POSTER N°1


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CENTRE DE RECHERCHES AGRICOLES NORD-OUEST (CRA-NO)
1. IMPORTANCE OF COTTON SECTOR

Agriculture in Benin: Semi-subsistence system
- 54% of active population; 25 - 40% of the GDP.

Cotton: chain-value & main cash crop valuing before 2005:
- 350,000 farmers & 37% of the total cultivated area
- 35% of households & 80% of rural household incomes
- 80% of agricultural exports & 25% of fiscal revenues
- 60% of the country’s industrial sector.

Why and how such a profitable and critical sector scrambled?

2. OBJECTIVES

- Analyze the historical evolution of cotton production in relation to the perceptions of farmers in Benin.
- Identify social processes that the sector has undergone in the context of international contingencies.

3. METHODOLOGY

- Literature review.
- Key informants interviews.
- Exploratory survey through focus-group interviews.
- In-depth interview with:
  - Farmers’ organizations leaders
  - Households & Case studies

4. DEVELOPMENT OF COTTON PRODUCTION

Historical phases of cotton development

- 1895 - 1960: Colonial Time
  - Developing industrial cotton production
  - Farmers full of goodwill
  - Benin (ex-Dahomey) as French first best result of colonial cotton experience in Africa

- 1960 - 1972: Continuation of Colonial Cotton Policy
  - First cotton riots in the north
  - Creation of first farmers’ group

- 1972 - 1990: Cotton as Colonial Symbol
  - Revolutionary period
  - Designing national agricultural system

- 1990 - 2006: Cotton as White Gold
  - Complete liberalization
  - Strengthening of farmers organizations
  - Competition, mismanagement, conflicts
  - Cotton as political instrument

- 2006 - Now: Cotton as a Nightmare
  - Agony of the goose that lays golden eggs
  - From public to private monopoly
  - Legislating on cotton: hundreds of orders and decrees

Bleak future

5. PRODUCTION & PRICE TRENDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area (x1000 Ha)</th>
<th>Production (x1000 Tons)</th>
<th>Yield (Kg/Ha)</th>
<th>Price (FCFA/Kg)</th>
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6. WEAKNESSES OF THE SYSTEM & CONSEQUENCES

- Overly-regulated system.
- Over-politicization of the sector.
- Over-ginning capacity (~600,000 tons) and low production (350,000 tons)
- Atomization of organisations.
- Mismanagements & billions of arrears
- Shifting to private monopoly
- High rate of abandonment & sharp decline of production.

7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

- Actors of cotton system caught in a trap they designed to make profit.
- Cotton as a makeshift crop or last resort.
- Cotton production has become a vicious cycle.
- More coherence needed in state role.

For quality of life