



FINAL COMMUNIQUE

27th Meeting of the Food Crises Prevention Network (FCPN) on the agricultural situation and the food prospects in the Sahel and in West Africa

Necessary appropriate responses in order to face the threats of localized food and nutritional crises in the Sahel

Subsequent to the 27th meeting of the food crises prevention network in the Sahel and in West Africa, held in Praia, Cape Verde from 8 to 10 December 2011, the regional food security monitoring system addresses the message below to the stakeholders.

Owing to the rainfall and water shortfall recorded, provisional cereal production for the 2011-2012 growing season in the Sahel and in West Africa is levelled at 55.4 million tonnes. Within the context of a population increase, this production has risen by 4% when compared to the average of the past five (5) years and has dropped by 8% relative to last year's production. With a total production of 16.6 million tonnes of cereals reflecting a drop by 2% when compared to the average of the past five years, this production has dropped 25 % when compared to last year. Chad and Mauritania register an important decrease respectively by 50% and by 52% compared to 2011/2012, and 23% and 38% relative to the five year average. Pockets of poor agro-pastoral and fishing conditions are reported throughout the Sahelian band of Chad, agro-pastoral zone of Mauritania, North of the regions of Kayes and Koulikoro and Niger river Delta in Mali, North, Centre North and East of Burkina Faso, regions of Niamey, Tillabéry, South-East of Zinder in Niger and certain localized zones of Senegal and the Gambia.

Poor biomass production has been recorded throughout the pastoral band of the Sahel with the exception of Gourma, the zone of Dakoro (Maradi) and the islands of Lake Chad as well as a low water filling rate of the surface water points. Early transhumance has already been spotted in Mauritania and in Chad as well as an abnormal movement of herders from Mali towards grazing lands in Burkina Faso.

Globally, the Sahel registers a gross cereal deficit of 2.5 million tonnes with imports not being taken into account. Conversely, certain countries of the Gulf of Guinea with a good production level (Ghana, Togo, Nigeria and Benin) have produced a surplus in maize which could be exported to the deficit regions in the Sahel. The production level of cassava (80 million tonnes) and that of yam (53 million tonnes) both similar to that of last year are significant.

Forecasts for imports would leave the cereal balance sheet with a slight surplus in the Sahel. This situation calls for much greater attention to the market. The continuity of cross border cereal trade flows will have to be preserved so as to allow regional trade play its regulatory role thereby avoiding a rise in price in the deficit zones. In fact, the transfer of foodstuffs from the surplus zones to the deficit zones will play a key role in providing access to abundant and affordable food for the vulnerable population. Presently, prices for dry cereals are still abnormally high when compared to the normal seasonal trend and are probably going to soar in the months ahead. Furthermore, the international markets are still punctuated by high price levels despite the slight drop observed in recent months.

The high price level of foodstuffs and the drop in the income of the populace in the pastoral and agro-pastoral zones particularly in Chad, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina and in Mali are already nursing food insecurity in some areas. This situation could build up to a food crisis if urgent mitigation measures are not taken before the next hunger period which risks to start earlier in 2012. In these zones, the vulnerable households will neither be able to preserve their means of production, nor assure themselves of adequate food consumption. Within a context of chronic vulnerability to food insecurity, this situation will further weaken their capacity to resist future shocks. Furthermore, the food access outlook will only exacerbate the already insecure nutritional situation in the region. During the last

hunger period, the prevalence of acute malnutrition was already close to or had gone beyond the critical threshold particularly in the regions of Tillabéry and Diffa in Niger, Tombouctou in Mali, Matam in Senegal, Brakna, Gorgol, Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh El Chargui in Mauritania and in the Sahelian band of Chad. This situation requires not only short term responses but also long term ones so as to remedy the structural crises of malnutrition.

Considering the foregoing, the Network recommends:

➤ **To the States:**

- To avoid any action which by nature will impede the proper functioning of the markets and the cross border trade flows;
- Carry out vulnerability sample surveys so as to better target the vulnerable populace and propose appropriate responses;
- Pursue and initiate in good time the assistance actions to the vulnerable populace and improve their means of existence;
- Develop off season cropping everywhere that it is possible;
- Support the breeders with cattle feed by facilitating transhumance and by encouraging animal movement from the high fodder deficit zones and by rehabilitating the water points;
- Encourage the cereal Boards to coordinate the actions on reconstitution of national food security stocks in order to avoid the concentration of local purchases in space and in time;
- Anticipate the emergence of acute malnutrition in the risk zones by strengthening the prevention and support systems;
- Invest more in structural actions that aim to provide sustainable long term responses to food insecurity;
- Promote the use of processed products in order to effectively combat child malnutrition.

➤ **To ECOWAS and UEMOA to:**

- To be involved more in the sustainable funding of the national and regional food security information system;
- Monitor the application of the regulatory procedures particularly the free movement of goods and persons and the conformity to the Charter on prevention and management of food crises;
- Accelerate the putting in place of the regional food reserve.

➤ **To the regional information and early warning systems (CILSS/FAO/FEWS NET/WFP) to:**

- Rapidly carry out joint missions in order to identify the vulnerable populace and target the needs for assistance and support the response plans of the countries;
- Support the States in accelerating the treatment of the agricultural sample surveys;
- Ensure the evaluation of the markets and the cross border trade flows;
- Ensure the permanent monitoring of harassments to regional trade.

➤ **To the technical and financial partners to:**

- Contribute to the funding of the emergency plans designed by the States;
- Support the joint evaluation missions of the food and nutritional situation programmed by the PREGEC regional system in support to the States;
- Further support the regional information and early warning systems (functioning and development of the analytical tools).

Done in Praia, 10 December 2011

The FCPN