NIAMEY, **NIGER**
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PRESS RELEASE Provisional results of the 2019-2020 Agro-pastoral season and the Food and Nutrition Situation in the Sahel and West Africa

Technical consultation of the

REGIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF FOOD CRISES (PREGEC)

"Despite overall satisfactory agricultural production, continuing civil insecurity in the region is worsening food and nutrition vulnerability, with 9.4 to 14.4 million people in need of immediate assistance."

Organized by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel with the support of its partners, the November PREGEC meeting assessed the provisional results of the 2019-2020 Agro-pastoral season and the Food and Nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa»

Participants in the technical consultation of the Regional Food Crisis Prevention and Management System (PREGEC) held from 25 to 27 November 2019 at the Soluxe Hotel in Niamey, Niger, examined the projected results of the 2019-2020 agro-pastoral season and the food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa and noted the following:

1. The onset of the cropping season was early in the coastal strip, the central and eastern parts of the Sahel and late in the western part. The level of satisfaction of the water requirements of crops and vegetation was satisfactory overall except in northern Senegal, south-western and northern Mauritania and Cape Verde and in places in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.

2. Expected cereal production is estimated at 75.1 million metric tonnes, up 1.7% and 14.2% respectively from last year and the average of the last five years. This overall increase hides significant disparities between geographical areas. Thus, significant declines in cereal production are expected in The Gambia (-13%), Cape Verde (-11%), Niger (-7%), Sierra Leone (-7%) and Senegal (-4%) compared to last year. These declines are observed in millet, sorghum and wheat production, which are reportedly down compared to the 2018-2019 cropping season. Expected production of roots and tubers is estimated at 191 million metric tonnes, up 1.1% from the previous season and 17.1% above the five-year average. Cash crops, apart from cowpea production, which is expected to be lower than last year, particularly in Niger, other crops (groundnuts, sesame, soya beans, voandzou) could record higher yields compared to last year and to the average of the last five years.

3. The projected cereal balance sheet for the region shows a net surplus of over 17 million metric tonnes, or an apparent availability of 186 kg/capita/year, which is far superior to the available per capita production of 139 kg/year. This reflects human consumption largely dependent on food imports, resulting in reduced investment in local food crop production and other structural determinants of food and nutrition security.

4. The pastoral situation is marked by significant forage deficits in the far west of the Sahel covered by Senegal and Mauritania and in places in Mali (Kayes region), Burkina Faso (Sahel region), Niger (Tillabéri and Diffa regions) and Chad (West and North-East). In the most affected countries (Senegal and Mauritania), there are already early departures of transhumance herds. This less favourable situation is exacerbated by armed and community conflicts, theft and banditry, which disrupt the mobility of animal herds, access to fodder and water resources. It also leads to a concentration of animals in some more secure areas in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad, with the risk of aggravating farmer-pastoralist conflicts.

5. Agricultural markets remain globally well supplied in view of current harvests and the relatively high level of carryover stocks. However, persistent civil insecurity in the conflict areas (Lake Chad Basin, Liptako-Gourma region and Tibesti region), associated with renewed attacks, robberies, banditry, as well as security and border closure measures taken by some countries, seriously disrupt the smooth functioning of markets. Prices for cereal products and local staples are down compared to the five-year average. However, much higher than average price levels are still observed in The Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia because of persistent inflation which limits poor households' access to basic foodstuffs and has a very negative impact on livelihoods. Price increases, more or less moderate compared to the five-year average, are driven by localised production deficits and the closure of Nigeria's land borders.

6. Livestock prices remain relatively stable throughout the region. However, livestock trade is negatively impacted by persistent insecurity in several Sahelian countries and the closure of Nigeria's land borders. The terms of trade for livestock/cereals are generally favourable to pastoralists because of the low level of cereal prices. However, in areas affected by fodder deficits or difficulties in accessing fodder resources due to civil insecurity, the terms of trade could deteriorate very quickly.

7. The results of nutritional surveys in the region show a continued high prevalence of acute malnutrition above the alert threshold (10%), particularly in Niger, Mali, North-eastern Nigeria and particularly in Chad and Mauritania, where prevalence rates exceed the emergency threshold of 15% in some areas. The severe form of acute malnutrition exceeds the emergency threshold of 2% in most of the areas surveyed. The closure of several health centres in areas of civil insecurity hinders malnutrition improvement activities. If the security situation deteriorates further, there could be a deterioration in the nutritional situation, especially for internally displaced persons and their host areas.

