



Communiqué on the half-term assessment of the 2017-18 agro-pastoral campaign and the food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa

Technical consultation of the REGIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF FOOD CRISES (PREGEC)

The regional technical consultation on the current 2016-2017 cereal and food balance sheets as well as the 2017-2018 outlook was held in Bamako, Mali, from 27 to 29 November 2017. The participants made the following observations:

« A mixed end to the campaign in the Sahel with the prospect of an early and very difficult lean season in the pastoral zones of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Senegal and particularly Mauritania »

The November PREGEC meeting validated the preliminary results of agricultural production, released the 2017-2018 food outlook and made the state of food and nutrition insecurity.

1. In terms of rainfall, seasonal levels were generally normal to surplus. However, poor distribution and an early end to the rains in some places affected crops and biomass production in Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. The situation is more critical in Cabo Verde where there was little rain at all.
2. In terms of hydrological aspects, there were deficits in runoff in the high basins of the Senegal and Niger Rivers, but surpluses in the other basins, especially the Lake Chad basin. This may have other repercussions: a low rate of expansion of flood-recession crops in the lower valley of the Senegal River; a limited expansion of flood waters along the Inner Niger Delta of Mali creating unfavourable conditions for irrigated crops and fish production in a strategic part of the Niger basin; and low water levels in the middle part of the basin, particularly in Niger. On the other hand, exceptional flood levels recorded in the Lake Chad basin could be very favourable to the development of flood-recession crops in the vast flood plains of the Chari-Logone basin.
3. The phyto-sanitary situation has been marked by reports of armyworm attacks on maize crops in several countries. However, thanks to intense and consistent rains recorded during the months of July and August as well as several interventions carried out, the effects of these attacks were limited. Nevertheless, this pest's presence in the region represents a permanent threat to crops because of its considerable ability to adapt.
4. In terms of agriculture, crop moisture requirements were satisfied overall, except in certain areas of the Sahel where crops suffered from water stress linked to dry spells and an early end to the rains. Expected grain production is therefore estimated at 68.3 million tonnes, an increase of 4% compared to the 2016-2017 campaign and 13% compared to the five-year average. However, some countries reported significant declines compared to last year and to the five-year average including: Mauritania (-5 and -12%), Guinea Bissau (-7 and -5%), Gambia (-27 and -38%) and particularly Cabo Verde, where production was insignificant due to lack of rain. Production of tubers is estimated at 182.4 million tonnes, an increase of 15% and 18% compared to last year and the five-year average respectively. The situation is similar for legumes with 8.3 million tonnes of groundnuts, 7.7 million tonnes of cowpeas and 1.7 million tonnes of soybeans, but production of Voandzou is down at 145 thousand tonnes.
- 5.5. The pastoral situation is critical in the Sahel due to unfavourable conditions for establishing and developing vegetation, especially due to dry spells and the early end to the rains. Consequently, fodder production remains very low and almost non-existent in the major livestock farming areas of Mauritania, northern Senegal, Cabo Verde, in the Burkinabe Sahel, in the north and east of Niger, in the west and east of the Chadian Sahel and in parts of Mali. This situation has already led to a massive and early departure of pastoralists to parts of Senegal and Mali where conflicts could occur. The outlook suggests there will be a very early lean season and very difficult livestock feeding conditions in these areas.

6. Agricultural markets in the region have been generally well supplied by the recently harvested crops and by cross-border flows. However, the price decreases that are usually observed during the harvest period were lower. As a result, commodity prices have remained higher than the five-year average in almost all countries, except Chad and Cabo Verde, for both grains and tubers. This price increase is largely due to the effects of currency disturbances and inflation in Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. This climate of rising prices may ease in response to international prices and favourable global inventories, although slight upward trends have been observed in recent months on the cereal price index. Prices for cash crops, such as groundnuts and cowpeas, are generally stable compared to the five-year average.

7. In livestock markets, cattle and small ruminant prices are stable with a downward trend compared to the five-year average due to difficult pastoral conditions and an overall low demand for livestock due to civil unrest, which has limited trade, particularly in Chad. As a result, the terms of trade livestock/cereals have significantly deteriorated in the region. If no action is taken, this situation could lead to a decline in the livelihoods of poor and very poor households, particularly pastoralists.

8. Despite efforts made by governments and their partners, the nutrition situation remains worrisome in certain regions of Chad, Mali, Mauritania and north-eastern Nigeria, where the prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) exceeds the emergency threshold of 15% and the prevalence of severe acute malnutrition has also increased. From January to September 2017, more than 1.2 million severely acute malnourished children were identified and treated.

9. The Cadre Harmonisé analyses carried out in the 17 CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA countries revealed the persistence of food and nutrition insecurity, particularly in the Lake Chad and Diffa regions of Niger and the states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe in Nigeria. There, civil insecurity has resulted in more than 2.8 million displaced persons or refugees. Between October and December 2017, more than 5.2 million people will need immediate food and humanitarian assistance in order to save lives and fight malnutrition. If the planned responses are not carried out, including the necessary measures to address the difficult livestock feeding conditions in the Sahel's pastoral zones, by the next lean season of June-August 2018, when the already precarious fodder situation will deteriorate even further, the number of people in crisis, could reach 9.6 million people at worst. More than 1 million of them could be in an emergency situation, mainly spread across Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria, and more than 12,000 people could experience famine in Nigeria's Adamawa State.

10. In the light of these observations, the following recommendations were made:

States :

- Invest in evaluating the pastoral situation, markets and food security in the region, planned for February 2018;
- Make appropriate arrangements with host countries so they are prepared for migration and facilitate the free movement of cross-border transhumants;
- Invest immediately in the development and implementation of response plans: (i) to assist the populations experiencing a food and nutrition crisis or emergency in the Lake Chad area; (ii) to prevent declines in livelihoods for people already under stress by focusing on supplying livestock feed and other instruments to manage pastoral vulnerability;
- Strengthen surveillance and monitoring of armyworms to prevent the risk of widespread dispersal;

CILSS :

- Strengthen the capacity of countries to use tools to monitor and evaluate biomass fodder in West Africa;
- Organise a specific meeting on the pastoral situation in the Sahel as soon as possible;

Partners :

- Support inter-governmental organisations in the fight against armyworms threatening the region's crops;
- Mobilise the international community to support States in rapidly implementing responses to prevent risks related to the pastoral crisis;
- Support the implementation of measures to strengthen the resilience of populations under stress.

Bamako, 29 November 2017



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