



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

November 2008

Policy Note RPCA

Main conclusions of the 24th annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA)

Introduction

The 24th RPCA annual meeting was held from 25 to 27 November 2008 in Dakar focusing on the “Role and Importance of the Market on Food Security.” Present were member countries of the CILSS and ECOWAS, international and sub-regional institutions (CBWAS, CILSS, ECOWAS SWAC and UEMOA), United Nations agencies (FAO, OCHA, WFP and WMO), FEWS Net, development partners (Austria, Canada, European Union, France, Germany, Italy and USA), research centres (CORAF/WECARD, IRD, ISRA.), civil society (cereal and local product processing associations), NGOs (Afrique verte, ICRC, OXFAM, Save the Children) and ECOWAS parliamentarians. The opening ceremony, under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Cheikh Hadjibou SOUMARE, Prime Minister of Senegal, took place with H.E. Mr. Hamath SALL Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Sidy GUEYE, Director of the Office of the Ministry of the Environment, Environmental Protection, Stormwater Detention Ponds and Artificial Lakes, Mr. Alhousseini BRETEAUDAU, Executive Secretary of the CILSS, Mr. Ivan ROBERTS and Mr. Jean Sibiri Zoundi representing the Director of the Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD. The closing ceremony was chaired by H.E. Mr. Minister of State, Minister of the Environment, Environmental Protection, Stormwater Detention Ponds and Artificial Lakes.

This note aims to inform decision-makers of States and intergovernmental organisations (CILSS, ECOWAS, UEMOA) as well as other food security actors of the important conclusions and recommendations.

Main Conclusions

Without losing sight of the production revival methods, the debates focused essentially on market regulation instruments: i) the management of stocks (local, national and regional); (ii) the processing and marketing of local products; and (iii) the strengthening of the regional market as well as the improvement of trade flows in the region. The main conclusions were:

- **There is a surplus of traditional local dry cereal production (millet, sorghum, corn) in comparison with the needs of the region.** During the 2008/2009 campaign in West Africa, traditional cereal production was estimated at 45 million tonnes and rice production was estimated at 9 million tonnes, i.e. a total of 54 million tonnes of all cereals put together. In the Sahel, overall cereal production, estimated at 15.5¹ tonnes, has increased 21% compared with the 2007/2008 campaign and 24% compared with the average over the last five years. In addition to satisfactory rainfall, this record production is due in large part to the measures taken by the States to support production, notably subsidies and free distribution of inputs, fiscal measures, etc. Despite this overall surplus assessment of dry cereals, some Sahel countries (Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Mauritania) however still cannot meet consumption needs.

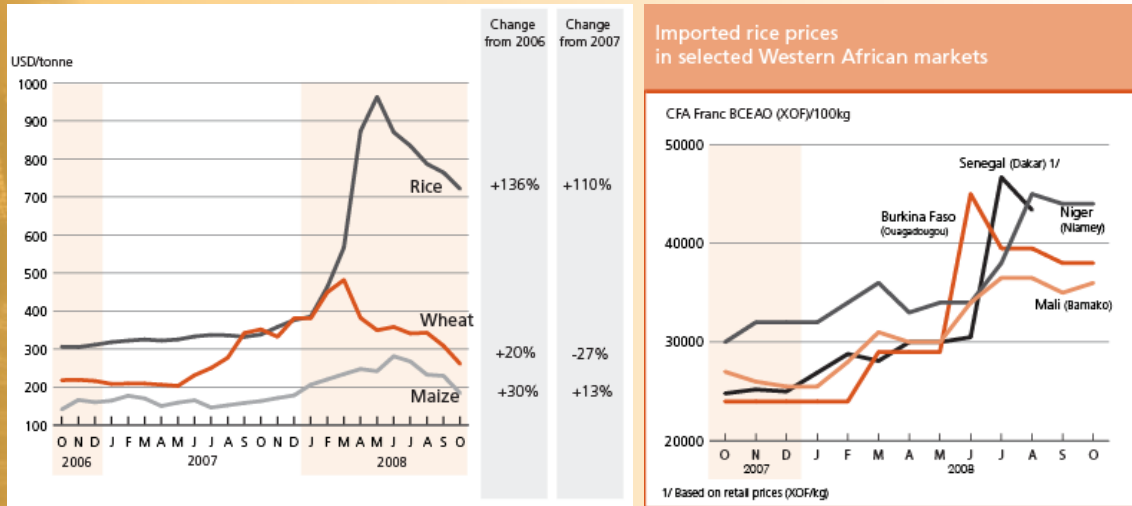
1 This estimate does not include forecasts for Senegal for which the analyses are currently underway.





