

# West and Central Africa

**US\$2,177.7 million**

invested by IFAD in the region's ongoing portfolio

**US\$162.9 million**

in IFAD financing approved in 2023

## 24 countries

Benin *	3
Burkina Faso	3
Cabo Verde *	1
Cameroon	1
Central African Republic	2
Chad	3
Congo	1
Côte d'Ivoire *	2
Democratic Republic of the Congo	3
Equatorial Guinea	
Gabon	
Gambia (The)	1
Ghana	3
Guinea	1
Guinea-Bissau	2
Liberia *	3
Mali	4
Mauritania *	2
Niger *	4
Nigeria	3
Sao Tome and Principe	1
Senegal	4
Sierra Leone	2
Togo	2

Numbers indicate ongoing projects and programmes

\* Countries with ongoing ASAP grants

## 51 ongoing programmes and projects

in partnership with 22 countries in the region at the end of 2023

## 2 new programmes and projects

approved in 2023 in Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic. Additional financing approved for projects in Chad, Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Mauritania and Sierra Leone

## Highlighted project

# Ghana and Nigeria

The [Promoting Sustainable Cage Aquaculture in West Africa \(ProSCAWA\)](#) project strengthened rural livelihoods in Ghana and Nigeria by applying knowledge, technologies and expertise in cage aquaculture. Implemented in collaboration with two private sector companies, ProSCAWA developed the capacity of fish farmers for profitable cage culture businesses. Productivity increased, for example, from 700 kg of fish every eight months to 3,000 kg in six months at one of the project sites in Nigeria.

**Over 500 smallholder fish farmers were trained in small-scale cage aquaculture best management practices and business development**

**Increased availability of affordable fish protein improved nutrition in local communities**

**An online fish marketing platform was developed**

## Nigeria

Omotayo Samuel displays a catfish just taken from one of the two fishponds she manages. She sells her catfish both in bulk to supermarkets and locally to consumers.

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Despite the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, accentuated by the war in Ukraine, West and Central Africa is on the road to economic recovery. As global commodity and energy prices stabilize, inflation – including food price inflation – is expected to ease. Growth for 2024 is projected at 4.5 per cent. However, this projected growth remains vulnerable to internal and external shocks, including the recent political instability in the region.

Many of the countries in the region are affected by conflict and other threats, such as climate change. Indeed, out of 24 countries in the region, 11 are on the World Bank list of countries in fragile and conflict-affected situations. This is holding back progress on the SDGs. Hunger continues to rise across sub-Saharan Africa – with prevalence being higher in rural areas – while progress in reducing and ending poverty has been insufficient. More needs to be done to strengthen the resilience of rural communities against the range of threats they are facing.

## Scaling up investments to leave no one behind

In the context of “leaving no one behind”, IFAD-financed projects in West and Central Africa aim to address the root causes of fragility while also building the resilience of small-scale farmers. In line with commitments, we have increased investments in mainstreaming youth, gender, nutrition and climate change. In addition, together with its government partners and bilateral and multilateral organizations, IFAD is implementing regional and subregional programmes aimed at building local resilience. For

example, the Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflicts and Climate Change (SD3C) addresses regional conflict, climate change and the impact of the pandemic. The Regional Programme for the Integration of Agricultural Markets (PRIMA) is designed to improve regional market integration for agricultural commodities, beginning in Benin and Togo.

In addition, we are aware that more needs to be done to attract financing for food systems transformation in West and Central Africa. To bridge the financing gap, IFAD is crowding in investments and technical expertise from the private sector through its private sector investment window. For example, in Nigeria, IFAD’s support to Babban Gona, a socially responsible agricultural trading company providing end-to-end farmer services, is creating market access for small-scale rice and cassava producers.

## Strengthening resilience to climate change and other shocks

In Mauritania, the PROGRES project has provided small-scale farmers with irrigation infrastructure, water tanks, improved seeds and other support. This has enabled them to extend their growing seasons, producing diverse and nutritious crops year-round.

**“With all the help, we are able to produce any time we want,” explained Sidi Ahmed Jeddo, a vegetable farmer and participant in the project. “We produce vegetables in the winter and summer.”**

The improvements in water retention and management have also enabled farmers in drought-prone areas to reclaim arable land and widen their plots.

Building resilience requires advancing a range of sustainable solutions to the threats rural people are facing. In Sierra Leone, the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project promotes climate-smart farming practices such as zero slashing and burning techniques and rotating the cropping of the main cocoa crop with auxiliary crops. Over 1,500 hectares of farmland for more than 1,000 small-scale cocoa farmers have benefited from these techniques.

**“The adoption of climate-smart techniques not only helped to keep my farm healthy but the intercropping methodology also provided fast income and nutrition for my household,” said Iye Kamara, a 33-year-old woman cocoa farmer who participated in the project.**

The project includes a youth entrepreneurship scheme in which young people are given training in best agronomic practices. This has helped many young women and men start careers in agriculture.



**“Farming eventually became my preferred option, thanks to the project,”** said Morie Brima, a 24-year-old participant in the project.

## Putting young people at the centre of recovery and resilience

Young people are central to IFAD’s work across the region. Africa’s youthful population holds the key to its future. IFAD-supported projects are specifically tailored to young people, offering them the training, services and technology they need to succeed.

In Benin and Nigeria, the Youth Employment in Agribusiness and Sustainable Agriculture Project has given young people the skills, equipment and know-how to succeed as agroentrepreneurs. More than 2,000 previously unemployed young people have become agroentrepreneurs, using their skills to take up opportunities in lucrative segments of local value chains from fish farming to plantain and banana processing.

**“Now I have a farmhouse and a farm,”** said Awoniyi Folake Temitope, a participant in the project. **“And I have people working with me because I cannot do this work alone.”**

## Realizing the potential of women to drive positive change

Digital technologies are making it easier to connect to markets and take advantage of new opportunities. But women are less likely to benefit because they are less likely to have access to these technologies. IFAD-supported projects address this divide by providing women with digital tools and training in how to use them so they can build successful businesses.

In Nigeria, the Value Chain Development Programme uses digital tools, along with training and advice on how to add value to products, to support rural women in creating thriving businesses in cassava value chains. Watsaji Angye, a participant in the programme, has learned how to use her mobile phone, which was provided by the programme, to market the high-value cassava flour she learned to produce. Using her phone she has joined online groups of fellow farmers, where she shares and receives tips on how best to grow and market her produce. Now she is exporting her products to nearby countries such as Benin, Cameroon and Chad.



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**“I built a processing factory with good equipment such as stainless fryers, a grating machine, and pressers which I accessed through the use of digital technology,”** said Watsaji. **“I have also built and opened up a new shop where I sell my products.”**