

Echoes from Food Stocks

Quarterly newsletter of the ECOWAS Regional Food Security Reserve

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Editorial team

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Ousseini Salifou

Editor-in-Chief

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Editorial board

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Pierre Haas

Mitowanou Egnonto Koffi-Tessio

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Moussa Mama

Malick Lompo

Jonas Alagbé

Nahmsath Yabouri

Celestin Tiénon

Septime Houssou-Goé

Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food

83, rue de la Pâture (Super TACO),
Lomé, TOGO - Tél. +228 22 21 40 03
araa@araa.org - www.araa.org

E ditorial

Dear Partners,

With the financial support of the European Union, the operationalization of the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) has reached its cruising speed, especially in the constitution of the regional physical stock.



Mr. Salifou Ousseini,
Executive Director of RAAF

Indeed, the Mid-Term Evaluation and the Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) of the RFSR Support Project have already touched on the achievements and significant progress made.

The involvement of the Private Sector and Producers' Organizations in the constitution of the Reserve is becoming more and more important. For example, for the time being, the supply of products is, for now, of about 70% provided by the Private Sector Companies and 30% by Producers' Organizations (POs), all originating from West Africa.

ECOWAS will take into account the various recommendations made by the two assessments in order to improve the implementation of the project during the remaining period and above all, to ensure a good foundation for the Regional Food Security Reserve. Among other priorities, ECOWAS will lay emphasis on the ownership of the Regional Reserve by all stakeholders, the capacity of the region to cope with the recurrent food crises, the sustainability and continuity of this regional solidarity and integration mechanism.

Support to the Network of Public Bodies and Offices in charge of the Management of National Food Security Stocks in the Sahel and West Africa (RESOGEST) is essential for the mobilization and pooling of the 5% of national stocks for the Regional Reserve as part of the contribution of the Member States to the initial Stock of the Reserve.

Moreover, another key challenge is the operationalization of the Regional Fund for Agriculture and Food in order to guarantee the development of the subsector and the sustainability of the Regional Reserve.

I wish to take advantage of this issue to renew and extend my sincere gratitude to you all for the various and manifold supports you have been bringing to the construction of this Regional Food Security Reserve.

ECOWAS, through its Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF), highly appreciates and welcomes the contributions of each and every one of you!

I wish you all a pleasant reading!

Monitoring the first Stocks of the Regional Reserve

Next to these follow-up missions with major recommendations that led to an overall improvement of storage and maintenance conditions, the project will soon start a communication-visibility campaign on the various storage sites.

As part of its operationalization, the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) made a first purchase of 11,178.5 tons of cereals of which 10,048.5 tons are stored in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger and Nigeria and 1,130 tons delivered directly to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) of Nigeria as part of the ECOWAS assistance to the populations affected by the food and nutrition crisis in the Northeastern part of Nigeria.

For the monitoring and quality control of the products of the Reserve's stocks, ECOWAS undertook from November 2017 to February 2018, a series of supervision missions to the various storage sites.

The quantity stored in Ghana, specifically in Yendi, was monitored and the exercise revealed some concerns with storage conditions. Recommendations were then made to the national storage body, the National Food Buffer Stock Company (NAFCO) which took some affirmative actions to improve storage conditions in Yendi and to relocate some of the products to the newly renovated warehouses in Tamalé.

In Niger, the conditions for receiving, storing and maintaining the products are satisfactory. Fumigations are done on due dates and the inventory tracking sheets available and visible at the entrance of the warehouses. The warehouses are all provided with the necessary equipment for the reception and maintenance of the products. However, quality of packaging and labelling needs to be improved so as to enhance products visibility.

In Burkina Faso and Nigeria, food storage and maintenance conditions are also acceptable. Exchanges between RAAF and partners have improved some of the aspects of food storage and maintenance such as improved availability of fumigation tarpaulins and a system for easy counting of bags.

The physical Component of the Regional Reserve receives new Stocks

It is ECOWAS singular pleasure that up to now, the supply of the physical component of the Regional Reserve is on-going without major challenges. ECOWAS hopes to shortly begin the operationalization of the second component of the Regional Reserve, namely the financial reserve.

Following the first cereals purchase that enabled ECOWAS to build the first cereals stocks of a total of 11,178.5 tons stored in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger and Nigeria, the Regional Reserve is currently receiving 15,691 tons of maize, sorghum, millet and rice as part of a second purchase. This stock comes from a call for tenders launched in November 2017 for a total quantity of 21,000 tons.

These products will be stored in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Deliveries began in March 2018 and will continue throughout the second quarter of 2018.

This second purchase of products for the Regional Reserve reassures the ECOWAS Commission and the European Union, the main financial partner of this initiative, of the upcoming capacity of the Regional Reserve to: (i) complement efforts of Member States to provide rapid and diversified food and nutritional assistance, (ii) express regional solidarity to Member States and affected populations through transparent, fair and predictable mechanisms, (iii) contribute to food sovereignty and the political, economic and trade integration of West Africa.

In the coming weeks and months, the process of building up the physical stock of the Reserve foresees the conclusion of framework contracts for the supply of fortified flour and the launching of a third call for tenders for the purchase of cereals in order to consolidate the response capacity of the Reserve.



