



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

“Food and nutrition insecurity in the Sahel and West Africa greatly aggravated by the combined effects of the security and health crises”.

« Organized by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel with the support of its partners, the June PREGEC meeting launched the 2020-2021 agro-pastoral campaign. It also examined the forecasts of the agro-hydro-climatic characteristics of the rainy season and prepared the follow-up of its progress »

Participants in the restricted meeting of the regional mechanism for Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC) in the Sahel and West Africa, held on 18 June 2020 by videoconference, made the following observations:

1. Following the relaxation, by the States, of measures to combat the spread of COVID-19, the functioning of markets in the region is gradually normalising in most countries except in Senegal, Nigeria, Togo and Chad where closure measures are in force in some markets. The same is true in the conflict zones of Liptako-Gourma, Lake Chad and Northern Mali because of the civil insecurity there. As a result, cereal prices are generally higher (variations between 4.1 and 8.6 percent) in the region compared to the five-year average except in some countries of the Central basin (Mali, Togo and Burkina Faso), the Eastern basin (Benin) and the Western basin (Cabo Verde). The most significant price increases are observed mainly on imported rice (variations between 11 and 17%) in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia.
2. The food and nutrition situation remains critical mainly in the Sahelian countries affected by the persistent security crisis, compounded by the health crisis linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. Current Cadre Harmonisé analyses identified nearly 17 million people in crisis phase or worse (Phases 3 to 5) for the period from June to August 2020 in the Sahel and West Africa. Amongst these populations requiring emergency food assistance, nearly 51 million people, currently under pressure (Phase 2), are likely to fall into a food and nutrition crisis (Phase 3) under the combined effects of the security and health crises, as well as the locust threat, if nothing is done to protect their livelihoods.

Prices for tubers and cash crops are also rising to varying degrees, except for cowpea. Livestock prices remain generally stable for most species, with downward trends observed in markets located in areas of civil insecurity due to the poor sales of animals. The prices of the major commodities will continue their seasonal increases, as the 2020-2021 cropping season sets in, particularly in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Gambia, which are facing inflation.

The close monitoring of the food and nutrition situation, introduced in March 2020, reveals negative impacts of the health measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning of health centres, agricultural and livestock markets, the development of income-generating activities, access to factors of production (inputs, agricultural labour) and pastoral resources, as well as animal mobility.

3. The nutritional situation in the region remains a cause for concern because of the slowdown in certain malnutrition management activities and the decline in attendance at health centres as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This could lead to an increase in the rate of global acute malnutrition (GAM) in the majority of countries during the year. Thus, GAM prevalence could vary between 10 and 15% in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Northeastern Nigeria, Senegal and Chad; in these same countries and localities, the rates of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) could exceed the emergency threshold of 2%.

4. To address this food and nutrition insecurity, States and their intergovernmental organisations, with the support of their partners, are implementing response plans to assist vulnerable populations, but also those affected by the measures taken to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the response remains timid and under-funded compared to the means deployed in the fight against the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of the fight against malnutrition, the partners, in collaboration with States, have developed a response strategy based on prevention and including infant and young child feeding, health, water, hygiene and sanitation, and social protection.

5. The agro-hydro-meteorological conditions are favourable for crop development in the coastal countries and for sowing of crops in the Sahel countries during the ongoing rainy season. In prospects, the significant rainfall expected in accordance with the seasonal forecasts could result in runoffs higher than the 1981-2010 average in the upper basins of Niger, Senegal, Chari (Lake Chad sub-basin) and Volta rivers. This situation could cause floods that could affect agro-pastoral production and the livelihoods of the populations in the areas concerned.

6. The phyto-sanitary situation is calm for the moment, but the locust threat remains and is becoming more precise. To cope with it, the frontline countries (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad) plus Burkina Faso and Senegal, regional organisations and their international partners are actively involved in mobilising the resources necessary to control a possible locust invasion. In addition to the risk of Desert Locust invasion from East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, there is the threat of the Fall Armyworm (FAW) now present in all Sahelian and West African countries for several years.

7. The pastoral situation is characterised by a very low (or almost non-existent) availability of fodder in Mauritania and Senegal and in places in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. In addition, both internal and trans-boundary transhumance have been strongly impacted by border closures linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, but also by persistent civil insecurity in central Mali, in the Liptako-Gourma region, in the Lake Chad basin and in north-eastern Nigeria; pastoralists and their livestock find it extremely difficult to access pastoral resources (pastures and water points) in these areas.

In the light of the observations listed above, the meeting makes the following recommendations to:

■ States:

- Intensify efforts to mobilise the funding required to strengthen the implementation of national response plans to save lives and protect household livelihoods;
- Take the necessary steps to secure the provision of food and humanitarian assistance to the populations in conflict zones with special attention to infants, young children and pregnant women;
- Engage actively in the prevention and management of malnutrition in order to considerably reduce the high prevalence observed, including taking specific measures for a rapid return to the normal functioning of health centres;
- Strengthen surveillance at the frontline country level and accelerate the implementation of national locust emergency plans;
- Maintain/reinforce fall armyworm monitoring and control efforts;
- Anticipate the formulation and search for means to implement prevention and response plans to the flood risks that some localities will experience, including mitigation measures on the agro-forestry-pastoral campaign.

■ CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA:

- Support countries in mobilising resources to finance response plans for vulnerable populations, with particular attention to Sierra Leone, which for the first time is experiencing food insecurity affecting more than 1.3 million people;
- Support frontline countries (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad plus Burkina Faso and Senegal) in the implementation of their national locust emergency plans;
- Support capacity building for locust and fall armyworm control brigades in the countries.

■ Partners:

- Support the efforts of States in the implementation of their national response plans, particularly in favour of vulnerable populations in conflict zones;
- Support countries and their regional organisations in the implementation of response plans to the threats of Desert Locust invasion and control of the fall armyworm and other crop pests.

Done on 18 June 2020

