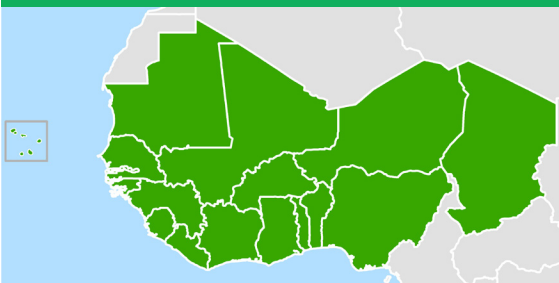




Watch Newsletter

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and nutrition security situation in the Sahel and West Africa



Issue No. 1: April 2020

A pre-existing food and nutrition crisis greatly exacerbated by public health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

Background

As in other regions of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a considerable impact on people's living conditions in the Sahel and West Africa. The region is already facing a major food and nutrition crisis affecting more than 17 million; nearly 51 million more people currently under stress are likely to be added to this population due to the combined effects of the security and health pandemic.

Approximately 9,000 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in the region with 2,740 recovered and 220 deaths, as at April 30, 2020. To contain the spread of the pandemic, countries are implementing various public health measures, including border and market closures, curfews, restricted mobility (total or partial lockdown of certain cities), etc. While these measures to combat Covid-19 are legitimate, they have considerable negative impacts on people's livelihoods, particularly access to food for the most vulnerable groups in both rural and urban areas. In order to regularly assess these impacts, the RPCA's Cadre Harmonisé (CH) Technical Committee (CH-TC) has set up a monitoring system with all the 17 countries of the region. These impacts are regularly reported by the States through a grid of alert thresholds summarized in Table 1 below. This first issue summarizes the highlights of the analyses made from a few countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal) that have provided the required information.

Methodological Approach : The compilation of this newsletter focused on the monitoring of five key areas namely : 1) health and nutrition; 2) market situation; 3) pastoral situation; 4) household living conditions; and 5) locust threat monitoring. Monitoring indicators were validated by consensus with the countries. An alert threshold was defined for each area in order to trigger a possible update of the March 2020 Cadre Harmonisé (CH) analyses; this helps to better assess the severity of the food and nutrition crisis and to identify the most affected populations. This information is expected to help governments, IGOs and TFPs make decisions. For some countries, country-wide data was not available as at the period of compilation this update, For example, for Nigeria, data presented in this update (apart from the figure on pandemic situation, which is nation-wide), came from only twelve (12) northern states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) . The other recovered countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Chad.

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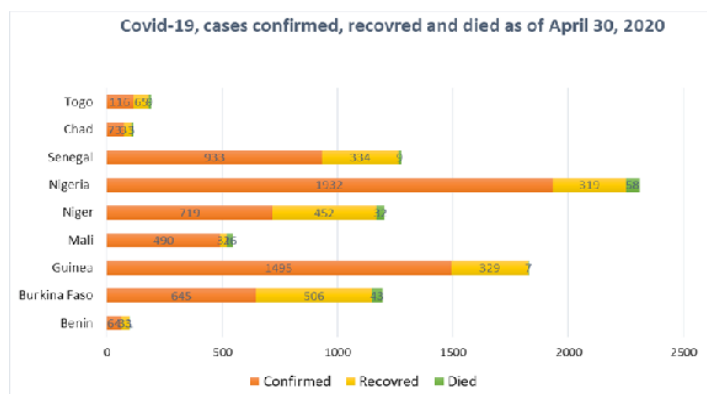
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Alert level	Table N°1: Alert thresholds per domain			
	Health-Nutrition Closure rate of health facilities	Markets (operation and animation and price level)	Pastoral situation (situation of transhumance)	Household living conditions (IGA access to means of agricultural production))
Normal	< 30%	Price variance	100% usual mobility	Normal>=80%
Alert	>=30%	Variance> 50%	>50%<75% of mobility disturbance and/or prohibition	Restricted + Wrestricted> 50%
Alarm	ND		>75% of mobility disturbance and/or prohibition	W. Restricted + No IGA> 20%
Emergency	ND		N/A	NoIGA>20%



Health and Nutrition Situation

Pandemic situation



As at April 30, 2020, the assessment of the COVID19 pandemic in the nine countries under review was 6,497 people tested positive, of whom 2,102 were cured and 190 died, i.e. an overall case-fatality rate of 2.9% (Table 2). The most affected countries in terms of number of cases are Nigeria (1,932), Guinea (1,495) and Senegal (933). However, the highest lethality rates are observed in Togo (7.8%), Chad (6.8%) and Burkina Faso (6.7%).