8. The Cadre Harmonisé (CH) analyses conducted in the countries of the region except Liberia show, for the period from October to December 2019, nearly 9.4 million people in food crisis or worse situation (CH Phase 3 to 4). During the lean season, from June to August 2020, the total number of food-insecure people could reach 14.4 million. This reflects an alarming deterioration in the food situation in the region, never observed in the last five years. It is the result of cyclical causes, including local deficits in cereal and fodder production due to drought and floods, but above all to the exacerbation of security tensions related to armed and community conflicts in the region. The security tension has led to massive population displacements, the destruction or cessation of basic social services (health and education), the disruption of productive activities, markets and trade flows.

8. The Cadre Harmonisé (CH) analysis, carried out also for the formal camps, shows a deterioration in the food and nutritional conditions of the internally displaced persons estimated at 680,000 people in Nigeria and 70,000 refugees in Niger. There are also several thousands of internally displaced persons living amongst the host populations in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. This situation is fundamentally due to a large food consumption deficit in quantity and quality, lack of capacity and opportunities to use coping strategies for the populations in formal camps in Niger and Nigeria, and to the low level of assistance interventions.

10. Recent assessments of country and humanitarian actor response plans for vulnerable populations identified in 2019 show that less than 50% of the assistance needs amplified by the security crisis are covered because of resource mobilisation difficulties at both national and international levels.

11. Despite these efforts by States and their partners to assist vulnerable populations, participants expressed concern about the persistence, for several years, of high prevalence of food insecurity and acute malnutrition, particularly in the conflict areas of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad and north-eastern Nigeria. This situation has led all stakeholders, both State and non-State actors, to question the effective implementation of agricultural and food and nutrition security policies and the capacity of States and their partners to take into account the „insecurity" dimension and its corollaries to facilitate access by populations in conflict areas to basic social services (school, health) and assistance, as well as for the collection and dissemination of information necessary for decision-making.

12. At the end of their deliberations, the participants in the technical consultation of the regional PREGEC system made the following recommendations to:

The States:

- Develop and implement, as soon as possible, response plans for acutely food-insecure populations (from phase 3 to 5 of Cadre Harmonisé) to save lives and protect their livelihoods through unconditional food assistance operations, support for irrigated or off-season farming, and combined actions to prevent and combat malnutrition;

- Accelerate the pre-positioning of livestock feed stocks in fodder deficit areas, particularly in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad;

- Accelerate the establishment of an effective mechanism for coordination and monitoring and evaluation of responses;

- Strengthen the implementation of cross-sectoral approaches built around the triple humanitarian-peace-development nexus in order to address increasingly multifactorial food and nutrition challenges;

- Promote the implementation of rehabilitation and resilience-building interventions in areas of persistent and chronic food insecurity;

- Conduct in-depth analyses on the impact of the security crisis on food crop production and livestock in the Sahelian countries concerned in order to implement appropriate mitigation measures.

- Engage in the preparation of joint market and food security assessment missions with a focus on the functioning of secondary markets.

CILSS

- Conduct a study to develop a harmonised methodology for targeting beneficiaries, per intervention area, to make intervention methods compatible;

- Adapt the PREGEC tools/instruments, in line with the new multidimensional configuration of crises as part of a global strategic reflection around the triple „Humanitarian-Peace-Development“ nexus.

IGOs: ECOWAS and UEMOA

- Accelerate the implementation of the recommendations of the high-level meetings held in Ouagadougou and Dakar on peace and security in the region.

- Support countries‘ efforts to assist displaced and food-insecure populations by activating community crisis management mechanisms.

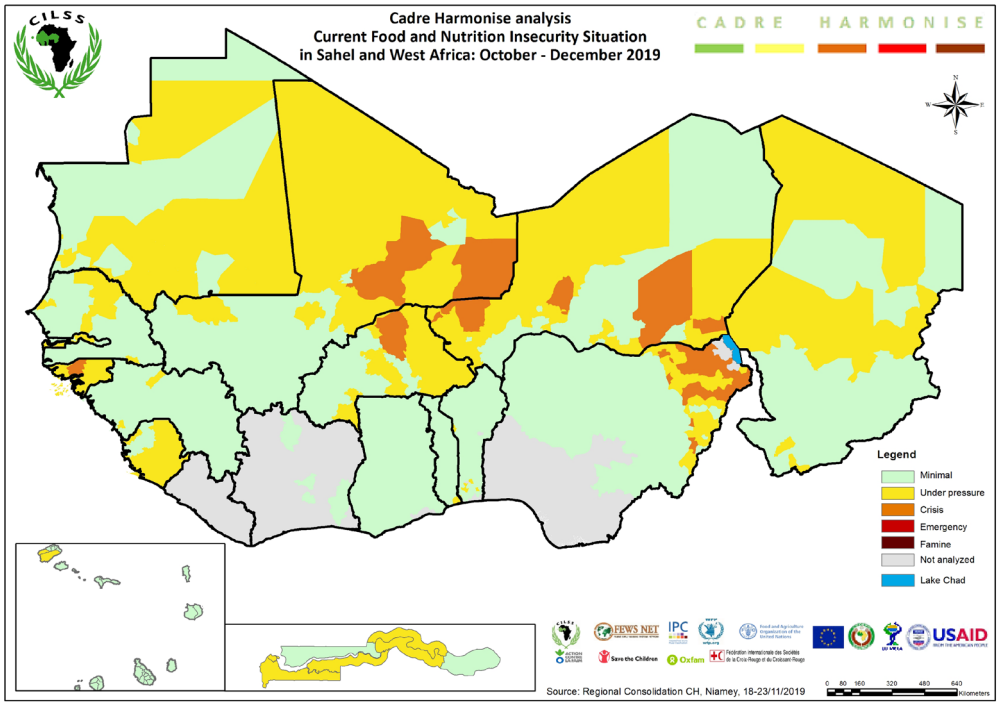
Partners:

