




Editorial

Preface: 2nd Edition of the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development's Symposium on "Processing and Transformation of Agricultural Products in West and Central Africa: Achievements and Opportunities for Private Sector Engagement"

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1. Introduction

1.1. Context

The agricultural sector faces new challenges, including pest and disease outbreaks, land degradation, and the effects of climate change. These challenges can be addressed through new technologies and practices, combined with appropriate tools and approaches for communication and knowledge management. These innovative technologies, practices, and approaches have the potential to increase production and productivity, reduce post-harvest losses, improve the quality of products and services, and make food systems more resilient and sustainable. Moreover, they provide a critical foundation for ensuring that agriculture remains a viable and thriving sector in the face of ongoing and future challenges.

In recognition of the pivotal role of research and development in addressing these challenges, CORAF organized an international symposium from 21st to 23rd November 2023, in Lomé, Togo. The theme of the symposium was, "Processing and transformation of Agricultural Products: Achievements and Opportunities Available to the Private Sector for Job and Wealth Creation in West and Central Africa". The symposium, which was attended by 147 participants, started with a call for abstracts, and 265 abstracts were received from authors spread across the West, Central, and Eastern Africa region, out of which 31 papers were accepted as full research papers with 18 manuscripts finally accepted for publication after the peer-review process.

This symposium was more than just a gathering of minds; it was a confluence of ideas, a testament to the power of collaboration in advancing agricultural research and development. It provided a unique opportunity for plant breeders, researchers, students, private companies, national agricultural research systems, and policymakers to discuss their findings, share their achievements, and forge new partnerships. These interactions are the seeds from which future innovations will grow, paving the way for a more prosperous and resilient agricultural sector in West and Central Africa region and beyond.

The symposium's outcomes and discussions, presented in this *Proceedings* volume, reflect the commitment of CORAF to advancing agriculture in the region, addressing contemporary challenges, and fostering innovative solutions for the benefit of West and



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Central Africa. Let it spark new ideas, foster deeper understandings, and ignite the drive to continue exploring and innovating in the field of agriculture.

1.2. Organizers

The Symposium is an annual regional scientific meeting in West and Central Africa focusing on current and important topics in the agricultural research and development areas. It is organized by the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF) and its partners. CORAF is a sub-regional organization made up of the national agricultural research systems (NARS) of 23 countries in West and Central Africa. It was established in 1987, with a mandate to coordinate and facilitate innovative and cutting-edge research products needed to unlock the agricultural potential of West and Central Africa.

1.3. Scopes and Topics

The 2023 symposium focused on “Processing and transformation of Agricultural Products: Achievements and Opportunities for Private Sector for Job and Wealth Creation in West and Central Africa”. For this proceeding, it covered three topics:

- Foods processing and nutrition;
- Postharvest management and conservation;
- Foods security.

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