

Main conclusions of the 26th annual meeting of the Food Crises Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA) held in Accra, Ghana, in December 2010

Introduction

The 26th annual meeting of the Food Crises Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA) took place in Accra, Ghana, on 14-16 December 2010, under the patronage of S.E. Prof. Kofi Awoonor, Chairman of the Council of State, Republic of Ghana. The aim of this meeting was to assess the situation, examine the prospects for the 2010-2011 agropastoral season and consider the progress in discussions towards a food crises prevention Charter. It also provided an opportunity to discuss the central issue of «*the livestock sector and food security*» in some depth.

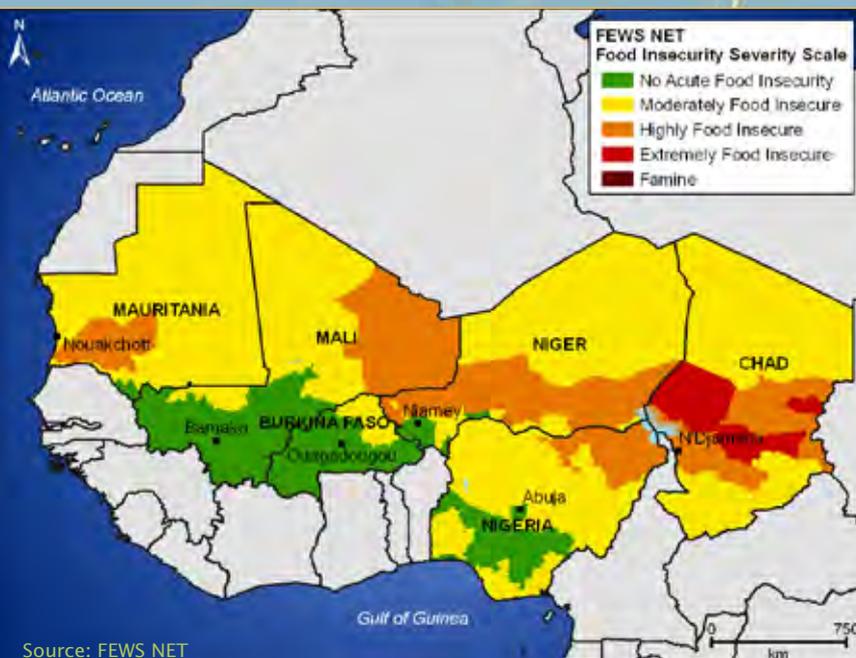
The present paper, for the attention of decision makers in governments, the CILSS, UEMOA, ECOWAS and other food security stakeholders, sums up the meeting's main conclusions and proposals for measures to be taken. It complements the press release on 2011 food prospects for the Sahel and West Africa ([press release 26th RPCA meeting](#)).

Conclusions

2.1. Food and nutrition situation

- ▶ **Good prospects for livestock and crop farming but insecure situation due to the rise in world prices and high malnutrition rates.** The grain output forecast for West Africa for the 2010-2011 season (excluding Senegal and Mali)¹ stands at 51 million tonnes, an increase of 12% on the 2009-2010 harvest. This includes an increase of 29% for millet, 15% for sorghum, 5% for rice and 3% for maize. Yam and cassava yield forecasts are also good, at 55 and 76 million tonnes respectively. But although the good yields suggest a generally satisfactory food situation for the first months after harvest, there is still uncertainty for the following reasons:
 - **The rise in world market prices for some commodities could impact on West African grain prices.** When the new harvests reached the markets in the last quarter of 2010 grain prices fell to levels of three years ago in almost all West African countries. However the upswing in world prices for rice, wheat, maize, sugar, oils etc. is likely to spread to West African markets from the first quarter of 2011. This world price increase is due to the 1.4% drop in global grain output and the 6% drop in stockpile levels compared to 2009. Rice prices on the world market rose by 14% between June and November 2010 and there is uncertainty as to future supply. For example in Vietnam, a major rice exporter, the price rose by 50% between July and November 2010. This rise could have a knock-on effect on West Africa's regional market and so weaken the food situation for low-income groups, especially in countries that depend heavily on the world market for these commodities.

1. Data for those countries was not yet available at the time of the RPCA meeting.



Source: FEWS NET

- **Malnutrition has worsened in Niger and Chad since the severe food crisis there in 2010.** Malnutrition is a major worry for most West African countries. Despite good grain yields, the nutritional situation is still tenuous, especially in Chad and Niger owing to the residual impact of the 2009-2010 food crisis, i.e. high levels of debt among the people, considerable livestock losses, loss of income due to low farm yields and the deterioration in terms of trade between grain and livestock. In August 2010 acute malnutrition rates in Chad's Sahelian belt stood at 20%. In October 2010 it was over 17% in Agadez and Zinder (Niger²). Special attention should be paid to

populations whose means of subsistence have been greatly reduced by the pastoral crises of 2009-2010 and the 2010 floods (Map 1).

