

Official Text of the Food Aid Charter

This document has been unanimously adopted by CILSS member nations and Club du Sahel donor countries (Canada, European Economic Community, Germany, France, Netherlands, United States). It was formally approved by the CILSS heads of state at their summit meeting in Guinea Bissau on 10 February 1990.

The concerned parties

- 1 -Recognizing the importance of food aid in the struggle against hunger and malnutrition;
- 2 -Recognizing a pressing need for food aid to be treated as an active component of overall development aid efforts aiming to create an ability to provide adequate food supplies, either through production or commercial imports;
- 3 -Recognizing that both donors and beneficiaries have expressed the wish that the food aid system be improved by drawing on past experience and by applying the recommendations made in this respect;
- 4 -Recognizing the need to adapt, to the extent possible, food aid to the qualitative and quantitative requirements of target populations in such a way as to avoid significant falls in the markets prices of food products, as well as resulting marketing constraints;
- 5 -Recognizing the importance of supporting swift, flexible procedures, allowing at minimal expense a reliable supply of food aid by sea, land, or, as a last resort, air;
- 6 -Recognizing the need to avoid promoting a greater dependence on imports through actions liable to foster long-term changes in consumption patterns away from locally produced cereals;
- 7 -Recognizing that food surpluses as well as food deficits can have a destabilizing effect upon prices, revenues, and food availability, and the need to integrate food aid into regional trade policies so that the market can better absorb local fluctuations in food supply;
- 8 -Recognizing that there can be no real solution to the problems posed by food aid unless donors reach a consensus among themselves, in agreement with the beneficiaries, to coordinate efforts and actions.

Adhere to the following:

I. Definition of the objectives of food aid

The general objective of food aid is to help support food security by addressing, in a timely and appropriate manner, problems arising from food shortages or deficits, whether they are caused by structural deficiencies, or crisis situations calling for emergency actions.

The long-term objective is to prevent crises and to correct structural deficiencies by supporting overall development and taking actions aimed directly at vulnerable groups. In this context, food aid plays a positive role, whether it is supplied as foodstuffs, or through the use of counterpart funds generated through local sales.

II. Evaluation of the food situation

II.1. The concerned donor governments, multilateral aid organizations, and governments of beneficiary countries, in collaboration with all involved partners, undertake to cooperate on the evaluation of the food situation in Sahelian countries, to help base decisions on reliable information and realistic forecasts, particularly on deficits and surpluses. Similarly, when the

situation calls for emergency aid, the parties agree to share immediately information at their disposal to facilitate appropriate decisions and actions. The parties undertake to continue in their efforts to improve the quality of national and regional data.

II.2. The concerned parties also undertake to improve and harmonize their own appraisal criteria, based upon:

- Proper analysis of each country's food requirements and food availability: domestic production and consumption, movements of stocks, all types of imports and exports;
- Indicators of the food situation, involving nutritional status and the purchasing power of the population groups concerned, prices on the different markets, and availability of food products in production and consumption areas;
- Food aid absorptive capacity of each country, and availability of additional financial and technical resources needed to make effective use of food aid.

III. Evaluation of food aid requirements

Beneficiary governments and bilateral or multilateral donors undertake to hold discussions at least once a year in order to evaluate food needs on the basis of jointly derived food balance data, with a view toward defining:

- The objectives of food aid in its different forms;
- Types, quantities, and qualities of aid to be supplied;
- The areas and population groups concerned;
- Logistical constraints;
- Periods when delivery is desirable, and periods when delivery would become inappropriate.

These components will determine the provisional supply schedule which food aid donors and national authorities will agree to implement. This schedule can then be used as the incremental framework for all subsequent action to be taken by the different partners.

In countries where no coordination mechanism exists, action shall be taken to fill this gap.

IV. Practical implementation of food aid activities

IV.1. The donors undertake to harmonize their decisions, and agree to coordinate their actions.

In order to ensure optimum satisfaction of requirements, and to make the best use of logistic resources, donors will work with each Sahelian country to jointly define:

- Quantitative distribution of food aid shipments;
- The choice of products;
- The origin of food aid (local purchases, triangular operations, imports);
- Beneficiaries.

The donors will keep each other informed on:

- The expected time lag between the assessment of needs and the supply of aid;

- Means of food aid distribution and utilization;
- Basic logistical organization.

IV.2. The concerned parties recognize the need to integrate food aid into agricultural and rural development policies, to coordinate it with other types of aid, trade policies and macro-economic policies, and to integrate food aid into long-term development plans. As is possible, multi-annual programs should remain sufficiently flexible to allow for the provision of financial or technical assistance in lieu of foodstuffs, provided the food supply situation warrants it.

The donors therefore undertake:

- To indicate the quantities and types of annual or multi-annual aid they plan to allocate, so that beneficiary countries may take this into account when formulating their development policies;
- To adjust their aid to avoid, to the extent possible, harmful effects on local production and marketing, i.e., reduction of market share, lower producer prices, disruption of distribution channels, or saturation of storage facilities;
- To minimize actions directly promoting lasting changes in food consumption patterns to the detriment of local production.

IV.3. The donors and the beneficiary countries undertake:

- Not to distribute food aid freely except in the case of emergency aid or to help vulnerable groups;
- To sell food aid without prejudice to domestic free market prices;
- To use counterpart funds proceeds to support development activities, particularly those aimed at food security.

IV.4. The donors and the beneficiary countries undertake:

- To promote cereal flows between surplus and deficit countries through economically viable triangular operations and the stimulation of regional cereals trade.

V. Food balance sheets and prospects

V.1. The annual meeting of the Network for the Prevention of Food Crises in the Sahel, jointly organized by the CILSS and the Club du Sahel, will provide an opportunity to make retrospective evaluations of:

- Trends in the nutritional status of beneficiary populations;
- The impact of aid on the national economies of the beneficiary countries, in particular on trade and rural development;
- The contribution of donors and beneficiaries to overall food security.

V.2. The concerned parties undertake to examine possible improvements in this area, in particular:

- Monitoring of the food situation;
- Coordination of evaluations;

- The distribution of tasks and responsibilities among donors and beneficiaries;
- The procurement of transport and other logistical means for the delivery of food aid;
- More generally, the overall mechanism promoting better coordination and closer cooperation among all parties.