Table 2. Covid-19 lethality rate

Country	Lethality rate
Benin	1,6%
Burkina Faso	6,7%
Guinea	0,5%
Mali	5,3%
Niger	4,5%
Nigeria	3,0%
Senegal	1,0%
Chad	6,8%
Togo	7,8%
TOTAL	2,9%

Source: https://github.com/CSSEGISandData/COVID-19/tree/master/csse_covid_19_data

Functioning of health facilities

In 7 countries of the region (Burkina Faso, Benin, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo) the functioning of health centres is generally disrupted. Between 7% and 58% of health centres, are already operating at idle or minimum speed. The highest rate is found in Burkina, in the Sahel region. However, the total closure of health centres is for the moment very marginal, not exceeding 5%. Nevertheless, for the time being, these closures are not due to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, but rather due to civil insecurity in some Sahelian countries, particularly Burkina Faso and Niger. Disrupted or minimum level of operation of some health facilities in Nigeria could be attributed to the fact that most private health facilities totally shut down, some public health facilities were converted or modified to serve as isolation (for suspected carriers) or treatment centres for covid-19 patients.

Nutrition situation

Acute malnutrition (AM) management situation

The management of malnutrition according to recommended protocols is continuing normally in the following countries: Benin, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Togo and Senegal.

However, in Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria, changes have been made in the way moderate malnutrition is treated and in the timing of its management. However, details to support these likely changes are not available for the time being

Morbidity and admissions of malnourished children

The major childhood diseases (Fever/Malaria, Acute Respiratory Infection and Diarrhoea) were monitored and reported for the last two weeks (1 to 16 April). Approximately 111,613 children under 5 years of age were affected by these diseases.

As for admissions of malnourished children, the data available to date show that 85,610 children have been admitted for severe acute malnutrition since the beginning of 2020.

Table3: Admission rate of malnourished children (January - April 2020)

Pays	Nouvelles admissions
Burkina Faso	22504
Chad	21764
Mali	4389
Niger	12529
Nigeria*	5333
TOTAL	66519

*Nigeria : this is the situation of the 6 States (Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe , Kaduna) and the FCT

Source: Matrice de suivi remplie par le pays

A few recommendations :

- **Infant and young child feeding when COVID-19 is suspected or confirmed:** a set of 10 tip cards and a practice booklet is available. These tools provide easy-to-understand messages and graphics that can be used with low-literate communities in different contexts. For more details, please follow this link : <https://www.advancingnutrition.org/news-events/2020/04/24/infant-and-young-child-feeding-recommendations-when-covid-19-suspected-or>
- **Management of nutrition information in the context of COVID-19:** the nutrition cluster made recommendations for adapting information systems. For more information, please follow the link : https://www.nutritioncluster.net/sites/default/files/2020-04/Nutrition-Information-COVID-Brief%201_0.pdf

Taking nutrition into account in Covid-19 responses : Although very little is known about nutrition and COVID-19, it is predicted that the pandemic will lead to a worsening of all underlying causes of malnutrition, including a deterioration in household food security, care practices for young children, decreased access to essential preventive and curative care, and increased morbidity amongst young children. COVID-19 responses should consider nutrition through an integrated approach, including food security, health, access to water and sanitation, social protection and infant and young child nutrition.



Market situation

Market operation and animation

At the end of April, no country had closed more than 50% of its agricultural or livestock markets. However, in some areas/regions of the countries, 60% to 100% of the markets were closed (Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Nigeria and Senegal).

The countries with the highest market closure rates are Chad, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Guinea, where national average market closure rates vary between 8% and 44%.

In Burkina Faso, in addition to all the large markets in Ouagadougou that have been closed (30 markets in total), livestock markets in the Centre, North-East and Central Plateau regions have been closed. However, no region in the country has recorded a rate of closed agricultural markets higher than 50%.

In Guinea, the most affected region is Dabola, where 100% of livestock markets were closed in April 2020 to comply with social distancing measures.

