



● RESTRICTED MEETING

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

**Urgent action is needed to save 49.5 million lives and lay the foundations for food and nutrition resilience in the Sahel and West Africa**

- **1** The RPCA Restricted Meeting brought together approximately 160 participants in person at the OECD Conference Centre in Paris and via videoconference. It reviewed the results of the 2023-24 Food and Nutrition Situation Analysis, discussed emergency and structural responses to food crises, and challenges related to food and nutrition security governance.
- **2** Cereal production in 2023-24 is estimated at around 77 million tonnes, down 0.6% from the previous year but up 4% from the average of the last five years. However, per capita output is down 0.7% compared to the average of the past five years in the Sahel and West African countries. Root and tuber production, valued at 206 million tonnes, is up 4% from last year and 8% from the five-year average. Cash crops are increasing overall, with the exception of cowpeas, voandzou, coffee and cocoa, where production is down between 6% and 13% compared to last year. Although water levels are generally adequate in most pastoral areas, a significant fodder deficit is observed in Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. In addition, civil insecurity continues to limit and disrupt traditional routes, resulting in a high concentration of livestock in the most secure areas.
- **3** The functioning of agricultural markets remains disrupted in areas of civil insecurity and in the Eastern Basin, in Nigeria, Niger and Chad, where supplies are lower in the face of increasing household demand. Despite a decline in price indices on global markets, inflation in the region remains high, at 21% compared to 18% in January 2023. The prices of the main staple grains are following the same trend with an increase from 42% to 54% compared to November 2023, and from 10% to more than 100% compared to the average of the last five years. This situation is exacerbated by considerable currency inflation in Sierra Leone (54%), Nigeria (30%), Ghana (23%), Gambia (16%) and Liberia (10%), but also and especially in areas affected by civil insecurity where supply chains are disrupted.
- **4** The food and nutrition situation in the region remains very worrying with an estimated 35.1 million people in need of emergency food and nutrition assistance, an increase of 5.8 million people compared to last year. If appropriate measures are not taken, 49.5 million people could be affected by the lean season in June-August 2024, including 31.7 million in Nigeria, 3.4 million in Niger, 3.3 million in Chad, 2.7 million in Burkina Faso, 1.6 million in Sierra Leone, 1.4 million in Mali and about 1 million in Ghana. In addition, 108.6 million people at risk could face a food crisis if preventive measures are not taken. In addition, the number of malnourished children continues to grow in the region, with an estimated 16.7 million children under the age of five affected by acute malnutrition. This food situation is exacerbated by civil insecurity, which has led to large movements of at least 6.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), deprived of essential resources such as housing, means of production and social capital. In addition, there are 1.9 million refugees in the region, 1.1 million of whom reside in Chad, including nearly half a million from Sudan. Security-related violence also leads to the closure of schools, depriving millions of children of education and school canteens.
- **5** Discussing various initiatives underway in anticipation of the upcoming review of the regional agricultural policy agenda, members of the Network strongly encourage ECOWAS and UEMOA to further enhance the value of agricultural research and innovation in agricultural policies and programmes in order to optimise agro-pastoral productivity. They encourage governments and regional organisations to work towards improving the enabling environment for policy implementation. This includes better co-ordination, access to finance to structure investments, optimisation of agricultural services, increased efficiency in agri-food value chains, and more effective risk management, including through the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and the implementation of index-based insurance mechanisms. They urge regional organisations and governments to invest more in the inclusion of women and youth.

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 restricted 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.



