



To interested media staff, May 2021

Invitation and information for media

Back to the roots of sustainable food systems

Documentary on the agro-ecological transformation in West Africa

The documentary “The Green Vein – The agro-ecological renaissance of West Africa” portrays a bouquet of flourishing agricultural projects (see trailer [English](#) / trailer [French](#)). Small farmers feed a large share of the West African population, especially in the growing cities. In the film, bottom-up initiatives and partnerships between research and civil society encourage and whet the appetite for more: more healthy food, more diversity, more future.

The broad transformation towards sustainable, resilient and productive agriculture in West Africa is urgently needed. Only in this way can it satisfy the hunger of a growing population without endangering the livelihoods of later generations. The concept of a one-dimensional "Green Revolution" based on growth, monoculture and agrochemicals has had its day. The preservation and development of soil fertility are at the centre of this agro-ecological renaissance.

“A hungry man is an angry man.”

“The Green Vein/La veine verte” takes you on a journey through five West African countries. To places and people where change is already happening. Fertile fields, forests and gardens contrast with the slums of the Nigerian city of Lagos with its 14 million inhabitants. In the film, Nigerian agronomist Beatrice Aighewi states: “A hungry man is an angry man.” Because agriculture not only nourishes, it also creates peace, security and less migration. For the small farmers who feed a large part of the West African population, this is an enormous task.

“The Green Vein – The agro-ecological renaissance of West Africa” is a documentary film, produced by the r4d programme¹, about the agro-ecological² movement of West Africa. “Science, civil society and art intertwine in ‘The Green Vein’ to create an atmospheric means of communicating research knowledge,” says r4d programme coordinator Claudia Zingerli. Especially with the strongly application-oriented research in the thematic area of “food security”, communication to and with the grassroots is central. “People and the environment should benefit from the research findings as soon as possible,” explains Claudia Zingerli.

Reggae star and ex-professional footballer as ambassadors of agricultural change

Like radio, films have the advantage that they also reach people who do not read much. Through the sensuality of the medium, messages become emotionally imprinted. Even though the situation is serious, the film does not show any doomsday scenarios. Without being naïve, it leaves viewers with hope and courage. To reach as many people as possible, parts of the film were dubbed into five different West African languages and distributed locally as short videos. Screenings of the entire documentary at festivals and by African television stations are to follow.

What reggae musician Tiken Jah Fakoly says and does has weight in Africa. Fakoly uses this influence to campaign for self-confident smallholder agriculture. In the film, we meet the giant in the Bob Marley shirt on his own organic farm in Mali. He says, “Since we all have to eat, agriculture is the basis of everything.” Role models are important for the spread of agro-ecological techniques. Ex-professional footballer Ousmane Konaté, who played in Portugal, hung up his goalkeeper gloves and became an organic farmer in Mali. So successful that today he employs more than 80 people.

¹ Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development (r4d programme, www.r4d.ch, www.k4d.ch), a jointly funded research programme of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

² As a concept, [agro-ecology](#) goes beyond organic farming. In addition to ecological aspects, it also takes into account social aspects that are needed for a sustainable and fair food system. Agro-ecology is an important way to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the international 2030 Agenda and to create well-functioning agricultural and food systems. It is promoted by the FAO.

Artist and filmmaker Sara Baga shot the film while travelling through Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin and Nigeria in autumn 2019. Together with r4d researcher Fernando Sousa, she embodies the core of the Food Systems Caravan.³ The aim of this knowledge caravan was to facilitate equal encounters and exchanges between r4d researchers and the affected, practising population.

Invitation to the film premieres in West Africa

“The Green Vein” will be screened at the following dates and locations:

18 May 2021: Mali, Bamako. 4pm to 10pm at the Institut français. Besides the film crew (Sara Baga, Fernando Sousa), Ousmane Konaté and the Nigerian researcher Beatrice Aighewi will be present. Also possible, but not yet certain, is the presence of Tiken Jah Fakoly.

June 2021: Ghana, Accra

June 2021: Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou

September 2021: Benin, Cotonou

September 2021: Nigeria

Media representatives and interested parties who would like to participate in a premiere in West Africa should contact r4d programme coordinator Claudia Zingerli: r4d@snf.ch, Tel.: +41 31 308 21 74.

Please note that changes at short notice - also due to the pandemic - are always possible. If you are interested in interviews, please contact us. We will be glad to put you in touch with smallholder farmers, entrepreneurs and institutions in West Africa who engage in agro-ecology.

The film will be released in Switzerland and Europe in **autumn 2021**. It will be shown at film festivals and made available through free rentals and streaming.

Up-to-date information, trailers and flyers in French and English as well as photo material can be found at

- <https://www.greenvein.org> (English),
- <https://www.laveineverte.org> (French), and
- <https://www.facebook.com/foodsystemscaravan/> (English/French)

Contact

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³ See <https://foodsystemscaravan.org>