In Nigeria, 6 zones in Kano and Plateau State have a livestock market closure rate ranging from 95% to 100%. It was also reported that the 3 senatorial zones in Gombe State have closed agricultural markets at rates ranging from 60% to 100%.

In Senegal, the closure of weekly markets resulted in a reduction in the marketing of local cereals by producers.

In Chad, 29 regions have completely closed livestock markets. Of these regions, five have also closed more than 60% of their agricultural markets.

In the other countries (Niger, Mali, Togo), although disruptions in the functioning of daily and weekly markets were reported, no region recorded a rate of disruption greater than 60% for agricultural markets and 80% for livestock markets.

Figure 2 : Market functioning situation

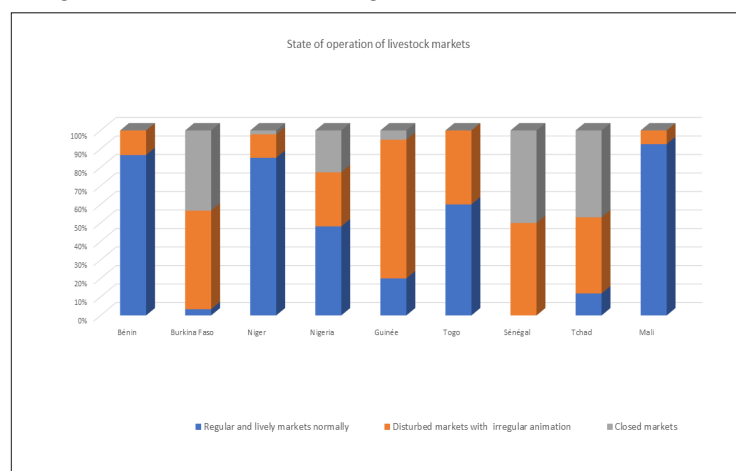
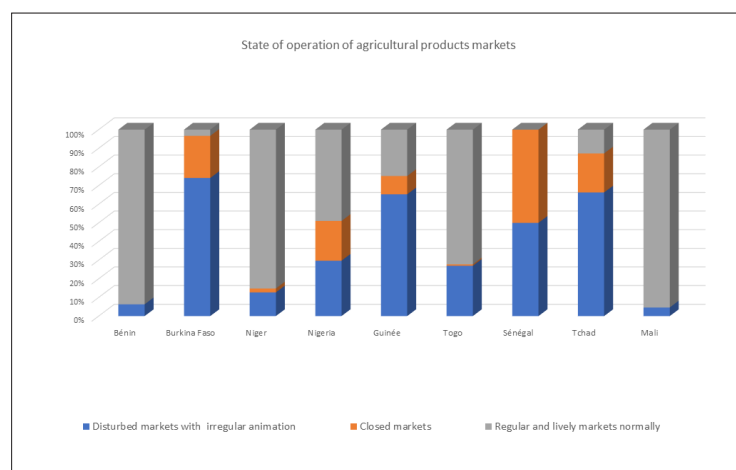


Figure 3. Operation of livestock markets



Availability

In most cases, markets have a level of food supply that is considered stable or normal. However, availability is low in some areas. This is particularly the case of markets in Burkina Faso (North Centre, South Centre, HautsBassins, Central Plateau and the Sahel).

This is also the case for markets in the departments of Boffa, Boké, Fria, Koumbia, Dalaba, Mamou, Pita, Labé, Lélouma, Mali and Tougué in Guinea. The same trend is observed in the markets of some Nigerian States (Plateau, Borno, Benue and Jigawa). In Chad, low supplies of basic foodstuffs are observed in the markets of some departments (Djourouf Al Amar, Ouara, Assoungba, Nord Kanem, Biltinem, Grande Sido, Darh Tama, Kobé and Dagana). The availability of basic foodstuffs in these markets is likely to deteriorate further and reach alert thresholds if government measures on restrictions on population mobility are not eased in the short term.

Price levels

Staple food prices remain stable with variations of -5% to +5% in some countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Togo, Niger and Benin compared to the normal situation. But prices of basic foodstuffs are clearly on the rise in the other countries, including Senegal, Guinea and Nigeria. However, the largest increases of more than 25% are observed in several Northern Nigerian States, Guinea and Niger.

