Making reliable food and nutrition security (FNS) information available to inform policies and decision-making on preventing and managing food crises in the Sahel and West Africa

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Background

1. Information on food and nutrition security (FNS) provides the basis for FNS policies and is at the heart of the Food Crisis Prevention Network’s (RPCA) Regional Mechanism for Preventing and Managing Food Crises (PREGEC). It was one of the key drivers behind the creation of the RPCA; it is also, and rightly so, the first pillar of the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC Charter), approved in 2012.

2. The PREGEC Charter includes a series of procedures at the country and regional levels including dialogue/consultation platforms for harmonising methodologies and data validation/analysis procedures, etc. These were designed to ensure transparency and facilitate consensus-building and access to high-quality, independent information for all stakeholders. The principles of the PREGEC Charter also insist that stakeholders (governments, inter-governmental organisations and civil society as well as technical and financial partners) commit to working together to help national governments develop sustainable food and nutrition security information systems (FNS-ISs) (including agricultural surveys, campaign monitoring, market monitoring as well as monitoring and analysis of household livelihoods and the nutrition situation) that are anchored in national institutions. This should help ensure the timely production of complete, high-quality analysis of food insecurity as well as the risks and the capacity of the different population groups to cope with it.

3. The first external evaluation of the PREGEC Charter drew attention to a number of concerns:

- For the past twenty years, or since the end of the last stage of the EU-supported Permanent Diagnostic Programme (DIAPER), international partners became increasingly reluctant to funding FNS-ISs; national governments have taken some initiatives, but struggle to cover the cost using national budgets.
- Despite the efforts made, the information systems in most countries do not have the capacity to provide the data the Cadre Harmonisé (CH) requires for unquestionable results that reflect as much as possible the reality on the ground; this is due to a number of factors including FNS-IS funding problems. Moreover, some key data is not available, such as conditions for access to food, particularly in urban areas and pastoral vulnerability.

4. The problem persists at several levels:

Governance of information systems: In spite of the initiatives that have been taken to support and build capacity of national mechanisms, most governments are finding it very difficult to implement sustainable funding mechanisms for their national FNS-ISs, starting with a sufficient and sustainable budget allocation. As such, the data needed to conduct CH analyses in some countries is lacking, which is a recurring problem in the region. The lack of information deprives public authorities of the data needed for decision-making. This led the Network – at its April 2018 RPCA restricted meeting – to recommend that a regional conference be organised by ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS, with the participation of relevant ministries, including the ones in charge of budget and planning as well as parliaments, to agree on concrete commitments to sustainable funding for FNS-ISs.

Information quality: In addition to being incomplete, the quality, independence, production process and other aspects of FNS information are also an issue of concern and are increasingly contested by stakeholders. Aside from the methods that are often questioned, the first external evaluation of the PREGEC Charter also pointed to a lack of dialogue/consultation mechanisms for analysing and validating the information at the national level. Other problems concern the lack of capacity of national information systems in collecting data needed for more relevant analyses and inadequate government leadership in some countries in conducting the information production process. These harmful inadequacies in applying the principles and commitments of the PREGEC Charter have resulted in a growing temptation on the part of each actor to want to produce its own information, which contradicts the principles of the Charter.

1 Consensual tool to analyse and identify areas and number of people at risk of food and nutrition insecurity
5. This situation raises the following questions:

i) What is the state of FNS-ISs in the countries of the region (institutional framework, internal organisation, performance/efficiency)? What is their real capacity to generate the desired information and which ones? More particularly, what is their capacity to deliver the multi-sectoral information needed for the Cadre harmonisé analyses, FNS monitoring and the ECOAGRIS platform?

ii) What are the underlying causes of these deficiencies relative to applying the PREGECE Charter’s recommended procedures for ensuring that reliable, consensual, independent information is accessible to all? To what extent are non-state actors involved? What roadmap (or procedures guide) can be recommended to national governments as a short- or long-term solution to this problem? What role could regional support play in this process?

iii) What evidence is available on government efforts aimed at sovereign funding for national FNS-ISs? What types of innovative partnerships (between government and local/regional authorities as well as other non-public actors such as NGOs, agriculture and livestock professionals’ organisations, etc.) could be promoted to foster high-performance and permanent FNS-ISs? What best practices from the field could be used to encourage countries to renew their political commitment to implementing and making permanent a sustainable funding mechanism for national FNS-ISs?

