



## PRESS RELEASE ON THE 2010 FOOD PROSPECTS IN THE SAHEL AND IN WEST AFRICA

### A critical agro-pastoral situation in Cape Verde, North-east of Mali, in Niger and in Chad

The twenty fifth (25th) annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (FCPN) in the Sahel and in West Africa was held in Bamako, Mali from 8 to 11 December 2009. The principal conclusions concerning the prospects for the food and nutritional situation in 2010 are the following:

The agro-pastoral prospects are good on the whole in the humid countries and in the zones to the west of the Sahel. They are poor or even sub-standard in the zones of the eastern Sahel. The prolonged drought has reduced the harvests to the north-east of Mali, in the agro-pastoral zones of Niger and Chad as well as to the North of Nigeria. The risk of a threat from the migrant locust in Mauritania which is a source of concern for the harvests is under control for the time being. The possibilities of off season farming will be limited in the zones affected by a protracted stoppage of rains because there are low water levels in the water points and the water retention lakes as well as excessive floods.

Provisional cereal production for 2009-2010 in the countries of the Sahel and West Africa with the exception of Liberia and Sierra Leone is estimated at 51 millions tonnes which is a production level equivalent to that of 2008/2009. This production level signals a drop in the Sahel (-9%) whereas it has risen in the coastal countries (+4%). However, when compared to the average of the past five growing seasons, this cereal production estimated at 15.9 million tonnes in the Sahel has risen by 10%. In the countries, drops in cereal production are expected in Chad (34%), Niger (26%), Mauritania (24%), Burkina Faso (10%) and Cape Verde (8%). On the other hand, there will be increases in Benin (45%), in Ghana (44%), in the Gambia (18%), in Mali and Togo (13%) and in Senegal (7%). Forecasts on productions are 44.5 million tonnes for yam, 53.8 million tonnes for cassava, 3.3 million tonnes for taro, 2.1 million tonnes for cowpea, 2.6 for sweet potato, 3.4 million tonnes for peanuts and 191 000 tonnes for sesame.

The pastoral situation is critical in Niger, in the north-east of Mali, in north East of Burkina Faso, in Chad and in Mauritania as a result of poor rains thereby causing a low level filling of the water points and a sub-standard regeneration of the grass cover. Already, early departure into transhumance has been spotted.

Following their maximum levels in 2008, international cereal prices sharply plummeted but at different rhythms. This drop in international prices was only partially reflected on the domestic markets in the Sahel and West African regions owing particularly to the depreciation of national currencies (Ghana, Gambia, Nigeria and Mauritania) as well as the lifting of tax measures undertaken during the crisis. These high price levels linked to the reduction of stocks in the households during the rainy season led to an insecure food situation coupled with high levels of vulnerability here and there among the low income populace that depend on the markets for their food supply. The replenishment of the markets by the first harvests in October contributed to improving the food availabilities of the households. This situation was seen in the light of a seasonal drop in prices on the markets. However, despite this price drop tendency, cereal prices particularly that of millet are still high as at November 2009 when compared to the average of the past five years and to some extent, those of 2008 and for the same period. Cattle (small ruminants) prices followed the same pattern. Despite these high price levels, the local and sub-regional markets remained sufficiently replenished and the cross border trade flows for the different products did not suffer from any major restriction. However in Niger, the price difference between the production zones and the deficit zones are huge and this can have destabilizing effects on the normal functioning of the markets like in 2005 despite some favourable purchasing possibilities emanating from Nigeria at the moment.

In conclusion, the poor prospects for agro-pastoral production to the east of the Sahel (South-east of Niger, north of Nigeria, Chad, north-east of Mali and north-east of Burkina Faso) coupled with the high price of cereals and the possibility of a deterioration of the terms of trade for cattle/cereals in the coming months risk to seriously compromise the food security of the most vulnerable households, particularly during the next lean period which risks starting earlier than expected. This mainly concerns the livestock breeders, agro-livestock breeders as well as the poor urban dwellers that depend on the markets to satisfy their main food needs.

Subsequent to the deliberations, the meeting made recommendations to:

The decision makers to increase support off season farming by providing inputs (improved seeds and fertilizers) and to facilitate the implementation of actions and/or measures aimed at acquiring cattle feed, livestock mobility as well as the free circulation of livelihood products in accordance with the regional accords.

The stakeholders (decision makers, NGOs, aid agencies and development partners) to supervise the coordination of actions and/or measures directed at facilitating the access of the most vulnerable populace to basic food, support for the malnourished and strengthening of the means of existence of the most vulnerable population.

The Regional Information Systems to start, come January 2010, a rapid and well tuned analysis of the food and nutritional vulnerability in order to better target the populace affected and to propose appropriate responses so as to mitigate possible crises and strengthen the adaptation capacities particularly among the vulnerable pastoral populace. This evaluation will have to place emphasis on the monitoring of the markets and cross border trade flows.

That CILSS should accelerate the putting in place of a network of companies/offices in charge of managing the national food security stocks.

That the West African organizations for regional integration should give CILSS the means necessary for extending its surveillance activities throughout the West African region.

Finally, the meeting invites the technical and financial partners to support all actions relative to the harmonized framework on the identification and analysis of risk zones and vulnerable groups so as to have an improved targeting of the actions aimed at strengthening the food and nutritional situation.

The meeting also focussed on the trade pressures on land and their possible consequences on food security. Strong recommendations were made on the necessity to enhance and support the processing of local products.

### **The Meeting**

**Bamako (Mali) 11th December 2009**