
REGIONAL RESPONSES

ECOWAS RESPONSE

ECOWAS and its partners mobilised strongly from March to organise a co-ordinated regional response. The agriculture ministers of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS met online on 31 March 2020. They approved a regional emergency action plan and decided to set up a Regional Task Force, involving the three organisations and led by ECOWAS. Its remit is to strengthen the co-ordination and monitoring of action to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on food and nutrition security. To support the Regional Task Force, the CILSS Executive Secretariat and the SWAC/OECD Secretariat, co-facilitators of the RPCA, set up a technical unit and an online platform for sharing information on the progress of the crisis, national response plans, and regional and international initiatives.

In line with RPCA recommendations, the ECOWAS Commission has played a pivotal role through its advocacy of co-ordinated action. It has constantly emphasised that the Covid-19 pandemic is affecting all sectors and disrupting systems of producing, stocking, marketing, processing and distributing agricultural inputs and food products.

Beyond its emergency aid (distribution of food through its Regional Food Security Reserve (Table 6), the ECOWAS Commission is pursuing further development of its social safety nets programme. Nineteen pilot projects, launched in 2016, have identified the types of social safety nets that need to be brought to scale in order to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable households.

REGIONAL EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

Acting on ministers' recommendations, the ECOWAS Commission developed a regional emergency action plan. This plan sets out the measures needed in support of action being taken by member states. It has four strategic focuses:

- ▶ Facilitating access to agricultural inputs and setting up effective social safety nets for food security
- ▶ Increasing the distribution capacity of the Regional Food Security Reserve and other reserves to 300 000 tonnes of food
- ▶ Preventing, monitoring and controlling crop pests
- ▶ Preventing, monitoring and controlling cross-border animal diseases

MOBILISATION OF THE REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY RESERVE

ECOWAS has provided humanitarian assistance to member states most affected by food and nutrition insecurity by mobilising its Regional Food Security Reserve. The cereal provided was produced by smallholders in the region.

The Reserve was mobilised in favour of vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria on two levels:

- ▶ Mobilisation of USD 1 million from the ECOWAS Humanitarian Emergency Fund
- ▶ Mobilisation of an additional EUR 2 million for contingencies under the EU West Africa Food Security Storage Support Project, to increase food assistance to the targeted countries by releasing more stocks from the Reserve

Table 6.

↓ Mobilisation of the Regional Reserve ↓

COUNTRY	CEREALS (TONNES)	MONTH
Burkina Faso	954	July
Mali	733	November
Niger*	473	July
Nigeria	3 999	August
Total	6 219	-

*Niger has also benefited from nutritional products worth EUR 430 000.

Source: ECOWAS Commission, November 2020.

Decisions to mobilise the Regional Reserve to support a country in the region are founded on objective and recognised criteria, informed by the CH analysis and RPCA recommendations. The rules applicable to the Regional Reserve were validated by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers on 7 and 8 July 2018 in Lomé, Togo.

ABOUT THE RESERVE

The Regional Food Security Reserve is an integral part of implementing the ECOWAS Regional Food Security Reserve Strategy and is the third line of defence in the event of a food crisis, after local/community stocks and national mechanisms. The Regional Reserve was adopted by ECOWAS in February 2013 and implemented in order to promote regional solidarity in addressing food and nutrition crises. A number of discussions and studies, and expressions of support conducted by the Sahel and West Africa Club as part of the RPCA have resulted in progress in developing the Reserve and helped gain the endorsement and political support of the international community through the G20. A pilot project, funded by the European Commission to support implementation of the regional reserve, helped make it operational. The physical stock is held in four storage areas chosen for speed and ease of mobilisation and deployment.

UEMOA RESPONSE

The response of the UEMOA is part of the regional response which focuses on mitigation measures in its eight member states and on greater co-ordination within the Union. The UEMOA is a member of the Regional Task Force which strengthens the co-ordination and monitoring of actions taken. To manage the exceptional situation with regard to health and food, the bodies and institutions of the UEMOA – Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), Commission, West African Development Bank (BOAD) – opted for a holistic and concerted approach. The Union has broadly facilitated the mobilisation of internal resources, temporarily suspending application of the Convergence, Stability, Growth and Solidarity Pact.

