

# Benin Platform Meeting

Opportunities in Benin: Water & Agri-food Nexus

19 May 2021



| **Water Support Programme**

## Water Support Programme



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**NWP** | Netherlands  
Water Partnership



Netherlands Enterprise Agency

This platform meeting is part of the Water Support Programme (WSP), an initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).

The programme is executed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) and the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP).

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# 1. Water Support Programme

## 1.1. Overview

The Water Support Programme (WSP) is an advisory programme established by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and executed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) and the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP). Through the Programme, the Dutch government supports Dutch Embassies in 11 partner countries to implement water programmes (Bangladesh, Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, South Sudan and Yemen). The WSP builds long-term relationships between the local water sector and the Dutch water sector (DWS). Each Embassy is supported by a Strategic Advisor on Water, knowledgeable about the local context and with the local networks. They are guided by sustainable development principles and act as a go between what is needed in partner countries and the Dutch Embassies, and between the Dutch Embassies and the DWS. They share information on the policy instruments in the partner countries and on the financial instruments available from the Netherlands.

# 2. Benin Platform meeting

## 2.1. Overview

The WSP strives to connect and inform the broader DWS (private sector, public sector, civil society, knowledge institutes, etc.) on the opportunities for cooperation and business in the WSP partner countries. As such, country platform meetings are organised. Under the framework of the WSP, the NWP, RVO and MoFA hosted an informative session on the water and agri-food nexus opportunities in Benin on Wednesday, 19 May from 11:00-12:30 CEST<sup>1</sup>.

Global food security has been a major policy goal for the Netherlands for more than a decade, with the ambition to become a global leader in circular agriculture, as part of the effort to build a green and circular economy. As the Dutch Embassy in Benin gradually phases out activities in the area of water this year, the session was the occasion to discuss the collaboration between the water and agri-food sector.

There is much for the DWS to offer from technical, market development and change process expertise to supporting education, training and capacity development at different levels on the water and agri-food nexus agenda.

## 2.2. Key messages

“No water, no food”

### 2.2.1. EKN Benin | Beninese and Dutch policy context

- Water as a focus will ultimately be phased out at EKN Benin in 2022.
- Policies and business environment is becoming more conducive for opportunities in the horticulture sector in Benin.

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<sup>1</sup> This session was complemented by a meet and greet with the Dutch Embassy in Benin. The meet and greet was a moment for the private sector to directly engage with Embassy staff with ideas and questions.

- Policy is steering towards more private sector interventions (knowledge and innovative technologies) on the nexus water-agriculture-climate-renewable energy and where more focus will remain on youth, small scale farmers and women's economic and social resilience.
- Focus of the coming years will be on the North of Benin.
- Huge market (Nigeria), with existing strong trade relations.
- EKN Benin can help with local presence/representation and partners and coordination and collaboration with ongoing initiatives, projects and programmes.

#### 2.2.1. RVO | Private Sector Development Tools

- Catalogue of Private Sector Development Tools available for Benin for Dutch and local businesses, PPPs and G2G engagement.
- RVO can facilitate different types of interventions, including loans for Investments by Dutch companies and SMEs in Benin (DGGF), export promotion programs for local SME's (CBI), Government to Government (G2G); Knowledge to Knowledge (K2K); Orange Corners; incoming and outgoing trade missions and study visits; matchmaking, seminars, trade fairs, (feasibility) studies, training, demonstrations of technologies or services. In addition, Impact Clusters were addressed whereby a cluster of companies takes a specific value chain or sector to the next level through introduction and application of new knowledge, skills and technologies.
- A key element is that these activities are in line with the policy agenda of EKN Benin and has a clear link with existing programs in the country.
- PSD Coach (RVO) as a first point of contact for EKN Benin for private sector development activities.

