



## National Alliance Against Hunger in Cameroon

### Alliance Participation at WFD 2009 Theme: Achieving food security in times of crisis



2008: the entire world endures a nightmare: the financial and economic crisis, at first wrongly held to be limited to the Northern economies, extends its reach to engulf the economies of the world as a whole, proving particularly damaging to those of the South. A country such as Cameroon feels the full force of its effects.

According to a report published in the review *Afrique Agriculture No 371* for July and August 2009 focusing on the impacts of the financial crisis on agriculture in our country, exports have fallen

dramatically. Examples include timber (down by 18%), the cotton sector (69,000 tonnes in 2008, down from 132,000 tonnes in 2007), rubber, whose price has plummeted by 40%, mainly due to the crisis hitting the tyre industry.

Lessons learned include the observation that markets alone can never regulate an economy, and that while lack of regulation at national, community and international levels may benefit capital interests, such a situation is without doubt harmful to the development prospects of any country.

As a response to the crisis, governments throughout the world have gone through their country's or community's legal systems with a fine-toothed comb in an effort to readjust or create the framework for economic activity, so as to safeguard growth and employment and thereby tackle poverty.

For its part, the government of Cameroon has stepped up cabinet meetings and launched an inter-ministerial committee to discuss solutions to the crisis.

Through the *Groupement Interpatronal du Cameroun (GICAM)* the private sector has issued a financial analysis, describing the situation in certain sectors and offering some solutions.

Given the role of agriculture, and its strategic importance for the development of our country, the government's efforts to project this sector are worthy of note.

However, while a sector such as education enjoys a framework law which clearly defines the role of key players and the organisation of educational activity, agriculture does not have a single legal framework in a position to regulate farming in Cameroon, since documents on agricultural policy produced since the 1990s do not serve this function.

Aware that this lack is disrupting interventions by actors – who are neither coordinated nor organised – as well as exacerbating hunger and poverty, the National Alliance, together with COSADER – the collective of NGOs for food security and rural development – has for more than two years now campaigned for a framework law for agriculture at almost all meetings with decision-makers attended by our representatives.

In our view, such a law would act as a basic foundation, enabling citizens to call the system into account regarding access to food and their right to an adequate diet. The crisis makes such a step even more urgent.

As part of our activities for JMA 2009, following the letter that we addressed on September 15th 2009 to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development announcing our intention to step up the campaign, we are now planning a second edition of «dialogue between women and rural youth with decision-makers», to be held in the Chamber of Agriculture on October 15th 2009. The first edition took place at JMA in 2008. It is our hope that the occasion will enable young small-scale producers of both sexes to take part in the debate, in the presence of decision-makers and officials from FAO, and to take in their opinions.

The Chamber of Agriculture is our main partner and ally in this process.

As part of this campaign, we will also be seeking to increase awareness among members of Parliament, during the parliamentary session starting in November.

It is our fervent hope that the outcome will be a bill for a framework law, which will be developed in a participatory manner before being put before parliament and voted.

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