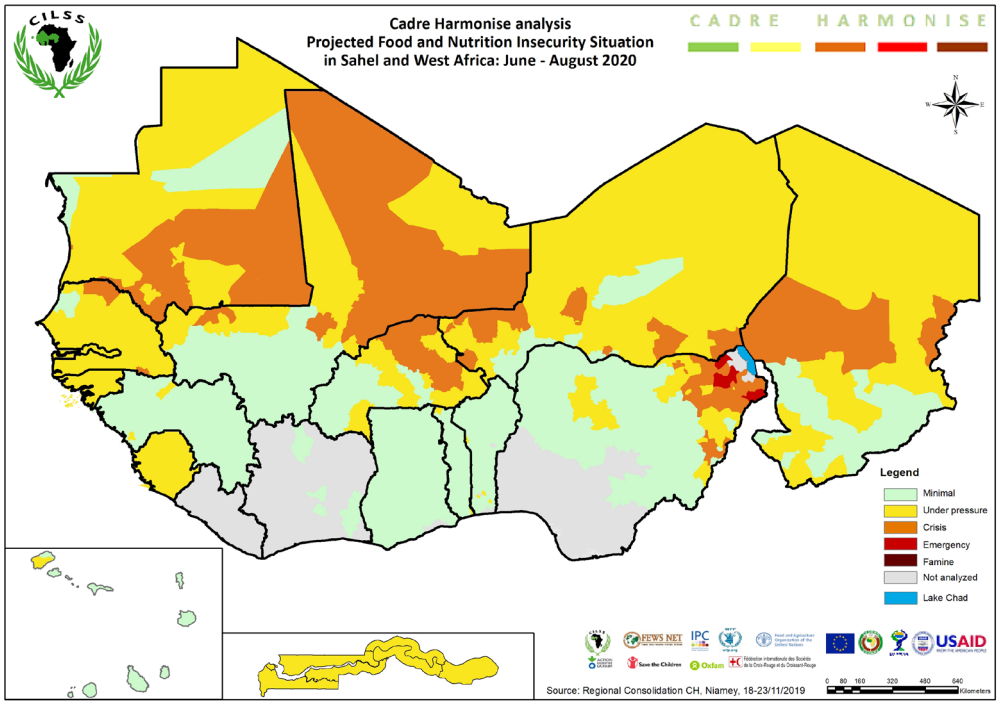
- Support the efforts of States in managing the security crisis and mitigating its consequences on the living conditions of the populations in the areas concerned;

- Support States in the preparation and implementation of national response plans.

Done at Niamey, 27 November 2019

The Meeting





Phase 1 Minimal	Phase 2 Stressed	Phase 3 Crisis	Phase 4 Emergency	Phase 5 Famine
At least four in five households are able to meet their food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical coping strategies or relying on humanitarian assistance.	*Even with humanitarian assi tance, at least one in five hous holds the area have the following or worse: reduced and minimally adequate food consumption but unable to afford some esse tial non-food expenditures wi hout engaging in irreversible coping strategies.*	*Even with humanitarian assitance, at least one in five households in the area experiences the following or worse: large food shortages and acute malnutrition at high or higher-than-normal rates;*	*Even with humanitarian asstance, at least one in fivehouseholds in the area experiences the fo lowing or worse: extreme food consumption gaps resuting in very high acute malnutrition or excess mortality; OR extreme loss of livelihood assets that will lead to food consumption gaps in the short term.*	*Even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households in the area experiences total lack of food and/or other basic needs and are clearly exposed to starvation, death and deprivation. Note: Evidence for all three criteria of food consum tion, wasting and crude death rate (CDR) are required to classify famine.*