



Final Communiqué

28th Meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA)

Statement on the agricultural situation and food and nutrition prospects in the Sahel and West Africa

Good harvest prospects in a context of low food stocks and high malnutrition rates

Original version: French

Subsequent to the 28th annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA) that was held in Ouagadougou from 4 to 6 December 2012, the regional monitoring system on food and nutritional security addresses the following message to the stakeholders:

The 2012 rainy period has been characterised by a good spatial and temporal rain distribution. Cumulative rainfall has exceeded the 1971-2000 average. In terms of hydrology, this good rainfall led to water rates and volumes above those of reference years (1985, 2011 and the 2002-2011 average), resulting in the flooding of the basins of several watercourses, particularly in Benin, Chad, The Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Losses in human lives were reported and damage to infrastructure and crops, particularly rice, also occurred in some places.

The phytosanitary situation has been calm overall. However, the presence of swarms of migrant locusts signalled in Chad, Mali and Niger threatens the region. As regards pastoralism, grazing lands are abundant and water points are well filled in all countries of the region. The animal health situation is relatively good.

Current crops have benefitted from good water conditions favouring good harvest prospects. Excluding Burkina Faso (data not yet available), total cereal production expected in the Sahel and West African countries for the 2012-13 crop season amounts to 57 318 000 tonnes, including 13 688 000 tonnes of rice, 17 622 000 tonnes of maize, 11 096 000 tonnes of millet, 14 341 000 tonnes of sorghum and 571 000 tonnes of other cereals. This production has risen by 13% compared to last year's production and by 18% compared to the average of the past five years. Yams production has increased by 2% and cassava production has dropped by 3% compared to the 2011-12 growing season.

Food insecurity in countries that were heavily affected by a drop in cereal production in 2011-12 (Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) has been mitigated not only by various interventions of the governments and their partners, but also by new harvests. However, poor households are still facing food and nutritional difficulties because of floods, high food prices, debt, weakened livelihoods, and population displacements caused by the Malian crisis.

The overall nutritional situation is still of concern, particularly in the Sahel, despite good harvest prospects and government interventions. Acute malnutrition exceeds the critical level of 10%, particularly in the regions in the north, centre north and east of Burkina Faso and in the region of Kayes in Mali. It exceeds the emergency level of 15% in the regions of Zinder, Maradi, Diffa and Tillabéry in Niger, in the districts of Kanel, Ranérou and Podor in Senegal as well as in the Sahelian strip of Chad and in the south and south-east regions of Mauritania.

With regard to markets, the low production levels recorded in 2011 greatly influenced prices, which rose steadily up to May 2012. The good start of the 2012-13 rainy season has helped to mitigate these upward trends. Price drops have been observed since September 2012 and have expanded progressively from the east to the west. However, price levels remain high when compared to their levels in October 2011 and to the five-year average. Considering the need to reconstitute the food stocks of households and cereal offices, prices could fail to drop significantly in 2013 despite good crop production, particularly for millet.

Cattle prices have been generally stable but remain high. The terms of trade (cattle/cereals) have slightly improved given the health of the animals and the drop in cereal prices as from mid-September 2012. Cattle prices could be maintained at their current level and the terms of trade improved.

The expected good cereal production could soon result in high food availability and a good market supply level, thereby improving access to food.

Taking account of the situation described above, the RPCA recommends:

To countries:

Uppermost:

- ▶ To continue monitoring/controlling migrant locusts in primarily concerned countries (Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger);
- ▶ To continue monitoring the food and nutritional situation, including of displaced and refugee populations from Mali, and to propose appropriate response plans;
- ▶ To strengthen interventions to prevent and respond to acute and chronic malnutrition.

In addition:

- ▶ To initiate and support off-season production programmes aimed at improving livelihoods and thereby increase the resilience of vulnerable populations facing food insecurity;
- ▶ To create an private investment-friendly climate, in particular in support of agricultural producers and investments in agricultural value chains in order to address the structural causes of food crises.

To ECOWAS and UEMOA:

Uppermost:

- ▶ To work with CILSS, FAO and other specialised institutions in order to strengthen the early-warning, prevention and monitoring mechanisms, thereby responding to the locust threat.

In addition:

- ▶ To improve the business climate to enhance private sector investment, in particular by agricultural producers, in agricultural production and value chains;
- ▶ To capitalise on the opportunity offered by the AGIR Alliance - Sahel and West Africa, in order to improve and accelerate the implementation of the National Agricultural Investment Programmes (NAIP) and the Regional Agricultural Investment Programme (RAIP);
- ▶ To support the implementation of the Harmonised Framework in member countries.

To the regional information system (CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET):

- ▶ To prepare food insecurity maps at each meeting, indicating vulnerability levels, the number of affected people and possible interventions.

To the technical and financial partners:

- ▶ To continue supporting the monitoring and control of migrant locusts in primarily concerned countries (Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger);
- ▶ To continue supporting the implementation of long-term agriculture and business development programmes within the framework of the NAIPs and the RAIP, in order to find structural solutions to food crises;
- ▶ To support capacity-building to enhance the ownership of the Harmonised Framework at the national/regional level.

Ouagadougou, 5 December 2012

The RPCA