



Performance of the "Support Project for Food Security Storage in West Africa" between 2015 and 2019

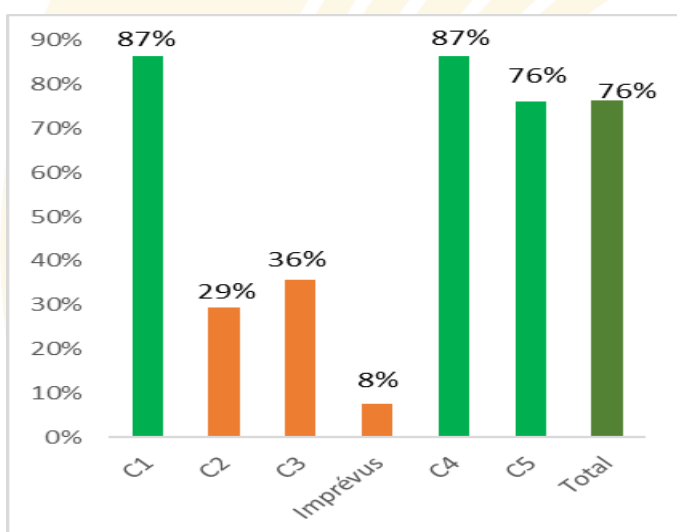
Introduction

Since 2012, ECOWAS has a regional food security storage strategy that combines local, national stocks, and the establishment of a Regional Food Security Reserve. To implement this strategy, the ECOWAS Commission received €56 million from the European Union. Four years later, the Support Project to Food Security Storage in West Africa made it possible to intervene at all three levels of crises response, to deploy the information and decision-making support system and, lastly, to strengthen the institutional capacities of the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF).

As a Preamble...

As of 31 December 2019, the overall implementation rate of the project is 76.5%. This gives a balance of 12 080166 euros, including 9 923 945 euros for the 4 components implemented by RAAF (1, 2, 3 & 5) to be spent during the remaining 11 months of the project, the agreement for component 4 (EU-CILSS) on the ECOAGRIS information system, having been closed.

Figure 1: Budget implementation rate



A Project based on the three lines of defence of the Regional Storage Strategy...

From its design, the project was intended to speed up the implementation of the storage strategy adopted by ECOWAS. This is why it covers all dimensions: the three levels of storage, information and decision-making support, but also the strengthening of the institutional capacities of RAAF, thus creating the conditions for the institutional sustainability of the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) as an instrument of Community solidarity.

R1.1. The RFSR is operational with governing Instruments and Mechanism

ECOWAS has a functional and operational Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) with a capital of 32 178.5 tonnes of cereals. Its governing bodies and management tools are in place with the official installation, in Conakry in December 2019, of the RFSR Management Committee and its Executive Body equipped with a Procedures Manual. The RFSR technical management Division is integrated to RAAF organization chart through the ECOWAS institutional Reforms adopted in July 2018.

The Procedures Manual of the Food Reserve was subject to a quality review involving Directors of National Storage Structures of several countries and the WFP during the February 2019 workshop. It was then brought into line with the ECOWAS General Procedures Manual by the Technical Departments of the Commission and adopted by the Management Committee in December 2019.

Between 2017 and 2019, the interventions of the RFSR on the basis of adopted procedures increased the volume lent to countries and ECOWAS up to 19 817 tonnes of cereals to support national response plans. In addition, a stock rotation was carried out on stocks stored in Ghana (2,750 tonnes), in partnership with the Government School feeding Programme.

