Improving internal governance within an agricultural cooperative in Togo: strategies and results

Producer organisation: Togolese Coordination of Farmers’ Organisations and Agricultural Producers

Internal Governance Case Study 5: Togo

Forest and Farm Facility

André Yawo Tokpa
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Acronyms

AFDI  Agriculteurs Français et Développement International (French Farmers and International Development)
AFR100  African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative
CROPPA  Coordination Régionale des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles (Regional Coordination of Farmers’ Organisations and Agricultural Producers)
CTOP  Coordination Togolaise des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles (Togolese Coordination of Farmers’ Organisations and Agricultural Producers)
FAO  Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFF  Forest and Farm Facility
FFPOs  Forest and farm producer organisations
IFAD  International Fund for Agricultural Development
OHADA  Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa
PNPER  Projet National de Promotion de l’Entrepreneuriat Rural (National Project for the Promotion of Rural Entrepreneurship).
ROPPA  Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (Network of Farmers Organisations and Agricultural Producers of West Africa)
SLM  Sustainable land management
ZAAPs  Planned agricultural development zones
Summary

This case study explores the internal governance tactics and strategies of the Togolese Coordination of Farmers’ Organisations and Agricultural Producers (Coordination Togolaise des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles or CTOP). It examines how CTOP’s governance corresponds to rules and practices at organisational, administrative, financial and technical levels to ensure its optimal functioning. CTOP is a national platform set up on 10 July 2001. Its aim is to promote and constantly defend the value of professional, competitive, dynamic and sustainable agriculture at the service of family-run farms. To this end, it is committed to:

- Representing Togolese farmers’ organisations at national, sub-regional and international levels
- Contributing to the development of solidarity among Togolese farmers, and between them and their counterparts in other countries
- Encouraging consultation and cooperation between professional agricultural organisations
- Contributing to the socioeconomic development of rural areas
- Fighting for a favourable environment for the development of agriculture, and
- Defending the interests of farmers.

CTOP attaches vital importance to the active participation and responsibility of its direct stakeholders, as well as to transparency. Its key tactics are therefore based on:

- Continuously strengthening the representativeness of CTOP’s forest and farm producer organisation (FFPO) members and to ensure equity for men, women and young people in its various governing bodies
- Establishing college for women and youth to ensure the representation, coordination and defence of the interests and specificities of women and youth in family farming and FFPOs.
- Implementing and scrupulously complying with strategic texts and documents adopted by all stakeholders
- Upholding free speech to enable all stakeholders to express their opinions
- Decentralising the various entities (colleges and Regional Coordination of Farmers’ Organisations and Agricultural Producers or CROPPAs) to promote proximity and take into account the realities of each area
- Conducting regular self-assessments at all levels to ensure the overall quality of results and progress towards achieving CTOP’s vision and mission
- Facilitating the provision of economic services offered by FFPOs to forestry and agricultural producers, thereby improving their membership of the organisation and providing them with the means to participate financially in the life of the organisation
- Ensuring transparency and accountability, which demonstrates integrity and has built trust with partners at all levels, including government
- Engaging in advocacy through its membership of national, sub-regional and international networks and actively participating in platforms to raise visibility, and
- Using social media networks to increase the organisation’s visibility and to maintain communication between members and employees.

Key lessons from CTOP’s experience include that good internal governance strengthens its credibility, the confidence of its partners, the mobilisation of resources and the achievement of its objectives. It motivates and inspires active participation, and therefore solidarity between all members to drive forward action, achieve results and work towards the realisation of CTOP’s vision and mission. It also builds CTOP’s integrity and trust with partners, who can provide substantial resources, and enables CTOP to contribute towards achieving global goals such as climate action, biodiversity conservation and food security.
1 About Togolese Coordination of Farmers’ Organisations and Agricultural Producers (CTOP)

1.1 CTOP’s background, vision and mission

The Togolese Coordination of Farmers’ Organisations and Agricultural Producers (Coordination Régionale des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles or CTOP) is a national platform set up on 10 July 2001 with the mission of promoting and defending the value of professional, competitive and sustainable agriculture in the service of family farming, forestry and fisheries.

Its vision is to be a credible network that is strongly rooted at the grassroots level and representative of family farmers in Togo, effectively participating in and influencing the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of sustainable agricultural and rural development policies, and providing appropriate and local services to its members. It aims to help ensure that no family farmer is left behind, including women, young people and people living with disabilities.

CTOP’s aim is to promote and constantly defend the value of professional, competitive, dynamic and sustainable agriculture at the service of family-run farms. To this end, it is committed to:

- Representing Togolese farmers’ organisations at national, sub-regional and international levels
- Contributing to the development of solidarity among Togolese farmers, and between them and their counterparts in other countries
- Encouraging consultation and cooperation between professional agricultural organisations
- Contributing to the socioeconomic development of rural areas
- Fighting for a favourable environment for the development of agriculture, and
- Defending the interests of farmers.

1.2 Location and membership

CTOP is based in Lomé, the capital of Togo, but covers the whole of the country’s forested area, with its rich biological diversity. In terms of membership, to date 21 umbrella forest and farm producer organisations (FFPOs) representing 565,000 forest and farm producers who are members of CTOP. The 21 FFPOs cover all agri-food and pastoral sectors. Table 1 shows changes in membership since 2010.

