



# FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

## Main conclusions of the 27<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Food Crises Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA) held in Praia, Cape Verde, in December 2011

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### I. Introduction

The 27<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA) took place under the patronage of His Excellency José Maria Neves, Prime Minister of Cape Verde. The aim of this meeting was to

- assess the 2011-2012 agropastoral season and food prospects,
- consider the state of progress of the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management, and
- discuss the issue of “food processing and food security”.

The present paper, aimed at informing decision makers in governments and intergovernmental organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS) as well as other food security stakeholders, summarises the meeting’s main conclusions and proposals for next steps. It complements the press release on 2011-2012 food prospects in the Sahel and West Africa, issued at the 27<sup>th</sup> annual RPCA meeting.

### II. Conclusions

#### 2.1 Food and nutrition situation

##### ► Net grain deficits and low biomass production in most Sahelian countries

The grain output forecast for the 2011-2012 season in the Sahel and West Africa stands at 55.4 million tonnes, representing an 8% decrease compared to the previous year’s output but a 4% increase from average output over the last five years. Total grain output in the Sahel stands at 16.6 million tonnes, a decrease of 25% from the previous year’s harvest and of 2% from the five-year average due to rainfall and water shortages. The Sahel has a gross grain deficit of 2.6 million tonnes. If regional markets were functioning properly, there should be a net grain surplus of 419 368 tonnes in the Sahel, but as it stands now, some countries will experience severe shortages. Chad and Mauritania in particular

are experiencing a 50% and 52% decrease in grain output respectively from the previous year’s harvest and a decrease of 23% and 38% from the five-year average.

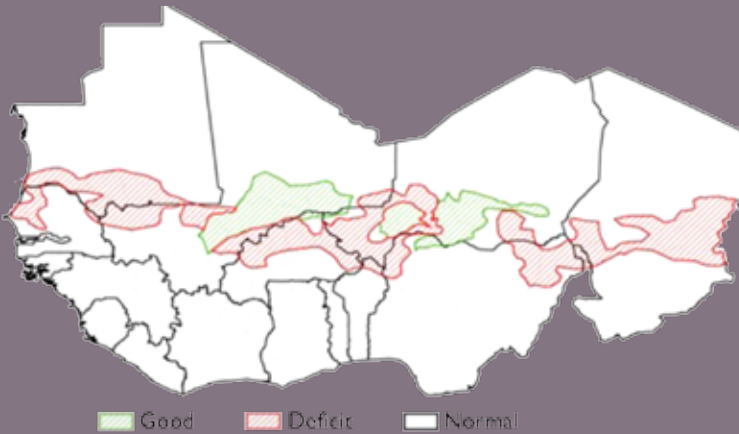
Chad’s Sahelian belt, Mauritania’s agropastoral area, certain areas of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, and localised areas of Senegal and the Gambia are all affected by fodder shortfall. This has resulted in early cross-border transhumance that has created risks of overgrazing and conflict in receiving areas. Pastoral farmers are also having difficulty providing their livestock with sufficient water due to low surface water levels.

##### ► Rising prices, particularly in drought-affected areas

Commodity prices are currently higher than the five-year average. Price increases are particularly

severe in low production areas of the Sahel (10 to 60%). Dried grain prices are particularly

## Assessment of the 2011-2012 agropastoral season



Note: This map aggregates the ICN, VCI and sNDVI vegetation monitoring indicators.

Source: CILSS/AGRHYMET.

high compared to the five-year average and will probably continue to rise in the coming months. Additionally, even though world grain output is expected to hit record levels in 2011 due to strong wheat production levels in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and increased rice production in Southeast Asia, the FAO's index of global food prices is higher than previous years.

