

RESTRICTED MEETING

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Approximately 38.3 million people could be at risk of hunger and malnutrition by June-August 2022:

It is important to act quickly in the face of the food and nutrition emergency and drive long-term political commitment to address the underlying causes of multifactorial food and nutrition crises.

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Held under the auspices of the Commissions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the RPCA restricted meeting connected the region's key food and nutrition security stakeholders (ministers and other government representatives, high-level officials of regional organisations, civil society and private sector representatives, technical and financial partners). 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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1. The restricted meeting of the RPCA brought together approximately 160 participants via video conference and onsite at the OECD Conference Centre to discuss the final results of the 2021-22 agropastoral season and the food and nutrition situation, including the response plans implemented in 2021. Participants also discussed the contribution of food systems to nutritional challenges. The Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR) Senior Expert Group (SEG) session focused on the Chadian experience in bolstering the resilience of its most vulnerable populations. The participants also discussed several of the RPCA's projects that contribute to strengthening the regional governance of food and nutrition security. On the margins of the RPCA meeting, a high-level consultation was held between political leaders and other non-state actors from the Sahel and West and Central Africa and their international partners, to: i) mobilise additional financial resources in response to the crisis, and ii) seal a long-term political commitment to address the underlying causes of recurrent food and nutrition crises.
2. Cereal production for the agropastoral season, estimated at 73 million tonnes, is up by 2.7% compared to the average for the last five seasons, but down by 2.2% compared to last year. Production in the Sahelian countries is down by 11% compared to 2021. The countries most affected are Niger (-39%), Mali (-15%), Burkina Faso (-10%) and above all

Cabo Verde, which for the fifth consecutive year has not recorded any significant production. Tuber and root crop production, estimated at 203.8 million tonnes, is up 11% on the five-year average and up 5.4% on last year. Compared to the average for the last five years, soybeans (1.97 million tonnes), cowpeas (3.2 million tonnes) and groundnuts (10.6 million tonnes) are up by 31.8%, 15.8% and 9.8%, respectively. Significant forage deficits, exacerbated by bush fires, as well as difficulties in accessing pastures and water points due to insecurity, complicate livestock feeding and have caused an early pastoral lean season. The limitation or even prohibition of cross-border transhumance in some countries aggravates this already alarming pastoral situation.

3. Markets are well supplied, but food prices are continuing to rise and are becoming more pronounced. They are 50% higher than the five-year average in some countries (Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone). These price hikes are fuelled by economic inflation in some Gulf of Guinea countries, production declines in the 2021-22 season, the security crisis, soaring world prices for agricultural products, but also by the persistence of obstacles to regional trade (export bans on foodstuffs imposed by some governments, road harassment and illegal taxation, etc.). The conflict in Ukraine is an additional factor accentuating these increases.

4. For the third consecutive year, the region is facing a major food and nutrition crisis, with an estimated 27.3 million people in need of emergency food and nutrition assistance. If appropriate measures are not taken, 38.3 million people could suffer from hunger and malnutrition during the lean season in June-August. In addition, an estimated 83 million additional people, “stressed”, could fall into crisis if appropriate measures are not taken. Negative nutritional trends persist in several Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) with nearly six million children under five suffering from acute malnutrition.

5. Members draw the attention of decision makers in the region to the risk of aggravation of the food and nutrition crisis with immeasurable social and humanitarian consequences:

- ▶ Civil insecurity persists and the number of internally displaced persons continues to rise. Around 2 million people in Nigeria and over 1.7 million in Burkina Faso are affected. Insecurity continues to deprive thousands of vulnerable households of access to land and means of production (equipment, agricultural and livestock inputs, water resources for irrigation and watering livestock, pastures...) and to health centres. In addition, thousands of children are still deprived of education and school canteens.
- ▶ The threat of inflation to the cost of food, caused by the conflict in Ukraine, looms large in the region. Rising global wheat prices are already being felt in the region and increasing energy and transport costs are raising concerns about the risk of price hikes for some imported staple foods such as rice. This crisis also raises the risk of a further increase in the price of agricultural inputs, which could be a major blow to future agricultural campaigns.

6. Therefore, Members :

- ▶ Reiterate their recommendations made at the 37th annual meeting to the attention of the States, on the urgency to: i) accelerate the mobilisation of resources for the financing of national response plans; ii) implement policies to secure and strengthen the resilience of agropastoral and food systems, including the strengthening of employment opportunities for agropastoral youth by drawing on the opportunities of the food economy and other sectors of the informal economy; iii) provide multi-faceted responses to affected populations in conflict areas through the operationalisation of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus; iv) take measures to protect and facilitate food and nutrition assistance operations in conflict and hard-to-reach areas.
- ▶ Recommend that ECOWAS and UEMOA strengthen dialogue and awareness-raising with their member states with a view to significantly reducing barriers to regional trade through the lifting of export bans on food products and border closures and by taking vigorous measures to reduce road harassment and illegal taxation.

- ▶ Recommend that States strengthen mechanisms to monitor the negative impacts of the Ukrainian crisis on the food and livelihoods of vulnerable populations and to anticipate the implementation of policy and financial instruments to mitigate their consequences.

7. The members of the Network congratulate the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC/OECD), the European Union and the Global Network Against Food Crises for the joint organisation of the high-level consultation that took place on 6 April and which enabled the mobilisation of additional financial resources and a renewed political commitment on food and nutrition crises. They urge all stakeholders to commit to the implementation of the defined roadmap.

8. The members of the Senior Experts Group (SEG) welcome the efforts of the Chadian government to strengthen the resilience of its most vulnerable populations. They note in particular the difficulties in co-ordinating and synergising interventions and the decline in financial resources allocated to the rural sector and to resilience. They encourage the government and its partners to find solutions to these major problems.

9. RPCA members commended the first steps that have been taken in further reflection on the contribution of food systems to nutrition, Network members stress the need to strengthen:

- ▶ The resilience and capacity of food systems to provide nutritious food at all times at affordable prices. They call on governments to invest more in the revitalisation of non-agricultural segments (collection, processing, distribution...) in order to increase the diversity and availability of nutritious food.
- ▶ Livelihoods and the purchasing power of vulnerable households for improved access to nutritious food.

10. Members commend and congratulate Benin, Guinea, Mali and Senegal, which are currently engaged in a self-assessment of their capacities to manage food security issues using the 'Food and Nutrition Security Governance Leadership Analysis Framework (C-GovSAN)' tool, validated by the Network in 2019. They encourage other countries to follow suit in developing plans to strengthen state governance leadership. They also congratulate and encourage civil society organisations in their initiatives to monitor and question the application of the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC Charter) and more generally on food and nutrition issues.

11. Subject to confirmation, Members agreed that the 38th annual meeting of the Network will take place on 6-8 December 2022 in Lomé (Togo) with the central theme of "Pastoral and security crises, and food and nutrition resilience".