



RPCA - FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ MEETING OF THE FOOD CRISIS PREVENTION NETWORK



Organised by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD), under the auspices of the Commissions of ECOWAS and UEMOA

The Members of the RPCA, gathered in Paris on 12 and 13 April 2012 to analyse the results of the 2011/2012 agricultural campaign, take note of the following:

This year's cereal production in the Sahel and West Africa decreased by 9% relative to the 2010/2011 record-year agricultural campaign and increased by 5% when compared to the average over the last five years (2006-2010). However, the cereal production level in Sahel countries dropped significantly not only in relation to the 2010/2011 campaign, but also in relation to the five-year average. These declines affect, in particular, The Gambia (decline of 56% in relation to 2010-2011 and 40% in relation to 2006-2010), Chad (49%/22%), Senegal (36%/21%), Niger (31%/14%), Mauritania (34%/10%) and Burkina Faso (20%/5%).

The pastoral situation remains very difficult in many regions because of poor biomass production and low water filling rates resulting in overgrazing and early transhumance. However, livestock mobility, limited by the Malian conflict and insecurity in Northern Nigeria, exacerbates this precarious situation, particularly for cattle in Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

Regarding agro-food market trends, prices remain at a high level, hindering vulnerable populations' access to food. The main cereal flows are impeded by numerous road controls that have multiplied further due to tighter border controls. Moreover, social and political unrest in the Sahel, particularly in Mali, continue to disrupt the proper functioning of markets.

Malnutrition remains an urgent priority. The region's persisting food insecurity causes worrying levels of malnutrition rates. In March 2012, some 6 million people were facing severe food insecurity. Response actions already implemented by regional and national actors remain insufficient. If there is no additional assistance, the food situation will rapidly deteriorate for millions of people.

This food insecurity is particularly worrying in Northern Mali as the socio-political conflict has led to the looting of foodstuffs, disrupted food supplies and interrupted humanitarian actions. It is estimated that some 210 000 people (as of 12 April 2012) were displaced; humanitarian organisations are no longer able to access the region as a consequence of this conflict. Moreover, cattle displacement is also creating tensions with indigenous populations.

During this difficult year, the RPCA members remind all of the participants of the necessity to respect the principles of dialogue, consultation and the importance of the West African leadership, in line with the "Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management" adopted in November 2011 at Conakry.

In this spirit, the members call upon ECOWAS and UEMOA to organise, as quickly as possible, a high-level meeting in order to make imperative political and financial decisions.

RPCA Members further recommend that ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS Members:

- Continue to finance and implement national emergency plans and development partners' actions in order to strengthen assistance to populations facing food insecurity. It is equally essential that national and regional actors (the Malian government, ECOWAS, development partners and humanitarian actors) open a humanitarian corridor in order to reach affected populations in Northern Mali;
- Provide support for agricultural producers for the next campaign by facilitating access to seeds and livestock reconstitution;
- Invest in long-term actions and strategies to develop populations' response capacities, notably through the implementation of national agricultural investment and food security plans.