Prices of cash crops and livestock are on the rise overall but the situation varies from country to country. Significant decreases are noted in Burkina and Niger (Tibiri, Aguié, Tanout) for livestock and in Nigeria (Taraba) for cashcrops.

Overall, the terms of trade are to the disadvantage of producers and herders in all countries, particularly in Niger (Belbedji) and Nigeria (Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Tabara, Bauchi); this is reflected in a drop in purchasing power amongst these agro-pastoralists

The zones in a state of alert, with commodity prices above 50% of normal and/or a 50% drop in the prices of the main cash crops, are located in Nigeria (States of: Bauchi, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Taraba). The risk zones with upward price variations between +25% to +50% are located in Niger (Maine Soroa, Aguié, GuidanRoundji, Maradi, Bouza, Belbedji and Tanout), Guinea (Dalaba and Mamouet) and Chad (Am jaras, Wadihawar, Fada and Mourtcha).

Price variations and terms of trade

Country	Changes in commodity prices	Changes in cash crop and livestock prices	Changes in the terms of trade
Bénin	-7%	8%	39%
Burkina	-6%	-15%	-1%
Guinea	15%	15%	5%
Mali	0%	2%	5%
Niger	4%	-4%	-4%
Nigeria	28%	10%	-22%
Senegal	16%	12%	-3%
Chad	-8%	-1%	15%
Togo	0%	5%	



Biomass availability, access to pastures, watering points and transhumance

Pastoral situation in the face of the COVID-19 crisis

The security context had disrupted the pastoral activities (closed livestock markets, prohibited transhumance, conflicts, difficulty of access to certain pastures, etc.) in the Sahelian strip long before the sudden COVID-19 crisis began, resulting in the degradation/erosion of the pastoralists' livelihoods. In Senegal and Mauritania, pastoralists were already facing the consequences of the biomass deficits recorded in 2019.

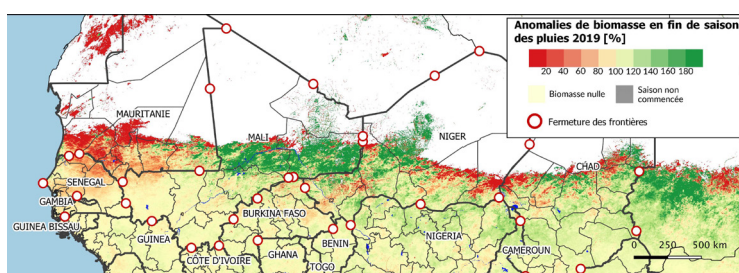
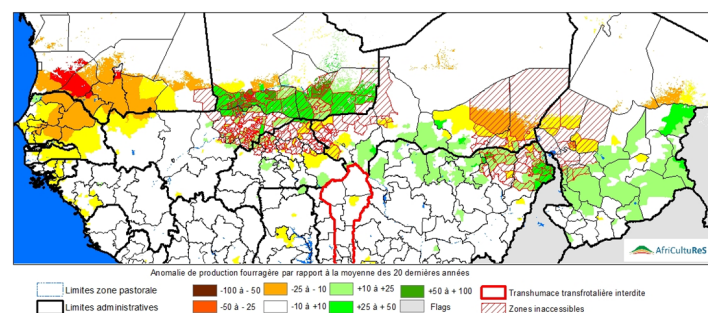
Analysis of the data provided by the countries :

Biomass availability

Biomass availability is limited (even very limited) in the Sahelian countries, but overall satisfactory for the Gulf of Guinea countries. Even if fodder deficits in the Sahel are in the range of what is usually observed, the alert threshold seems to have been reached in the pastoral zones of Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Chad and Nigeria (Adamaoua, Central zone, Northern zone, Southern zone).

Access to pastures

Due to persistent insecurity, access to grazing in the pastoral areas is generally difficult for the majority of Sahelian countries except in Niger (Goudoumaria, Manesora, Ngourti ...), in Chad (Lake, Kanem, Batha East, FitriBourkou ...) in Mali (central Mali and northern part); several areas are totally inaccessible and are above the alert threshold of 75%.