Financial Support



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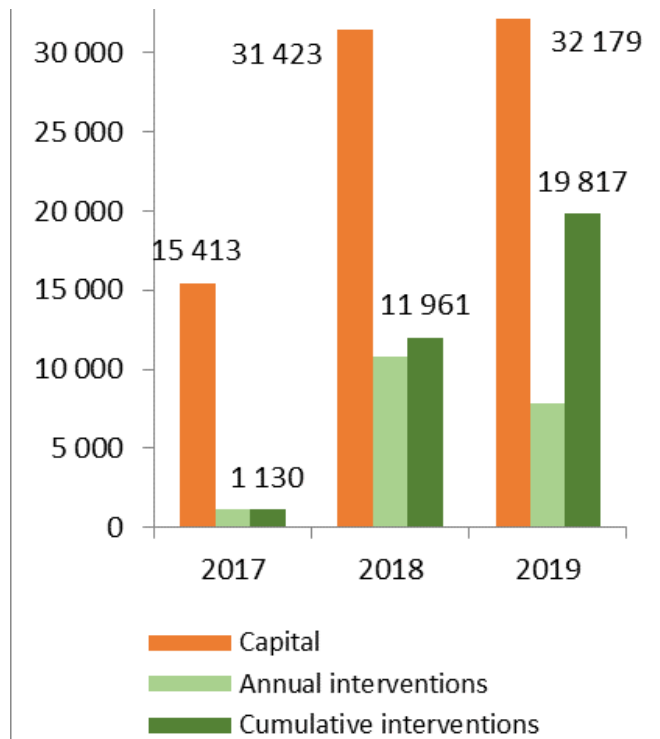


These interventions were expected to reach more than 545,000 people receiving food assistance from the RFSR.

The build-up of a cumulative physical stock of 32 178 tonnes of cereals represents 95% of the target of 34 000 tonnes (EU Funds) and 54% of the RFSR target (60 000 tonnes). It is received, stored and kept by the national storage structures (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Niger) under service contracts. These sites were identified by the feasibility study of the RFSR in terms of sub-areas for rapid interventions in ECOWAS Member States.

The graph below shows the annual evolution of the RFSR capital (tonnes per year) as well as the volumes of annual and cumulative interventions.

Figure 2: Stock and Intervention Levels

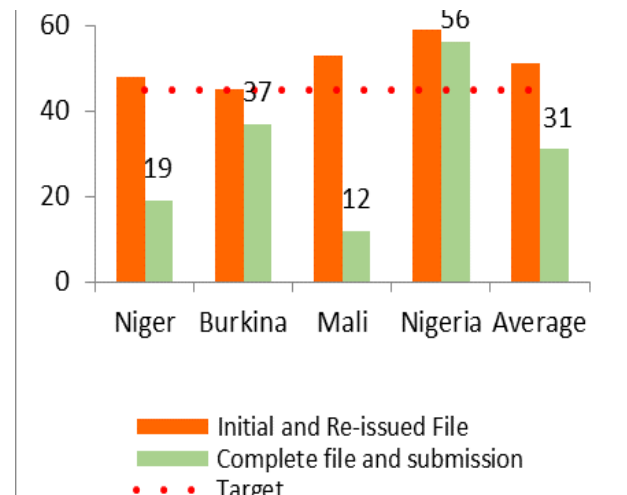


Taking into account the procedures as well as the urgency of intervention in the event of a difficult food situation, a target of a maximum of 45 days has been set between the State's request and the delivery of food.

However, it must be noted that all countries have, from the outset, submitted incomplete requests, extending response times to almost 50 days averagely.

When considering the date of complete requests submission, during the period, interventions in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Nigeria decided by the Ad Hoc Management Committee were executed within an average of less than one month (see figure below).

Figure 3: RFSR Response Times (days) vs. 45-day target



After providing loans to countries, the replenishment mechanism of the RFSR is the grain for grain replenishment to enable restoration of the capital and ensure its sustainability.

The status of grain for grain replenishment is as follows:

Table 1: Handover date, initial and new replenishment date

Country	Quantity (Tonne)	Handover Date	Replenishment
Burkina Faso	4 303	09/8/2018	April 2019
			April 2020
Niger	6 528	07/08/2018	January 2019
			June 2020
Nigeria	5 000	31/01/2019	June 2019
			April 2020
Mali	2 856	30/07/2019	By ECOWAS 2020
			February 2020
Total	19 817		April 2020

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Burkina Faso: the 4,303 tonnes availed to the country were used for sales at moderate prices for the benefit of vulnerable populations. At the scheduled date for replenishment (end of April 2019), the replenishment had not started. The process was initiated by SONAGESS through a call for tenders for the acquisition of packaging in accordance with ECOWAS standards with a view to replenishment in April 2020.

