

News *from the* Department

Agriculture
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- **Putting in Place a Regional Response Action Plan**
- **Activating and Strengthening Social Safety Nets**
- **Anticipating the Threat of Desert Locust and Fall Armyworm Invasion**

Editorial

News from the Department



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ECOWAS Commission

Dear Partners,

West Africa is faced with the combined challenges of civil insecurity, heightened by armed and inter-community conflicts and climate change to which the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) has been added since 27 February 2020. This pandemic cuts across all sectors and disrupts production, warehousing, marketing, processing and distribution systems of agricultural and food products.

The projected risk of food shortages is exacerbated by the corona virus disease with regards to the restrictive measures that strongly impact on food availability and movements within countries and across the region. In addition to the Covid-19 and health measures impacts, the region must also anticipate on the impacts of two other threats, namely the desert locust and the Fall armyworm invasions.

Considering these various crises, we must act quickly and in a more coordinated manner to save the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable people, without losing sight of the ECOWAP's key intervention areas.

More than ever, resilience strengthening is the hinge point between emergency responses, crisis recovery and the building of the foundations of a robust and sustainable agricultural and food system capable of meeting medium and long-term challenges: youth employment, adaptation to climate change and the deployment of agro-ecology, a food and nutritional security that eliminates hunger and malnutrition, effective national and regional institutions, family farming structured by more productive and competitive professional organizations that are well articulated to markets, adequate financing tools, etc.

In this perspective, the ECOWAS Department for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources has reorganized its work plan in order to take into account the response to food and nutrition crisis and the constraints imposed by the health situation with a view of ensuring continuous support to populations and mitigate the impact of the various shocks on food and nutrition security.

The good articulation of the regional monitoring system (PREGEC/RPCA) with the three-level system of the Regional food security storage strategy and the micro-projects of social safety nets, will allow the monitoring of the living conditions of the most vulnerable households and provide appropriate responses to the structural crises that have been affecting our region for several decades.

It is with this determination that I invite you all to flip through the pages of this double Issue of our integrated communication tool, "**News from the Department**".

Thank you in advance for getting involved.

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Putting in Place a Regional Response Action Plan

Faced with the combined challenges of civil insecurity, conflicts and climate change in the region, to which the coronavirus pandemic has been added, ECOWAS and its partners are mobilized, through a regional Emergency Action Plan, to address the impacts of the pandemic on food and nutrition security in the region.

The current health consequences of the coronavirus pandemic have attracted ECOWAS Member States' attention and led most of them to adopt drastic measures to counter its spread, resulting into significant loss of income for countries and the degradation of vulnerable populations' livelihoods.

The impacts of the Covid-19 come on top of civil, food and nutritional insecurity, but also to the dreaded threats from pests and the resurgence of transboundary animal diseases. In addition, the pandemic has exacerbated the risk of food shortages and challenged the region to ensure its food and nutrition security.

During a meeting held on June 18 this year by the Regional Mechanism for the Prevention and Management of Food Crisis (PREGEC) in the Sahel and West Africa regions, nearly 17 million people were considered to be in food and nutrition insecurity for the period of June to August 2020 in the Sahel and West Africa region. In addition to these populations in need of emergency food assistance, nearly 51 million people under food stress are likely to fall into food and nutrition crisis under the combined effects of the security and health crises, as well as the desert locust threat, if nothing is done to protect their livelihoods.

In such a context of widespread crises, ECOWAS, in consultation with UEMOA and CILSS, organized on March 31, 2020 an exceptional online Conference of ECOWAS, Chad and Mauritania Ministers in charge of Agriculture and Food, on the impact of the pandemic and crop pests on food and nutrition security.



The ministers' recommendations led to the preparation of a Regional Emergency Action Plan defining the measures to be taken to support Member States in their efforts.

This Plan is built around 4 strategic actions namely, (i) facilitating access to agricultural inputs and establishing effective social safety nets, (ii) increasing the Regional Food Security Reserve response capacity and that of other reserves to 300,000 tons of food products, (iii) preventing, monitoring and controlling pests and (iv) preventing, monitoring and controlling transboundary animal diseases.

ECOWAS calls on all its partners to coordinate their actions and to act now to support the region and countries in their Covid-19 response plans implementation.

Financing needs (by December 2022) :

US\$500 million, to :

- Set up social safety nets through local organisations in the 17 Member States: USD 170 million (34%),
- Increase ECOWAS Regional Food Security Reserve capacity and that of other reserves to 300,000 tons (cereals and animal feed): USD 150 million (30%),
- Strengthen the operational capacities of the 17 Member States' plant protection directorates in the prevention, monitoring and control of pests: USD 80 million (16%),
- Strengthen the operational capacities of the 17 Member States' veterinary services directorates in transboundary animal diseases prevention, surveillance, and control: USD 75 million (15%),
- Coordinate and monitor actions implementation: 25 million USD (5% of the total budget).

