

36TH ANNUAL MEETING

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Sound the alarm for political and financial action to address an unprecedented food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa that has been strongly exacerbated by the combined effects of security, health and inflation crises: 16.7 million people are in need of immediate food and nutrition assistance, and this number is expected to reach 23.6 million during the next lean season if appropriate measures are not taken.

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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 annual meeting was held virtually bringing together the region's key food and nutrition security stakeholders. 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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RPCA members paid a glowing tribute to Dr Djimé Adoum, CILSS Executive Secretary who is at the end of his term.

1. The 36th annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) brought together nearly 220 participants to take stock of the 2020-21 agro-pastoral campaign and the food and nutrition situation. It also provided an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned from the management of the 2020 food crisis, including preventive measures against the locust threat. The Senior Experts Group of the Global Alliance for Resilience (SEG-AGIR) examined the progress made by Burkina Faso in the implementation of national resilience priorities (NRP-AGIR) and the best practices promoted by the country. Lastly, the meeting considered the Network's newly designed "Analytical tool for assessing leadership in the governance of food and nutrition security" (FNS governance tool), the database of food and nutrition security programmes and projects, and the process for evaluating and implementing the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC Charter).
2. The 2020-21 agro-pastoral campaign has been good overall, despite floods resulting in loss of life and extensive agricultural damage, particularly in the rice sector in Niger and Nigeria. Estimated cereal production projections are for 74.7 million tonnes, 1.4% higher than the previous campaign and 9.3% above the five-year average. However, production decreases are expected in Côte d'Ivoire (-8%), Mali (-2%) and Nigeria (-2%) compared to the previous campaign. Tuber production is estimated at 194.8 million tonnes, an increase of 3.7% and 11.6% compared to the previous year and the five-year average respectively. Cash crop production is expected to be higher than the previous campaign, with the exception of cotton (-6%), cowpeas (-2%) and cocoa (-4%). Fodder production is good overall with some surplus production. Nevertheless, the security crisis means that the accessibility of some pastures, the functioning of livestock markets and pastoral mobility in general remain difficult.
3. The results of the Cadre harmonisé analyses indicate that, for the second year in a row, the region must prepare for a major food and nutrition crisis in 2021. Some 16.7 million people require immediate food assistance. This could increase to approximately 23.6 million during the next lean season, from June-August 2021, if appropriate measures are not taken. The prevalence of global acute malnutrition exceeds the threshold of 10% ("high" per WHO) in northern Burkina Faso, central and northern Mali, eastern and western Chad, and most regions of Niger. This unprecedented food and nutrition situation is the result of a combination of socio-economic, security and health shocks. Inflation continues to have a serious impact on Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Guinea.

The resulting loss in local purchasing power, coupled with the effects of health measures to address Covid-19, is keeping food prices high and limiting access to food for the most vulnerable. The ongoing security crisis in the Liptako-Gourma region and the Lake Chad basin continues to generate large flows of internally displaced people (IDPs) without livelihoods; Nigeria and Burkina Faso account for 2 million and 1 million IDPs respectively.

4. RPCA members urge ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS to immediately call on their member states and partners to mobilise in order to provide appropriate responses.

They recommend that States, with the support of their intergovernmental organisations and partners: i) raise the alarm, formulate and implement response plans as quickly as possible; ii) continue to strengthen the scaling up of social protection programmes focussed on responding to food requirements, preventing malnutrition and strengthening the resilience of populations in structurally vulnerable areas; iii) take vigorous measures to ensure the effective security of food and humanitarian assistance operations in hard-to-reach conflict zones; iv) implement targeted livelihood development and resilience-building programmes for the benefit of populations under food pressure, who could reach 62 million during the during the 2021 lean season; and v) strengthen the monitoring of food markets in order to better anticipate price increases caused by persistent inflation in certain countries as well as by the high prices of food imports.

5. The Covid-19 pandemic – the real impacts of which remain insufficiently assessed – continues to exacerbate a socio-economic situation already strained by inflation and the security crisis. Public health measures are disrupting the conduct of agro-pastoral and income-generating activities, causing huge job and income losses among households dependent on the informal economy. RPCA members draw the attention of the public authorities to the high risk of millions of young people and women falling into poverty and precariousness as a result of the combined effect of the security and health crises. They recommend that States implement multi-sectoral programmes to restore their socio-economic conditions, dignity and resilience. Based on the outcomes of discussions organised by the SWAC Secretariat and the OECD Development Centre, RPCA members call on all stakeholders to put gender at the heart of food and nutrition security policies and commitments in the region. This involves: i) strengthening advocacy and awareness-raising

by drawing on civil society, including youth organisations; ii) updating or overhauling information systems in order to collect sex-disaggregated data, and; iii) innovating practices by refocusing them around inclusive multi-sectoral approaches that tackle the socio-cultural dimensions of the problem.

6. Regional solidarity came to the fore during the management of the 2020 food and nutrition crisis. ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS, have – more than ever – mobilised in support of their member states alongside their partners. While RPCA members welcome this commitment, they nevertheless note the persistence of co-ordination challenges in increasingly difficult conditions for funding food and humanitarian assistance. To better prepare for future crises, **RPCA members call on all stakeholders to invest in co-ordination and information in order to ensure the effectiveness of interventions and address resource scarcity.**

In particular, they urge States and intergovernmental organisations to develop ownership and use the FNS governance tool developed by the Network to strengthen their co-ordination and alignment instruments. **They encourage them to draw on the lessons of the 2020 crisis in order to strengthen political commitment to developing sustainable and resilient local food systems and structural investments that address the root causes of recurrent food and nutrition crises.** Lastly, RPCA members call on governments to learn from the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in order to better anticipate possible future surges. This covers the consequences of border closures and blocking local economies, and measures that are detrimental to food production and supply chains.

7. After examining Burkina Faso's experience in building resilience, the SEG-AGIR members welcome the relevance and usefulness of the tools for capitalising on and sharing best practices, as well as the database on food and nutrition security programmes and projects dedicated to strengthening co-ordination. They encourage stakeholders, particularly CILSS, to support States in scaling up these tools, including the development of stronger country ownership over the databases and the processes to update them.

8. Significant progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the 2nd evaluation of the PREGEC Charter, demonstrated by the FNS governance tool, the Civil Society and Parliamentary Oversight Committees, the FNS project database, etc. RPCA members agree to continue consultations on the choice of theme for the 3rd evaluation at the RPCA restricted meeting in April 2021.