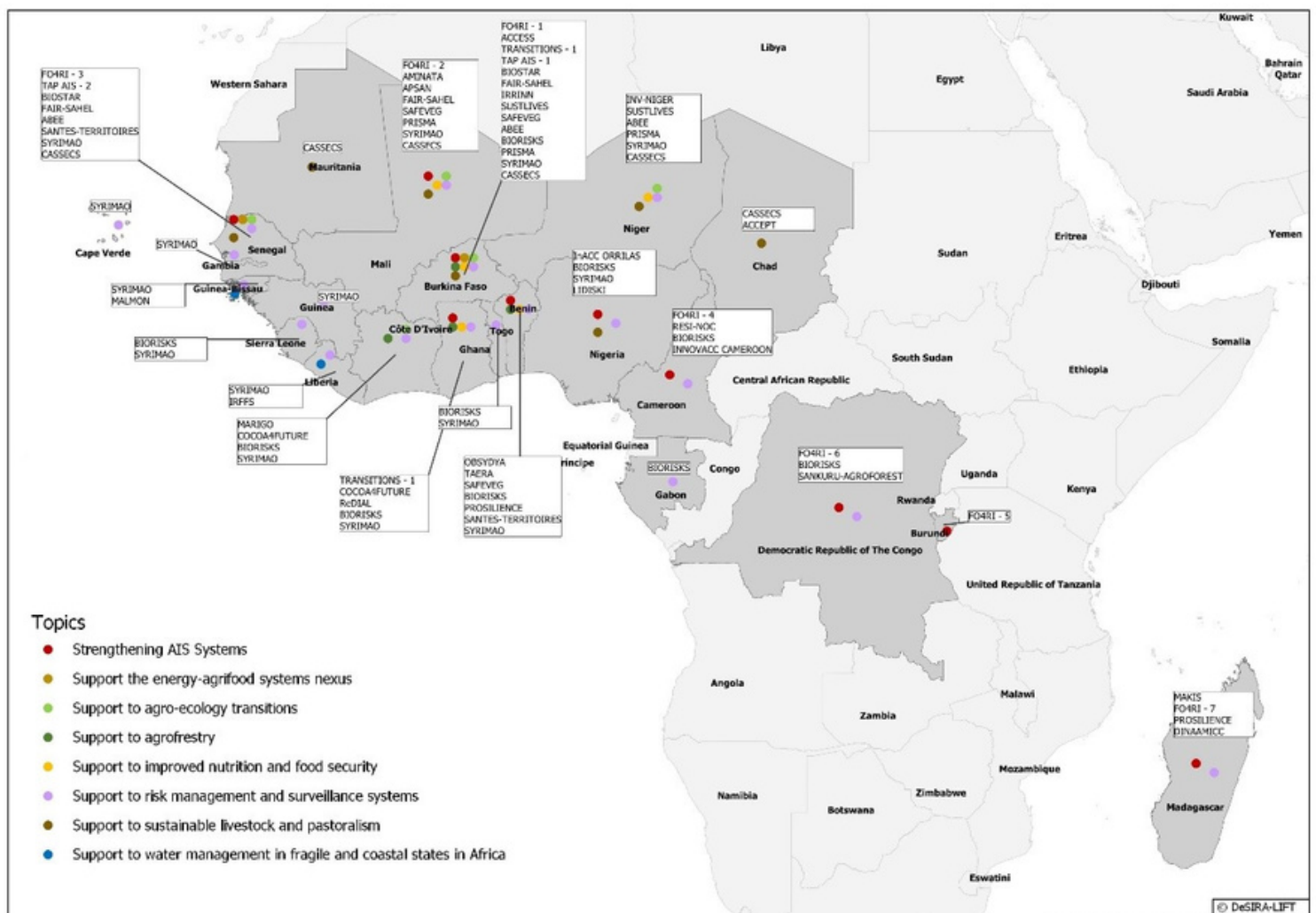


# CLUSTER 1

## Western Africa, Central Africa & Madagascar



## CLUSTER PROFILE

Cluster 1 comprises DeSIRA projects in Western and Central African countries and Madagascar\*. It is a large cluster, with over thirty (30) DeSIRA projects in over 20 countries. Many of these projects operate in multiple countries within the Cluster (and a few beyond the Cluster), and many countries host several DeSIRA projects. The most significant number of DeSIRA projects are present in Burkina Faso (13), followed by Senegal (8) and Mali (8), Benin (7), and Niger (6), while Mauritania, Cape Verde, Gambia, Gabon, and Burundi host one project each.

Many of Cluster 1 countries are located in the Sahel region, highly vulnerable to land degradation and climate change. The DeSIRA projects seek to address these challenges, covering various thematic areas, including risk management and surveillance systems, agricultural and rural transformation, agroecology transition, nutrition and food security, and sustainable livestock and pastoralism.

When it comes to geographical coverage, ECOWAS leads the SYRIMAO project in 15 countries, and CORAF leads the BIORIKS project in 10 countries. A strong presence of CIRAD as a leading organisation can be noted, with 11 projects in seven countries. The variety of strategies applied by DeSIRA projects in Cluster 1 is also significant. The projects work towards change at all levels of Agricultural Innovation Systems - niche, innovation support services, and policy environment. They target a large array of innovations: from technical to organisational; some propose innovations at the level of innovation support services. There are several projects which engage with farmers to jointly define research topics, conduct farm experiments, or undertake farmer-led research.

\*The criteria used to organize the DeSIRA projects in clusters were both geographic and linguistic. In the case of Cluster 1, the common language is French except for Ghana and Nigeria where the language spoken is English and Guinea Bissau where the language is Portuguese.

Some of the projects use the potential of Multi-stakeholder Innovation Facilities, such as innovation platforms or living labs (choosing to either strengthen the existing platforms or create new ones). Several projects plan to engage in policy dialogue or advocacy activities.

During SA1 Inception Workshops, most Cluster 1 projects were in the mid-phase of implementation. We could assess that a few projects formulated their theory of change (ToC) in a participatory way. Others were facing the challenge of aligning their ToC with already planned activities. In addition, context uncertainties of various nature (sanitary, political, security-related, administrative) generated delays in implementation and required additional adjustment of the ToC.

Projects are heterogeneous in terms of progress (deployment of activities, monitoring of outputs, tracking of outcomes), MEL structuring, resources for MEL, and conceptual understanding of participative research/innovation trajectories. A strong demand for setting a Community of Practice was identified in order to get to know better the other DeSIRA projects and partners. The projects expressed the need for developing their MEL system, conducting an open innovation process, engaging in work with non-academic stakeholders, and facilitating multi-stakeholder platforms.

There is potential for inter-project synergies in some of the Cluster 1 countries, for example, in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Benin around the theme of agroecology transition, in Nigeria, where three projects work on risk management, in Cameroon, or Madagascar. Furthermore, there are potential regional inter-projects' synergies at the level of common thematic, such as agroecology transition, crop pests and diseases, or agro-pastoralism, or around similar methodological choices, such as multi-stakeholder platforms.