At an extraordinary meeting held on 27 April 2020, the eight leaders of the Union noted “with alarm the particularly difficult food and nutrition situation of a certain number of populations in the Union, who will need immediate food and nutrition assistance during the lean season (June-August). This

food vulnerability, due in essence to the security situation, could be made even worse by the health crisis caused by Covid-19.” Whilst the CH analysis of March 2020 identified 6.5 million people as being in a “Crisis” or worse situation in the Union, the UEMOA High-Level Committee on Food Security, meeting on 19 May 2020, indicated some 19.7 million people, i.e. three times the initial number. Concerned at the low mobilisation of financial resources (52%), the ministers appealed to stakeholders to engage more strongly. Updating of national response plans – a key RPCA recommendation – became an official recommendation of the Union.

Union leaders also intend to facilitate peaceful transhumance and asked the UEMOA Commission to “give thought to promoting a forage economy by putting in place a regional programme for forage production and development of the forage trade amongst coastal and Sahelian countries.”

ACTION TAKEN

- ▶ Adoption of a common strategy of response to the Covid-19 pandemic
- ▶ Loan of 196.6 billion CFA francs to member states of the Union by the West African Development Bank (BOAD)
- ▶ Contribution of 25 billion CFA francs by the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) towards the subsidised BOAD loan
- ▶ Contribution of 15 billion CFA francs by the UEMOA Commission towards the subsidised BOAD loan to member states
- ▶ Contribution of 3 billion CFA francs by the Commission, to finance the national response plans of member states
- ▶ Contribution of 10 billion CFA francs to finance national response plans for Covid-19 in member states

Source: UEMOA Commission, October 2020.

CILSS RESPONSE

As the technical arm of ECOWAS and UEMOA, CILSS has supported all the measures taken by political leaders in the region. It has strengthened its monitoring and early warning system. Beyond its usual support as part of the PREGEC cycle, CILSS has assisted states in monitoring the situation closely. In June 2020, it co-ordinated the updating of CH national analyses in Burkina Faso, Togo and four sensitive states in Nigeria (Adamawa, Borno, Kano and Yobe). It successfully provided these services – on the ground and remotely – in conditions that were extremely tricky.

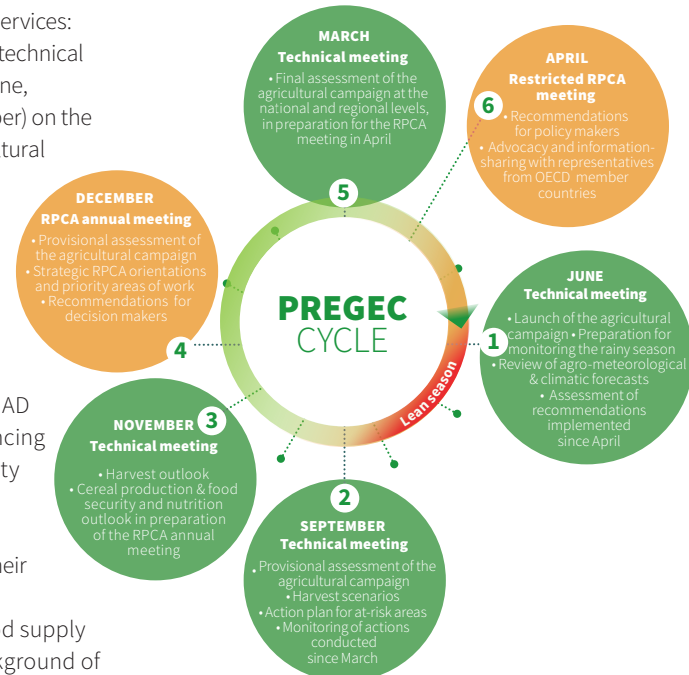
EARLY WARNING AND MONITORING

The CILSS piloted the early warning and monitoring group of the CH Technical Committee which has produced regular information on various areas of analysis (health, nutrition, market functioning, pastoral situation, household living conditions and the desert locust threat). The analysis and recommendations were shared in five newsletters and policy briefs. All products are available on the CILSS virtual cloud (*CILSS drive*). The information products were widely distributed, attracting a record-breaking audience.

SERVICES

- ▶ Regular animation of the PREGEC system and its services: organisation of regional technical consultations (March, June, September and November) on the 2020-21 food and agricultural outlook, the forecast results of the 2020-21 agropastoral campaign and the food & nutrition situation
- ▶ Seasonal forecast analysis (PRESASS) in collaboration with ACMAD
- ▶ Development and financing of a remote food security monitoring tool
- ▶ Supporting countries in the process of revising their national response plans
- ▶ Regional debate on food supply chains against the background of Covid-19 (in collaboration with WFP)
- ▶ Communication and advocacy: audio and video messages, articles and social networks

Figure 17.
PREGEC system



Source: RPCA; Figure: © SWAC/OECD, 2016.

This text was prepared on the basis of a contribution from CILSS.