Assisting Vulnerable Populations with Food Stuffs

Similarly to the 2008 crisis, the current coronavirus pandemic is a reminder that food reserves are a major tool for meeting the emergency food needs of populations, deployed as part of social safety nets.

The new forms of vulnerability induced by the combination of poverty, climate change, demography and civil insecurity have been severely aggravated by the Covid-19 consequences. They reconfirm that the regional

food security storage strategy is a key instrument, both for preventing and managing food and nutrition crises and for helping to increase supply, structure value chains and organize agricultural markets.

To provide support to countries whose budgets are under heavy pressure in their efforts to respond to the health and security crisis in a context of declining tax revenues subsequent to economic activities disruption, the ECOWAS Commission is strongly committed to providing humanitarian assistance to the most affected vulnerable populations in its Member States.

In this perspective, it has mobilized one (1) million US dollars from its emergency humanitarian fund and is acting as a third party payer to rapidly destock 2 190 tons of cereals from the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) and provide food assistance to vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. It has also decided, jointly with the European Union, to mobilize €2.2 million from the contingencies of the EU-funded West Africa Food Security Storage Support Project, to increase food assistance to the targeted countries by mobilizing more stocks from the Regional Reserve in strict compliance with the rules and procedures in force.

To recall, these four countries alone account for more than 80% of the populations in a difficult food situation, including internally displaced persons and children affected by malnutrition.

This support includes a total quantity of cereals estimated at 4, 993 tons (rice, maize, millet and sorghum) for Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, and a combination of 4 nutritional products (pumpkin seeds, supercereals, supercereals plus, enriched maize flour) worth 430 000 euros for Niger.

This operation is being carried out in two folds: an emergency mobilization of the RFSR stocks and additional purchases of cereals directly from producer organizations.



It is supplemented by purchases of nutritional products from pre-qualified companies that can supply the Regional Reserve with quality nutritional products.

These two interventions make it possible to simultaneously test three strategic modalities not yet implemented with regard to the challenges related to the deployment of the Regional Reserve: the principle of the third party payer in the "RFSR" technical instrument interventions financing mechanism, the use of nutritional products in the response to crises and, finally, the procedure for direct purchases from producer organizations or professional cooperatives.

Considering the major role that the Regional Reserve can play in mitigating the effects of multiple crises on food and nutrition security, the region and its partners shall further deepen their reflection on the financing of the solidarity exerted by its mobilization for countries and populations in times of crisis.

Activating and Strengthening Social Safety Nets

The establishment of social safety net systems capable of responding efficiently, and on a large scale, to an emergency is a key determinant in addressing the devastating effects of the corona virus disease (COVID-19) on people's well-being. Otherwise, the stability of the region, which already faces several challenges, including civil insecurity, could be further weakened.

The COVID-19 outbreak in the region and its rapid spread has led to the adoption of various social measures by countries to enable the most vulnerable populations to overcome the pandemic.

Indeed, though all the populations are affected by the pandemic, some people will suffer more from the effects of the pandemic. From this perspective, social safety nets are essential in protecting the most vulnerable people, as they are a major complement to medical interventions.

Responsive actions taken so far by countries have proven to be relevant. Yet, they have been unable to halt the decapitalization of the livelihoods of the vulnerable households' facing the crisis.

In view of the consequences already suffered, such as the loss of livestock and perishable foodstuffs, loss of income, inability to purchase some basic products, risk of famine and malnutrition, interventions such as free or low-cost distribution of agricultural inputs to small producers (seeds, fertilizers, provision of productive capital, production materials, etc.) during this high productivity rainy season are strongly recommended.

They have the advantage not only of preserving and strengthening the means of production and subsistence, but also and above all of strengthening the vulnerable populations' resilience to future crises.

As the approach to providing emergency assistance (e.g. food

distribution, free or reduced costs of certain basic services) is very limited due to its ad hoc nature, it is desirable to move towards more regular, predictable and sustainable social safety net instruments.

In this respect, the diversified experience of ECOWAS through the financing of 19 pilot social safety net projects implemented in the 15 Member States has made it possible to identify the types of social safety nets to be scaled up in order to strengthen crises management mechanisms and, above all, to integrate vulnerable households into a development path.