Table 1. Membership trends 2010–2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of FFPO umbrella members</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of forest and farm producers represented by the FFPO members</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>550,000</td>
<td>565,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3 Services, products and land use

1.3.1 Services offered by CTOP
CTOP offers its members a variety of services, including:

- Developing farmer leadership skills, including for women and young people, through training and coaching
- Defending producers’ interests through advocacy and lobbying at national, sub-regional and international level (through world forums)
- Monitoring policies and programmes to support family farmers at national, sub-regional and international levels and in relation to international initiatives
- Financial intermediation (such as support in drawing up business plans, linking with decentralised financing systems, offering financial education)
- Commercial intermediation (such as support for contracting, setting up exhibitions to promote products, taking part in promotional events such as trade fairs)
- Support for initiatives to process agricultural products
- Support for capitalising on and disseminating governance experiences of member FFPOs and for setting up community focal points to strengthen communications
- Support for FFPO internal governance (such as the development of management tools, training), and
- Promoting good practice in sustainable land management.

1.3.2 Land tenure and land use
Most farmers own the land as they inherit from their parents. However, some farm on land leased from individuals or communities. Others work on state-owned land. In terms of agricultural production, in addition to food crops, CTOP’s producer members grow commercial crops such as coffee, cocoa, cotton, soya, shea, pineapple and cashew nuts, which are mainly exported. Surplus food crops (such as maize, tubers, beans, groundnuts, rice, sorghum, fonio, small millet, vegetables and chickens) are also marketed. The average size of farmland farmed by individual members varies from 2.73ha to 4.63ha (MAEP 2012).

Togo is divided into four major agroecological zones: the coastal, forest, wet savannah and dry savannah zones. It has four main categories of natural formations: dense forest formations, open formations, wooded savannah, and riparian formations located in the more or less floodable valleys of the main rivers (MERF 2013).

Overall, there are three types of forest area: state-owned forest areas, forest estates managed by local authorities, and forest areas owned by private individuals (MERF 2011):

- State-owned forests are areas consisting of forests, woodlands and land to be reforested that are registered in the name of the state or have been classified. In these areas, the Togolese Ministry for the Environment and Forest Resources (MERF) has established management rules and plans, and implements them either directly or through third parties. The state manages its land and resources, but must also take steps to encourage local communities to participate in the management of forest resources.
- Local authority forest estates consist of forests and woodlands owned by the state (at regional, prefecture or commune levels) that are managed by the local authorities themselves. However, management may be contracted to a third party.
- Forest areas owned by private individuals consist of forests, woodlands and reforestation land registered to or recognised to be in the name of private individuals: forests, woodlands and forest land developed and used by private individuals.
2 Evolution of internal governance structures, systems and practices

2.1 Organisational structure

2.1.1 CTOP’s membership
Only national umbrella FFPOs recognised in accordance with national legislation applicable to associations or to the Uniform Act of the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) relating to the rights of cooperative societies may join CTOP. As shown in Table 1, the number of CTOP member associations has risen from 12 in 2010 to 21 in 2023, an increase of 92% over 10 years. This is thanks to:

- The quality of services provided to members (such as training and financial intermediation)
- The recognition of CTOP’s place in policy dialogue, and
- CTOP’s membership of networks at sub-regional level, including the Network of Farmers Organisations and Agricultural Producers of West Africa (Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l’Afrique de l’Ouest or ROPPA) and at international levels: Via Campesina, World Rural Forum (WRF) and the PanAfrican Farmers Organization (PAFO).

2.1.2 Structure of the organisation
CTOP’s organisational chart is presented in Figure 1. CTOP has the following governance bodies:

- **Ordinary conventions**: Since 2019, annual general assemblies have been replaced with ordinary conventions. These are now held once every three years, attended by seven delegates from each of the 21 FFPO umbrella member organisations (including two women and two young people). This is the highest decision-making level in CTOP.

- **Board of directors and executive board**: The board of directors consists of the presidents of the 21 FFPO member organisations. It includes an executive board of seven FFPO members (FFPO presidents) who are elected at the ordinary convention for a three-year term, renewable once only. The current executive board consists of five men and two women. Presidents of the FFPO members not represented on the executive board are automatically members of the board of directors. CTOP’s bylaws set out the eligibility criteria, election procedures, terms of office and resignation conditions.

- **Control and supervisory committee**: The committee consists of three members (FFPO presidents) who are elected for a non-renewable three-year term.

CTOP operates at two levels:

- **National executive secretariat**: The national executive secretariat is responsible for carrying out all CTOP’s technical activities in accordance with the decisions of the board of directors and deals with the day-to-day operational aspects. The executive secretary has primary responsibility (see Table 2).

- **Regional CROPPAs**: In 2013, CTOP set up regional consultation committees in the five regions of Togo. These Regional Coordination of Farmers' Organisations and Agricultural Producers (CROPPA) committees consist of CTOP-member FFPOs at the regional level and do not have legal status. They are governed by CTOP’s statutes and each has its own internal regulations that take account of specific regional features.

