



PRESS RELEASE 2024-2025 Agricultural and Food Outlook in the Sahel and West Africa

Regional technical consultation REGIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF FOOD CRISES (PREGEC)

Members of the Regional Food Crisis Prevention and Management mechanism in West Africa and the Sahel met from 11 to 13 December 2024 in Nouakchott, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, to review the progress of the 2024/2025 agro-pastoral season and to rule on the projected agricultural production and the food and nutrition situation. The following observations and recommendations were made at the end of the meeting:

The December PREGEC meeting validated the forecast results for the 2024-2025 agropastoral season and the food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa. The meeting was organized by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and its partners.

1. The 2024/2025 agro-pastoral season was characterised by surplus rainfall in the Sahelian countries and normal to deficit rainfall in the Gulf of Guinea countries. Heavy downpours were recorded in Desert Locust-breeding areas in frontline countries. However, the season was also marked by long dry spells in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea, northern Senegal and the far south-west of Mauritania. The resumption and intensification of rainfall from July onwards enabled crop cycles to develop under satisfactory water conditions.
2. The 2024-2025 hydrological situation was marked by run-offs above the 1991-2020 hydrological reference level. Red warning levels were observed in the upper and middle Niger river basin, the Senegal river basin, the Komadougou-Yobé and the upper Chari River basins. Overflowing basins caused river flooding (Lake Chad and Middle Niger river basins in Mali). The downpours also caused severe flooding in Mali, Niger, Nigeria, in Senegal, Chad, etc. The floods affected more than 5 million people, with more than a thousand deaths, and caused huge economic losses (destruction of crops, animals and socio-economic infrastructures). Niger, Nigeria and Chad were the countries most affected by the floods.
3. The phytosanitary situation was marked by multiple pest infestations on food crops. Fall armyworm infestations had a low to moderate impact on maize crops, particularly in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Chad. Attacks on crops by flower-feeding insects, leafminer caterpillars (on millet) and defoliator caterpillars (on cowpeas and groundnuts), grasshoppers and grain-eating birds were observed in several countries. Several countries have reported a resurgence of certain fungal and bacterial diseases affecting food and cash crops.
4. The pastoral situation in the Sahel region is characterised by a satisfactory availability of fodder and water for livestock watering. Cattle are generally in satisfactory body condition. Livestock movements and concentrations are normal. In Senegal, the situation is relatively poor along the Atlantic seaboard.

In the Sudanian zone, fodder production is slightly lower than in 2023 and equivalent to the average for the last ten years. The animal health situation remains stable overall, with a few disease outbreaks reported in Niger and Senegal having been brought under control by the veterinary services. Insecurity conditions and measures restricting transhumance across borders in some countries are considerably reducing the mobility of transhumant animals.
5. Cereal production for the 2024/2025 season is estimated at 78.9 million metric tonnes, 2% increase compared to the previous season and 5% to the last five-years average. It should be noted that decreases are expected in Senegal and Togo. Production of roots and tubers is estimated at 275 million metric tonnes, 5% increase compared to the previous season and 11% to the five-years average. Cash crops

production is expected to be higher than last year and the last five-years average except for cowpeas, voandzou, cotton and cashew nuts, which productions are expected to be lower compared to last year.

The region's provisional cereals balance-sheet shows a gross deficit of 11.5 million metric tonnes. This deficit is made up of rice (8.7 million metric tonnes) and wheat (9 million metric tonnes), but could be amply covered by imports estimated at around 19 million metric tonnes. A net surplus of around 7 million metric tonnes emerges in considering countries' import intentions.

6. Agricultural markets remain well supplied with local foodstuffs and imported commodities in line with the ongoing harvests. Cross-border flows and the functioning of agricultural and livestock markets are severely disrupted in areas affected by civil insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin, Liptako-Gourma, the far north of certain coastal countries, and several States in eastern, north-western and central Nigeria. Inflation rates are still high, particularly in Nigeria (34%), Ghana (23%) and Sierra Leone (20%). High domestic demand and inflation are keeping cereal prices higher (by 40-50%) compared with the five-years average. Due to the high cost of the diet, more than 53% of households do not have access to healthy and nutritious food, particularly in certain countries.