#### 2.2.1. SNV | Emploi des Jeunes pour une Amélioration de la Sécurité Alimentaire (EJASA) au Nord Bénin

- Young people are key to a productive agriculture sector and food security.
- Opportunities in the horticulture / irrigation nexus exist at the small, medium and large scale. SNV focus is with smallholder farmers around the horticulture value chain, including water availability, water management, infrastructure management, conflict management, crop diversification and supply management.

#### 2.2.1. Holland Greentech (Benin) | Doing business in the horticulture sector in Benin

- Various challenges offer opportunities in the horticulture sector in Benin around knowledge exchange and introducing new technologies to build capacity of farmers, ensure availability of water, and establish sustainable irrigation systems.
- In Benin there is a high local market demand, especially in the dry season.
- High market potential in Nigeria for produce.
- Benin is politically stable, and creating a business is facilitated by the government of Benin.
- There is relatively low competition in Benin.

### 2.3. Next steps

Follow up Meet and Greet sessions were organised offering a moment for the private sector to directly engage with Embassy staff with ideas and questions around water and agri-food nexus opportunities in Benin.

For further questions, please feel free to reach out to Caroline Figuères ([c.figueres@nwp.nl](mailto:c.figueres@nwp.nl)) and Raül Glotzbach ([r.glotzbach@nwp.nl](mailto:r.glotzbach@nwp.nl)).

## Annex 1. Programme

Time	Item
11:00 11:05	Welcome and introduction   Caroline Figuères (RVO/NWP)
Part 1	
11:05 11:20	Beninese and Dutch policy context   Sigrid Meijer (EKN Benin)
11:20 11:35	RVO Private Sector Development Tools   Ingrid Flink (RVO)
11:35 11:50	Q&A
Part 2	
11:50 12:00	Emploi des Jeunes pour une Amélioration de la Sécurité Alimentaire au Nord Bénin   Piet Vroeg (SNV)
12:00 12:10	Doing business in the horticulture sector in Benin   Miriam Belhaine (Holland Greentech Benin)
12:10 12:25	Q&A
12:25 12:30	Closing

## Annex 2. Participant list

First name	Last name	Organisation
<b>Organiser(s)</b>		
Caroline	Figuères	NWP/RVO
Raül	Glotzbach	NWP
<b>Speaker(s)</b>		
Ingrid	Flink	RVO
Miriam	Belhaine	Holland Greentech - Benin
Piet	Vroeg	SNV
Sigrid	Meijer	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
<b>Participant(s)</b>		
Aimé	Sedegan	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Angelika	Kessler	CARE Nederland
Annemarie	Klaasse	eLEAF
Auke	Boere	Resilience B.V.
Clement	Edah	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
David	Quenum	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Emeline	Bereziat	Akvo
Faezeh	Alibabaei	Ferr Tech B.V.
Gert Jan	Bom	Practica Foundation
Jan	Kamstra	IUCN NL
Joop	de Schutter	Waterpartner Foundation
Kayode Raoul	Balogoun	DEDRAS
Kees	van 't Klooster	IMA-Wageningen
Lisanne	Evenhuis	NWP
Michel	Tonneijck	Royal HaskoningDHV
Néné	Barry	Witteveen+Bos
Nico	Barning	Nuffic
Nicole	Osuji	VNG International
Niels	Lenderink	RAIN
Peace	Quadt	Ferm O Feed B.V.
Rachade	Sefou	Nuffic
Rasoul	Mikkelsen	Royal Eijkelpark
Roos	M	YEP
Sina	Samimi Sedeh	Ferr Tech B.V.
Stephen	Teeuwen	NCEA