Constitution of the physical stock of the Reserve.



Fighting Food and Nutritional Insecurity in the Northeastern States of Nigeria : An Update of the Contribution of the ECOWAS Commission

This ECOWAS humanitarian assistance in the Northeastern part of Nigeria is part of the foundation of a regional structural solidarity for food and nutrition security under construction in West Africa since 2013.



As part of the fight against food and nutrition insecurity faced by the populations of the Northeastern part of Nigeria confronted with a major security crisis in the

region, the ECOWAS Commission made a contribution by mobilizing 1,130 tons of cereals from the Regional Food

Security Reserve. This food aid consisting of 730 tons of millet, 200 tons of maize and 200 tons of sorghum, was officially given to the Federal Government of Nigeria on 8 August 2018 through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to be distributed to the populations of Borno, Gombe, Adamawa and Yobe States. According to NEMA's estimates, more than one million people including 211,000 people in Borno State will benefit from this food assistance.

From the food distribution report submitted to ECOWAS by NEMA in mid-March 2018, 4,200 bags of cereals were distributed in Adamawa State to people affected by food and nutrition insecurity.

While waiting for a detailed distribution report in the other three States, a total of 11,300 bags of 50 kg of cereals were handed over on 29 September 2018 to Borno State, through its Governor, for distribution. The same applies to Gombe and Damaturu States that respectively received 2,260 bags and 3,390 bags of cereals for distribution to the affected populations in their zones.

A second ECOWAS contribution of 690 tons of rice is yet to be given to NEMA in order to better satisfy the dietary habits of the assisted populations. The support of ECOWAS and its partners will therefore rise up to a total of 1,820 tons of cereals.

Role of National Storage Bodies, Private Sector and Producers' Organizations in the Supply and Storage of the Products of the physical Component of the Reserve

With this approach, ECOWAS is making efforts to bring all stakeholders to fully play their role in the construction of this tool of regional solidarity and integration which is the Reserve. ECOWAS also contributes to building the capacity of regional actors in the development of their business activities.

Since the startup of the operationalization of the Regional Reserve, several actors are contributing in the supply and in the reconstitution of the physical stock.

As a matter of fact, the storage, stockpiling and maintenance of the products were given to national food security storage companies on the basis of service delivery agreements on behalf of ECOWAS. To this end, a call for proposals for the reception, control, storage and maintenance services of the stocks of the physical reserve launched in 2016 allowed to select, for the moment, 5 national storage companies namely SONAGESS in Burkina Faso, NAFCO in Ghana, OPAM in Mali, OPVN in Niger and FRSD in Nigeria.

Furthermore, discussions are ongoing with the national storage companies of Togo (ANSAT) and Senegal (CSA) to possibly store other products of the Regional Reserve.

For the calls for tenders, the supply of products is, for the moment, of about 70% provided by private sector companies and 30% by Producers' Organizations (POs), all originating from West Africa. Selected private companies and POs have so far shown professionalism in the conduct of products packaging and delivery operations.

To further stimulate POs participation, an information campaign is being conducted by the "Oxfam, Afrique Verte, Jade Productions and Inter-Réseaux" Consortium to inform, advise and train the various cereals producers' and processors' organizations in West Africa and the Sahel on the supply and reconstitution modalities of the Regional Reserve.

The Consortium's approach consists in developing a database of targeted POs, setting up an interactive information and communication system, building and transferring skills towards taking ownership of the project.



Countries' Continued Efforts in the Establishment of the Regional Agricultural Information System Platform (ECOAGRIS)

ECOWAS pays great attention to the population of the platform by Member Countries and especially to the launching of this platform in order to fill out the gap of reliable information and agricultural statistics in the region.



Mission of population of the ECOAGRIS platform in Benin, from March 21st to 23 rd, 2018

As part of the implementation of activities of component 4 of the Support Project, and more importantly in the context of the operationalization of the ECOAGRIS platform, the project continued to populate the platform in the countries during the first quarter of 2018. To this end, capacity building and data population missions were carried out in four countries.

In Senegal for instance, sectoral focal points were trained; twelve (12) focal points were reoriented for the population of the platform and seven (07) sub-subsystems populated with data. In Burkina Faso, twenty (20) focal points were trained for an upgrading of the ECOAGRIS platform with nine (09) subsystems populated. In Guinea, eighteen (18) sectoral focal points were trained and twelve (12) sub-systems are being populated. The same applies to Nigeria where twenty-five (25) sectoral focal points were trained and twelve (12) sub-systems being populated.

In addition, meetings were held by the ECOAGRIS National Executives of Benin and Togo to assess the level of population of the ECOAGRIS platform and to specially identify the challenges with a view of finding appropriate solutions.

The project also organized a workshop from 24 to 30 March 2018 in Accra, Ghana, to improve the English version of the ECOAGRIS platform.

This workshop, which was facilitated by a team of experts from the AGRHYMET Regional Center made it possible to define a roadmap to fine-tune the English version of the platform.