► **Rice production has increased greatly although prices remain higher than the inter-annual seasonal average.** In CILSS member countries, there has been a large increase in rice production varying between 13% and 200% compared with the preceding agricultural campaign. This production increase is essentially due to government production support measures and initiatives. As set out in Figure 1, the fall in rice prices on the international market has led to a slight decrease in imported rice prices in West Africa. However, this drop in prices should not mask the fact that price levels are still much higher than the inter-annual seasonal average.

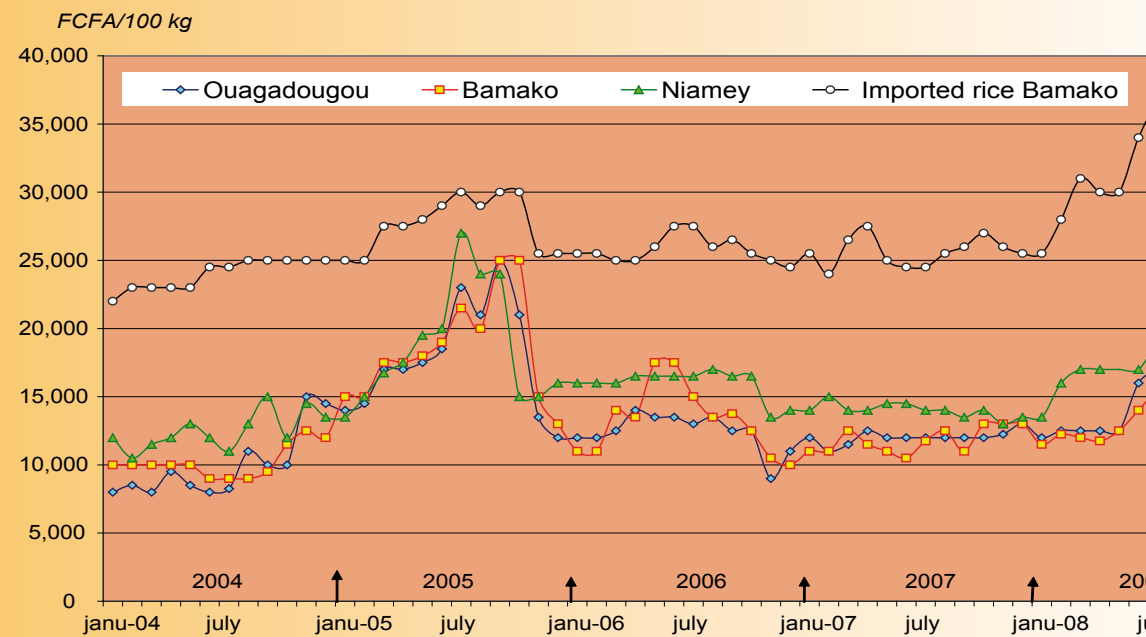
Figure 1 – Evolution of international and West African rice prices



Source: FAO, GIEWS (2008)

The region remains highly dependent on rice imports, despite immense rice production potential. Local production only meets 50% of consumption needs and rice and wheat imports represent more than 90% of all cereal imports in CILSS member countries. This situation calls for State intervention to continue production revival measures undertaken by governments during the 2008-2009 campaign. This intervention supports the recommendation made by ECOWAS parliamentarians meeting at the extraordinary session in Niamey from 22 to 26 November 2008.

Figure 2 – Comparison of millet and imported rice prices (2004-2008)



Source: Afrique verte (2008)



The regional market remains a major concern. Despite relative food availability, trade flows remain a major challenge which should be given particular attention by decision-makers. In 2008, as in 2005, several countries took measures prohibiting exports of some agricultural products despite regional agreements on free movement of goods. At the last RPCA meeting in November 2007, the issue of questioning policy decision-makers regarding the need to respect the free movement of goods was raised and remains an issue. Some initiatives, concerning storage systems and cereal stock markets of which the aim is to improve trade flows between deficient and surplus zones, need to be intensified.

The vulnerability of the urban environment and malnutrition in children and women breast-feeding should be given particular attention in 2009. The rise in prices has emphasised the importance of taking into account the vulnerability of the urban environment in the monitoring of food and nutritional security. Considering that prices are even higher than the preceding year along with chronic malnutrition in several countries, analysis of the vulnerability in the urban and rural environments and the adequate access to food by children and breast-feeding women should be a priority for interventions in 2009.