CTOP also has two consultation forums – women’s colleges and youth colleges – that aim to ensure the representation, coordination and defence of the interests and specificities of women and youth in family farms and FFPOs. The main vision is to work to improve the living and
Working conditions of women producers and young producers and agricultural professionals in Togo (see also Section 2.2.9). There are colleges at both the national and regional levels:

- **Women’s colleges** are spaces within CTOP dedicated to consultation, exchanges and reflection on the specific concerns of rural women in agriculture in Togo and to promote their development.¹
- **Youth colleges** bring together young people from all CTOP’s umbrella FFPO members and take into account the specific concerns of young people in relation to the agricultural sector.²

### 2.1.3 Structural innovations

Since its creation, CTOP has introduced many structural innovations to its organisation.

- From 2019, with a view to involving more people in decision-making, the number of delegates to the general assembly per member FFPO was increased from three to seven (to include two women and at least two young people). This not only encouraged more people to take part in decision-making, but has also and above all ensured the participation of women and young people.
- Given the relatively large numbers of FFPO members and the increased number of delegates attending general assemblies, in 2019 it was also agreed to transform the annual general assemblies into triennial ordinary conventions. This allows for real structural action to be taken as there is more to achieve results before reporting back to members every three years. It also allows financial resources to be managed much more efficiently, although a potential drawback is that if there any major decisions are needed that might need approval from the assembly, these cannot be taken immediately. To ensure that all its members are regularly informed of progress, CTOP ensures that board meetings are held regularly and that feedback is given to members at grassroots level.
- Since 2019, the board of directors now includes an executive board of seven members. The whole board of directors meets twice a year (previously four times a year), while the executive board meets four times a year. With a view to ensuring that decisions take into account the opinions of all 21 members, the board of directors includes all of the presidents of its member FFPOs. The board of directors used to have seven members, which meant that not all the umbrella organisations could be represented. This led to frustration among the FFPOs that were not represented, as they could only be informed of the workings of their organisation at the annual general assembly.
- Since 2019, the positions of chairperson and vice-chairperson must be held by people of the opposite sex. If the presidency is held by a man, the vice-presidency must be held by a woman, and vice versa.
- Since 2012, a form of decentralisation has been in place, with regional representatives known as CROPPAs. The advantage is that matters specific to each region are managed more effectively and efficiently at regional level. CROPPAs act as relays for CTOP at the regional level.
- The national women’s college and youth college began in 2013. Since 2021, decentralised regional youth and women’s colleges are now being established in each of the five regions.
- Since 2010, the executive secretariat has been strengthened and expanded, to include new posts such as a communications officer, and a monitoring and evaluation officer. A gender unit has also been created. These have been important innovations in CTOP.
- In 2019, CTOP also set up an incubation centre for forestry and agricultural cooperative enterprises. This has the advantage of providing local support to FFPOs, taking account of their specific characteristics. The centre aims to facilitate the emergence of genuine cooperatives developing business projects in line with cooperative principles. To achieve

¹ See: [https://ctoptogo.org/college-des-femmes](https://ctoptogo.org/college-des-femmes)
² See: [https://ctoptogo.org/colleges-des-jeunes-2](https://ctoptogo.org/colleges-des-jeunes-2)
this, CTOP, through the implementation of Phase II of the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF), has drawn inspiration from FAO’s ForBInc toolbox.\(^3\) The guidance note for CTOP’s national incubation centre offers a wide range of services, including: formalisation, planning and assessment, improved governance, management tools, access to resources, technical capacity building, packaging and labelling, access to financial instruments, quality approaches, business visibility and market research.

Table 2. Changes in the number of employees at the executive secretariat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of employees</strong></td>
<td>3 including 1 woman</td>
<td>9 including 2 women</td>
<td>11 including 2 women</td>
<td>11 including 2 women</td>
<td>13 including 4 women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of volunteers/other types of employees</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7 including 2 women</td>
<td>Regional offices: 10 including 3 women</td>
<td>3 international volunteers</td>
<td>2 volunteers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Launch of CTOP’s 6th Ordinary Convention: a decisive gathering for family farming in Togo © CTOP

\(^3\) Forest business incubation toolkit by and for FFPOs (ForBInc). See: [www.iied.org/13596iied](http://www.iied.org/13596iied)
Figure 1. CTOP’s organisational chart
2.2 Organisational systems

2.2.1 Constitution and strategic plans
The organisation and operation of CTOP are governed by several texts, most notably its statutes and internal regulations, that are adopted by all members. These were amended at the request of members in 2012 and again in 2019 at the extraordinary general meeting, when the number of delegates increased from three to seven. CTOP also has a:
- Five-year strategic plan (2022–2026)
- Climate-resilience plan (2023–2027)
- Communications plan
- Monitoring and evaluation manual, and
- Administrative and financial procedures manual.
CTOP always works on the basis of a five-year strategic plan from which an annual work plan and budget is drawn up for each year. The strategic plan is evaluated at the end of its implementation and a diagnosis is made in order to draw up a new strategic plan. The current strategic plan (2022–2026) is comprised of four areas:

- Generating knowledge and influencing policy
- Economic services and local food systems
- Governance and institutional performance, and
- Promoting gender equality and strengthening the resilience of family farmers to climate change and socioeconomic shocks.

The environmental dimension is dealt with in more detail in the national plan for the resilience of FFPOs to climate change, drawn up by CTOP in 2023. This is a planning tool for adapting family farms and FFPOs to climate change. It covers a five-year period (2023–2027).

