

37TH ANNUAL MEETING

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Act now and in unison in the face of an unprecedented food and nutrition crisis that has been greatly exacerbated by insecurity inflation and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic:

Approximately 33.4 million people are expected to be in need of emergency food assistance by the 2022 lean season if vigorous 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 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 37th annual meeting of the Network brought together nearly 150 participants to discuss the provisional results of the 2021-22 agro-pastoral season, the food market situation, the macroeconomic context, the security context and their consequences on the food and nutrition situation. The assessment of the response to the 2021 food crisis was also presented and discussed, including specific measures to address the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the security situation, Network members have deepened their reflection on the theme "*Women, conflicts and food and nutrition issues*". The session of the Senior Experts Group (SEG) of the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR) was an opportunity to share the experience of the Togolese government in favour of resilience. Finally, participants took stock of several of the Network's topics dedicated to the consolidation of regional governance of food and nutrition security.
2. The 2021-22 agro-pastoral season was marked by pockets of drought and an early cessation of rainfall in the Sahelian strip, which adversely affected crop yields but also caused significant fodder deficits in Mauritania and Niger and in several areas of northern Senegal, Mali and Chad. This situation, coupled with difficulties in accessing pastures due to the security crisis, suggests that transhumance will take place earlier in 2022, with a high risk of conflicts between farmers and herders, as well as an increase in animal diseases due to the high concentration of livestock in the host areas.
3. Cereal production, estimated at 73.3 million tonnes, is down by 1.8% from last year and up by 3.2% from the average for the past five years. The largest declines were recorded in Niger (-36%), Mauritania (-16%), Burkina Faso (-9.1%), Gambia (-8.5%), Mali (-6.5%) and Chad (-6.3%). Tuber production, estimated at 202.9 million tonnes, is up by 5% compared to last year and by 11% compared to the average for the last five years. Apart from cowpeas, sesame and Bambara groundnut, cash crops are on the increase, particularly cotton, valued at 3.3 million tonnes, 27% more than last year. Network members highlight the following factors that exacerbate food crises and for which increased monitoring is required.
4. The increase in food prices, compared to the average of the last five years, persists and is a cause for concern: +36%, +26%, +24% and +18% for maize, millet, sorghum and rice respectively. The sharp price increases are mainly observed in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. These increases are due to economic inflation, additional transport costs caused by Covid-19 measures, but also to price increases of certain commodities (maize, rice, wheat, sugar, oils) on the international market. Network members also note with great concern the soaring prices of fertilisers. This situation, largely due to the surge in world prices, is likely to have negative

repercussions on agro-pastoral production and food prices. The additional costs associated with regional trade barriers, such as road harassment, continue to weigh heavily on food prices. In view of this persistent concern, *the members of the Network call on **ECOWAS and UEMOA** to work together to find vigorous policy options that will enable them to address food, economic, security and health imperatives in a single approach.*

- 5.** For the third consecutive year, a major food and nutrition crisis is looming in 2022. The provisional results (excluding Cabo Verde and Liberia) of the Cadre harmonisé analysis indicate that 23.7 million people are in need of immediate food assistance. In the absence of appropriate measures, this number could rise to 33.4 million people during the lean season (June-August 2022), including 18 million in Nigeria alone; these figures are almost double the number of people who were affected in the 2020 lean season. The food insecurity outbreak, which emerged in the Gulf of Guinea in 2019, persists; for the third consecutive year, Sierra Leone has more than 1 million people affected. Acute malnutrition rates are above the 10% alert threshold in Mauritania, Niger and Chad, and above the 15% emergency threshold in several areas of some countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Chad). Security tensions and violence, inflation, the generalised surge in cereal prices and the consequences of health measures in response to the Covid-19 pandemic are exacerbating the food and nutrition crisis. *Members recommend that **States** (i) anticipate the formulation and implementation of response plans; (ii) facilitate access to humanitarian organisations for emergency interventions in areas heavily affected by the food crisis but with difficult access; (iii) develop support and resilience-building programmes for people under food pressure in order to protect and avoid the erosion of their livelihoods; iv) support the initiatives of agro-pastoral organisations to prevent and manage the pastoral lean season, including the supply of livestock feed, the mobilisation of consultation and inter-state partnership frameworks for the smooth management of cross-border transhumance; and v) continue and strengthen actions to prevent and manage malnutrition through updated response plans. They also request: i) **ECOWAS and UEMOA** to activate solidarity mechanisms (regional reserve and other financial mechanisms) in support of national responses; and ii) **CILSS** to set up a price monitoring system as well as a system for close monitoring of the food and nutrition situation in inaccessible or limited access areas.*
- 6.** Between December 2019 and December 2021, the number of people in need of food assistance increased by a factor of 2.5, putting a strain on the response capacities of States and their partners. The results of the implementation of the 2021 food crisis response plans confirm once again the difficulties of their financing. *To States and their intergovernmental organisations, the members reiterate the recommendation made in December 2019 on the urgent need to invest as a priority in structuring and territorialised programmes that address the roots of food crises and strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable.*
- 7.** Security tensions persist and are causing a sharp increase in civilian casualties, creating social tensions close to breaking point in several countries. Network members once again alert policy makers to the fact that the food and security crises feed each other. The violence continues to generate large flows of internally displaced persons, 3 million in Nigeria, 1.5 million in Burkina Faso, 1.2 million in Mali. In addition to the human tragedies they cause, security tensions disrupt agro-pastoral and food systems and darken the prospects of future generations. The members of the Network alert political decision-makers to the growing risk of young agro-pastoralists becoming involved in terrorist and criminal networks. *They call on **States** to implement policies to secure and strengthen the resilience of agro-pastoral and food systems, but also to support young agro-pastoralists in their new professional aspirations, drawing on employment opportunities in the agro-pastoral economy and other segments of the informal economy.*
- 8.** Women, children and girls are the first victims of violence and food and nutrition crises. The members of the Network reiterate to **States** the recommendation made in April 2019 on the urgency of providing multi-faceted responses based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, in particular by providing the necessary programmatic and dialogue frameworks for the operationalisation of such an approach on the ground. *They call on them to: (i) take more concrete action to address the situation of women, children and girls in conflict areas, including appropriate programmes to strengthen their resilience and empowerment; and (ii) give greater momentum to an inclusive endogenous dialogue for the construction of a new social and economic contract capable of easing tensions and promoting peace. They call on **ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS** to support the emergence and implementation of endogenous and integrated cross-border co-operation initiatives for food security, development and peace in the Liptako-Gourma and Lake Chad areas that are structurally vulnerable to food and security crises. Similarly, and in order to promote the search for holistic solutions to these multifactorial crises, Network members undertake to open a strategic dialogue with other networks in charge of security and peace issues.*
- 9.** The stakeholders of the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR), meeting at the Senior Expert Group (SEG) session, welcomed the commitment of the Togolese government to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations. *They stress the importance of continuing the process of capitalising on and sharing good resilience practices between countries, including those related to pastoral vulnerabilities. In particular, they ask regional organisations (**ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS**) to conduct, within the framework of the High-Level Concertation on Cross-border Transhumance, an exercise to capitalise on experiences and good practices in the management of pastoral mobility in order to fuel the debate and policy decisions.*
- 10.** In view of the increasing complexity of food issues, the members of the Network ask the Technical Committee of the Cadre Harmonisé to accelerate the process of innovation of governance instruments for food and nutrition security, while strengthening the inclusion of gender dimension. *Recalling the strategic importance of information on food and nutrition security, they ask **States, with the support of their regional organisations and partners**, to invest in the implementation of roadmaps on strengthening the effectiveness of information systems and mechanisms.*