## Annex 3. Q&A from chat

#	From	Questions/Comments	To	Answer
1	Michel Tonneijck (Royal HaskoningDHV)	Project for mapping agriculture, results could be shared with OmiDelta and OmiDelta may offer other data in return, e.g. communal planning maps in Ouémé Delta.	Sigrid Meijer (EKN Benin)	This is a national initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture. Best way would be that OmiDelta directly approaches the authorities in Benin to propose this collaboration.
2	Niels Lenderink (RAIN / Aidenvironment)	EKN is phasing out water, but at the same time steering towards the water-agriculture nexus. That seems contradictory to me. Or not?	Sigrid Meijer (EKN Benin)	It was a political decision to phase out of the water sector, which is not just IWRM, but also water supply and sanitation. What is important is there will be no bilateral funds for specific water related projects for the future, but we will still work in food security and nutrition, so that is why we want to maintain the possibility to still exchange knowledge and expertise in this area by linking it to intervention in food security and nutrition. The exit strategy can provide more clarity on this.
3	Nene Barry (Witteveen+Bos)	Mostly when it comes to private sector projects, funds (loan/equity) can be arranged but the bottleneck remains the co-funding from the private party. Does the EKN have any support for that and what is your experience in general?	Sigrid Meijer (EKN Benin)	As explained in the presentation by Ingrid, it is specifically RVO who have instruments to support the private sector.  In some projects it is possible to have financing of private actors on certain activities that contribute to the results we want to reach. For example, in our BeniBiz project (implemented by TechnoServe) there are instruments for matching grants for local entrepreneurs, and for the beneficiaries of EJASA (implemented by SNV) they will benefit from certain contributions from

				<p>the project, however at the moment we do not have projects in Benin where we can collaborate and co-finance initiatives of Dutch private sector companies. This is something we could always investigate the possibility to develop. In my experience as Project Manager of a EKN funded project in Kenya, there was the possibility to have specific interventions where private companies paid half of the intervention costs, while the project paid the remaining half. In this situation it was about training farmers with the use of new climate smart technologies or access to improved seed input, etc.</p> <p>For the moment, and because of the situation in Benin with regards to private sector development, it is different to Kenya. A project like in Kenya has yet to exist in Benin.</p>
4	Jan Kamstra (IUCN NL)	Can you elaborate a little more on IWRM as a bottleneck? For instance, we notice a growing number of competing claims when it comes to use of water especially in the Oueme Delta.	Sigrid Meijer (EKN Benin)	<p>I do not think I have more detailed information than you do, but also in the North (focus area of the Embassy now) there are the more and more conflicts around water. For more details, better contact our implementing partners in IWRM in OmiDelta (EKN Benin can provide contact details).</p>
5	Rachade Sefou (Nuffic)	Tolaro is already a company of a certain size; what efforts have been made to make the APPS Toolkit more flexible to stimulate the growth of smaller companies?	Ingrid Flink (RVO)	<p>Concerning the PSD toolkit, various interventions have been undertaken to stimulate SME development, e.g. the Impact Cluster HortiBenin whereby Holland Greentech (a Dutch SME) aims to grow its businesses further in Benin. 5 Cooperatives are also supported in this Impact Cluster to professionalise their business services as well.</p>

			Also, in 2019, a business plan competition was organised for local young entrepreneurs through the PSD toolkit. We are currently looking to see if something similar can be done in the North of Benin.	
6	Rasoul Mikkelsen (Royal Eijkelpkamp)	Local presence, representation and local partners are key for successful business in Benin. How can the Dutch embassy, RVO, etc. specifically support the Dutch SME's and private sector to identify strategic partners in Benin? Furthermore, please elaborate a bit on Government role in various projects?	Sigrid Meijer (EKN Benin)	<p>To a certain extent the Dutch Embassy can facilitate contacts, however we expect implementers to already have some basic knowledge before the start of any project and to do ongoing stakeholder analysis during the implementation of projects, in case of changes in the environment.</p> <p>Regarding the role of the government, they do not have a direct implementing role of course, however, we expect projects to be well aware of local government policies and have regular contacts for coordination and collaboration on the ground.</p>
			Ingrid Flink (RVO)	<p>RVO can organise trade missions and matchmaking between Dutch SME's and Beninese companies. Due to COVID-19, we have experience with doing this digitally, e.g. in Senegal.</p> <p>RVO facilitates the tender procedures, reviews applications of project proposals and manages the projects from a distance etc. for the various projects.</p>