Co-financed by the Spanish Cooperation and the ECOWAS Commission, these projects, whose implementation began in 2016, had positively impacted the lives of more than 53 000 direct beneficiaries, of whom 62% women. The achievements are expressed in terms of (i) food distribution, child development and access to basic social services, (ii) development of the main source of income and food security for vulnerable households, (iii) strengthening of livelihoods and household capacity to cope with shocks and (iv) development and testing of targeting methods.

Other achievements include women empowerment and most States capacity building in social safety

net programmes management in line with national social protection strategies or policies.



Lessons learned from these achievements orient the reflection towards the promotion of some social safety net instruments, such as (i) integrated models of school canteens with the supply of local products and agro-ecological practices promotion, (ii) social safety nets design adapted to the pastoral context, (iii) cash transfers combined with production support measures and (iv) support for women's income-generating activities and the promotion of their role in food and nutritional security.

Protecting the Livestock Sector

With the unexpected impact of the Covid-19 on the livestock sector, the region will have to further equip itself to address a series of challenges such as pastoral crisis, famine on family farms, increasing rural conflicts, high cost of animal products and end of cross-border transhumance.

Although animal husbandry deals with animal life, it requires daily human attention. Moreover, when human activities are disrupted, as it is the case with the Covid-19, the livestock sector is inevitably affected. Indeed, the reduction in livestock production activities and animal movements due to the pandemic creates major challenges in food value chains with implications for food and nutrition security and livelihoods.

Poultry meat processing and incubators are no longer operating at full capacity, affecting the quantity and price of meat on the market. Due to difficulties in transporting incubators to farmers, chicks may not be available to replace the poultry sold. The supply chain for red meat from the Sahel region to coastal countries is also under threat.

A disruption of this animal protein supply chain has consequences on food and nutrition security of urban populations and the livelihoods of livestock farmers and other people earning their life by this activity.

The corona virus disease could therefore lead to livestock losses, impoverishment of pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and their families, cross-border livestock markets disappearance, a reduction in protein supply, socio-economic crisis that in turn could lead to the



erosion of social cohesion and the enrolment of some pastoralists in armed groups due to the deterioration of their living conditions and the loss of their social capital.

Moreover, disruptions in the traditional fish supply chain from coastal countries to the Sahel region as a result of the pandemic will have an impact on the role of fish in the food and nutritional security of the populations, especially on the livelihoods of fishermen and other people living from this activity.

Finally, populations' lockdown and some veterinary laboratories and institutions closure will lead to the suspension of animal disease testing and research, and the disruption of animal disease surveillance and reporting.

Indeed, poor access to veterinary inputs, including medicines and vaccines, increases the risk of new epidemics development, particularly those of transboundary animal diseases (plague of small ruminants, recent outbreak of African swine fever in Togo, etc.) that could cause significant losses of livestock as well as outbreaks of zoonosis.

In order to mitigate these risks, ECOWAS, through the PREDIP COMATAO project, provided sanitary products and equipment, including hand washing kits, liquid soap,

hydro alcoholic gel, infrared thermometers, bleach and awareness posters to the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries of Mali. This donation helps limit human-to-human transmission of the disease and prevent surface contamination through improved hygiene practices.

Among others, these efforts should be reinforced by complementary actions such as: the availability and circulation of inputs and outputs for animal production, for example by publishing a list of exemptions on movement restrictions, strengthening surveillance, prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases, strengthening national reference laboratories capacity, and inter-professional and multi-sectoral collaboration in the prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases and zoonosis under the **One Health Approach**.

Protecting the West African Environment

For ECOWAS, as paradoxical as it may seem, the strong measures taken by the various States of the world against the coronavirus pandemic show that it is possible to act in favour of the climate and the environment, particularly in terms of improving air quality.

The closure of borders, schools, several industries and factories, and other measures to restrict movements and ensure physical distance in the fight against the pandemic have had unintended benefits for the Environment. Although not yet documented in the region, these benefits are widely disseminated through Internet and social media.

Indeed, the pandemic has reduced the sources of household, medical and industrial waste generation on the one hand, and increased on the other hand the environmental risk in most countries in the region where waste management systems are weak.

The immediate consequences of the pandemic on the environment are therefore, among others, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the reduction of pollutants and nuisances that negatively affect the urban environment in West Africa.

In spite of these induced benefits and challenges, the Covid-19 resulted in the postponement of several global and regional meetings where important decisions and commitments should have been made to strengthen the management of the environment and climate change.

As a result, the ECOWAS Commission also had to postpone or find alternative mechanisms to organize some key regional meetings aimed to discuss and obtain commitments from governments on promoting, among other things, environmental sustainability. As a result, all scheduled physical meetings were converted to virtual meetings using existing video-conferencing tools such as Zoom, Teams, Webex, etc..