6. The present study aims to identify concrete actions for substantial support to countries as foreseen in Sub-component 2.2: Support to agricultural information systems, food security and resilience information systems and early warning systems of the PAGR-SANAD project\(^2\), as well as the RPCA reform plan adopted in 2017.

2 "Improving the governance of resilience, food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture in West Africa (PAGR-SANAD).

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

7. The overall objective of the study is to enhance the capacity of national and regional FNS-ISs to deliver complete and reliable information accessible at all times to all stakeholders in order to foster evidence-based decision-making on preventing and managing food crises. The specific objectives are outlined as follows:

Specific objective 1 (SO1): Prepare a comprehensive analysis of the current state of FNS-ISs in the 17 countries;

Specific objective 2 (SO2): Improve the understanding of the underlying causes of the deficiencies related to implementing the procedures designed to ensure the availability of reliable and consensus-based FNS information at the national level.

Specific objective 3 (SO3): Analyse the mechanisms and strategies intended to ensure permanent and sustainable funding for national FNS-ISs.

8. The expected outcomes are listed below.

O1: A comprehensive analysis of FNS-ISs carried out and key levers for strengthening FNS-IS defined (SO1)

- A mapping study describing the state of play of the current functioning of national FNS-ISs: structuring/consolidation of the institutional framework, current skills/capacity in collecting information (which ones?), performance and efficiency, etc.;
- Identification of key levers for strengthening FNS-ISs, particularly those that have proven successful in producing significant and lasting impacts on the efficiency of FNS-ISs to deliver the information required for the CH analyses, FNS monitoring and the ECOAGRIS platform, as well as information on the main institutional, political and financial implications etc.;
- National roadmaps for strengthening the FNS-ISs (including information on possible regional support).

O2: An exhaustive mapping of the shortcomings established together with identified areas for improvement (SO2)

- A mapping study of the underlying causes of the deficiencies related to implementing the recommended procedures (effectiveness, performance, transparency, inclusivity and independence of the mechanisms/harmonisation frameworks of the information collection, analysis and validation methodologies, etc.) to ensure that reliable and transparent information is available to all.
- A standardised grid (or analysis framework) to measure the “quality” of processes (collection and analysis of data) and results (notably from the CH).
- A roadmap (or procedures guide) for national governments, local/regional authorities and other stakeholders (agriculture and livestock professionals’ organisations and NGOs as well as technical and financial partners) as a short- or long-term solution to the dysfunctions and shortcomings observed.
**O3: An in-depth diagnosis of the financing of FNS-IS carried out and opportunities for streamlining and making it sustainable identified (SO3)**

- An in-depth diagnosis of the cost structure of FNS-ISs (production and analysis of information) at the national and regional levels and opportunities for streamlining (including opportunities for harnessing farmer and citizen information on FNS).
- A mapping of national FNS-ISs funding mechanisms, including the relative share of the various funding sources.
- An analysis of the overall sustainability of the funding mechanisms put in place by the different countries.
- A roadmap for national governments and other stakeholders (agriculture and livestock professionals’ organisations and NGOs as well as technical and financial partners and others) to raise sustainably FNS-IS funding.

**3. Content of the evaluation**

8. The analyses will be conducted in all 17 Sahelian and West African countries of the region: i) Sahel countries that are members of the first group of CILSS member states and; ii) coastal countries that have integrated the Network’s PREGEC mechanism.

**3.1. Specific objective 1 (SO1):** Prepare a comprehensive analysis of the current state of FNS-ISs in the 17 countries, based on the information provided by the first external evaluation of the PREGEC Charter, with a view to

- Deepening the analysis of the current state of the FNS-ISs, both in terms of their respective structuring and institutional anchoring, as well as their real capacity to deliver regular and quality information for CH analyses, FNS monitoring and the ECOAGRIS platform;
- Identify and evaluate the quality of the types of information that the FNS-ISs are currently able to deliver (mapping of delivered services), as well as gaps to be filled for each country;
- Identify key levers for strengthening FNS-ISs in order to produce significant and sustainable impacts and better equip them to produce quality information, particularly required for CH analysis, FNS monitoring and the ECOAGRIS Platform as well as the policy / institutional and financial implications of these capacity-building measures.

