



Press Release

Conclusions of the High-Level Meeting to better Coordinate Responses to the Food and Nutrition Situation of 2020 in the Sahel and West Africa

Niamey, (Niger), 18 February. As part of the implementation of the orientations and decisions of the Ministerial Meeting and the Management Committee of the Regional Food Security Reserve, ECOWAS organized from 17 to 18 February 2020 in Niamey jointly with the Republic of Niger, a High-level Meeting with the Humanitarian Community and the Technical and Financial Partners on the Coordination of responses to the difficult Food and Nutritional Situation of 2020 in the Sahel and in West Africa.

Indeed, data from the November 2019 analysis of the Harmonized Framework and PREGEC on the food situation show that, if appropriate measures and responses are not taken and implemented by the next lean period (June- August 2020), more than 14.4 million people (including 12.4 million in the ECOWAS region) could find themselves in a critical food and nutritional insecurity (phase 3 and more of the Harmonized Framework), an increase of 53% compared to the current period and 48% compared to the 2018 lean period data. The number of people in food emergencies, particularly in Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali could reach 1.3 million.

Faced with the gravity of the food and nutritional situation, the main objective of the meeting was to reach a consensus with all stakeholders for a concerted, coordinated, rapid and appropriate response for the benefit of the affected populations.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Gado Sabo Moctar, Minister for Hydraulics and Sanitation, representing the State Minister, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock of Niger and Chairperson of the Management Committee of the Regional Food Security Reserve.

During the two-day discussions, Commissioners for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources of both ECOWAS (Mr Sékou Sangaré) and UEMOA (Mr Jonas Gbian) as well as the Executive Secretary of CILSS stressed the need for consistency of the interventions of the International Community and all other stakeholders operating in the region with national and regional strategies. While recalling the importance of planning and a concerted implementation of the interventions with due respect to the principle of subsidiarity, they also insisted on the availability of food products at regional level and invited all partners and stakeholders to give preference and priority to local products of producers' organizations and nutritional products companies while purchasing their food products.

Discussions made it possible for the participants to (i) make a concerted assessment of the needs and types of assistance necessary to deal with this worrying situation on the basis of national response plans, (ii) make an assessment of the response capacities available at country, regional and partner level, (iii) agree on the procedures for intervention and coordination of responses at national and regional level for more effective interventions and (iv) inform all partners of the ECOWAS initiative to organize an international conference on the West African storage system and gather their opinions, advice and recommendations.

Specifically, four major concerns ran through all the discussions and call for answers as soon as possible.

- the programming method in relation to the central objective of strengthening national and regional capacities to prepare responses, coordinate and implement interventions in response to emergency situations,
- the choice of response instruments, their relevance, efficiency, targeting modalities and impacts on food and nutrition security,
- the need to strengthen the mechanisms, the management of food crises, their articulations and their complementarities,
- the consistency of policies with actions on the ground and the consistency of the interventions of stakeholders operating in the region with national and regional policies.

These workstreams require stronger leadership from the ECOWAS and UEMOA institutions and should, if possible, be integrated into all regional programs supported by technical and financial partners and fit into the cooperation mechanisms on food and nutritional security. They will be subject to a detailed road map and action plan. For all these concerns, the international organizations have expressed their willingness to put their expertise and experience at the service of the region.

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