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## Press release on the 2016-2017 Agricultural and Food Outlook in the Sahel and West Africa

### Good to very good crops and pasture production expected for the 2016-2017 cropping season

Participants in the regional technical consultation on agricultural and food prospects in the Sahel and West Africa, held from 19 to 21 September 2016, in Lomé, Togo, draw the following conclusions:

1. **As part of preparations for the agro-pastoral season**, States and their partners provided support to farmers with inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides) and agricultural equipment, even if these efforts have not met the expressed needs.
2. **On rainfall**, the rainy season installation was early in Central and Eastern Sahel, including in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. However, it was late in Western Sahel (Senegal, the Gambia, Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau). Overall, starting from July, the rains have been abundant and well distributed in time and space, except in part of the agro-pastoral areas of Niger and Chad. At the Gulf of Guinea, light rainfall deficits were noted particularly in August, in the coastal area from Sierra Leone to Nigeria. In early September, seasonal rainfall totals were everywhere normal to excess, except in places along the coastline, in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Nigeria where light deficits were observed. The heavy rains have caused flooding in some countries, causing damage to crops, infrastructures and loss of human lives and livestock, including in Benin, Burkina, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and the Gambia.
3. **Regarding the hydrological situation**, like the rainfall, river water flows and volumes are important this year and close to or even higher than those in wet years. The filling level of irrigation structures and dams is also satisfactory and favourable to off-season cropping. However, the high flood of the Niger River has caused losses of acreages for swamp rice crops in Mali.
4. **On the crop situation**, plantings were early in Central and Eastern Sahel, normal in coastal countries and late in Western Sahel. Due to good soil water, from July, the level of vegetative growth and development of the crops is satisfactory. This, combined with the possibility that rains continue to fall into October promises average to higher crop yields.
5. **As for the phyto-sanitary situation**, it is generally calm and under control, except in Burkina Faso and Benin where damage from caterpillar infestations on maize were observed. The desert locust situation remains always calm overall. However, the presence of winged individuals in small numbers is reported throughout the summer breeding areas in the northern Sahel of West Africa, Sudan and along the Indo-Pakistan border. This follows on the improvement of the ecological conditions in outbreak areas with risks of small-scale breeding especially in the west and northwest Mauritania.
6. **As a result of the foregoing, good to very good harvests** are expected this year in the region. Thus, for cereals, production could be between 64 and 75 million metric tonnes, i.e., increases between 0.2% and 28% compared to last year and the past five-year average. Production of roots and tubers would be between 151 and 168 million metric tonnes with increases of 3 to 22% compared to last year and the average of the past five years.
7. **On the pastoral level**, the situation is overall satisfactory because of the good filling level of water points, the abundance of pasture and control of animal diseases by the veterinary

services. However, low forage biomass productivity pockets can be observed in places in Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad.

8. **Markets** were generally well supplied in the region due to the fact that cross-border trade flows were maintained during the 2016 lean season and the good progress of the rainy season, which encouraged traders and farmers to market their stocks. The demand side experienced a normal seasonal increase. Prices of local cereals, tubers and cash crops are generally up compared to the five-year average. These increases are more pronounced in Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and in certain markets of Benin, Togo, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Senegal. In the coming months, given the good harvest prospects, commodity prices will experience a seasonal decline, except in Nigeria where they will remain above the five-year average.

As for livestock, the situation is variable depending on the marketing basins. Prices are overall rising except in countries of the Eastern Basin where the continued depreciation of the Nigerian currency and the crisis around Lake Chad Basin have negatively affected the functioning of markets.

9. **In nutritional terms**, the situation remains worrying. According to UNICEF (July 2016), 9.4 million children under 5 could suffer from global acute malnutrition in the Sahel countries and the eleven States of Northern Nigeria affected by the conflict, including 3.5 million in its severe form.
10. **The food situation** is overall satisfactory and was reinforced by the early harvest, from August in the coastal countries, and September in the Sahel. However, conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin and Northern Mali, represent the major threat to food security in the region. Thus, in Northern Nigeria, nearly 5.8 million people need immediate food and humanitarian assistance, including 4.5 million people in the States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.

11. **At the end of their deliberations, participants in the regional consultation on agricultural and food prospects in the Sahel and West Africa made the following recommendations:**

**To countries,**

- i. Revitalize and facilitate the multi-disciplinary working groups (GTP) set up as part of monitoring of the agro-pastoral season;
- ii. Take steps to coordinate the PREGEC system in the countries between the regional consultation meetings;
- iii. Set up mechanisms and procedures for better management of agricultural production surpluses;
- iv. Keep watch on the information on desert locusts given the improvement of the ecological conditions in outbreak areas;
- v. Take steps to protect and better manage the available pastures.
- vi. Strengthen and continue measures against malnutrition.

**To CILSS,**

- vii. Update the procedure note for monitoring cyclical anomalies of biophysical and socio-economic variables, identify risk areas and develop production case scenarios;
- viii. Continue strengthening the capacities of national GTPs on crop season monitoring tools developed at the AGRHYMET Regional Centre;
- ix. Continue to facilitate the regional PREGEC outside the consultation meetings;
- x. Set up mechanisms for tracking the recommendations of the various meetings.

**To partners,**

- xi. Assist the countries in caring for people in food and nutrition insecurity, especially in conflict areas around the Lake Chad Basin and Northern Mali;
- xii. Implement urgent and coordinated action for people in emergency and famine situations in the States of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe.

*Done at Lomé, on 21 September 2016*

*The participants*