Transhumance situation

Cross-border transhumance, which was already affected by the security crisis, is being severely disrupted by the border closures imposed by the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. The pastoral lean season has practically reached its peak and most of the transhumant who are currently in the host countries (Togo, Benin...) will begin their homeward movement from the end of May. The current closure of borders is gradually leading to an abnormally high concentration of animals in the closed border areas; risks of conflict are not ruled out with the start of the cropping season.

Intra-country transhumance in the countries is also disrupted due to quarantine measures, lockdown and curfews limiting the mobility of transhumant herders. The alert threshold (75% transhumance prohibited) is reached in the majority of countries except in Chad, Guinea, Togo, etc.

Conclusion/recommendation :

With the predicted early onset of the rainy season and the beginning of the cropping season, it is necessary to facilitate the return of cross-border transhumant herders to reduce the risk of mortality of drought-weakened livestock and avoid inconvenience and conflict. The abnormally high concentration of livestock due to the prohibitions and difficulties of transhumance in border areas presents a strong zoo-sanitary risk. The management of natural resources (risk of overgrazing) and the availability of foodstuffs (milk, meat, etc.) of animal origin could also be seriously disrupted, particularly in the Sahelian countries.


The emergency health measures implemented by the States are disrupting and exacerbating the development of pastoral life which was already in crisis due to insecurity, which could, if nothing is done in the short and medium term, durably affect the livelihood of pastoralists. A targeted response (targeted and gradual opening of transhumance border areas, distribution of livestock feed and veterinary care) on pastoralism and its actors (food assistance to the most vulnerable people) should be considered as soon as possible.





Household living conditions in Covid-19 context


Income-generating activities, access to production means (Inputs and labour)

General situation in the region : Daily income-generating activities (petty trade, sale of labour) are highly disrupted in most countries. Agricultural activities are normally carried out in the vast majority of countries. Overall, access to inputs and labour has not been negatively impacted by public health measures against COVID-19 except in Chad, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso. On the pastoral level, persistent civil insecurity makes access to pastoral resources (pastures and water points) difficult in the Lake Chad basin and the Liptako Gourma area. Mobility is severely restricted along the borders between Benin-Niger and Burkina-Benin.


 **BENIN :** 20% of households have limited access to means of production. The rest (80%) carry out their activities in the usual conditions. The situation is homogeneous throughout the country.


 **BURKINA FASO :** All 13 regions of the country reported an emergency situation with very limited possibilities for conducting income-generating activities (petty trade, sale of labour). The same trend is observed for the conduct of agricultural activities; all regions are in an emergency situation with little or no access to means of production (inputs and labour).


 **GUINEA :** the conduct of income-generating activities (petty trade, sale of labour) is limited (even very limited) in 50% of the areas monitored. Overall, this situation is considered alarming and this is partly due to the slowdown and cessation respectively of national and cross-border flows of agricultural products caused by the current Covid-19 state of emergency. Access to the means of production (inputs and labour) is limited or inaccessible in about 30% of the areas.


 **NIGER :** Monitoring of the 75 departments and municipalities reveals that income-generating activities and agricultural activities are conducted at 81% and 88% of normal conditions respectively. However, about 2% of these areas (11 departments and municipalities of Niamey) have reached the emergency threshold and 1% (5 departments) of areas are on alert with regard to income-generating activities.

Regarding agricultural activities, 2% of the departments are on alert. Difficulties relate to limited access to inputs and the absence of manpower due to young people who have left the country in exodus and whose return has become impossible due to the border closure and the lockdown imposed on Niamey.

 **NIGERIA :** The measures (lockdown, curfew, restricted market functionality, etc.) taken in the context of the management of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affect income-generating activities in the 12 States and FCT (comprising 44 zones) monitored in April 2020. Available data shows that 57% of the zones have reached the alert threshold; a situation that creates poor income access conditions for poor households largely dependent on markets for their food supplies. Similarly, the conduct of agricultural activities is severely disrupted. Access to inputs and labour availability are considered to be (7%) or poorly/not accessible (27%) in the States. Overall, income-generating activities and access to agricultural inputs and labour are highly deteriorated in more than a third of the areas monitored in the 13 northern States of Nigeria.

 **MALI :** Income-generating activities are highly disrupted in 100% of the 55 areas monitored. Activities are very limited or stopped in about 50% to 65% of the areas monitored. However, agricultural activities are taking place normally in all areas where access to inputs and labour have not been impacted by the measures taken in the context of the pandemic management.

