

35TH ANNUAL MEETING

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

- 1.** The 35th annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) focused on reviewing: the provisional results of the 2019-20 agro-pastoral campaign, the region's markets, and the food and nutrition situation. The objective is to develop a set of recommendations and concrete measures. This meeting takes place in a unique and challenging context as the security crisis continues to compound food and nutrition vulnerabilities.
- 2.** The provisional cereal production is estimated at 75.1 million tonnes, up by 1.7% and 14%, compared to last year's production and the five-year average respectively. However, some countries are reporting decreases in production compared to last year: Cabo Verde (-11%), The Gambia (-13%), Niger (-7%), Senegal (-4%) and Sierra Leone (-10%). Root and tuber production is estimated at 191 million tonnes, up by 17.1% compared to the five-year average. The pastoral situation has been marked by significant fodder shortages, particularly in Mauritania and Senegal but also in other parts of the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger). These fodder shortages, combined with difficulties in accessing some pastures due to the security crisis, have led to a high concentration of livestock in new safe areas, as well as to early transhumance. This situation could contribute to increased conflict between farmers and herders. In light of the critical pastoral situation, the RPCA members recommend that the governments of the affected countries put in place mitigating mechanisms, including making livestock feed supplies available in areas with severe fodder shortages et in areas hosting displaced people.
- 3.** Markets remain generally well supplied with the arrival of new crops. However, they have been seriously disrupted not only by civil unrest and an upsurge in organised crime, but also by Nigeria's closure of its land borders with Benin and Niger. Cereal and local commodity prices are generally lower than the five-year average, but remain high in The Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone due to persistent inflation. The combination of these factors further undermines the livelihoods of vulnerable populations and limits their access to food and basic social services, thereby increasing food and nutrition insecurity.
- 4.** Nutrition remains a concern with persistently high rates of acute malnutrition. It exceeds the emergency threshold (15%) in some areas of Chad and Mauritania, and is above the alert threshold (10%) in Mali, Niger and northeastern Nigeria. This situation is exacerbated by the security crisis, which has led to the closure of many health centres and schools in several communities. RPCA members encourage governments and their partners to further commit to implementing the 2018 Banjul Declaration, which urgently called for "taking long-term action to reverse the negative and destructive trends in nutrition."

5 Despite many different initiatives undertaken by countries and their partners, RPCA members recognise that the implementation of governments' response plans to food and nutrition crises are increasingly hampered by a serious and continuous lack of funding, meeting barely 50% of required needs. This is happening in a context of ever-increasing numbers of requests for assistance due to insecurity. This situation is also partly due to inadequate response plans, which, in most cases are "catch-all" plans that mix populations suffering from acute food insecurity with those suffering from chronic food insecurity, who require more structural resilience programmes. RPCA members therefore recommend that:

- **All stakeholders** expedite the process of implementing the recommendations of the PREGEC Charter's second external evaluation, in particular the development of a standard methodology for targeting acute and chronic food-insecure populations, as well as carrying out impact evaluations of responses on the extent to which they transform the livelihoods of targeted populations; and
- **States** gradually invest more in structural responses that address the root causes of food and nutrition crises.

6 Some 9.4 million people are estimated to be in need of food and nutrition assistance (excluding Liberia) in October-December 2019, including 619 000 people facing a state of "emergency" (phase 4). If appropriate measures are not taken, this number could reach 14.4 million people during the next lean season (June-August 2020). This exceptional situation is partly due to localised food and fodder shortages caused by drought and floods. However, it is mostly due to the worsening security in the Lake Chad basin and in the Liptako-Gourma region. This has led to large numbers of displaced people, disruptions to health, education and markets in many communities.

7 RPCA members draw the attention of political decision-makers to the ways in which the increasing security crisis has become a growing burden on food and nutrition security. More specifically, it has led to: i) food production losses (abandonment of fields, loss of means of production, loss of livestock); ii) severe market disruptions; and iii) the deterioration of and difficulties in accessing socio-educational and health infrastructure. The RPCA members call on the region's political decision-makers to closely monitor the situation and ensure immediate action. In view of the worrying food and nutrition prospects for the 2020 lean season, RPCA members recommend that ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS, organise as soon as possible a high-level consultation to agree on political, technical and financial measures to address this issue. In addition, they recommend that the affected states - with the support of their inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) and partners - conduct in-depth assessments of the impact of the security crisis on agricultural production, livestock and food and nutrition security in general. These assessments should enable governments to define and implement integrated multi-sectorial mitigation plans based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

8 As a follow-up to the international conference on "Food and agriculture in times of crisis" held in Brussels in April 2019, RPCA members urge stakeholders to combine their efforts in order to fast-track the development of intervention tools for addressing food and nutrition issues that are adapted to this new multi-factorial environment. They point out that food and nutrition vulnerabilities, coupled with climate uncertainties and precarious employment opportunities for young people and women, are a breeding ground for instability and insecurity in the region. In line with the discussions that took place at the 33rd and 34th annual meetings in Cotonou and Banjul, the RPCA members call upon States, IGOs, partners and, particularly, the leaders of security and stability initiatives in the Sahel, to urgently reposition food, nutrition, resilience and employment issues as key priorities for addressing security and migration challenges.

Paris, 9 December 2019