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PRESS RELEASE Food situation and agricultural prospects 2022-2023 in the Sahel and West Africa

Regional technical consultation

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

Meeting at the Praiamar Hotel in Cabo Verde on 23 and 24 June 2022, the members of the regional PREGEC mechanism discussed the preparations for the 2022-2023 agro-pastoral season.

"A general rise in food prices, exacerbating a complex food and nutrition crisis, despite good prospects for the 2022/2023 cropping season, which is already facing a fertilizer crisis"

Organized by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel with the support of its partners, the June PREGEC meeting launched the 2022-2023 agro-pastoral campaign. It also examined the forecasts of the agro-hydro-climatic characteristics of the rainy season and prepared the follow-up of its progress »

1. The 2021-2022 cropping season ended with cereal production of 73 million metric tonnes, i.e. an average increase of 2.7% compared to the last five-year average. However, the season was particularly marked by a significant decline in cereal production in the Sahel countries (-11% compared to the five-year average). The pastoral situation was marked by an overall satisfactory fodder production but by difficult access to pasture for livestock farmers due to civil insecurity and acts limiting cross-border transhumance.

2. The Cadre Harmonisé figures show that 38.3 million people are food and nutritionally insecure during the lean season (June-August). The close monitoring system also indicates a continued deterioration in food and nutrition conditions due to the worsening security crisis in the Tri-border area (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), in the north-western and central States of Nigeria, in northern Benin and Togo.

3. The region's markets are witnessing a particularly strong exacerbation of price increases for all foodstuffs. Compared to previous months, this price increase has intensified, reaching record levels in several markets for both local cereals (+40%) and imported commodities such as wheat (+20%) and oil. This unusual increase is mainly due to a combination of factors such as the poor cereal production for the 2021/2022 season in the Sahel countries, the persistence of civil insecurity, the effects of the embargo on Mali and the various measures taken by some countries to ban or restrict the exit of cereals.

All these factors disrupt the cross-border flow of foodstuffs, aggravating the decline in availability and the upward trend in consumer prices, particularly in the Central Basin in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Mali. This tense situation, exacerbated by economic inflation, has a very negative impact on household livelihoods, weakening their purchasing power and increasing their vulnerability.

4. Internationally, the FAO Food Price Index remains well above last year's level, with a 56% increase for wheat. This substantial increase, especially in wheat prices, is a source of concern for several countries in the region.

5. The conflict in Ukraine is causing a significant rise in world prices for grain, oil and especially fertiliser, and is exacerbating inflationary trends in the region.

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In particular, the increase in the price of fertilisers and other agricultural inputs poses a serious threat not only to the current season, but to future seasons.

Despite government efforts, including subsidies, fertiliser prices remain very high and availability is generally low. Major supply shortages are expected this season, with significant shortfalls for food and cash crops.

6. Acute malnutrition remains a particular concern in recent years. The number of affected children has increased by 20% in 2022 compared to 2021, from 5.18 million to 6.49 million.

7. The national response plans still face the recurring problem of underfunding. As we enter this lean period, funding mobilisation stands at 51%.

8. The seasonal agro-hydro-climatic forecasts for the 2022-2023 season indicate an overall surplus to normal rainfall over all Sudanian and Sahelian zones of West Africa and Chad, with an early start, relatively short to normal dry sequences, and a late to normal end to the season. Overall average to surplus runoff is also expected over most of the West African and Chadian river basins.

9. The current locust situation is generally calm in the Sahel, despite the presence of lone individuals in some frontline areas. Fall armyworm infestations are under control.

In view of the above, the meeting recommends the following

To the States:

1. Intensify the mobilisation of funding for the implementation of national response plans, particularly in conflict-prone areas and in Cabo Verde;
2. Strengthen information monitoring on the food and nutrition situation in relation to the security crisis and the conflict in Ukraine;
3. Make the necessary arrangements to ensure security and access to conflict areas for humanitarian actors;
4. Maintain and strengthen pest surveillance (locusts, armyworms and other major pests);
5. Strengthen actions that contribute to the effective implementation of food security policies and strategies.

To CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA:

- Support frontline countries in monitoring locust risk;
- Strengthen monitoring and dialogue with States with a view to removing barriers to sub-regional trade and facilitating the free movement of goods and services between countries;
- Continue to build the capacity of national mechanisms to use tools for monitoring the agricultural season, analysing food and nutrition security and implementing National Response Plans.
- Strengthen the hydro-meteorological watch-keeping and disseminate information from regional forecasting and warning systems.

To the Partners:

- Support States in the implementation of national response plans for vulnerable populations;
- Strengthen national food and nutrition security information systems.

Done at Praia, 24 June 2022

The meeting