2.2.2 Membership, suspension, exclusion and readmission
Article 14 of CTOP’s statutes states that candidates for membership of CTOP must be farmers’ organisations which are national umbrella organisations recognised in accordance with national legislation applicable to associations or the Uniform Act of OHADA relating to the rights of cooperative societies. The conditions for membership and the procedures to be followed are set out in the rest of this case study.

Suspension and exclusion procedures as well as other sanctions are also provided for in the texts. For example, the texts provide for sanctions in the event of non-compliance with commitments and particularly financial obligations; repeated absences from general assemblies and meetings; non-compliance with the statutes and internal regulations; deliberate sabotage of an assigned mission; behaviour contrary to or harmful to CTOP’s objectives; and the embezzlement and misappropriation of property or funds belonging to CTOP. Sanctions may be a warning, suspension or exclusion. During CTOP’s 2023 ordinary convention, four FFPOs were suspended for lack of governance and failure to pay memberships fees and another was expelled for poor governance, non-participation in CTOP activities, and non-compliance with paying membership fees.

As the texts are sufficiently clear and known to all, none of the suspended or excluded members was surprised by the ordinary convention’s decision. Suspended members may be readmitted, provided that they rectify any misconduct before the next convention.

2.2.3 Leadership systems
While the members of the board of directors used to be elected, since 2019 this is no longer the case (although the executive board is still elected). The board now consists of all the FFPO member presidents. This strategy ensures the continuity of actions undertaken, as the
board does not change from one agreement to the next. Instead, arrangements are in place at
the level of each umbrella FFPO for the election of FFPO presidents, to ensure that there is a
sufficiently democratic process in place and that presidents are chosen on the basis of
objectively fixed criteria. CTOP aims to ensure that each member FFPO has good internal
governance, as this has been one of the causes of suspension or exclusion.

CTOP’s current board of directors © CTOP

The elected executive board takes office as soon as it is elected, although there is a handover
period with the outgoing chairperson and executive board to ensure the transfer of knowledge
about the main issues and current affairs. For each position, contact is maintained between
the new and outgoing managers to provide support where necessary. In all cases, outgoing
and new members of the executive board meet again at the board of directors’ level, where
experiences are shared.

At the level of the executive secretariat, which deals with the day-to-day operational aspects,
the administrative and financial procedures manual sets out the procedures for recruitment,
resignation and dismissal. For each position, the manual also specifies the qualifications
required (such as level and field of training, experience). Each employee has a job
specification and a contract. The manual also includes aspects of employee appraisals.

2.2.4 Decision-making processes and inclusion
Members of the executive board are elected during ordinary conventions (one FFPO, one
vote). However, decisions are generally taken by consensus at both executive board and
board of directors’ meetings. In fact, on all issues, the floor is open for a wide-ranging debate
so that decisions made take into account the opinions of all concerned. Board members put
forward the proposals and recommendations of their members.

The women’s and youth colleges also have representatives on the CTOP board of directors
alongside the presidents of the member FFPOs. The statements made by women and young
people on various occasions also ensure that these categories of stakeholders are taken into
account in decision-making. At the executive secretariat level, issues requiring decisions to be
taken are debated before the executive secretary, who has primary responsibility and takes
decisions, taking into account the results of the debates.
2.2.5 National-level advocacy

In line with CTOP’s mission to promote and defend the value of professional, competitive and sustainable agriculture in the service of family-run agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries operations, CTOP has undertaken advocacy actions to contribute to the development of land-use plans. These include:

- Advocacy for the application of the Code Foncier et Domanial (Land and State Code), particularly the provisions relating to the development of unused land, the fight against land grabbing, and women’s access to land. This advocacy strengthened CTOP’s leadership on land issues and led to its appointment as a member of the National Advisory Committee for the land reform project in Togo set up by the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

- Dissemination of the content of the Land and State Code, particularly on aspects relating to rural land tenure. This has helped to build the capacity of forestry and agricultural producers and locally elected representatives in relation to the provisions of the Land and State Code. CTOP now has a pool of farmer leaders in each of the five regions who are familiar with land issues and capable of defending the interests of family farmers.

- Advocacy for better access for women to land in planned agricultural development zones (ZAAPs). As a result of this advocacy, emphasis is being placed on the development of model ZAAPs that take women and young people into account in the new Regional Programme for the Integration of Agricultural Markets (PRIMA). It is recommended, for example, that the beneficiaries should be 40% women and 40% young people, instead of a combined total of 40% women and young people in the classic ZAAP model.

2.2.6 Internal processes for the sustainable use of land and forests

With a view to contributing to the collective or individual sustainable management of forests and farms, CTOP has undertaken a number of actions:

- The promotion of agroecological and sustainable land-management (SLM) practices in ZAAPs through the training of more than 3,000 ZAAP farmers and support for the adoption of agroecological practices in 60 ZAAPs, covering an area of around 6,000ha. Thanks to this initiative, 60 ZAAPs are now following agroecological practices and the development of SLM practices.

