



## 34<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

# SCALING UP BEST NUTRITION PRACTICES

## MAKING NUTRITION A POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL PRIORITY IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

### Taking long-term measures to reverse negative and destructive nutritional trends

The members of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) and the region's food and nutrition security stakeholders, meeting at the 34<sup>th</sup> RPCA annual meeting,

#### CONSIDERING THAT:

- 1.** Nearly 20 million children under 5 years of age (about one out of every three children in this age group) suffer from chronic malnutrition and about half of women suffer from anaemia;
- 2.** This scourge creates unacceptable social costs in terms of cognitive development, morbidity and mortality; chronic child malnutrition after the age of 2 creates lost generations in the worst affected areas;
- 3.** Malnutrition also has economic costs that may represent more than 10% of GDP in some countries;
- 4.** This nutritional vulnerability, coupled with economic fragility, the precariousness of jobs for young people and women, are the primary breeding grounds for instability, violence and insecurity;
- 5.** Insecurity worsens the food and nutrition situation of households and the budgetary and financial difficulties of governments;
- 6.** About one-third of adolescent girls have their first baby before the age of 18, and more than half of them have anaemia; early marriage and the high number of pregnancies increase the malnutrition that is transmitted from generation to generation.

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Hosted by the Republic of The Gambia and held under the patronage of the Commissions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the 34<sup>th</sup> RPCA annual meeting focused on scaling up best nutrition practices.

The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) organised the meeting.  
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SAHEL AND  
WEST AFRICA



## RECOGNISING THAT:

- 7.** Good nutrition contributes to building the human capital and resilience of the most vulnerable populations;
- 8.** Investments in nutrition are highly profitable; a dollar invested in prevention can generate 16 dollars in return;
- 9.** Prevention is of paramount importance given that the damage of chronic malnutrition is largely irreversible after the age of 2 years (impossibility of repairing undeveloped neurons); prevention is usually much less expensive than the curative approach;
- 10.** Almost all governments in the region have joined the SUN movement and have defined multi-sectoral nutrition policies and action plans; nutrition is also one of the four strategic pillars of the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR);
- 11.** Scaling up best practices for nutrition in the Sahel and West Africa region is possible as demonstrated by the example of severe acute malnutrition; the region has developed capacity to cure nearly 1 million children per year;
- 12.** The region has an under-exploited agricultural potential to address its nutrition challenges, while facing climate change and pressure on natural resources;
- 13.** Nutrition is a key factor for sustainable development; at least 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have indicators that are linked to nutrition.

## URGING:

- 14.** The Sahelian and West African governments and their intergovernmental organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS) to:
  - Consider nutrition as an economic opportunity by investing in agricultural value chains that can contribute to food and nutrition security, the incomes of actors (producers, processors, employees, traders, etc.), the protection of the environment and natural resources.
  - Develop community-level and preventive approaches to tackle all forms of malnutrition, including forms that are just emerging in the region, such as overweight and obesity;

- Rethink food systems to make them more nutrition-friendly; especially, to invest more in formulating and implementing strategies to promote local food and nutrition practices and products that are built around sustainable agro-ecology and a dynamic local economy;
- Integrate security contingencies and refocus the political and financial effort around the eradication of hunger and all forms of malnutrition, especially once food and nutrition crises occur;
- Implement sovereign and sustainable funding mechanisms for nutrition, including innovative financing; IGOs and technical and financial partners should support governments to map potential funding sources, as well as to define and experiment sustainable financing mechanisms;
- Expand investments in unified data portals and knowledge management tools in order to improve decision-making, planning and the implementation of policies and programmes;
- Speed up the implementation of budget monitoring mechanisms that can constantly alert governments about nutrition investment efforts and their quality;
- Give special attention to girls and women, including their nutritional and health status, their rights to refuse any forced marriage, to education and health, and their economic and social role;
- Give renewed impetus to the region's political commitment to nutrition issues through all forms of lobbying and advocacy, including setting up a "decade of nutrition."

**15.** The Sahel's international stabilisation initiatives (G5 Sahel, Sahel Alliance, etc.) and the partners who support them to:

- Give stronger priority to food and nutrition as integral parts of any sustainable solution to security crises and political instability;
- Align their work with the nutrition agendas of government and IGOs, and act in a co-ordinated and complementary way to make these interventions more effective; use their interventions in ways that strengthen the leadership of governments and their IGOs.

Banjul, 5 December 2018