Photo 1 : Commissioner Sékou Sangaré in blue, officially handing over the stocks to the Minister for Agriculture Jacob Ouédraogo



Niger: The stock of 6,528 availed to the country is being used for sales at moderate prices as part of the implementation of the 2019 annual plan to support vulnerable people. The sale price was 6,500 CFA francs for a 50 kg bag of maize, millet and sorghum. However, at the date scheduled for replenishment, the stock was not yet used. In response to the letter from the President of the Commission to remind the commitment to replenish the stock grain for grain, the Niger authorities indicated that the new deadline was June 2020.



Photo 2 : Commissioner Sékou Sangaré in white, officially handing over stocks to the Minister for Agriculture in the presence of EU representatives



Nigeria: All the stock of 1130 tonnes availed to Nigeria in 2017 by ECOWAS was used. At the scheduled date for replenishment, the stock of 5 000 tonnes received in 2019 was not yet used. Arrangements were made to replenish the stock in April 2020.

For the 1,130 tonnes allocated under the regional solidarity, ECOWAS has allocated US\$500,000 to RFSR for the purchase of cereals for replenishment. Procurement work is ongoing for a purchase before the lean season in 2020.

Photo 3: Official handover of Cereals to NEMA (Nigeria) DG by the ECOWAS Director for Social and Humanitarian Affairs



Mali: the products handed over are destocked for the benefit of vulnerable populations. A budget line is planned for the replenishment in April 2020.

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Photo 4 : Commissioner Sékou Sangaré in the middle officially handing over stocks to the Minister for Agriculture



Ghana: for the stock rotation of 2,750 tons, 2,250 tons were used in Ghana for the school feeding programme benefiting 104,678 students in 153 schools.

The remaining 500 tonnes of sorghum were sold to the population, as sorghum is not included in the school canteen food basket.

On the planned date, 585 tonnes were replenished, i.e. 21%. On 31 December 2019, the replenished quantity was 755 tonnes and the rest scheduled for April 2020.

Photo 5 : Commissioner Sékou Sangaré in blue, officially handing over stocks to the Deputy Minister for Agriculture



The main reason for the difficulties in replenishing is that for years, beneficiary countries face a series of crises, compounded by the rise of terrorism and conflicts.

In addition to the interventions, the project made it possible to complete the entire process of selecting regional companies with the capacity to deliver nutri-

tional products (fortified flours, plumpy nut, etc.) to the RFSR, and authorised to enter into contracts with RAAF for this purpose.

Photo 6: On-site inspection of companies engaged in the pre-qualification process for the supply of nutritional products to the RFSR.



RI.2. Countries establish or strengthen their National Security Stocks and Governance Mechanisms

For this result, the main achievements are :

- **The adoption of a concrete mechanism for the regional pooling of 5%** of national stocks, a commitment made by the countries in the RESOGEST Cooperation Framework,
- **The adoption of the guide to the definition or revision of national storage policies,** promoting their harmonisation and convergence,
- **The adoption of the benchmark of good practices in public stock management** and its translation into a guide to the development of national procedures manuals. In addition, a draft directive is being prepared by the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions.

Fifteen out of the seventeen countries have finalized MoUs and PTBAs, which are the prerequisites for the initiation of national processes to strengthen storage policies and capacity building. Activities have been initiated in a majority of countries and make it possible to envisage the completion of all country processes before September 2020. Combining regional convergence, optimal harmonisation and taking into account the diversity of the seventeen national situations, remains a daily challenge.

