The 34th annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) brought together some 250 participants, including senior representatives of African governments, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), civil society groups, members of the private sector as well as technical and financial partners. RPCA members reviewed the provisional results of the 2018-19 agro-pastoral campaign, the food and nutrition situation, the implementation of response plans and reflected on the armyworm infestation. They also focused and, while also considering at length the different ways to scale up best practices in nutrition. The meeting also provided an opportunity for the Network to discuss how to implement the recommendations of the second external evaluation of the Food Crisis Prevention and Management Charter’s (PREGEC Charter). Finally, it was an opportunity for RPCA members to learn more about the Senegalese government’s experience working to build food and nutrition resilience for its most vulnerable citizens.

The rainy season has been generally well distributed throughout the region, but there were some floods that caused extensive property, crop and pasture damage in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria, and that caused fatalities in Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Niger and Togo. In Chad, Niger, Senegal, Mauritania, Cabo Verde and Gambia, there were some pockets of drought, which affected crop and pasture growth. Fodder and water supplies are generally satisfactory, but some zones are suffering from shortages, especially Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. This situation could lead pastoralists to start their transhumance earlier than usual. The zoo-sanitary situation was especially notable because of the outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease, which caused huge livestock losses in Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo.

The agro-pastoral campaign was also affected by the fall armyworm infestation, with disastrous consequences for both rain-fed crops and irrigation-fed crops during the dry season. The CILSS-ECOWAS-FAO joint evaluation confirmed the extent of the pest damage, with infestation rates reaching 90% in some places. The threat requires an appropriate, timely and, above all, co-ordinated regional response.
Improving the understanding of nutrition challenges, the Network acknowledges that a wide array of best practices exist but unfortunately, these experiences are rarely scaled up. Drawing attention to the exorbitant social and economic costs of inaction, sometimes near 11% of the countries’ GDPs, the RPCA members adopted a declaration in which they recall to governments and their regional organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS): i) that nutritional vulnerability, combined with economic fragility and job insecurity of young people and women are fertile grounds for instability and security crises; (ii) the urgent need for local and community-based preventive approaches to tackle all forms of malnutrition, including emerging forms such as overweight and obesity; (iii) the need for innovative, sustainable and sovereign nutrition financing mechanisms, as well as budget monitoring mechanisms, capable of constantly informing governments on the efforts and quality of nutrition-focused investments. To this end, they urge ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS to boost policy dialogue and advocacy with a view to creating a decade of nutrition.

Meeting within the Senior Experts Group, stakeholders of the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR) are supporting government efforts to implement their National Resilience Priorities (NRP-AGIR). While welcoming the Senegalese government’s commitment to strengthening food and nutrition resilience for the most vulnerable, stakeholders encourage: i) ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS and their member states to expedite the operationalisation of tools to monitor and evaluate the Alliance’s results and impact; ii) governments to consolidate their national mechanisms for capitalising on and sharing best nutrition practices. Finally, they reiterate the call made in Abuja in 2016, about the moral obligation to go beyond security contingencies and keep helping vulnerable households and communities become more resilient.

RPCA members agree that the 35th annual meeting will be held on 2-4 December 2019 in Conakry, Guinea.