If appropriate action is not taken, nearly 42.5 million people would be at risk from the food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel and West Africa during the lean season (June-August 2023), more than five times the level before the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2014:

Pursue and strengthen long-term political and financial commitments to eradicate the underlying causes of food and nutrition insecurity in the region.

KEY MESSAGES

MESSAGE 1: The food crisis is growing and is highly exacerbated by insecurity, inflation and the adverse effects of climate change

- The 2022-2023 agropastoral season was generally satisfactory, but cereal production per capita declined. Cereal production, estimated at more than 77 million tonnes, is up 6% from the average of the last five years and 8% from last year. However, output per capita is down 2% compared to the average of the last five years. Tuber and root production is estimated at 212 million tonnes, an increase of 10% over the five-year average. Production of cash crops is also up except for cotton, which is down 1% compared to the five-year average. Fodder availability and watering conditions for livestock are relatively satisfactory but access remains difficult in insecure areas.

- Food and nutrition insecurity is affecting more and more people. The number of food insecure people increased by 32.8 million, from 9.7 million in June-August 2019 to 42.5 million people in June-August 2023. In addition, 107.5 million people would be under pressure during the 2023 lean season and could fall into crisis in the event of shocks, particularly in Nigeria (64 million), Niger (7.3 million) and Burkina Faso (5.1 million). Malnutrition also remains a concern with nearly 16.5 million children under five affected in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. This tense food and nutrition situation is the result of interconnected crises:
  - Civil insecurity causing more than 7.5 million internally displaced persons deprived of their means of subsistence (housing, productive capital, social network) and access to education and health.
  - Persistent inflation undermines households' ability to access sufficient nutritious food. Inflation remains a concern (18% on average in the region). It is fuelled by the persistence of barriers to regional trade (illegal levies, taxes, and bans on grain exports), rising transport costs, currency depreciation in Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, and the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This caused a sharp rise in the prices of the main cereals of 25 to 40% compared to the average of the last five years, with peaks in Ghana (+100%), Sierra Leone (+100%), Nigeria (+50%) and Burkina Faso (+50%), and particularly in areas of insecurity.
  - The worsening adverse effects of climate change also continue to impact the region’s food systems, including severe disruptions in rainfall patterns, low availability of water for irrigation, flooding, etc.

- Food and humanitarian assistance alleviate suffering, but on its own does not provide a sustainable solution to recurrent food and nutrition crises. Similarly, it leads to an increasing financial needs in a context of strong financial stress at the level of States and their partners. This situation reminds of the need for greater political commitment to the effectiveness of the response, prioritising investment in resilience, in synergy with emergency response.
1. Take appropriate measures to respond effectively to the food and nutrition crisis and to better prevent future crises

- Support national response plans by activating regional solidarity mechanisms (ECOWAS regional food security reserve, UEMOA financial instrument within the framework of its High-Level Committee on Food and Nutrition Security...).
- Raise awareness and support countries to resolutely engage in inclusive structural responses to reverse negative food and nutrition trends in the region, including the development of the fertiliser and irrigation sector.
- Support States in the implementation of policy measures to support purchasing power and protect people's livelihoods, and also to address the structural causes of soaring food prices.
- Accelerate the strengthening of the response capacities of the Regional Food Security Reserve, including its sovereign financing.
- Engage in dialogue with Member States with a view to significantly reducing obstacles to regional trade (lifting of export bans on food products and border closures; effective measures to combat road harassment and illegal taxation, etc.) and to cross-border transhumance.

2. Support States in the implementation of inclusive development policies in agropastoral territories, including measures addressing the underlying causes of security violence

- Engage in dialogue with Member States on accelerating the implementation of policies and programs (NAIP-FNS, PCD-TASAN, NRP-AGIR, Youth Employment Strategy, etc.) dedicated to the optimisation of the agro-pastoral, food and informal economy, providing employment opportunities, especially for youth.
- Organise a restricted consultation with countries plagued by insecurity in order to define and implement a roadmap on the strengthening of local mechanisms for dialogue, peacebuilding and governance capable of stimulating a new social contract conducive to inclusive development in agropastoral territories and restoring social cohesion.

KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR ECOWAS, UEMOA AND CILSS

MESSAGE 2: Persistent insecurity exacerbates the crisis of agropastoral territories, further aggravating food and nutrition insecurity

- Insecurity in the Sahel and West Africa is spreading, and violence is intensifying. The Sahel and West Africa region has experienced an exponential increase in the number of outbreaks of violence in recent years with 10,000 incidents between 2020 and 2021, representing an increase of 180% per year compared to the period 2015-2019. In the same period, the number of victims has increased by 521% per year. This violence is spreading to coastal countries, particularly northern Benin, and Togo.

- The agro-pastoral economy is highly weakened with implications in terms of loss of income and livelihoods for the affected populations. The combination of pastoral and security crises is taking a heavy toll on pastoralists, agropastoralists and other actors in the pastoral economy (private vets, traders, etc.). The consequences of insecurity are multifaceted: inaccessibility to grazing land and markets, prohibition of transhumance in some countries, cattle theft associated with loss of life, dropping out of school, and recruitment of young people by armed groups. Insecurity particularly threatens the future of young agropastoralists who have lost their bearings and are looking for opportunities.
SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA: FOOD AND NUTRITION SITUATION

29.5 million people in “Crisis” or worse (phases 3-5) in the Sahel and West Africa

Current situation: March-May 2023

- 29.5 million people in “Crisis” or worse (phases 3-5)

Phases of food insecurity:
- Phase 1: Minimal
- Phase 2: Stressed
- Phase 3: Crisis
- Phase 4: Emergency
- Phase 5: Famine

Projected situation: June-August 2023

- 42.5 million people expected to face “Crisis” or worse (phases 3-5)

Source: Cadre harmonisé analyses, regional concertation, Bamako, Mali, March 2023