at the regional level: lack of security for female traders who work in transborder markets, lack of credit...
While the strong market protection of the East African Community (EAC) makes it possible to limit competition from low-priced imported products, the situation is different in much of West Africa. Importing basic foodstuffs (e.g. rice, powdered milk) into WAEMU (the West African Economic and Monetary Union) or into ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) has a deflationary effect on consumer prices and thus on the prices to producers. Before the revision of the common external tariff (CET) of the ECOWAS countries, the CET applied within WAEMU was very low compared to that of the EAC: 10% on maize compared to 50% at the EAC level; 10% on paddy rice compared to 75% in the EAC; 5% on milk and wheat compared to 60% in the EAC.

The political influence of certain economic sectors (wholesalers, major traders) or social sectors (urban populations) leads to national policies that facilitate export and import with the rest of the world, rather than those that stimulate production and regional exchanges, especially in the coastal cities that have good port infrastructures. The fact that civil society (peasant or trade organisations, NGOs, social movements, researchers, etc.) is not involved enough in political choices tips the balance of power in favour of several dominant players.

Recommendations for agricultural and trade policies

In order to encourage the development of intra-African trade and to remove the obstacles to it, GRET recommends:

- **Supporting African countries in their desire to strengthen regional integration and achieve their objectives of food security and self-sufficiency.** These objectives must be reflected in national and regional policy orientations and in the bilateral or multilateral trade agreements now being negotiated. Four types of policies must be combined coherently: support for the development of agricultural production, strengthening of value chains and support for activities to process production, construction and improvement of transport and trade infrastructures in the country and at the borders, and effective protection of regional markets. The process underway in West Africa, along with implementation of ECOWAP (ECOWAS agricultural policy), is very promising results at the regional level and in each country, as long as the states implement the policies that are decided on.

- **Strength of regional products.** It is necessary to provide protection via tariffs for food products—including processed products—that come into competition with regional products. The example of milk in East Africa shows that it can be useful in enabling policies for agricultural production support to achieve their objectives. In order to consolidate the construction of a domestic market, the international trade negotiations in which the different states are involved must not disturb the processes of integration by exacerbating tensions among countries (Economic Partnership Agreement – EPAs with the European Union, commitments made by the states to the World Trade Organisation – WTO, bilateral negotiations, etc.).

- **Invent new regulation mechanisms.** The impediments to intra-regional trade related to tariff and non-tariff barriers must be resolved. Elimination of export bans must be accompanied by food security management measures. In addition to the improvement of storage capacities for family farmers, these regulation mechanisms can promote the building up of national or regional stocks, mechanisms for market monitoring and information, and measures to make it possible to supply areas suffering shortages and the most vulnerable populations from areas where there are surpluses (i.e., security nets).

- **Change the paradigm on issues of sovereignty and the role of civil society.** One issue that arises is the relationship between national and regional sovereignties. Reinforcement of regional leadership is often needed to help resolve the contradictions between countries. Solidarity mechanisms and trade policies must enable the entire country to benefit from regional integration and to benefit from the latter for their growth and the improvement of the living conditions of their population. Just liberalising the markets in no way represents a guarantee for balanced development and may increase unbalances and inequalities, as well as lead to poverty traps for all the countries.
services, significant costs in monetary transac-
tions between countries, absence of mecha-
nisms for settling trade disputes between op-
erators in different countries, difficulties in driving livestock to market by foot or by convey-
go, etc. The markets are not very competitive: producers know neither the market prices nor the methods of storage. They must sell their production at harvest time, relying on a limited number of trad-
ers for even just one, and they must accept low-
prices. They miss out on a significant proportion
of the added value.

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products, the situation is different in much of
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The political influence of certain economic
sectors (wholesalers, major traders) or social
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Recommendations for agricultural
and trade policies
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GRET recommends:

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and effective protection of regional markets.
The process underway in West Africa, along with
implementation of ECOWAP (ECOWAS’ agri-
cultural policy), is encouraging results at the
regional level and in each country, as long as
the states implement the policies that are
decided on.

- Continue support for developing production
and the agri-food sector. In many regions, agri-
culture still requires significant support in order
to intensify and develop production sustainably.
It is also important to: promote the development
of value chains as a whole (especially small agri-
food businesses); strengthen the organisation,
economic role and negotiating power of farmers
(storage capacities, wholesale markets, process-
ing and packaging, information on agricultural
markets); organise value chains by furthering co-
operation and negotiation frameworks between
players in order to increase the effectiveness
and fairness in the distribution of added value;
innovate and develop policies and specific sup-
port for the development of a fabric of small
agri-food processing businesses.

- Strengthen protection of regional products.
It is necessary to provide protection via tariffs
for food products—including processed products
—as that come into competition with regional pro-
duction. It must be strong enough to guarantee
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milk in East Africa shows that it can be useful in
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**Family Farming: intra-regional trade to feed the African continent**

Undevelopment affects 37% of East Africans and 12% of West Africans. The continent’s food needs will continue to increase sharply over the coming decades, due to demographic growth and to expected improvement in living standards. Trade between African countries can help meet this need and at the same time strengthen the roles of family agriculture and local products in domestic economies. However, intra-African trade is still very weak compared to imports from the rest of the world and represents only 10 to 20% of the continent’s trade exchanges. Its development entails suitable agricultural and trade policies that further the development of local production and marketing value chains.

**Impediments to intra-regional trade**

There are still several challenges to take up.

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- **Value chains that are often inefficient, lack of services and infrastructures.** The conditions of services and infrastructures.

- **Traders complaint of the lack of services at the regional level: lack of security for female traders who work in transborder markets, lack of credit, less to have a container shipped to Abidjan from Le Havre than from Dakar.**

- **Quality products now provide many opportunities for developing agriculture and intra-regional trade.**