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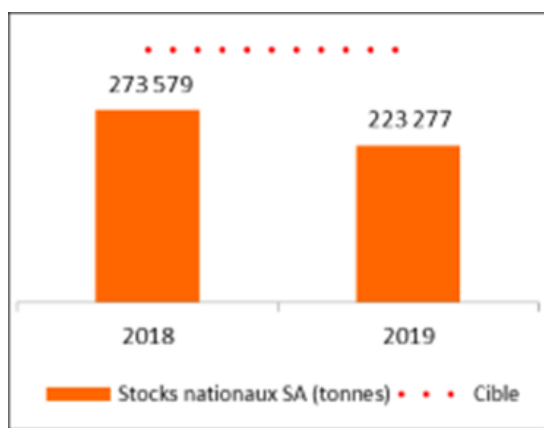
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The strengthening of RESOGEST, the network of national storage structures through its institutionalization (adoption of its By-laws and rules of procedure, signature of the MoU between RESOGEST and ECOWAS, the granting of the Headquarters agreement in August 2018 in Ouagadougou), continued with normal functioning of its statutory bodies and the deployment of training activities.

In 2019, the level of national stocks is estimated at 223,277 tonnes, i.e. an achievement rate of nearly 62% compared to the target of 360,464 tonnes.

Figure 4: Evolution of National Security Stocks

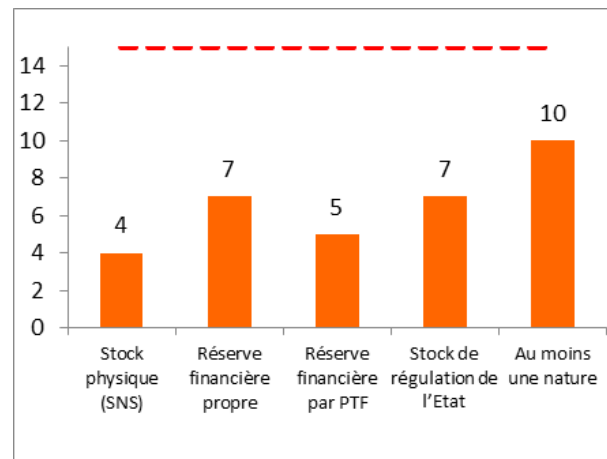


Over the period, physical stocks came from four countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria.

- **Seven (07) countries have a financial Reserve:** Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.
- **Five (05) countries have a financial reserve:** Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali and Niger.
- **Seven (07) countries have a financial reserve financed by TFPs:** Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.
- **Ten (10) countries have at least one instrument :** Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Liberia, Cape Verde and Togo.

This performance did not change over the project period.

Figure 5: Number of countries with stocks



R1.3. Community-based stocks are strengthened and their governance improved to better meet the needs of vulnerable populations

The project trained 247 community-based stocks managers against a target of 80. The training involved Nigeria (24 participants), Niger (45 participants) and Burkina Faso (26 participants) and focused on administrative and technical capacity to respond to RFSR tenders.

In addition to this, the main achievements of the project are :

- the participatory design of a multi-stakeholder framework to support local storage in West Africa is underway,
- the support for capacity building of local stock managers, their networking and contractualisation,
- the production of regional references on local stocks: memento of local storage, charter for stock keepers,
- the setting up of a training course on local storage for Pos,
- capacity building of umbrella producer organizations at the regional level (ROPPA, ROAC, APES and RBM),
- the design of a regional mechanism for financing and risk management at the level of FOs engaged in food marketing, and support for the adoption of regulatory instruments by ECOWAS.

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Facsimile: The memento of local storage prepared by specialized Pos