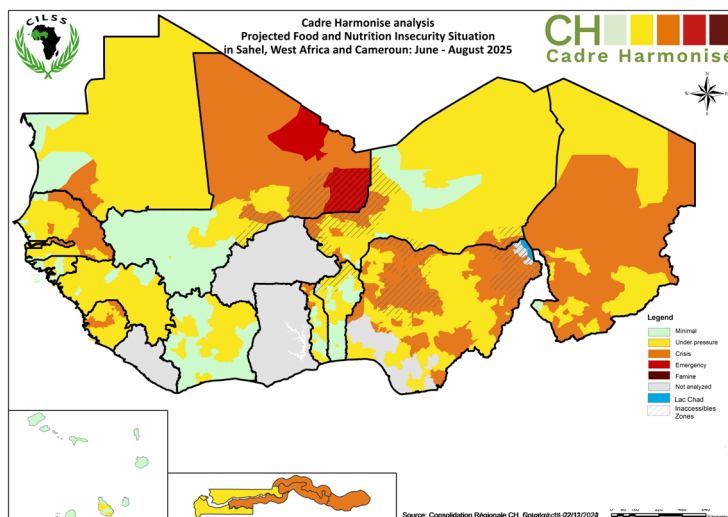
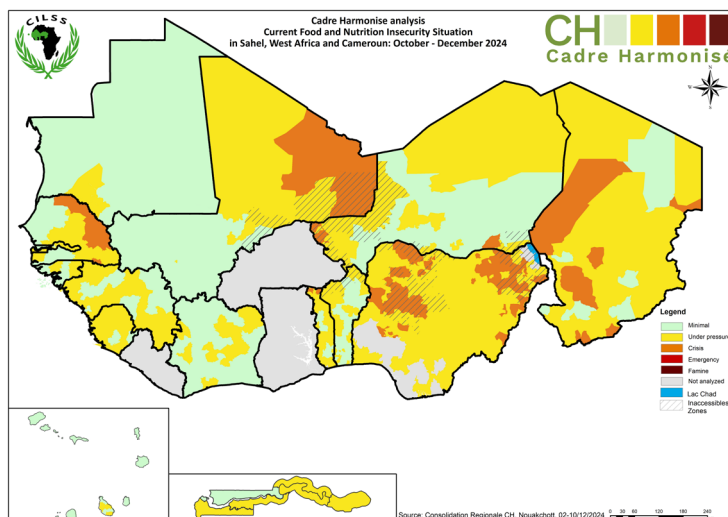
Livestock prices remain relatively high across the region. The terms of trade between livestock and cereals are deteriorating and generally unfavourable for livestock farmers, due to the high prices of cereals relative to livestock.

On international markets, food prices are increasing, except for cereals, meat and sugar, which are decreasing. This increase in food prices is not favourable for the region, which continues to rely on imports to make up its food deficits.

7. The food and nutrition situation remains worrying. The results of the vulnerability analyses carried out in the countries with the Cadre Harmonisé tool show that 34.7 million people (25 million in Nigeria, including 516,000 internally displaced persons) are in food insecurity, Phases 3 to 5 during the period from October to December 2024 in the Sahel and West Africa region, with more than 1.3 million people in Phase 4 (food emergency).

Food insecurity could affect more than 47.1 million people (including 33.2 million in Nigeria) during the lean season (June - August 2025), if appropriate measures are not taken by governments and their partners. To this figure must be added almost 600,000 displaced people in Chad. The nutritional situation is marked by a very high prevalence of acute malnutrition in several countries, particularly in north-western and north-eastern Nigeria, the north-eastern regions of Mali, in Niger and the Sahelian strip of Chad. Access to adequate diet remains a major challenge, as one child in five does not have access to it, which explains the poor nutritional conditions.

8. The implementation of responses for populations vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity, as identified in 2024, has made timid progress. Countries and their partners have mobilised around 112 billion (F CFA) in support of food and nutrition-insecure people in nine countries of the Sahel and West Africa. This represents 48% of the forecasts.



RECOMMANDATIONS

To States:

- Mobilise financial resources to implement national response plans integrating livestock needs;
- Strengthen monitoring of the Desert Locust threat in frontline countries;
- Strengthen bushfire prevention and control to protect available forage on natural pastures;
- Lift cross-border trade restrictions on the free movement of agricultural products in the region.

To CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA IGOs:

- Strengthen regional instruments for the prevention and management of food, nutrition and pastoral crises in line with the regional food security reserve.
- Advocate to convince States governments to lift restrictions on the free movement of agricultural products in the region in compliance with Community agreements;

- Strengthen information systems on Anticipatory Actions in the region.

To Technical and financial partners

- Support the region's Inter-Governmental Organisations and their Member States in setting up an effective monitoring system to strengthen early warning and crisis prevention.
- Strengthen the mobilisation of resources for the response and the operationalisation of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in order to create coherence and complementarity of actions in the countries.

Nouakchott, December 13, 2024

The meeting



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