



## PRESS RELEASE ON THE 2023-2024 PROJECTED PRODUCTION AND THE 2022-2023 EX-POST AND 2023-2024 PROJECTED CEREAL AND FOOD BALANCE SHEETS IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

### Regional technical consultation

# REGIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

Members of the Regional Food Crisis Prevention and Management Mechanism in the Sahel and West Africa met from 22 to 24 November 2023 in Conakry, Guinea, to review the progress of the 2023/2024 agro-pastoral season and discuss the projected agricultural productions and the food and nutrition situation. At the end of their deliberations, the participants came to the following conclusions and recommendations:

The 2023 agropastoral season recorded overall rainfall totals close to average, compared with the 1991-2020 normal. However, it was marked by long dry spells, particularly in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad.

The hydrological situation in the major river basins of the region is characterised by flows that are generally lower than the average flows of the last five years, particularly in the Niger River and Lake Chad basins. Cases of overflow leading to flooding have been observed in Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Guinea and Senegal.

Water requirements for rainfed crops were met to varying degrees. Persistent water deficits in May, June and July, and even in early August, adversely affected crops in some areas of Niger, Mali and Chad. Elsewhere, crops developed under moderately favourable conditions.

Reported pest infestations were kept under control in most countries.

These included persistent attacks by autumn armyworm, with a low to moderate incidence, mainly on maize crops, attacks by millet leaf-miner caterpillars and cowpea defoliator

caterpillars, grasshoppers, grain-eating birds (Mali-Burkina Faso-Niger tri-border area) and flower-eating insects (beetles and bugs) on food crops. As regards cash crops, an outbreak of cocoa caterpillars, with sometimes severe damage in June-July (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone), and persistent attacks by Jassid moths on cotton and certain vegetable crops were reported in the cotton-growing areas of some countries. Despite the intrusion of groups of adult locusts from the Maghreb at the start of the summer season and the favourable eco-meteorological conditions observed throughout the season, the threat of Desert Locust invasion remained low in the region.

The overall pastoral situation in the region is marked by relative forage availability, with deficits recorded in certain regions of Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Cabo Verde and Chad. Biomass production in the deficit areas of these countries is estimated to be lower than the average for the last five years and last year.

On the other hand, biomass production is in surplus in Burkina Faso in hard-to-access areas and along the Atlantic seaboard. Overall, water availability for livestock watering is satisfactory, and the animal health situation is relatively calm.

«Organized by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel with the support of its partners, the November PREGEC meeting validated the preliminary results of agricultural production, identified the food outlook for 2023-2024 and report on food and nutritional insecurity »

This situation arises in a context where there are difficulties in practising transhumance, given certain restrictions imposed by coastal countries and in troubled areas.

Expected cereal production is estimated at 76.5 million metric tonnes, which is 1% down on the previous season and 3% up compared with the last five years' average. Although all countries are affected, the decline is greater in the countries of the Lake Chad basin, particularly Niger (-13%), Chad (-7.5%) and Nigeria (-7%). Expected production of roots and tubers is estimated at 205 million metric tonnes, 2% up on the previous season and 7% up compared with the last five-year average. Regarding cash crops, apart from cocoa production, which is down compared with last year and the five-year average, production of other crops is expected to be up relative to last year and the average for the last five years.

The provisional cereal balance sheet for the region shows a gross deficit of 11.7 million metric tonnes. This deficit, which is made up of rice and wheat, could be largely offset by imports. A net surplus emerges after taking into account imports from other countries, giving an apparent availability of 185 kg/capita/year compared with 198 kg/capita/year for the previous season.

Agricultural markets are well supplied overall, given the current harvests and the relatively acceptable level of carryover stockpiles. However, persistent civil insecurity in conflict zones (Lake Chad basin, Liptako-Gourma region and north-western Nigeria), security measures, the closure of borders by certain countries and ECOWAS sanctions on Niger are seriously disrupting market operations. Moreover, despite the continuing downward trend in the FAO food price index, the overall level of product prices remains high in the region. This high inflation is keeping staple food prices, both local and imported, higher than the five-year average (including 44% for cereals). Inflation is particularly high in Sierra Leone (54%), Ghana (35%), Nigeria (27%) and The Gambia (18%).

Livestock prices remain relatively high across the region, with a downward trend in areas affected by insecurity and in Niger. Livestock trade has been adversely affected by the continuing insecurity in several Sahel countries and the sanctions imposed on Niger. The terms of trade between livestock and cereals are generally unfavourable to livestock farmers due to high cereal prices.

People's food and nutrition situation remains worrying. The Cadre Harmonisé analyses, carried out in sixteen countries, indicate that 34.6 million people are acutely food and nutritionally insecure, from the crisis phase to the worst, during the period from October to December 2023.

If no action is taken, this number could rise to 47 million people during the period from June to August 2024 in the Sahel and West African countries and in Cameroon.

More than 4 out of 5 people in the crisis to worst phase, i.e. around 39.4 million people during the next lean season, are to be found in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali. In particular, more than 2 million people will be in an emergency situation (Phase 4), and around half of them will be in Nigeria.

Insecurity and conflict continue to affect the household food and livelihood situation in the region, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin, Liptako Gourma, northern coastal countries and the English-speaking area of Cameroon. It has led to forced displacement of more than 8.3 million people, many of whom are in a precarious situation. The disruption of economic activities in these areas is reducing food availability and economic access to sufficient food for households. Insecurity and displacement continue to heavily affect small-scale producers and livestock breeders, who have no access to their fields or pastures in some areas. In addition, humanitarian access to these populations remains difficult, which reduces the response capacity of humanitarian partners.

The nutritional situation remains worrying, with levels of acute malnutrition exceeding 15%, the WHO emergency threshold, in the tri-border areas of northern Mali and Burkina Faso, as well as in certain areas of north-eastern and north-western Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To States:

- Provide emergency assistance to populations suffering from from „crisis to worst“ food and nutrition insecurity.
- Ensure humanitarian access to partners in insecure areas to provide emergency food assistance to affected populations.
- Make the necessary arrangements to ensure peaceful transhumance in the countries concerned.
- Take steps to ensure the free movement of food commodities between countries.
- Support pastoralists and agro pastoralists by providing them with livestock feed.
- Strengthen pest monitoring to document the impact of crop pests on the food and feed situation.

## To IGOs: CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA

- Further mobilise the response instruments put in place by ECOWAS and UEMOA (the regional reserve) to support the implementation of national response plans (NRPs).
- Strengthen the regional coordination and monitoring-evaluation system for the National Response Plans.
- Strengthen the nutrition surveillance system and explore new methodologies for collecting data to support early action and a more effective humanitarian nutrition response.
- Mobilise partners to support countries in preparing and implementing responses to pastoral crises.

## CILSS/SWAC

- Assess the impact of the political and security crisis on trade flows, cross-border market operations and the food and nutrition situation in Niger, Nigeria, and Benin.

## To Technical and Financial Partners:

- Support the governments' and the region's efforts to mobilise resources to meet the needs of people affected by the food and nutrition crisis through national response plans.
- Support the financing of national food and nutrition data collection systems.

Done in Conakry, 24 November 2023

## The meeting

### LEADERS POLITIQUES ET ANIMATEURS TECHNIQUES DU RPCA



### PARTENAIRES TECHNIQUES



### PARTENAIRES FINANCIERS