...and an Information and Decision-support System

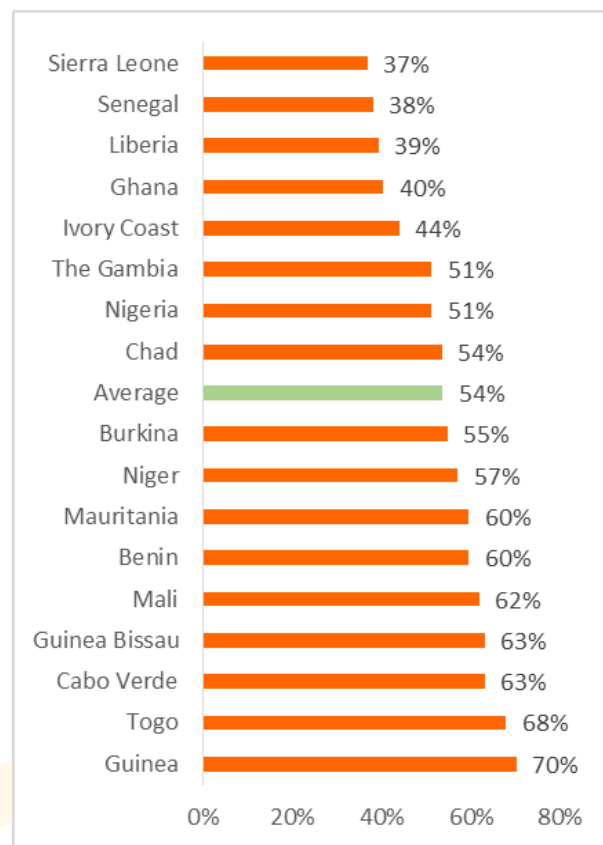
R2.1. Information Systems are strengthened at local, national and regional levels

Of the 17 countries (ECOWAS-CILSS), 15 have a functional ECOAGRIS information system. The data collected cover 12 themes: Macroeconomics, Early Warning, Agricultural Production, Agricultural Markets, Livestock, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agricultural Research, Agro-Hydro-Meteorology, Agricultural Inputs, Food Stocks, Nutrition, Natural Resources and Climate Change.

Today, it is estimated that 38% of the 209 indicators (i.e. 80) are populated in the ECOAGRIS system. These data cover the period 2011-2017 in 15 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo).

As for the data population rate, it varies between 38% and 77% depending on the country and it is estimated that the average for the 17 countries covered is 65%.

Figure 6: Population rate of the ECOAGRIS platform by country



In addition to the ECOAGRIS database, the Harmonized Framework for Food and Nutrition Situation Analysis (HFSA), Household Economic Analysis (HEA), monitoring of agricultural markets and catalytic support to countries also strengthen information systems at different local, national and regional levels.

These systems respond to information needs for monitoring the food and nutrition situation, vulnerability analysis, decision support for anticipating crises and for selecting and targeting interventions.

They are essential for the activation of the national reserves and the Regional Reserve.

Due to the difficulties encountered in ensuring the cash advance of the financing balance (10%), ECOAGRIS was only able to implement 13% of the budget of the PTBA 2019. Measures have been taken by ECOWAS to secure the transfer, updating and sustainable internalization of the platform.

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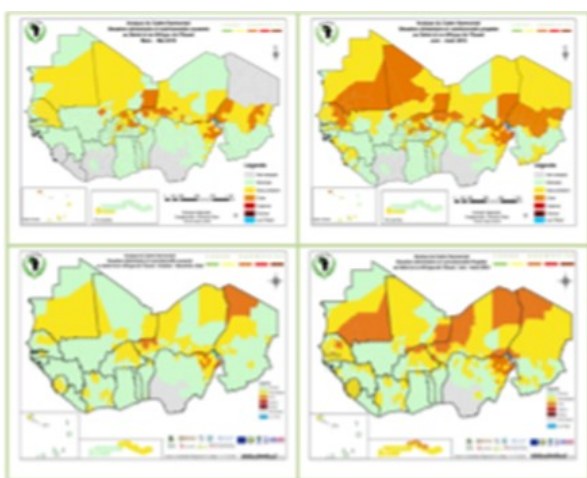
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R2.2. Prompt and appropriate decisions, based on reliable and independent information, are made to mobilize the food reserve system to respond to food and nutrition crises

During the period under review, the project enabled ECOWAS and CILSS to have a harmonized tool for analyzing the food and nutrition situation (CH). Today, the region and all 17 countries have vulnerability maps that facilitate the development of national response plans to contain the effects of crises.