- Training young people in agroecological and SLM practices: 100 young farmers (including 31 young women) were trained in agroecological and forest landscape restoration practices in 2020. Another 126 young people (including 32 young women) were trained in 2021, and 134 young people (including 32 young women) in 2022. Thanks to this training, CTOP has strengthened its network of agroecological farms. The young beneficiaries are applying what they have learnt from the training on their own farms. Others have specialised in the production and marketing of organic inputs.

- Supporting the Union of Village Associations for Participatory Management of Protected Areas (Union des Associations Villageoises pour la Gestion Participative des Aires Protégées ou UAVGAP) for sustainable forest management (such as awareness-raising activities, production of seedlings and reforestation).

- Raising community awareness of and supporting the development of simple management plans for reforestation in 11 community forests.

- Supporting 23 FFPOs involved in the production of forestry and agroforestry seedlings, including training in seedling production techniques, installing an irrigation system, providing a tricycle for transporting seedlings and fencing to secure production sites.

4 See https://ifad-cofinancing.org/project/regional-programme-for-the-integration-of-agricultural-markets-prima-togo
2.2.7 Financial accounting systems
To guarantee financial transparency and the effective and efficient management of financial resources, CTOP has put in place a number of tools, including:

- A qualified accounts department with an accountant (with over 10 years’ experience working on various projects) and two assistants who work with the CTOP’s general treasurer (a farmer leader).
- A manual of administrative and accounting procedures, which is the reference for all actions in these areas. Accounting software (Sage Comptabilité 100) is used for recording transactions and financial reporting. All CTOP’s bank accounts require a triple signature (two elected representatives and one accountant).
- There are two monitoring meetings per year with the control and supervisory committee and an accounting audit done by an external auditor every year. A financial report is also drawn up and shared annually with the board of directors.

2.2.8 Human resources policies, manuals and guidelines
CTOP’s FFPO members own their organisations and as such do not have the same status as CTOP employees. The rights and duties/obligations of the FFPO umbrella organisations and their individual members are set out in CTOP’s governing texts and vice versa: it is on the basis of these texts that CTOP offers various services to members.

As far as employees are concerned, the administrative and financial procedures manual sets out the guidelines for human resources management. Each employee has a contract of employment with the organisation. Recruitment is carried out through a process set out in the manual: setting up a committee, issuing a call for applications, conducting a written test and interviews for applicants, notifying applicants of results, and negotiating and signing contracts with a probationary period. In the calls for applications, emphasis is placed on applications from women and young people.

The administrative and financial procedures manual was updated in 2022 to take account of changes in the environment. It updated the qualifications required for each position in terms of level and areas of training, experience required and other skills, and also in terms of remuneration. The manual also sets out the resignation and dismissal procedures, which are in line with Togo’s inter-professional collective agreement and labour code.

2.2.9 Gender equality and youth programmes
Since 2013, CTOP has been developing and implementing strategies to promote gender equality and youth. In order to create favourable conditions for greater participation by women and young people in decision-making processes, a national-level women’s college and a youth college were established, as well as decentralised regional colleges. The presidents of the women’s college and the youth college are members of the CTOP board of directors and are the spokespersons for women and young people within CTOP’s bodies.

These colleges are genuine forums for dialogue and consultation between women and young people from all CTOP’s member umbrella organisations. They are forums for debate on issues leading to proposals, which are submitted to the organisation for consideration in decision-making. Each college organises regular consultations with a view to drawing up and circulating declarations on the fringes of special events.

A specific political training programme for 100 young peasant leaders on the peasant movement and leadership, as well as a training programme dedicated to women on leadership and advocacy, have been in place since 2021. This will encourage women and young people to speak out, not only within CTOP but also in the bodies on which CTOP is represented.
2.2.10 Internal conflict-resolution processes
The conflict-resolution process is set out in the administrative and financial management manual. CTOP’s statutory bodies provide forums for conflict resolution. In all cases, consensus and amicable settlement are preferred, whatever the type of conflict. In the case of technical employees, the executive secretary implements the strategy for conciliation and amicable conflict resolution and has recourse to the executive board if necessary, which takes a decision and informs the ordinary convention. For other types of conflict, the executive board takes responsibility for resolving them and refers the matter to the board of directors for a ruling.

2.3 Organisational practices

2.3.1 Decision-making and planning
Regular meetings enable all of CTOP’s FFPO members to contribute to the way in which the organisation’s activities are developed to achieve results. Meetings of the executive board, board of directors and the ordinary conventions are forums for sharing results and planning CTOP actions. These forums allow all stakeholders to contribute to the way in which actions are developed to achieve the organisation’s objectives and vision. To encourage the effective participation of the majority of members, preparatory documents are circulated in advance and analysed at various levels to ensure that everyone’s views are heard.

At employee level, monthly meetings are organised to review the implementation of activities and to plan for the following month. Social networks are also used to facilitate sharing and to hold virtual meetings to share information and brainstorm so that all stakeholders can participate in the development of activities to achieve results.

2.3.2 Internal monitoring and evaluation
One of the real concerns of CTOP managers is to have objective data on the performance of their organisation. To this end, board meetings are occasions for stocktaking, where a kind of self-assessment is carried out on the basis of various reports and other documents. For example, CTOP organises annual self-assessments of its strategic plan involving its forestry and agricultural producer members. A self-assessment is led by an external resource person and is carried out halfway through the plan’s implementation.