The Commission also had to postpone or find other mechanisms to organize some key regional meetings to discuss and obtain commitments from governments on promoting, among other things, environmental sustainability.

This practice has led to drastic reductions in travel costs, and consequently, a saving of financial resources for additional activities in favour of the populations. From this point of view, one recommendation, among others, would be to invest more resources in equipment and comfort tools for videoconferencing meetings.

These adjustments measures constitute new professional habits and behaviours that should be integrated, in a sustainable way, in the good practices to be adopted by institutions and companies after the pandemic.

The impact of the coronavirus disease on the environment could therefore be twofold and mitigated.

Indeed, the suspension of missions and other movements throughout the world globally and in West Africa in particular, has as a consequence on the reduction of environmental pollution linked to the emission of

greenhouse gases, pollutants, and nuisances. In China for instance, restrictions and other measures have led to a 25% reduction in carbon emissions and a 50% reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions. However, the States of the region could face the challenge of mismanaging the contaminated disposables, which would lead to further spread of the virus.

Anticipating the Threat of the Desert Locust and the Fall Armyworm Invasion

After several months of alert, the risks of the Desert Locust invasion in West Africa are becoming clearer and clearer. At the same time, the Fall Armyworm attacking cereal crops, maize, is now present in most countries of the region. Without a rapid response, these two threats could severely affect crops and pastures, increase food dependency, and increase the vulnerability of populations to food and nutrition insecurity.

The coronavirus health crisis and civil insecurity in the region are compounded by the threat of an imminent invasion of desert locusts and Fall armyworms. Available data indicated that locusts were expected to arrive in Chad at the end of June. The entire West African region could be impacted, as they reproduce rapidly in the Sahel. These locusts will cause severe damage to pastures and rain-fed subsistence crops with serious threats to crops.

An estimated 9.3 million more people could be moved into phase 3 and beyond (crisis to worse) of the Harmonized Framework from June 2020, bringing the number of people in crisis in the locust-prone areas of analysis to 26.3 million: Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, the Gambia and Mauritania.

This other regional concern led ECOWAS to urgently convene on 10th June a ministerial meeting by videoconference on the locust threat and the armyworm in West Africa and the Sahel, in collaboration with the UEMOA Commission, CILSS, FAO and the Desert Locust Control Commission (CLCPRO).

Discussions thus made it possible to reach a consensus on the diagnosis of the risks of invasion and on the content of the response: (i) monitoring and warning, (ii) preparation of intervention capacities, (iii) protection of the populations' livelihoods. This review of the situation also made it possible to agree on the principle of a regional response plan to strengthen the resilience of the populations already weakened by the Covid-19. To this end, countries are invited to send their respective response plans to the ECOWAS Commission without delay. The regional response plan should facilitate the mobilization of financial resources from development partners.

The French Development Agency (AFD) has already allocated an additional 1 million euros to help finance the action plan, bringing its support to the fight against the locust threat to 3 million euros. In addition, as the ECOWAP Donors' Group Lead, it reiterates its willingness to support ECOWAS in its efforts to coordinate the response at the regional level.



As for the World Bank, it avails to Africa an envelope of five hundred (500) million US dollars to develop prevention and control. Morocco remains available to respond to any request for assistance from countries.

The FAO and the CLCPRO which brings together the frontline countries (North African and Sahelian) have already released US\$2 million for the preparation of the fight.

The conclusions of this ministerial meeting will further refine the response plan already developed by FAO and CLCPRO costing between US\$50 and US\$75 million and based on three main intervention areas, namely (i) curbing the spread of the desert locust, (ii) protecting the livelihoods and early recovery of the vulnerable populations and (iii) coordinating the response.

Concerning the Fall armyworms, the meeting recommends that efforts be redoubled to mobilize available resources from financial partners, including the African Development Bank. In view of the efforts made by most countries, research, training and support to producers, sharing of good practices, pooling of research results, revitalization of the regional monitoring system, among others, are important areas of cooperation to be promoted.

ECOWAP

2025 Vision : «A modern and competitive agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries sector, inclusive and sustainable guaranteeing decent jobs, food and nutrition security and food sovereignty».

ECOWEP

2025 Vision : « A peaceful, dignified and prosperous West Africa whose natural, diverse and productive resources are conserved and managed sustainably for the development and balance of the sub-regional space».

WAWRP

2025 Vision : «Water resources that are efficiently and practically managed so that everyone has access to safe drinking water for basic needs, waste disposal facilities, food security and reduced poverty; protected human health, the biodiversity of terrestrial and aquatic systems protected ».



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