



28th Meeting of the food crises prevention network (RPCA)

Statement on the agricultural situation and the food and nutrition prospects in the Sahel and in West Africa

Good harvest prospects in a context of low food stocks and high malnutrition rates

Subsequent to the 28th meeting of the food crises prevention network in the Sahel and in West Africa (RPCA) that was held in Ouagadougou/Burkina Faso from 4 to 6 December 2012, the regional monitoring system on food and nutritional security addresses the message below to the stakeholders.

The 2012 rainy period has been characterised by a good spatial and temporal rain distribution. Cumulative rainfall has exceeded the reference average 1971-2000. In terms of hydrology, this good rainfall led to water rates and volumes above those of reference years (1985, 2011 and average 2002/2011), resulting in the flooding of the basins of several watercourses, particularly in Niger, Nigeria, Benin, Senegal, the Gambia and Chad. Losses in human lives were reported and damage to infrastructure and crops, particularly on rice, also occurred in some places.

The phytosanitary situation has been globally calm. However, the presence of swarms of migrant locusts signalled in Niger, Chad and Mali, threatens the region.

As regards pastoralism, grazing lands are abundant and water points well filled in all countries. The animal health situation is relatively calm.

Crops have benefitted from good water conditions favourable to their growth and development, which augurs for good harvests. Excluding Burkina Faso whose data will be available later, total cereal production expected in the other countries of the Sahel and West Africa for the 2012-13 cropping season amounts to 57 318 000 tonnes, including 13 688 000 tonnes of rice, 17 622 000 tonnes of maize, 11 096 000 tonnes of millet, 14 341 000 tonnes of sorghum and 571 000 tonnes of other cereals. This production has risen by 13% compared to last year's production and by 18% relative to the average of the past five years. Yam production has increased by 2% and that of cassava has dropped by 3% relative to the 2011-12 growing season.

Food insecurity in countries deeply affected by a heavy drop in cereal production in 2011-12 (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, the Gambia and Chad) has been mitigated not only by the various interventions of the governments and their partners, but also by the new harvests. However, because of floods, high food prices, indebtedness, the erosion of livelihoods, and population displacements caused by the Malian crisis, poor households are still facing food and nutritional difficulties.

The nutritional situation is still of concern in the region, particularly in the Sahel, despite good harvest prospects and government interventions. Acute malnutrition exceeds the critical level (10%), particularly in the regions in the North, Centre North and East of Burkina Faso and in the region of Kayes in Mali. It exceeds the emergency level (15%) in the regions of Zinder, Maradi, Diffa and Tillabéry in Niger, in the

districts of Kanel, Ranérou and Podor in Senegal, in the Sahelian band of Chad and in the South and South East regions of Mauritania.

With regards to markets, low production levels recorded in 2011 have largely influenced prices which have regularly continued rising up to May 2012. The good start and progress of the 2012-13 rainy season allowed to mitigate these upward trends. Price drops have been observed in September 2012 and expanded progressively from the East to the West. However, price levels remain high when compared to their levels in October 2011 and to the average of the past five years. Considering the needs of reconstituting food stocks of households and cereal offices, prices could fail to drop significantly in 2013 despite good crop production, particularly for millet.

Cattle prices have been generally stable but remain high. The terms of trade (cattle/cereals) have slightly improved given the fitness of the animals and the drop in cereal prices as from mid-September 2012. Cattle prices could be maintained at their current level and the terms of trade improved.

In the near future, the expected good cereal production could result in high food availability and good market supply level, thereby improving access to food.

Taking account of the foregoing, the FCPN **recommends** the following:

To countries:

Uppermost:

- Continue monitoring and controlling migrant locusts in countries located in the frontline (Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad);
- Continue monitoring the food and nutritional situation, including of Malian displaced and refugee populations, and propose response plans if needed;
- Strengthen interventions to prevent and respond to acute and chronic malnutrition.

In addition:

- Initiate and support off-season production programmes and stronger means of existence to improve the resilience of the populations facing food insecurity;
- Create an environment conducive to private investment, in particular by agricultural producers, in agricultural value chains in order to address the structural causes of the food crises.

To ECOWAS and UEMOA:

Uppermost :

- Work with CILSS, FAO and other institutions specialised in the area, to strengthen the surveillance and prevention mechanism, thereby responding to the locust threat.

In addition:

- Improve the business climate to enhance private investment, in particular by agricultural producers, in agricultural production and value chains;
- Leverage the opportunity offered by the Alliance AGIR in the Sahel and West Africa to improve and accelerate the implementation of the NAIP and the RAIP;
- Support the implementation of the Harmonised Framework in member countries.

To the regional information system (CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET):

- Ensure at each meeting the production of food insecurity maps, including vulnerability levels, the number of affected people and possible interventions.

To the technical and financial partners:

- Continue supporting the monitoring and control of migrant locusts in frontline countries (Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad);
- Within the framework of the NAIP and the RAIP, continue supporting the implementation of long-term agriculture and business development programmes to bring structural solutions to food crises;
- Support the strengthening of capacities to enhance the ownership of the Harmonised Framework at the national and regional levels.

Done in Ougadougou, on 5 December 2012

The RPCA