The board of directors discusses the substance of the reports on the basis of planning documents and assesses the progress of the results, taking into account the various indicators. The same procedure is applied at the ordinary convention meetings. During these meetings, the debate is very open and all delegates discuss the results in depth and, in the long term, identify strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats. New plans are drawn up on the basis of the results of the self-assessments, with due regard, of course, to the missions initially defined.

In addition, institutional diagnosis is systematically organised as part of the preparation of future strategic plans and other strategic documents, such as the climate-resilience plan and the communications plan, to provide opportunities for forestry and agricultural producer members to take stock of their actions and plan for the future.
2.3.3 Diversity, equity and inclusion
CTOP encourages broad diversity and inclusion among its employees. No discrimination is made during recruitment. The candidate’s technical skills, their understanding of CTOP’s vision, mission and values and their ability to integrate into the FFPO environment are the primary recruitment criteria. Applications from women and young people are strongly encouraged. Positive discrimination in favour of women is applied in the event of a tie on all criteria. In all cases, there is a high degree of sensitivity towards women and young people. The results are reflected today in the 13-strong executive secretariat team, including four women and five young people.

CTOP places particular emphasis on results-based management at all levels: it is not so much the physical presence at the office of the employee that is important but rather the results delivered by each individual. Members and employees have the freedom to choose how to live their lives with respect for others, providing they inform their superiors in good time in case of absence.

There is no discrimination against employees. Women are mobilised in the same way as men. Women benefit from flexible working hours if necessary to care for children, and there is no requirement for them to be present at non-standard times (after normal working hours, at weekends or on public holidays). To ensure equity between members, CTOP uses the women’s and youth colleges as advocacy forums. The colleges call on the board if equity is not respected. For example, for any activity requiring the participation of two people, the participation of one man and one woman is mandatory. This is the same strategy used in the configuration of the FFPO delegates to the ordinary convention: seven delegates, including at least two women and two young people.

2.3.4 Employee team building, training and support
CTOP has instituted various team-building practices in recent years, including employee group lunches and setting up a WhatsApp group for exchanges on non-professional subjects. For the time being, there are no formal ‘creativity’ practices to encourage employees at all
levels to exercise their creativity to provide better services within the organisation, nor are there any communication practices to recognise internal efforts that would enable members or employees to celebrate good practice and learn from each other.

Nevertheless, although they each have their own office, employees sometimes like to work in the meeting room together, including the executive secretary, who often leaves his office to work with them. This helps to create a conducive working environment. An atmosphere of conviviality is created around the work, as employees chat and share experiences. Employees also visit the farms of FFPO leaders. Visits are organised often and encourage exchanges between the two parties, so that they gain a better mutual understanding.

A capacity-building programme based on a skills assessment of all employees was carried out from 2022 to 2023 by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Inades-Formation Togo, supported by French Farmers and International Development (Agriculteurs Français et Développement International or AFDI) as part of its project Services and Policies for Producer Organisations (SEPOP). Personalised coaching for each position was carried out simultaneously with and after the training. CTOP takes advantage of training opportunities such as these as they arise and trains its employees according to their position and skills. Although this is not a formal coaching programme, the initiative was ongoing as of 2023, with a training programme for the directors/executive secretaries and accountants of farmers' organisations.
3 Tactics that improve CTOP’s internal governance

3.1 Tactics that improve members’ confidence and sense of belonging

- Establishing the women’s and youth colleges and setting quotas for the representation of women and young people in the ordinary convention delegations have enthused the forestry and agricultural producers concerned. Women and young people in particular feel more involved in FFPO affairs and have been more active since 2019.
- Decentralisation through the establishment of regional CROPPAs and regional women’s and youth colleges have also delighted grassroots forestry and agricultural producers, who feel more involved in the management of their organisations.
- The fact that the board of directors has been extended to include all the presidents of the FFPO member organisations, so that they can all be aware of and involved in decisions taken, has helped to take away some of the frustration that unrepresented associations used to feel.

CTOP has also taken other practical measures, such as:

- Making sure its employees are available to its members, at their request, for any support they may require (such as developing projects or strategic documents).
- Linking its members with external technical and financial partners.\(^5\)
- Providing partial funding to some of its FFPO members for the annual general meetings (AGMs) on the basis of the terms of reference. CTOP funding generally amounts to around €763 to cover part of the organisational costs.

3.2 Tactics that improve relations with partners and government

Some of the strategies developed by CTOP that have helped to improve its integrity and, consequently, its relationships with its partners include:

- **Transparency and accountability:** The systematic reissuing of accounts and transparency in management through annual audits and audits of all projects based on a manual of administrative, financial and accounting procedures.
- **Networking:** CTOP’s membership of ROPPA and other international networks (such as the World Rural Forum, Via Campesina) and the National Platform for Family Farming in Togo (Plateforme Nationale de Promotion de l’Agriculture Familiale au Togo or PNAFAT) has enabled it to improve its image with the government and other partners. This has resulted in closer collaboration with sectoral ministries (including agriculture, environment, health, and the promotion of women). CTOP has become increasingly important to the Togolese government, especially the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development (Ministère de l’Agriculture, de l’Elevage et du Développement Rural or MAEDR). CTOP interacts a great deal with MAEDR, for example on issues related to agricultural inputs and the development and use of planned agricultural development zones (ZAAP).
- **Improving access to finance:** CTOP has set up regional consultation frameworks between decentralised financing systems and farmers’ organisations. These frameworks facilitate negotiations between financial institutions and agricultural producers. The professionalism shown by CTOP at consultation meetings has improved its image with financial institutions such as the Decentralized Financial