**3.2. Specific objective 2 (SO2):** Improve the understanding of the underlying causes of deficiencies related to implementing the procedures designed to ensure that reliable and consensus-based information is available at the national level.

Using the results of the first external evaluation of the PREGEC Charter and other studies as well as additional information collected in the field:

- Accurately map the real reasons (underlying causes) for national governments’ failure to apply the procedures recommended by the PREGEC Charter for supplying reliable and consensus-based information accessible to all (consensus-based guide to the regulations governing the production, verification and dissemination of the information and a procedure for evaluating the quality of that information, based on an independent certification mechanism).
- Accurately diagnose the shortcomings relative to fulfilment of the roles and responsibilities of the PREGEC Charter signatories.
- Propose a standardised grid to measure the “quality” of processes (collection and analysis of data) and results (namely from the CH).
- Assist national governments by developing a roadmap (or procedures guide) as a short- or long-term solution to the dysfunctions observed, based on the underlying causes and the responsibilities of the various stakeholders.

**3.3. Specific objective 3 (SO3)** Analyse the mechanisms and strategies intended to ensure permanent and sustainable funding for national FNS-ISs

Based on a literature review and information collected in the countries:

- Analyse, as fully as possible, the FNS-IS cost structure: i) carry out disaggregated analysis of the costs of producing and analysing information at the national and regional levels (analyse opportunities for streamlining the regional PREGEC cycle and minimising the cost but without impacting the timely availability and quality of useful information for the CH; optimise the contribution of farmer and citizen information on FNS etc.; ii) analyse innovative collection/analysis tools (including those that capitalise on NICT) with the potential to positively influence the cost structure by making it easier for national and partner budgets to support it; iii) identify unavoidable costs tied to national government sovereignty and those to be covered by complementary financing sources (additional); iv) analyse and evaluate potential partners (agro-pastoral professionals’ organisations, NGOs and other technical and financial partners, among others) with the potential to positively influence the FNS-ISs funding plan while ensuring it is sustainable.
• Map the FNS-IS funding mechanisms in the different countries including the sources, volumes and regularity of funding by focusing on the percentage contributed (absolute and relative value) by national governments via their national budgets.
• Conduct a critical analysis of the sustainability (based on specific criteria) of the funding mechanisms in place in the different countries.
• Analyse the percentage of stable funding (that can be 100% mobilised in any year – financial sovereignty of FNS-ISs) and its adequacy in terms of actual FNS-ISs funding needs.

4. Organisation of the evaluation and deliverables

10. The analysis will be jointly supervised by the CILSS Executive Secretariat and the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) under the guidance of a Steering Committee established by the RPCA.

It will be conducted by a highly qualified consultant’s team (a regional consultant working with the support of national consultants). The Lead consultant, bilingual (French / English), should have a proven track-record (at least ten years) in the region’s food and nutrition issues and FNS-IS challenges in particular.

11. The key deliverables are listed below.

• A fifty-page document (maximum length)/regional synthesis report summarising the different expectations (expected outcomes) outlined in section 2 of these terms of reference;
• A ten-page executive summary (maximum length) on the key findings, including the roadmap designed to overcome shortcomings in obtaining quality information and quantified evidence to be used to build an argument aimed at mobilising national governments and their partners to sustainably fund FNS-ISs;
• 17 country-reports.

12. In addition to encouraging national governments to implement concrete actions designed to enhance the quality of FNS-IS information and governance, the various deliverables (including those outlined for SO2) will be used to develop arguments in favour of high-level policy dialogue on the sustainable funding for FNS-ISs (see the recommendation formulated at the RPCA restricted meeting in April 2018).

5. Duration

13. The study is estimated to take a maximum of 75 working days in total. This duration will be clearly defined in the contractual arrangements with the selected consultant.
6. Tentative planning

14. The tentative planning for conducting the study is provided in Table 1.

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<td>Sequence 1: Finalisation ToR and contractualisation</td>
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<td>Finalisation and validation ToR</td>
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<td>Sequence 2: Inception workshop</td>
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<td>Sequence 6: Draft report validation with the countries (November PREGEC)</td>
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<td>Sequence 7: Conclusions shared with the IGOs' decision-making bodies and during RPCA annual meeting (December)</td>
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<td>Sequence 8: Regional conference (High-level political dialogue Region-TFPs): Roadmap for implementing the conclusions</td>
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