- 6 The members of the Network also welcome the OECD's initiative to improve the monitoring and transparency of financial flows for agricultural development and food policies. They encourage regional organisations and countries to take ownership of this instrument, which contributes to better financial governance of investments in hunger and malnutrition.
- 7 Members congratulated Gambia and Mauritania for the progress made in building resilience and supporting vulnerable communities. They encouraged them to scale up these promising initiatives to sustainably improve food and nutrition security.
- 8 They also commend and support the efforts of civil society organisations to monitor and challenge policies at national and regional levels. They urge them to focus on taking concrete action and to play their full role in transforming food systems. They call on regional organisations and governments to redouble their efforts to strengthen the institutional development of civil society organisations, which are essential for effective governance of sectoral policies.
- 9 Based on the main findings, the members of the Network draw the attention of policy makers to the persistence of factors that aggravate food and nutrition crises. These include:
  - **Civil insecurity**, which directly affects food security by deteriorating the means of production (reduction in cultivated areas, destruction and theft of livestock, etc.) and by disrupting food supply chains. In addition, nearly 40% of the areas where humanitarian actors intervene are difficult to access.
  - **Restrictions on the free movement** of agricultural products and transhumant livestock, imposed by 10 of the 17 countries in the region, continue to disrupt intra-regional trade. This, combined with inflation, is leading to higher food supply costs. Nearly 85% of the region's population cannot afford adequate nutritious food.
  - **Insufficient funding for responses to food crises.** Investment in food emergency response fell from USD 198 to USD 67 per person from 2014 to 2021, a decrease of 66%. The funding rates of the national response plans are decreasing, with a mobilisation rate of 34.2% in 2023 compared to 45% in 2021.
- 10 The members of the Network emphasise that over the past four decades, the RPCA, with its diverse membership, has consistently demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt to the challenges of preventing food crises and finding adequate solutions when they occur. All this has been done by transcending political and institutional divides and keeping as a central objective the collective mobilisation around the implementation of the recommendations in order to reverse the negative trends.

With this in mind, and as a result of their work, the members of the Network:

- Reaffirm their recommendations made at the 39th Annual Meeting of the Network for the attention of **States and their intergovernmental organisations**, on the urgency of: (i) accelerating the mobilisation of resources for the financing of national response plans, in particular in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Chad, and to facilitate access to insecure or hard-to-reach areas; (ii) accelerate the strengthening of the intervention capacity of the Regional Food Security Reserve and national stocks, including their sovereign financing; and (iii) rapidly activate the UEMOA financial solidarity mechanism to support national response plans.
- Recommend that **States and their intergovernmental organisations** strengthen their capacities to steer food issues by: (i) defining and implementing dedicated approaches and instruments to improve the effectiveness of responses to food crises; (ii) implementing innovative strategies to finance response measures, while continuing dialogue on the modalities of financing these measures; (iii) investing decisively in inclusive structural responses by seizing the opportunity of formulating new regional agricultural and food and nutrition security policies to reverse negative food and nutrition trends in the region; (iv) generating more evidence on market challenges to inform policy and financial decisions aimed at strengthening citizens' purchasing power in the face of inflation; and (v) strengthening civil society monitoring and advocacy capacities in order to consolidate governance and nutrition.
- Recommend that **ECOWAS and UEMOA** should: (i) strengthen regional solidarity on the issue of pastoralism and conduct a forward-looking reflection on the fodder economy, (ii) conduct a high-level consultation to find appropriate solutions to the recurrent obstacles to the free movement of agropastoral and food products, (iii) establish an accountability mechanism in terms of institutional and political governance, including compliance with European Union (EU) regulations and policies and national, continental and international commitments to eradicate hunger and malnutrition.
- Urge partners to: (i) increase their support to the food and nutrition crisis response and engage in a long-term partnership with governments to address the underlying causes of food and nutrition crises; (ii) make a strong commitment to support the implementation of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus in countries affected by civil insecurity, including concrete support from the Global Network Against Food Crises.

In addition, **members of the Network** recall that the climatic, economic, security and socio-political challenges and their impacts on food security require a remobilisation of States and regional institutions based on strengthened regional integration, which is essential to ensure real food sovereignty in the region. The ongoing review of agricultural and food policies initiated by ECOWAS and UEMOA provides an opportunity to advance and strengthen the regional food agenda.

- 11 Members agree that the 40th annual meeting of the Network will take place from 17 to 20 December 2024 in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The main theme of the meeting will be communicated at a later date.

Paris, 5 April 2024

Participants at the RPCA restricted meeting