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\(^5\) For example, CTOP has created linkages between the Network of Young Agricultural Producers and Professionals of Togo (Réseau des Jeunes Producteurs et Professionnels Agricoles du Togo or REJEPPAT) and AFDI; the National Network of Women Farmers of Togo (Réseau National des Femmes Agricultrices du Togo or RENAFAT) and Carrefour International; and REJEPPAT and RENAFAT with the Andreas Hermes Akademie (AHA).
Systems (DFS). As a result, the amount of financing granted by these institutions to CTOP members has increased from year to year. For example, in 2021, with the support of the FFF, 18 business plans were drawn up for 18 FFPOs and financed by the National Project for the Promotion of Rural Entrepreneurship (Projet National de Promotion de l’Entrepreneuriat Rural or PNPER) through CTOP. The total cost of financing these business plans was CFA 74,999,800.

Meeting between members of CTOP’s executive board and executive secretariat and the Minister of Agriculture, 15 June 2021 © CTOP

Generally speaking, thanks to improvements in CTOP’s internal governance, it has developed more and more partnerships, as shown in Table 3. CTOP’s main partners today include:

- AFD: Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
- AFDI: Agriculteurs Français et Développement International (French Farmers and International Development)
- AVSF: Agronomes & Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (Agronomists & Veterinarians Without Borders)
- Carrefour International
- CORAF/WECARD: Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles (West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development)
- FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- FFF: Forest and Farm Facility
- IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development
- WRM: World Rural Forum
- GIZ: German Corporation for International Cooperation
- Oxfam International, and
- European Union.

Box 1. Positive outcomes of improved governance within CTOP

CTOP has received support from the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF), a global partnership between FAO, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and AgriCord, which aims to strengthen FFPOs working in forest landscapes and put them in touch with key partners. This has enabled CTOP to improve its internal governance in order to be able to access larger amounts of funding. CTOP has fostered several important partnerships:

- Global Environment Facility (GEF): Climate resilience project for Togolese coastal communities (R4C-Togo) in collaboration with the Togolese Forest Development and Exploitation Office (Office de Developpement et d'Exploitation des Forets or ODEF).\(^7\)
- Global Agriculture & Food Security Program (GAFSP): Support for the promotion of agroecological market gardening in Togo (ProSMAT) project in collaboration with IFAD.\(^8\)
- FAO: Artisanal fisheries project, Strengthening routine fisheries data collection in West Africa: Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria and the Fishery Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC).\(^9\)
- IFAD: National Programme for the Promotion of Rural Entrepreneurship (Projet National de Promotion de l'Entrepreneur Rural or PNPER).\(^10\)

As part of its partnership with the FFF, CTOP has set up its National Cooperative Business Incubation Centre (Centre National d'Incubation des Entreprises Coopératives), which has provided support for the development of 301 business plans as part of the PNPER project implemented by the Togolese government.

As part of its partnership with FFF, CTOP has also organised several events:

- A national dialogue on the role of FFPOs in forest landscape restoration, which has led to greater recognition of the role of Togolese FFPOs and their contribution to achieving Togo's commitment to the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100) and the Bonn Challenge to restore 1.4 million hectares by 2030.
- A round table to mobilise resources for FFPOs from technical and financial partners to support the restoration of forest landscapes by FFPOs.
- A regional conference on the role of FFPOs in forest landscape restoration in Africa within the framework of AFR100, to create a framework for the exchange of experiences and good practice related to forest landscape restoration.

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\(^9\) See: [www.fao.org/3/k7480b/k7480b06.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/k7480b/k7480b06.pdf)

\(^10\) See for example: [www.ifad.org/fr/web/operations/-/project/110001639](http://www.ifad.org/fr/web/operations/-/project/110001639)
3.3 Tactics that improve the delivery of CTOP’s vision and objectives

Several strategies have helped to improve CTOP’s services with a view to achieving its vision, mission and objectives:

- By systematically drawing up and implementing strategic plans, CTOP avoids navigating blindly. These strategic plans are based on the results of participatory diagnoses and discussions with all stakeholders, particularly forestry and agricultural producers, and take account of their real needs. The process is closely informed by CTOP’s initial mission. The strategic plan serves as a reference document for drawing up annual operational plans that take account of any changes in the environment. This well-conducted process inevitably contributes to the achievement of the organisation’s objectives in that all actions are designed and implemented in accordance with its initial aims.

- The design and implementation of a systematic monitoring and evaluation system geared towards results-based management is a major tactic. CTOP has a monitoring and evaluation manual and a department specifically responsible for monitoring and evaluation. The manual focuses on monitoring resources, activities and results (outputs, outcomes and impacts) on the basis of indicators. Self-evaluations are carried out systematically at the end of each year, as well as mid-term evaluations of strategic plans and final evaluations at the end of the implementation of each strategic plan. This organisational and managerial system contributes enormously to the progressive achievement of CTOP’s objectives.

