

## Food Security Information Note - FOSIN

### Food Situation in the Sahel and West Africa: What are the strategies to deal with the persisting rise in food product prices?

Note 17 – February 2008

#### 1. Prices of Food product in the Region Continue to Rise

Several analyses carried out in February 2008 indicate that prices of key cereals continue to rise in the region.

**In the Sahel**, prices continue to rise in most key cereal producing countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The assessment made by *Afrique Verte* at the beginning of February confirms this trend with the steep hike in prices reaching 25% for sorghum in Maradi, 18.5% and 20% respectively for millet and corn in Niamey, Niger.

In certain flood-affected areas of Burkina Faso, recent assessments indicate that the food and nutritional situation could deteriorate due to a continued rise in food product prices. Compared to the situation in 2007, the greatest increase was 100% for corn (15 000 CFA F for one 100 kg sack in 2008 compared to 7 500 CFA F in 2007) in some areas of the Cascades region.

In most cases, this continued rise in prices seems to be due to a combination of factors:

- Average production of the 2007 agricultural campaign, a situation which has also involved northern Ghana and Nigeria, main cereal producing areas.
- A global rise in food product prices ([FOSIN 16](#)).
- Strong demand and competition between local and foreign buyers such is the case with the great rush of Ghanaian and Nigerian merchants seeking cowpeas and millet in the Zinder and Maradi zones. This competition between food product market operators is also occurring in Burkina Faso where food prices could continue to rise.

**In Summary:** For the moment, the food situation seems overall satisfactory. The arrival of garden harvests on the market providing substantial revenues for populations improves accessibility and hence the food situation for some households.

However, the food and nutritional situation could rapidly deteriorate in some areas of the region especially with the possible early arrival of the lean period if this price hike situation continues. With regard to discernible social tensions, countries could impose restrictive measures on food product exports such was the case in Argentina, China, Russia and the Ukraine. Such a situation could hinder intra-regional trade flows and would thus increase the risk market tensions as well as food and nutritional crises.

#### 2. What to do? What types of strategies?

Following the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA) held in Brussels in November 2007, several concrete measures were recommended with regard to states and regional economic organisations ([RPCA Policy Note](#)). These recommendations remain timely and urgent with regard to the continued rise in prices.

The current situation calls for **governments to be involved and take determinant action**. Some recommended measures were made by the RPCA:

- Government and NGO action to be undertaken to limit the hike in prices** through appropriate measures.
  - Increase efforts to reconstitute stocks in particular in at-risk zones and before the critical rainy season. Appropriate operations and/or special campaigns must be organised.
  - Act immediately to stabilise prices. In some areas such as the central-south and central-east of Burkina Faso, recent experiences indicate that sales at subsidised prices limited price hikes and thus improved accessibility to food by vulnerable populations. Such operations in at-risk zones must be strengthened.
- Improving access conditions to food resources for the most vulnerable populations.** Current price levels appear far from most of the population's purchasing power in rural as well as in urban areas. Operations and







measures to improve revenues of vulnerable populations could prove essential, through:

- Off-season cash crop agricultural production activities
- Non-agricultural revenue generating activities

**Information Sources**

This FCPN analytical note was produced on the basis of information or analyses provided by various specialised Network (non) member institutions. More information can be obtained from the respective websites.

				
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 OCHA: [www.humanitarianinfo.org](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org) & <http://ochaonline.un.org/>; SISA/CNSA: [www.sisabf.net](http://www.sisabf.net)

**Better Access to Information on the Food and Nutritional Situation in the Sahel and West Africa**

The FCPN has set up a website to encourage access to information on the food and nutritional situation in the region in view of decision-making for action.

For any information questions, and/or analytical document you may need with regard to the food and nutritional situation, please access the site at: [www.food-security.net](http://www.food-security.net)