

AfDB, ECOWAS sign \$12 million agreement to boost food security in West Africa



Agriculture Department and the ECOWAS Rice Observatory, will spearhead the implementation of the initiative.

During the signing ceremony, Dr. Touray reaffirmed ECOWAS' dedication to fast-tracking the implementation of REWARD, emphasizing its alignment with the bloc's 4X4 Strategy, which focuses on regional peace and

The African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission have signed a \$12 million grant agreement to implement the Rice Resilient Value Chains Development Project (REWARD) and boost food security in West Africa. The signing ceremony took place at the ECOWAS Commission Headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria, marking a significant milestone in regional food security efforts, a press release on ECOWAS website stated. The REWARD project aims to promote public and private investments in rice value chains, leveraging successful business models to enhance local production. The initiative is part of a broader AfDB-funded regional rice development program covering all 15 ECOWAS member states. The agreement was signed by ECOWAS Commission President, H.E. Dr. Alieu Omar Touray, on behalf of the regional bloc, and Dr. Abdul Kamara, AfDB's Director General for Nigeria, representing the bank's President, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina. The REWARD project forms part of a larger \$650 million multinational program aimed at ensuring rice sovereignty and food security across the region.

According to the statement, rice is a staple food for millions in West Africa and a key economic commodity. *"Despite Africa's vast agricultural potential, West Africa continues to heavily rely on imports to meet demand, placing a strain on economies and food systems. With demand expected to rise significantly in the coming years, strengthening local rice production is not just a priority but an urgent necessity,"* the statement noted. With rice demand expected to rise in the coming years, the REWARD project seeks to bridge this gap through policy reforms, improved agricultural input regulation, and enhanced regional digital monitoring systems. The ECOWAS Commission, through its Economic Affairs and

security, deeper economic integration, good governance, and inclusive development. *"I want to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude, on behalf of ECOWAS and all ECOWAS Institutions, to the President of the African Development Bank, Dr. Akinwumi ADESINA, for his commitment to the development of the African continent in general and West Africa in particular. Dr. Adesina's role and dedication to Africa's development is known to all and is extremely appreciated for what he has done for the continent and ECOWAS region during his tenure as the President of the African Development Bank. Food and rice production are part of food security, which is also related to peace and security. So, for us, an important project such as REWARD must be implemented fast. The project aligns with our 4X4 Strategy, which is anchored on enhanced regional peace and security, deeper regional integration, good governance, and inclusive and sustainable development."* Dr. Touray stated. Similarly, Dr. Kamara reiterated AfDB's commitment to bolstering food security and value chain development in the region.

The REWARD-ECOWAS project is part of a comprehensive strategy to implement the ECOWAS Regional Rice Roadmap (2025-2035) and the Action Plan of the ECOWAS Rice Observatory. It is also aligned with the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) and the African Development Bank's broader vision of enhancing agricultural productivity and strengthening regional food systems. With this grant agreement, the statement said, ECOWAS member states now have the opportunity to transform their rice sectors, secure food sovereignty, and reduce their dependence on external markets. The success of REWARD will not only feed millions but also create jobs, stabilize economies, and reinforce the region's resilience against future food crises.