- Communicating its actions and supporting members’ participation in promotional events such as trade fairs and exhibitions enables forestry and agricultural producers to showcase their products and develop partnerships. All these tactics have major impacts on the achievement of the organisation’s objectives, especially when combined with effective activities facilitate the involvement and influence of CTOP’s member FFPOs in the development, implementation and monitoring of public policies and programmes. They strengthen the economic services offered by the FFPOs to forestry and agricultural producers and the representativeness, governance and visibility of CTOP and its members.

Participants at a women’s training workshop on advocacy and citizen watches © CTOP
By way of example, these tactics are behind the setting up of the agroecology training programme for young people to strengthen the capacities of young farmers. The same applies to the training programme for farmer leaders, involving 100 farmers, including young people and women. The women and young people produce advocacy documents for the authorities, as well as recommendations to improve women’s access to land and a proposal document to improve access to finance for young people in rural areas. The young people also set up a mechanism to monitor and follow up the recommendations.

Participants at a youth training workshop on advocacy and to draft a proposal to improve access to finance for young people in rural areas © CTOP
4 Future plans to improve CTOP’s internal governance

4.1 Future plans

For the future development of its internal governance mechanisms, CTOP intends to:

- Facilitate the emergence of more new leaders (young people and women) within its governing bodies, with the hope of seeing a woman or a young person as president of the CTOP executive board. With this in mind, CTOP plans to step up training for young people and women in advocacy, leadership and the farmers’ movement.
- Revitalise the CROPPAs and strengthen their involvement in CTOP’s internal governance so that the grassroots forestry and agricultural producers play a greater role in the life of CTOP. It plans to provide local support to decentralised bodies such as the CROPPAs, equipping them with the tools they need to become more operational.
- Capitalise on and disseminate the internal governance experiences of member FFPOs and set up community focal points to strengthen communications and share learning and experiences.
- Strengthen the visibility of CTOP by building a new headquarters and setting up at least one training centre for forestry and agricultural producers.
- Define and implement a strategy to mobilise CTOP’s internal and external resources and develop income-generating activities in the productive sector.

To be able to implement these actions with a view to further improving its internal governance and achieving more results, CTOP will need technical and financial support from its partners.

4.2 Replication prospects

For other FFPOs to replicate the internal governance of the CTOP, it will be essential to:

- Establish clear statutory texts approved by all members
- Ensure scrupulous compliance with regulations and impose penalties where necessary
- Set up governance bodies on the basis of consensus
- Respect the mandates of the various governing bodies
- Set up a dynamic technical team with clear, precise specifications
- Separate the roles of members and employees, and
- Hold regular sessions with the various governing bodies.

In the process of replication, FFPOs could eventually face a problem of funding for employees and the regular holding of meetings of the governance bodies. It may also encounter difficulties in mobilising members and building their capacity if they are not sufficiently prepared for this. It would therefore be advisable for the FFPO to draw up a strategic plan and work on mobilising the financial and human resources needed to implement it, and to focus on internal and external communications to increase visibility, which would contribute both to the confidence of its members and to the integrity of the organisation vis-à-vis its partners.
5 Main conclusions

5.1 Innovations

The main innovations in internal governance that deserve to be highlighted relate to:

- Continuously strengthening the representativeness of CTOP’s FFPO members and to ensure equity for men, women and young people in its various governing bodies
- Establishing women’s and youth colleges to ensure the representation, coordination and defence of the interests and specificities of women and youth in family farms and FFPOs
- Implementing and scrupulous complying with strategic texts and documents adopted by all stakeholders
- Upholding free speech to enable all stakeholders to express their opinions
- Decentralising the various entities (CROPAs and colleges) to promote proximity and take into account the realities of each area
- Conducting regular self-assessments at all levels to ensure the overall quality of results and progress towards achieving CTOP’s vision and mission
- Facilitating the provision of economic services offered by FFPOs to forestry and agricultural producers, thereby improving their membership of the organisation and providing them with the means to participate financially in the life of the organisation
- Ensuring transparency and accountability, which shows integrity and has built trust with partners at all levels, including the government
- Engaging in advocacy through its membership of national, sub-regional and international networks and actively participating in platforms to raise visibility, and
- Using social media networks to increase the organisation’s visibility and to maintain communication between members and employees.11

5.2 Lessons learnt

5.2.1 Lessons for other FFPOs

The general lessons on governance tactics relevant for other FFPOs are:

- Constantly listen to your forest and agricultural producers as well as your employees. This fosters their sense of belonging to the organisation and therefore their commitment and dedication to achieving the vision.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of members and employees. This will help to establish a climate of political leadership and technical efficiency in the implementation of activities.
- Renew governing bodies and comply with the articles of association to strengthen your credibility.

5.2.2 How good internal governance supports global agendas

For FFPOs, good internal governance strengthens their credibility, the confidence of their partners, the mobilisation of resources and the achievement of their objectives by:

- Motivating and inspiring active participation, and therefore solidarity between all members to drive forward action, achieve results and realise the vision and mission.
- Building integrity and trust with partners, who can provide substantial resources, and
- Helping FFPOs to contribute towards achieving global goals such as climate action, biodiversity conservation and food security.

References

