



**COTONOU, BENIN**  
4-6 DECEMBER 2017



ANNUAL MEETING

# SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Hosted by the Republic of Benin and held under the patronage of the Commissions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the RPCA annual meeting brings together the region's key food and nutrition security stakeholders. The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) organised the meeting.

**1** The 33<sup>rd</sup> annual RPCA meeting, hosted by the Republic of Benin and under the patronage of the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions, brought together nearly 300 participants including: representatives of Sahelian and West African governments, parliamentarians and locally-elected representatives; inter-governmental (IGOs), civil society and private sector organisations; technical and financial partners and the media. Participants examined the results of the 2017-18 agro-pastoral campaign and the food and nutrition situation. They also debated and discussed experiences around innovative and territorial approaches to food and nutrition security. The implementation, lessons learned and best practices relating to the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR) were presented as well as the second external evaluation of the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC Charter) and the implementation of the RPCA communications strategy.

**2** The agro-pastoral campaign has been mixed; in particular, it was marked by a difficult end to the rainy season, which will have a significant impact on crops, fodder and the availability of water for livestock. Overall, cereal production is estimated at 68.3 million tonnes, 4% higher than last season and 13% above the five-year average. However, significant decreases have been observed in several countries compared to the five-year average, particularly in Cabo Verde. The critical situation in this country requires particular attention. Livestock feed is a cause for concern in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal where an early and very difficult lean season in the pastoral areas is expected.

**3** Given the food and nutrition situation, 5.2 million people are in need of food assistance. This figure could reach 9.6 million people between now and the lean season in June-August 2018, if appropriate measures are not taken – especially in order to cope with the looming pastoral crisis. Although the situation has improved somewhat in the Lake Chad basin, the food emergency still continues.



The prevalence of global acute malnutrition exceeds the emergency threshold of 15% in parts of Chad, Mali, Mauritania and northeastern Nigeria. The situation could worsen as a result of inflation and its impact on access to food, particularly in Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria, countries whose currencies have depreciated.

- 4** In this context, RPCA members recommend: 1) continuing to monitor and provide food and nutrition assistance to affected populations in the Lake Chad basin, including structural recovery measures; 2) organising, in February 2018 at the latest, a regional consultation on the pastoral and agro-pastoral lean season in order to evaluate the extent of the pastoral crisis and to define appropriate response plans, including speeding up the implementation of the Regional Food Security Reserve's "livestock feed" component and preparing for the early cross-border transhumance of livestock; 3) accelerating the dissemination of pastoral resource assessment tools and strengthening vulnerability indicators for pastoral areas in the *Cadre harmonisé* analyses; 4) ensuring governments' investment in the development, implementation and monitoring-evaluation of response plans; 5) strengthening prevention and management measures with regard to devastating crop diseases, in particular, the armyworm. With regard to the critical food and nutrition situation in Cabo Verde, the Network calls on the international community to support the efforts made by the country in the implementation of its response plan.
- 5** The participants recommend that governments and their partners support the implementation of inclusive local governance for food and nutrition security, based on the dialogue and initiative of local actors -- both rural and urban. They stress the importance of a territorial approach to the food economy in order to optimise growth and jobs. The food economy worth 260 billion dollars, or 39% of regional GDP, provides jobs for 82 million people, representing 66% of total employment. RPCA members call on governments and the IGOs (ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS) to invest in proactive policies to develop and strengthen agri-food value chains over the long term, in particular the weak or missing activities in agri-food processing and distribution. They emphasise the need to place the food economy at the heart of national, regional and international strategies for job creation, in particular for women and young people, including in the area of development and security initiatives in the Sahel.
- 6** The conclusions of the second evaluation of the PREGEC Charter will be available soon. The Network underscores the importance of such an external evaluation and RPCA members emphasise the need to better incorporate gender and strengthen monitoring and evaluation tools. They also welcome the progress made in implementing the RPCA communication strategy, and welcome the upcoming launch of the interactive information platform on the *Cadre harmonisé* analyses, the mapping tool of food and nutrition security and resilience interventions as well as best practices on resilience.
- 7** RPCA members acknowledge the importance of the African Risk Capacity (ARC) tool to enable States to deal with shocks linked to climate change. They insist on the need to ensure better coherence and complementarity between this tool and those developed by the Network in the region. In this regard, they encourage the strengthening of co-operation between ARC and the RPCA Network. RPCA members underscore the need to discuss opportunities for synergy around early warning systems as well as those related to security.
- 8** Five years after the launch of the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR), tangible investments in the implementation of the National Resilience Priorities have been made. Furthermore, the Alliance's momentum has positively influenced the integration of the resilience component into new policies being formulated. Finally, they are capitalising on best practices on resilience in order to facilitate peer learning. While welcoming these achievements, stakeholders stress the urgent need to accelerate the implementation of monitoring and evaluation tools as well as the Alliance's framework for results.
- 9** AGIR's 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary comes at a time when the positioning of food, nutrition and resilience issues on the list of priorities for governments, IGOs and their partners, is being called into question. The emphasis placed on migratory and security challenges, as well as the proliferation of uncoordinated and unaligned initiatives, are all risks to the region's goal of achieving "Zero Hunger" by 2035. Stakeholders of the Alliance reaffirm the urgent need to put food, nutrition and employment issues at the heart of development agendas, recalling that food issues are a central part of the responses to security and migration challenges. They recommend that ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS appoint a high-ranking political leader, a "Food and Nutrition Champion," in order to ensure that vital lobbying for this cause takes place -- with the support of the President of the SWAC, civil society organisations and the private sector. In line with the 2015 Milan Declaration, RPCA members once again urge all stakeholders to better co-ordinate their interventions and align them with the region's priorities. In this regard, they call on governments and IGOs to fulfil their sovereign duties to guarantee co-ordination and harmonisation by establishing appropriate frameworks for dialogue. This obligation of accountability also requires establishing operational mechanisms in order to be held accountable for results and to ensure the effectiveness of the many policies and programmes proliferating in the region.
- 10** Members agree that the 34<sup>th</sup> RPCA annual meeting will be held on 3-5 December 2018 in Banjul, Gambia.

Cotonou, 6 December 2017

Participants of the 33<sup>rd</sup> RPCA annual meeting