 **TOGO :** 30% of households have been deprived of the daily conduct of their income-generating activities (petty trade, sale of labour), while 20% of households have very limited activities and 50% have limited activities. Only 10% normally conduct their IGAs. Agricultural activities normally take place in more than 80% of the areas monitored. Access to agricultural inputs and labour is limited in 20% of the zones.

 **CHAD :** In 73% of the zones monitored, income-generating activities are heavily impacted (27% limited, 23% very limited and 22% have come to a halt), thus putting the country in an emergency situation. Agricultural activities are also experiencing difficulties in 38% of the zones monitored, including 15% without access to inputs and labour and 23% with limited access.



Desert locust tracking

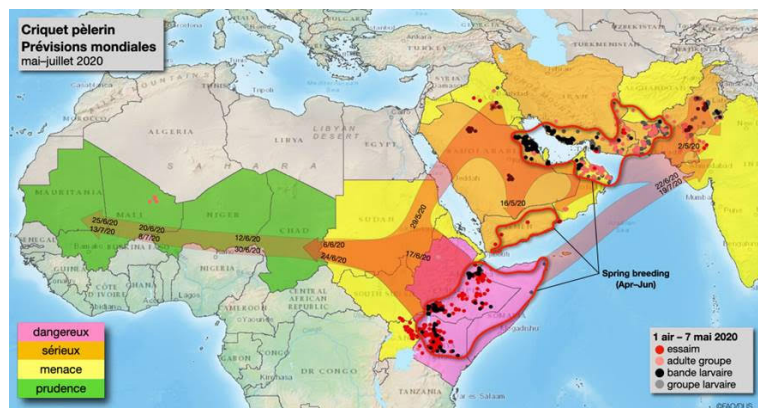
The Desert Locust situation is calm and under control in the Sahel and West Africa. However, in view of what is happening in East Africa and the likely risk of receiving swarms from this region in June, the frontline countries (Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad) and those of Burkina Faso and Senegal are working together with their partners (FAO and CLCPRO) to mobilise the resources necessary for the implementation of a regional contingency plan and National Locust Emergency Plans (NLEPs).

The cost of the regional emergency plan is estimated at USD 9.6 million of which about USD 995 000 is to be contributed by countries, USD 1 million by CLCPRO through its Regional Locust Risk Management Fund (RLRMF) and USD 7.6 million are to be sought from FAO and other national and international financial partners.

Recommendations

Given the risk of locust invasion in the region, the following recommendations are made :

- Regularly update the Desert Locust situation with the support of plant protection services and/or locust control centres and report on the locust situation in the countries (including during lull periods);
- Strengthen the Regional Coordination between CILSS, ECOWAS and CLCPRO (FAO Commission for Desert Locust Control in the Western Region) for concerted and appropriate actions;
- Coordinate actions with FAO country offices to provide plant protection services and/or national locust control centres with monitoring and control facilities/equipment.



Desert Locust Occurrence and Risk Map - April 2020 (source FAO/DLIS)

Table 5: Summary of the alert grid

Country	Market anima- tion	Pastoral situation		Household living conditions	
		Biomass availability	Access to pastures	IGA	Agri- cultural activities
Benin					
Burkina Faso					
Guinea					
Niger					
Nigeria					
Mali					
Togo					
Chad					

Normal
Alert
Alarm
Emergency

Mitigation actions in the countries

Governments have revised (or are in the process of revising) their national food and nutrition crisis response plans to incorporate the impacts of the public health measures in response to the Covid-19 pandemic or have adopted response plans to assist vulnerable populations. Other broader measures are being implemented, such as ensuring the proper functioning of local food supply systems and boosting local agricultural production. Thus, in addition to reducing household expenses (covering water and electricity bills), some governments have initiated various other actions: reference shops, free food distribution, support for food production, strengthening of institutional stocks, etc. These actions are implemented in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Chad and Togo.



In conclusion : the food and nutrition situation, already greatly aggravated by the security crisis in some countries (Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Chad), has become very worrying with

the consequences of public health measures in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. The conduct of income-generating activities is very limited or even impossible; a situation that greatly deteriorates the living conditions and purchasing power of the most vulnerable populations, who are essentially dependent on markets for food supplies.

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