Map 1: Food and Nutrition Insecurity Vulnerability Map



In 2018, the information resulting from these analyses will feed into the various decision support notes prepared by the Stock Information Unit to inform the decisions of the Ad Hoc Management Committee, thus enabling ECOWAS to intervene in support of countries in food crisis and meeting the RFSR criteria for triggering interventions, in accordance with its procedures.

In conclusion...

Two important aspects deserve special attention. The first concerns the procedure for replenishing the physical capital of the RFSR. The second concerns the issue of aflatoxin.

Indeed, the spread of terrorism and insecurity places the countries concerned in a humanitarian (including food) crisis.

Eligible in 2018-2019 for RFSR interventions, they have benefited from RFSR support with a "grain for grain" replenishment commitment.

They are eligible again this year 2019-2020, even though they have only been able to partially begin the process of replenishing the stock.

It is both the seriousness of the humanitarian situation and the issue of taking charge of the RFSR interventions that led the RFSR Management Committee to recommend to the ECOWAS Commission to initiate the High Level Meeting (held in February 2020) for the coordination of the response to the food situation, inviting the concerned States and the humanitarian community.

The RFSR is a technical tool that can quickly be mobilized, but the question of financing the solidarity exerted by its mobilization towards countries and populations remains unresolved. As with the interventions of all humanitarian agencies, it is difficult to build a sustainable funding mechanism that ensures renewal of resources.

The importance of the RFSR as an instrument for crisis response actors is now clearly seen by the humanitarian community as a whole. But its mobilization implies a stronger integration in the National Response Plans, and a stronger coordination under the aegis of the States with the support of ECOWAS in the financing and implementation of these NRPs.

With regard to aflatoxin, the incoming inspection procedures led the RAAF to reject some deliveries.

Yet, this episode delayed the supply to the RFSR but demonstrated the reliability of the specifications, acceptance procedures and the contract.

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However, it recalls the crucial importance of this issue, because of the health risks involved, not only for institutional markets but also for all self-consumed or marketed food. This is a matter of great concern for producer organizations and institutional buyers and will merit a wide-ranging action plan in the coming years.

The rise of new forms of vulnerability induced by the combination of poverty, climate change, demographics and insecurity makes the regional storage strategy a key issue, both for crisis prevention and management and for contributing to the growth of supply and the structuring of value chains and market organization.

While the complementarity and successive triggering of the three lines of defence (subsidiarity) represent more an arrival point than a starting point, this approach is strategic because it structures the institutions at the three essential levels: territories, states and the regional community.

The International Conference on the West African Storage System, recommended by the 2019 CoPil, should enable an uncompromising assessment to be made of the achievements, difficulties and lessons learnt from the five years of deployment of the strategy, with the help of European funding, as the main social safety net for food security.

It should also make it possible to identify solutions to the new issues that arise and pave the way for an increase in the three stock levels.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which is plunging the world and West Africa into a crisis unprecedented, will have significant repercussions on the implementation of the project to support food security storage in West Africa.

However, this global health crisis, which is also becoming an economic, social and food crisis, once again reminds us - the 2008 crisis - that food reserves, though expensive they may be, are of absolutely strategic importance. Indeed, they are one of the main cornerstones of a genuine crisis prevention and management strategy and of real regional food sovereignty.

Coordinating the Response

Notwithstanding the fact that combining regional convergence, optimal harmonization and taking into account the diversity of national situations remains a daily challenge, the regional workshop of Member States on the Regional Food Security Reserve held in Conakry in December 2019 made it possible to reposition all the countries in a common and convergent dynamic.

In this perspective, the High-level meeting on the Coordination of the response to food and institutional crises with humanitarians organized in Niamey in February 2020 clearly emphasized that alleviating the suffering of populations requires that Humanitarian Aid actors coordinate them strongly under the leadership of ECOWAS with the support of UEMOA and CILSS.

The issue of institutional coordination of the response to food crises is therefore acutely important, particularly at this time of the coronavirus pandemic.

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