### ► A risk of food crisis in vulnerable areas

Acute malnutrition rates are already high in deficit areas such as Tillabéry and Diffa in Niger, Timbuktu in Mali, Matam in Senegal, certain areas of Burkina Faso and Mauritania, and Chad's Sahelian belt. The agricultural and fodder production deficits recorded in the 2011-2012 season in certain areas of the Sahel, particularly in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, have significantly lowered the incomes of pastoral and agropastoral communities in these areas. This loss of income, combined with higher food prices, is already causing localised food shortages. The situation could evolve into a food crisis in the coming months if mitigation measures are not taken before the next lean season, which may come earlier than usual.

## 2.2 Regional Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management

Originally adopted in 1990, a process to revise the "Food Aid Charter" was launched in late 2006. Following an extensive and inclusive consultation process, the draft document, renamed the "Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management", was officially adopted on 17 November 2011 in Conakry, Guinea by the Ministers of Food and Agriculture of the 15 ECOWAS member countries, as well as Mauritania and Chad. The Charter will subsequently be submitted to the Heads of State and Government for approval, in accordance with ECOWAS procedures. The Ministers also adopted a roadmap for the creation of a regional food stock in West Africa.

## 2.3 Food processing and food security

### ► Food processing: issues and challenges

Discussions highlighted the poor development of the West African food processing industry. Limited access to credit, technology, equipment, suitable infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, and markets has restricted the expansion and viability of the food processing industry, keeping it at a low scale. Business permits are often difficult to obtain, imports of equipment require a significant amount of time, and taxes on businesses are relatively high. Access to markets remains limited, not only because of a lack of information and infrastructure, but also due to intra-regional trade barriers that make it difficult to acquire raw materials and finished products. Difficulty in procuring sufficient good quality, affordable raw materials on a regular basis is a major constraint for certain food processing companies. Finally, these companies cannot regularly perform laboratory tests due to high costs, making their products less competitive than imported equivalents. Faced with a low supply level and low appeal of locally processed foods, most of the growing urban demand for processed foods is being met by imports.

### ► Successful food processing initiatives

Successful attempts to process cassava in Nigeria and bananas in Senegal demonstrate that there is a wide range of potential processing food products. Cassava, for example, can be processed into chips and pellets for animals, as well as into flour, sweetener, cooking oil, ethanol, or a starch for flavouring or making various candies. In addition, green bananas can be processed into dumplings, chips or vinegar, or used in stew. Finally, dried bananas can be processed into flour or couscous. Participants also mentioned many other successful initiatives that should be replicated on a wider scale, including Céréalor, a cereal for infants made in Burkina Faso using corn, soy and peanuts.

### ► Policies encouraging food processing

The 1986 conference on grain policies in the Sahel countries held in Mindelo, Cape Verde highlighted the role of food processing as a driver for the rest of the food sector. Following the conference, CILSS





introduced and implemented the Regional Programme for the Promotion of Local Products in the Sahel (PROCELOS) from 1994 to 2005. The actions carried out under this programme – including collecting and sharing information, advising food processing companies and promoting consumption and innovation – helped to strengthen the presence of processed local grains within distribution channels, allowed operators to become better organised, helped identify solutions to improve food quality and packaging, and created opportunities in export markets. The 24<sup>th</sup> RPCA meeting, held in December 2008 in Dakar, also called for the promotion and the implementation of programmes supporting local food processing in order to drive local food production and create jobs. In following this recommendation, CILSS drafted a basic document on a regional food processing development strategy that would promote high-quality, competitive, processed local products that would contribute to food and nutritional security. Food processing actors approved the document in January 2010. In addition to these regional programmes, governments have also adopted policies to encourage food processing. In Nigeria, for example, export incentives and free trade zones have strengthened the development of the cassava industry.

### III. Recommendations and next steps

#### 3.1 The food and nutrition situation

##### ► Governments

- Continue and expand assistance programmes targeting the most vulnerable;
- Strengthen information systems to anticipate malnutrition peaks in at-risk areas and take preventive measures;
- Better target vulnerable populations and secure their livelihoods;
- Avoid any action that could prevent the proper functioning of markets and cross-border trade, thereby ensuring that food can freely move from surplus to deficit areas and preventing a rise in food prices;
- Support herders by prepositioning livestock feed, facilitating transhumance, encouraging the destocking of animals in areas with severe fodder deficits, and rehabilitating water sources;
- Promote dry season farming in appropriate areas;
- Encourage grain agencies to coordinate efforts to reconstitute national food security stocks in order to avoid a concentration of local purchases at one place or time.

