



COMMUNIQUÉ on the 2020-21 agricultural outlook and food prospects for the Sahel and West Africa

Regional technical consultation

REGIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF FOOD CRISES (PREGEC)

“Average to good production prospects for food crops and pasture, with limited access to pastoral resources in insecure areas.”

The September PREGEC meeting conducted a half-term assessment of the 2020-21 agricultural campaign and monitored actions conducted since March.

The meeting was organised by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and its partners.

Members of the PREGEC reviewed the progress of the current agro-pastoral season, and the agricultural and food prospects by videoconference on 24 September 2020:

- 1. The 2020-21 agro-pastoral season** is taking place in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, affecting all countries. Since March 2020, governments and partners have been carrying out interventions for food insecure populations affected by the security (internally displaced persons) and health crises. These interventions mainly involve social transfers, food distributions or food price subsidies. Support for agro-pastoral activities includes the provision of inputs (seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, vaccines, etc.), agricultural mechanisation services and other agricultural equipment.
- 2. The rainfall pattern** observed since the beginning of the season has been favourable overall to the development of crops and natural vegetation. However, heavy rainfall has resulted in flooding causing extensive damage to property and assets (fields and livestock) as well as loss of lives in Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.
- 3. In terms of hydrological conditions,** river flows in the major basins have been much higher than normal (1981-2010) due to heavy rainfall. For example, on the Niger River, the Niamey station reached water levels never observed since its creation. The resulting river overflows have caused thousands of displaced people, especially in Senegal, Niger and Benin.
- 4. In terms of agriculture,** crop development is satisfactory overall due to good agro-meteorological conditions since the beginning of the season. The expected yields of rain-fed crops may therefore be somewhat higher than the median values over the last five years. The first harvests of maize, groundnut, voandzou and fresh yam from Sudanian zones are being put on the market in addition to those from the coastal areas of the Gulf of Guinea countries, where they experienced a heavy wet season.
- 5. The phytosanitary situation** is relatively stable and under control for all pests. However, the risk of attacks by grain-eating birds is of concern for cereal harvests, particularly in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. While the fall armyworm continues to establish itself in the region, damage remains relatively low in most countries. As for the desert locust, the risk of swarms from East Africa has decreased due to preventive actions implemented by States and partners within the framework of the Commission for controlling desert locust in the western region. However, vigilance and continuation of ongoing interventions are required. Ecological conditions may be favourable to the development of the desert locust in breeding areas across Chad, Mali and Mauritania.

6 Considering the above, and based on current assumptions, the **expected production** could be between 72 and 77 million tonnes for cereals, between 187 and 194 million tonnes for roots and tubers and between 27 and 33 million tonnes for cash crops. The expected agricultural production for this season is better compared to the same period last year and compared to the five-year average. This favourable situation is due not only to good rainfall conditions, but also to government support measures, particularly in terms of input supply. However, low production may be recorded in conflict zones in central Mali, in the Liptako-Gourma and in the Lake Chad basin due to the displacement of local populations.

7 **On the pastoral front**, conditions are favourable for good fodder production. However, access to some pastures remains difficult due to persistent insecurity in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. This situation could affect livelihoods, lead to a high concentration of animals in some grazing areas and cause conflict.

8 Overall, **agricultural markets** have returned to normal functioning since the end of May when measures to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic were eased. However, the impact of these measures, together with the decline in food supply during the lean season and persistent inflation in several countries, have led to a sharp increase in the prices of basic foodstuffs compared to the five-year average for the same period. This price increase particularly concerns countries in the eastern basin (over 20%) and the western basin (10%), except for Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania. In the central basin, prices are close to normal for the period, although there is an upward trend.

9 Prices for cattle and small ruminants are down in **livestock markets**, compared to the five-year average, especially in Chad, Mali and Niger. However, they remain on the rise in Benin and Guinea.

10 Despite good prospects for agricultural production, the combination of the security and health crises continues to undermine livelihoods and food security, particularly in the conflict-affected areas of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali,

Niger and Nigeria. Measures taken to combat the Covid-19 pandemic have seriously impacted the income and livelihoods of rural and urban populations, severely limiting their access to adequate food. Similarly, the nutrition situation has also deteriorated under the combined effect of diseases (diarrhoea, malaria) and poor access to health care centres. States, with the support of partners, are investing in food assistance and social protection for the most vulnerable populations. However, they are facing great difficulty in mobilising the necessary funding.

11. PREGEC members made the following recommendations:

To States:

- Respond to the flood emergency by taking appropriate measures to remove sand from rivers, protect river banks and riverside communities, and evacuate rainwater from urban centres;
- Maintain and strengthen the monitoring of the desert locust;
- Strengthen mechanisms for evaluating agricultural production and forage biomass, including specific evaluations of the impact of floods;
- Invest in food and nutrition security assessments, including the impact of combined security, health and climate crises (floods);
- Anticipate the programming of cross-border transhumance campaigns in Sahelian and coastal countries, including the strengthening of dialogue mechanisms as well as assistance in pastoral areas under high pressure.

To ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS:

- Take appropriate measures to support national mechanisms both in crop assessments and in Cadre harmonisé analyses in light of restricted mobility in the region;
- Continue the regional monitoring of the desert locust in collaboration with States and specialised institutions.

To partners:

- Support States and intergovernmental organisations in the regional monitoring of the desert locust;
- Support States in their flood management efforts.

TECHNICAL PARTNERS



FINANCIAL PARTNERS



POLITICAL LEADERS AND TECHNICAL FACILITATORS OF THE RPCA