- **The political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire could drive up prices for some food staples in neighbouring countries.** The political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire is hampering the operation of neighbouring markets (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger). The prices of sugar and edible oils, which neighbouring countries usually import from Côte d'Ivoire, rose by 40% in December 2010.

2.2 Regional Charter for Food Crises Prevention and Management

- ▶ The **"food aid charter"** adopted in 1990 is being updated to adapt it to the new situation in West Africa and also globally to new players such as Brazil, China and India, who have not signed the Charter, but have joined the food aid system. The first phase of updating the Charter began in 2007 and resulted in the production of a draft document in 2009. Renamed the *Charter for Food Crises Prevention and Management*, it is being produced through an inclusive participative process of dialogue conducted under the auspices of ECOWAS, led by CILSS and with support from the SWAC/OECD Secretariat. In 2010 national workshops were launched in Burkina Faso, Mali, Gambia, Liberia, Togo, Benin, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger. They will continue in 2011. Alongside these workshops, international discussions have begun with the various stakeholders and donors, with the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) contributing. The 26th meeting of the RPCA strongly recommended setting up a system to monitor and assess the stakeholders' application of the Charter's principles once it has been adopted.

2.3 The livestock sector and food security

Three aspects of the livestock sector's contribution to food security were discussed: livelihoods, nutrition and livestock development policy.

- ▶ **Livestock and livelihoods.** The discussion highlighted the value of seeking the means to continue and expand successful experiments. For example, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières and Initiatives-Conseils-Développement provided support for poultry production and marketing to women in Cercle de Kati, Mali. This enabled the women to increase their individual incomes from CFA 5000 to 20,000 in three years (between 2007 and 2010). The income was used for primary health care, children's schooling and income-generating activities. However, the question remains as to whether the improvements will last after the project. This kind of experiment is worth adapting and extending to other types of livestock and other parts of West Africa.
- ▶ **Livestock and nutrition.** Global chronic malnutrition (GCM) is high in most West African countries and the discussions stressed the value of nutrition education. Fishery and livestock products provide high-quality protein and a range of micronutrients that are difficult to obtain in sufficient quantity from plant foods alone. The livestock sector also improves nutrition by providing more variety in

2. The WHO sets the critical threshold for global acute malnutrition (GAM) at 15% and global chronic malnutrition (GCM) at 40%. Above those rates, intervention is necessary.



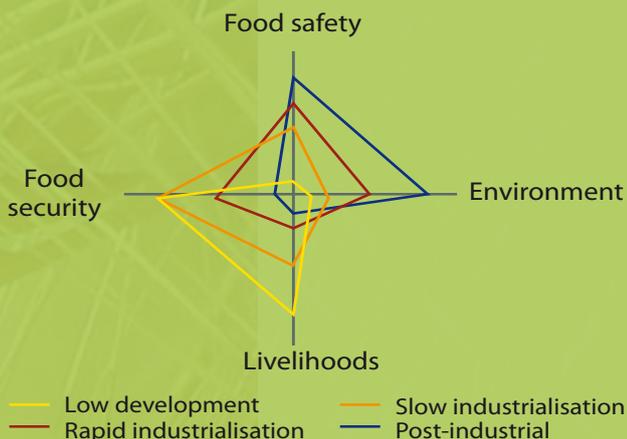
the diet. However, it was pointed out that very often, increased production did not necessarily lead to increased consumption. The latest food crisis in the rangelands showed that consumption of meat, milk, fruit and vegetables had fallen drastically by 30-50% compared to normal years. Acute malnutrition rates in the Malina rangelands were above the 15% critical threshold, making an emergency feeding operation indispensable. Promoting foods provided by biodiversity and unconventional livestock rearing (e.g. agouti and giant frogs) could also contribute to local food and nutritional security.

► **Livestock and development policies for food crises prevention.** The meeting highlighted the following concerns for strengthening livestock policy: (i) non-traded goods provided by livestock such as insurance, manure for crops and waste for energy production; (ii) access to low-cost cattle feed (transport from coastal areas to the Sahel renders prices exorbitant); (iii) the need to take rangelands into account in land tenure policy; (iv) support for local rangeland monitoring and early warning systems; (v) herd health governance, particularly the introduction of locally-based veterinary services to reduce herd health risks; (vi) introduction and application of equitable policies and adequate laws and regulations by governments.