7	Jan Kamstra (IUCN NL)	Is there any possibility for financing specific work on policy issues? For instance, addressing destructive and still increasing impact of (illegal) sand winning linked to strong growth infrastructure...also linked to growth of the private sector.	Ingrid Flink (RVO)	If this is part of a larger, ongoing project, we can support assessing environmental and social impact of infrastructural projects. But we do not finance stand-alone policy work. For Develop2Build feasibility studies, ESIA are integrated here and conducted by Commission m.e.r. (Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment).
			David Quenum (EKN Benin)	This is a real issue that is going to be addressed by the B2B project on Lac Nokoué as a part of the results. The IUCN proposal could be a complementary study for addressing a storage of sand dragged out from the lake to be stored for strong growth infrastructure use. This could be a mitigation solution for the environmental challenges generated by the private sand mining companies.
8	Nene Barry (Witteveen+Bos)	Does RVO support local private startups in a similar set-up as my question to Sigrid (see #3)? So as co-financing in a bigger investment project with private funding?	Ingrid Flink (RVO)	<p>Most RVO instruments are focused on Dutch SME's, except for CBI who supports local SMEs in export to the European market and indeed the PSD toolkit provides opportunities to do so as well. Orange Corners has experience with co-financing by private partners. Orange Corners Innovation Fund (currently closed) supports access to finance for local entrepreneurs: <a href="#">Orange Corners Launches Pilot Innovation Fund</a>.</p> <p>Note that for DGGF, Triple Jump &amp; PwC facilitates Track 2, financing local SMEs through intermediary investment funds and seed capital &amp; business development.</p>

9	Peace Quadt (Ferm O Feed B.V.)	<p>What are the opportunities for companies like us (Ferm O Feed B.V.) who are organic fertilisers in the SNV projects in Benin (and Holland Greentech)?</p> <p>Organic fertilisers address low water supplies (due to the high organic matter content) and it is not restricted to the organic sector as 98% of Ferm O Feed B.V. clientele are conventional farmers.</p>	Piet Vroeg (SNV)	<p>SNV has done a basic market analysis of the needs of people who want to start their business in horticulture. First of all, that is about identifying an appropriate site where there is water (available also outside of the rainy season – highest priority). Next level priority is good quality seeds. After that, other inputs are considered: pesticides, fertilizers. Organic fertilizer was not even mentioned, however, you have to take into account that for regions where SNV is busy, horticulture is not very well developed for the moment, the technology being used is not very sophisticated, also the knowledge on organic fertilizer is not that high. There is a great potential, but it needs to be proven to farmers otherwise they will not accept it, it needs to be at very good price otherwise they will not buy it. For the moment, I do not think that the farmers as a market is strong enough to accept organic fertilizers, but maybe in the future. One of the objectives is to show new technology for farmers to absorb.</p>
			Miriam Belhaine (Holland Greentech - Benin)	<p>Agree with Piet, it is hard to introduce new product in the sense it takes time to introduce, there is however a high demand for fertilizers (organic or not), but currently the ones used are for cotton production and not fit for vegetable plants.</p>
10	Michel Tonneijck (Royal HaskoningDHV)	In increasing productivity, what is your experience on water-management issues?	Miriam Belhaine (Holland Greentech - Benin)	Not enough boreholes (and also a problem to finance these boreholes) to have stable access to water.

11	Auke Boere (Resilience B.V.)	How are the low-tech greenhouses financed?	Miriam Belhaine (Holland Greentech - Benin)	We will probably try to introduce them via the help of a project, to be able to set-up demonstration greenhouses. Then private clients will follow.
12	Nico Barning (Nuffic)	What is the input of TU Delft for the TVET institutions? I guess mainly on Water related issues and needs?	Miriam Belhaine (Holland Greentech - Benin)	Their input is on entrepreneurship in agriculture (they have an entrepreneurship centre specialised in the sector). With TU Delft, Holland Greentech will organise entrepreneurship workshops at the TVETs.