Intensification of local product processing is an instrument which could facilitate access to food. The processing of local food products is a determining stage in improving food security as it minimises post-harvest waste, creates value added and jobs, assures regular supply of food commodities as well as stabilises supply and prices of food products. Investment in support of this sector would improve access to food commodities as well as offer a response to the recurrent problem of massive imports of some cereals such as rice and wheat which are ever increasing in price (Figure 2).

Intensifying the processing of agricultural products requires however a commitment and strong political support. This has been the case for some governments who have taken measures to gradually substitute imported industrial raw materials by local cereals (sorghum and corn, notably). These successful measures illustrate well the possibility of the gradual substitution of imported raw materials by breweries and flour mills as well as in cattle feed production. Improving the quality and packaging of local products would also help conquer the urban market.

Main recommendations: lessons learned from the rise of food commodity prices

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At the end of the working meeting, several recommendations were made to States, cooperation agencies, the CILSS, ECOWAS and the SWAC/OECD.

To the States, it was recommended

- ▶ To support product marketing by granting easy credit and initiating surplus management measures;
- ▶ To promote direct purchasing from small producers to reconstitute stocks (community, institutional and private), with a view to strengthening livelihoods and encouraging food production;
- ▶ To improve Offices' storage capacities and encourage the cereal stock market in the sub-region;
- ▶ To promote and implement agro-food processing policies as drivers of local agricultural production, creating local jobs and stimulating the regional agro-food product market. To this end, it was proposed to States to define VAT rates adapted for processed products in order to promote processing and marketing of local agro-food products.


To cooperation agencies and States

- ▶ To encourage and support the building of agricultural producer organisations' capacities to be more effective in the marketing of agricultural products;
- ▶ To reinforce tools aiding decision-making and analytical capacities of national and regional food crisis prevention mechanisms;

To the CILSS, ECOWAS and the SWAC/OECD

- ▶ To examine the relevance and feasibility of a regional financial fund to provide food security stock;
- ▶ To carry out studies on the impact of agricultural production revival measures implemented by States;
- ▶ To conduct in-depth analyses on the regional agricultural product and agro-food product market by examining more particularly stimulation and regulation mechanisms;
- ▶ To better harmonise approaches and means of vulnerability analyses and malnutrition reduction programmes in the region. To this end, at the regional level, every new initiative related to the





analysis of food security, vulnerability, and strengthening of information systems should explicitly refer to the technical coordination committee on the harmonised framework of identification and analysis of at-risk zones and vulnerable groups set up by the CILSS.

- ▶ To strengthen the monitoring and analysis methodology of the vulnerability of the urban environment.

During the meeting, participants reaffirmed the determining role of regulating the regional market to improve food security. This concern led Network members to recommend that the 25th annual meeting, to be held in Canada, focus on *“the market and the processing of local products.”* Various actors (States, IGO, cooperation agencies and development organisations, technical and financial partners, NGOs, etc) should now undertake analyses and build on the related experiences to feed into strategic thinking at the next Network meeting.

What is the RPCA?

- ▶ The Food Crisis Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA) was created in 1984 during a period in which the Sahel suffered severe droughts which had dramatic human and economic effects. The Network brought together several categories of members including bilateral and multilateral aid agencies (Austria, Canada, EC, France, Italy and USA), international and sub-regional organisations and regional food security monitoring systems (CILSS, ECHO, ECOWAS, FAO, FEWS NET, OCHA, SWAC/OECD, UEMOA, UNICEF, WFP and WMO.), specialised NGOs (Afrique verte, ICRC, Oxfam and Save the Children), professional agricultural organisations (ROPPA), etc. The RPCA constitutes a framework for stimulating strategic thinking and various actions on food security in the region. As an arena for discussion and open and informal strategic thinking and through its annual meetings, the Network forms a veritable permanent analysis framework for the agricultural and food situation as well as decision-making.
- ▶ One of the Network's major achievements was the adoption of the Food Aid Charter in 1990, a document that greatly inspired the development of the International Convention on Food Aid (London, 1999). With the Network's urging, the Charter's revision has been underway since 2007. Another RPCA product is the monthly Food Security Information Note in the Sahel and West Africa (FOSIN).
- ▶ The Network is led by the CILSS and the SWAC/OECD. More information is available on the RPCA website: www.food-security.net

Photos: World Bank, Curt Carnemark, Yosef Hadar

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