Worldwide, the ranking order of livestock policy goals often varies according to a country's level of development (Graph 1). While low-income countries prioritise food security and livelihoods, advanced economies are more concerned with human food safety and the damaging effects of stock farming on the environment.

Introducing stricter environmental measures raises the production costs of animal products and makes them less affordable to a large part of the population. A comprehensive view of livestock policy must therefore find a balance between policy goals that are sometimes in contradiction with each other, at least in the short and medium terms.

Graph 1 — Livestock policy goals by national level of development



Source: FAO (2009)

Recommendations and measures to be taken

3.1 The food and nutrition situation

► Governments

- Take advantage of high output to build national food security stocks as well as village and community stocks, preferably using local purchases from small-scale producers;
- Help pastoral communities that lost their cattle in the 2010 crisis reconstitute their herds;
- Take advantage of water availability to encourage more dry season cropping;
- Strengthen prevention and feeding programmes, especially in Niger and Chad;
- Ensure timely production and dissemination of crop and livestock statistics.

► Intergovernmental organisations (CILSS, ECOWAS, UEMOA)

- Take advantage of current food availability to launch RESOGEST, the network of food security stock management agencies;
- Raise governments' awareness and actively advocate timely dissemination of crop and livestock statistics.

► Information systems (CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET)

- Set up food situation analysis instruments that are appropriate to pastoral communities and intervention mechanisms that take cattle feed into account;
- Strengthen analysis of the food situation by incorporating output data on fishery, livestock and forest products.

► Technical and financial partners

- Give priority to local food purchases (WFP, NGOs and other humanitarian organisations);
- Support governments and CILSS to ensure timely production and dissemination of crop and livestock statistics.
- Coordinate operations to achieve more efficient action and resource use.





3.2 Food Aid Charter

Intergovernmental organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS) with support from SWAC/OECD should set up a system for monitoring and assessing the application of the new Charter once adopted. The results of the assessments should be discussed and disseminated by appropriate means at country, region and international levels, especially at RPCA meetings.

3.3 Livestock and food security

Governments and development partners should support the setting up of locally-based veterinary services (private or community-based) to improve animal health and so strengthen the livestock sector's contribution to food security. They should support public and private initiatives to manufacture and distribute cattle feed.

National and international research centres (CORAF/WECARD, CIRDES, ILRI, ITC, etc.) should increase the involvement of pastoralists' organisations in identifying and implementing research projects. Priority should be given to (i) improving productivity, (ii) livestock disease control, (iii) competitiveness and market access and (iv) analysis of interactions between livestock rearing, crop farming and the environment.

Information suppliers (CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET) should set up suitable early warning systems for pastoral communities. Databases on grazing land and water points and the indicators developed by the regional AGRHYMET Centre under the AMESD project constitute a particularly valuable foundation and deserve considerable support. The same is true of food crisis response instruments adapted to the particular conditions of pastoral communities.

Governments and IGOs (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS) should reconsider the time limit allowed for informing the competent authorities of herd movements. Existing time limits, which vary between two and six months depending on the country, are inappropriate because one cannot forecast the right moment for transhumance six months in advance. It was also recommended that a thorough analysis be made of obstacles to implementing the international transhumance certificate and that a regional action plan be drawn up for the development and transformation of the livestock sector.

What is the RPCA?

- ▶ The Food Crises Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA) was set up in 1984 at a time when the Sahel had been hard hit by a severe drought with dramatic human and economic consequences. The Network comprises several categories of member including bilateral and multilateral aid agencies (USA, EU, Canada, France, Italy, Austria, etc.), international and subregional organisations and regional food security monitoring systems (ECOWAS, UEMOA, the CILSS, SWAC/OECD, FAO, WFP, WMO, UNICEF, ECHO, OCHA, etc.), specialised NGOs (Oxfam, Afrique Verte, ICRC, Save the Children), professional agricultural organisations (ROPPA), etc. The RPCA provides a forum in which to pursue a variety of discussions and actions on food security in the region. As a platform for discussion and free and informal reflection, the Network, through its annual meeting, provides a genuine and permanent framework for analysis of the agricultural and food situation and for decision-making.
- ▶ One of the Network's major achievements was the adoption of the Food Aid Charter in 1990, a document which largely inspired the development of the International Convention on Food Aid Charter (London, 1999). Another RPCA product is the monthly Information Note on Food Security in the Sahel and West Africa (FOSIN).
- ▶ The Network is managed by the CILSS and the SWAC/OECD Secretariat. Further information is available on the RPCA website: www.food-security.net

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