##### ► Regional organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS)

- Monitor the application of regulatory texts, including those concerning the free movement of people and goods and more specifically food products as well as transhumant pastoralists;
- Monitor the effective application of the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management;
- Accelerate the establishment of the regional food stock;
- Make a long-term commitment to fund national and regional food security information systems.

##### ► Regional information systems (CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET)

- Rapidly carry out joint missions to identify vulnerable groups, determine assistance needs and support national response plans;
- Support governments in processing the results of agricultural surveys;
- Evaluate market functioning and monitor regional trade barriers on a regular basis.

##### ► Technical and financial partners

- Organise food distribution by targeting malnourished groups, particularly children under 5 and pregnant and nursing women in the areas most affected by production deficits particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad;
- Support joint missions planned by the CILSS Regional Food Crisis Prevention and Management Unit (PREGEC) to evaluate the food and nutrition situation;
- Strengthen support for regional information and early warning systems, most notably for the operation and development of tools for analysis;
- Contribute to funding of national emergency plans and food security programmes.



### 3.2 Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management

- ▶ Governments, regional organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS), and technical and financial partners
- Contribute to the implementation of the new Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management and the roadmap for the creation of a regional food stock in West Africa.

### 3.3 Food processing and food security

#### ▶ Governments

- Support the production of the agricultural and livestock products needed for the food processing industry;
- Support the development of and compliance with regional quality standards;
- Promote processing local produce into high-nutrition food products that will help effectively fight malnutrition;
- Strengthen the functioning of local, national and regional markets to ensure a continuous supply for food processing plants;
- Enforce the free movement of goods and services, particularly through the application of ECOWAS and UEMOA regulations;
- Implement targeted measures and revise investment codes to facilitate access to credit for SMEs involved in the food processing industry;
- Revise taxation policies to ensure better access to food processing equipment and new technology;
- Fund research towards the development of processing equipment adapted to the local context and of crop varieties tailored to different markets;
- Promote solar energy, particularly to improve access to electricity and ensure better conservation as well as higher quality raw materials for food processing;
- Promote consumption of local products through awareness campaigns.

#### ▶ Regional organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS)

- Support regional initiatives that facilitate smooth trade between countries;
- Organise a regional conference around ECOWAS, UEMOA and the CILSS for the development of a regional food processing programme.

## What is the RPCA?

Since its creation in 1984, the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) has been a unique forum for dialogue on food security issues, facilitating decision-making to better prevent and manage food crises. It brings together West Africa's main food security actors. As an open and informal forum, it analyses the food situation of the region, improves information-sharing among key stakeholders and promotes concerted and consistent actions. The network is led by the CILSS and SWAC Secretariats.

For further information, please consult the RPCA website: [www.food-security.net](http://www.food-security.net)

Photos: World Bank: Curt Carnemark - Ray Witlin

Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat  
SWAC/OECD  
2 rue André Pascal  
75775 Paris Cedex 16 – France  
Tel: +33 (0)1 45 24 19 82  
Fax: +33 (0)1 45 24 90 31  
Website: [www.oecd.org/swac](http://www.oecd.org/swac)  
Contact: [sibirijean.zoundi@oecd.org](mailto:sibirijean.zoundi@oecd.org)

Permanent Inter-State Committee  
for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)  
03 BP 7049 Ouagadougou 03  
Burkina Faso  
Tel: +226 50 37 41 25  
Fax: +226 50 37 41 32  
Website: [www.cilss.bf](http://www.cilss.bf)  
Contact: [mahalmoudou.hamadoun@cilss.bf](mailto:mahalmoudou.hamadoun@cilss.bf)