Besides, in order to allow members of National Data Management Units of the ECOAGRIS National Executives at country level to master the management of the national servers and how to operate the platform, the project held a training workshop from 9 to 13 April 2018 in Lomé, Togo, bringing together two members of each National Data Management Unit from the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Chad and Togo.



Training Workshop for Sectoral Focal Points and Monitoring of the population of historical data in Guinea, Conakry, from March 12 to 23, 2018



Participants to the training workshop for NGO members in Lomé from 9 to 13 April 2018



Scoping and briefing meeting of the monitoring mission team.

Results-Oriented Monitoring : An Update of the Implementa- tion of the Support Project to the RFSR

ECOWAS will take into account the various recommendations made by the evaluation team to improve the implementation of the project during the remaining period and above all, to ensure a good foundation for the Regional Food Security Reserve. ECOWAS will further emphasize among other things, on its ownership by all stakeholders, the capacity of the region to cope with recurrent food crises, the durability and sustainability of this regional solidarity and integration system.

During February and March 2018, a Result-Oriented Monitoring Assessment of the Support Project was conducted through field visits to Togo, Niger, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. The evaluation concluded that the ECOWAS Storage

Strategy remains relevant to the situation of food insecurity and the nature of the cyclical crises affecting the region. It relied on a defense system focused on local food stocks organized at community level, strengthening of national security stocks and the Regional Reserve which will give room for immediate food availability in addition to national efforts.

These three defense lines are complementary and should ensure an effective response to the target populations facing food crises and who are the real end beneficiaries. Moreover, the physical component of the Regional Reserve is a relevant device to respond to food crises, especially for the Sahelian landlocked countries. But it does not concern the whole typology of crises the region is suffering from.

In this context, the startup of the financial reserve, as a flexible and adaptable mechanism, becomes a priority that depends on ECOWAS. This constitutes a necessary condition towards ensuring the relevance and sustainability of the Regional Reserve.



Meeting and the steering committee of the RFSR Support Project.

The Regional Reserve in a Nutshell !

The Forty-Second Ordinary Session of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS Member Countries, created the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) on February 28, 2013 by Additional Act N ° AS /2 / 02 /13 to the ECOWAS Revised Treaty.

It is the third line of defense to prevent and manage food crises. It is complementary to local stocks (the first line of defense at the village and community level) and national food security stocks (second line of defense) owned by the States.

It (i) complements the efforts of the Member States to provide rapid and diversified food and nutrition assistance, (ii), it expresses regional solidarity with Member States and affected populations through transparent, equitable and predictable mechanisms, (iii), it contributes to food sovereignty and to the political, economic and trade integration of West Africa.

It intervenes mainly in the form of loans or disposals for free of food or financial resources decided by the Management Committee. These interventions express regional solidarity and the region's contribution to response or contingency plans designed by countries in response to food crises.

It consists of a physical reserve (1/3) and a financial reserve (2/3).

It only covers emergency food crises.

ECOWAS has planned a first four-year phase with an overall reserve of 176,000 tons before raising it to 294,000 tons starting from the 5th to the 7th year and to 411,000 tons from the 8th year.

The Support Project will provide a contribution of 31,500 tons to the physical component of the Regional Food Security Reserve.

The creation of a Regional Food Security Reserve falls within the ECOWAP guidelines adopted by the Heads of State and Government in 2005 and aims to prevent and manage cyclical food crises in the region,

The Regional Storage Strategy is based on four complementary lines of defense mobilized according to the scale and severity of crises: (i) local stocks; (ii) national security stocks; (iii) the Regional Food Reserve and (iv) call for international aid,

The stocks of the Regional Food Security Reserve available and mobilizable by ECOWAS for emergency interventions in the event of food crisis in a Member State are stored in the warehouses of various countries' national food storage facilities,

The modalities for mobilizing the ECOWAS Regional Food Security Reserve are based on three principles: equity, efficiency, transparency and must follow the following procedure:

a.A request by the Member State, justified by :

i.The vulnerability analysis and the food situation: starting from level 3 of the Harmonized Vulnerability Analysis Framework (CH),

ii.The National Response Plan, identifying the gap between the mobilized resources and the needs,

b.A technical investigation by the Stocks Info Unit leading to a technical advice (assistance towards decision-making) to the Reserve Management Committee.

c.A decision taken by the Reserve Management Committee for the granting/destocking of food products of the Reserve to the population of the Member State facing severe food crises with guarantees for rebuilding the stock (by the country, the ECOWAS Commission, a third party, etc.).

It is important to formalize and consolidate the legal framework that governs the implementation of the RFSR through the Regulation establishing the Management Committee and the Implementing Regulations of the President of the ECOWAS Commission.

It is necessary to mobilize the ECOWAS Commission's own financial resources for strategic purchasing of the Reserve's physical stock and its operationalization, and to implement sustainability mechanisms of the Regional Reserve by ensuring its sovereignty.



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Group photo of the Dakar workshop on national response plans and the Regional Food Security Reserve



With the financial support of the European Union



And technical support from implementing partners



**Regional Agency for
Agriculture and Food**

83, rue de la Pâture (Super TACO),
Lomé, TOGO - Tél. +228 22 21 40 03
araa@araa.org - www.araa.org