

Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative – Sahel and West Africa (AGIR)

Joint Statement

Following a series of consultations between Sahelian and West African countries, West African regional organisations, organisations of agricultural producers and pastoralists, the private sector, the civil society, financial partners and non-governmental organisations, stakeholders involved in food and nutritional security met in Ouagadougou on 6 December 2012 within the framework of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) to seal the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative - Sahel and West Africa. To this end, they endorsed the following declaration.

Background

1. Over the past decade, Sahelian countries have witnessed successive food and nutritional crises, in particular in 2005, 2010 and 2012. In 2012, these crises have affected 6 million people suffering from severe food insecurity. In some countries, the rate of global acute malnutrition (GAM) regularly exceeds the alert threshold of 10%. Every year, millions of children die of malnutrition-related causes.

2. While Sahelian countries remain the most vulnerable to food and nutritional crises, many other West African countries are also affected. West Africa constitutes an area of interdependencies and complementarities, in which ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS countries must jointly act to eradicate food and nutritional vulnerability.

3. The root causes of food and nutritional insecurity are multiple and complex and result from a combination of risks, uncertainty and structural vulnerability related to:

- i. Extreme poverty, weak purchasing power, lack of stable revenues, degradation of the livelihoods of some rural and urban households who can thus no longer access basic social services (health, education, hygiene, water and sanitation);
- ii. Dysfunctional markets and value chains, in particular due to barriers to the free movement of goods generating higher transaction costs and excessive price volatility;
- iii. Climatic shocks and environmental disasters (droughts, floods, cricket invasions);
- iv. Conflict and socio-political problems.

4. Root causes must be analysed in the context of a worrying demographic situation. Any delay in controlling fertility rates will slow down the development process and raise further concerns over the future food and nutritional security.

5. During a high-level consultation on the food crisis in the Sahel held on 18 June 2012 in Brussels, Sahelian and West African political leaders and their development partners agreed on the chronic and structural nature of the root causes of food and nutritional crises, affecting the resilience of the most vulnerable households and families. They agreed to build together a Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative - Sahel and West Africa (AGIR). The purpose of this initiative in the long term is to put an end to the cycle of hunger and malnutrition. To implement this partnership, consultations involving all stakeholders have been conducted within the framework of the Sahel and West Africa Club: technical and financial partners met in Brussels on 23 July; Sahelian and West African regional organisations exchanged in Abidjan on 10 September; agricultural producers, civil society and the private sector gathered in Ouagadougou on 22 October; and finally, on 7 and 8 November, all stakeholders came together to discuss the content of a roadmap for the Alliance.

Objective

6. As a result of this inclusive consultation process, stakeholders agreed to define resilience as ***“The capacity of vulnerable households, families and systems to face uncertainty and the risk of shocks, to withstand and respond effectively to shocks, as well as to recover and adapt in a sustainable manner”***. This definition calls for unifying in a same approach structural development efforts in the long-term and humanitarian actions in the short-term.

7. The general objective set by the stakeholders is to: ***“Structurally and sustainably reduce food and nutritional vulnerability by supporting the implementation of Sahelian and West African policies”***. The Alliance aims to achieve ‘Zero Hunger’, i.e. eliminating hunger and malnutrition, within the next 20 years. A roadmap will provide quantitative specific objectives and monitoring indicators.

8. To achieve this goal, the Alliance agrees to focus efforts on the following groups of households:

- i. Small-scale farmers with limited market access, insecure land tenure, and little capital to invest in agriculture, who are thus not producing enough food to feed themselves and have few opportunities for income diversification. This group includes a large number of landless rural residents.
- ii. Agro-pastoralists and pastoralists whose capital stock and livelihoods are continually threatened by recurring weather hazards.
- iii. Poor agricultural and non-agricultural workers in urban and rural areas.

In these three categories of households, a particular focus will be placed on the most vulnerable groups, including under-five children, and more particularly those under two-year of age, as well as pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. A specific effort will target women in light of their predominant role in food production, income generation, education, health and child nutrition.

9. The Alliance proposes to conduct complementary and co-ordinated actions at three levels: i) local, by supporting endogenous initiatives and mechanisms and local communities, ii) national, by supporting existing investment programmes and consensus-building mechanisms, especially in the six priority target countries in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) and; iii) regional, by supporting/assisting regional plans and mechanisms put in place by the three regional organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS). Actions undertaken by the three regional organisations in the context of the Alliance will benefit all the 17 countries (15 ECOWAS member countries, plus Chad and Mauritania).

Principles

10. The Alliance relies on the following implementation principles:

- i. Common understanding of all stakeholders of the ‘resilience’ concept, the main objective of the Alliance and of its target populations;
- ii. Support to the implementation and to the strengthening of resilience-related elements of the ECOWAP/CAADP Sahelian and West African policies for agricultural investment, food and nutritional security (FNS), health, education, social protection, infrastructure, market development, etc.

- iii. Multi-sectoral approach and subsidiarity, with regard to the different levels of intervention (local/community, national and regional), and to the different categories of stakeholders based on their comparative advantage and a clear definition of their roles and responsibilities.

Governance

11. The regional governance of the Alliance relies on the political and technical leadership of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS and draws on existing organisations, platforms and networks.

At country level, dialogue, guidance, co-ordination and monitoring of the implementation will be undertaken through inter-sectoral platforms (focusing on food and nutritional security, health and social affairs, etc.) gathering various stakeholders (agricultural producers, private sector, civil society, and technical and financial partners).

At all these levels, specific areas for dialogue will be dedicated to agricultural producers' and pastoralists' organisations, civil society and the private sector, allowing them to strengthen their capacity for management, analysis and dialogue.

12. In order to guarantee the effectiveness of collective action, the international technical and financial partners of the Alliance agreed to co-ordinate their action according to modalities they will define to maintain the commitment of the international community, facilitate continuous political interaction between the international community and Sahelian and West African policy-makers, and enhance the co-ordination and development of joint positions of technical and financial partners. They also agree to develop and strengthen such an approach in each country involved, as well as at the regional level within the framework of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA).

Priorities

13. Building on the priorities of the regional agenda for food and nutritional security, the Alliance focuses on the following four strategic pillars:

Pillar 1: Restoring and strengthening the livelihoods and social protection of the most vulnerable populations, in particular by supporting strategic frameworks for social protection, food reserves and local support mechanisms to deal with food and nutritional crises;

Pillar 2: Strengthening health and nutrition, in particular by strengthening the implementation of programmes intending to provide social safety nets targeting nutrition, facilitate access to basic social services (education, hygiene, water and sanitation, preventive and curative health care, family planning, etc.), and promote good health and nutrition practices.

Pillar 3: Increasing food production, the incomes of vulnerable households and their access to food in a sustainable manner, giving the priority to:

- i. Agricultural investments targeting vulnerable family farmers, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists, by facilitating in particular access to land tenure security and to markets, as well as infrastructure, credit market and agricultural risk management instruments;
- ii. Targeted investments for pastoralism;
- iii. Sustainable management of natural resources, including soil fertility;
- iv. Diversification, employment and other income-generating activities in rural and urban areas;

- v. Strengthening of local, national and regional markets and value chains.

Pillar 4: Strengthening governance in food and nutritional security, with a special focus placed on supporting/strengthening:

- i. Early warning and information systems, particularly the implementation of: *the Enhanced Harmonised Framework (EHF)*, *ECOAGRIS*, regional agricultural information system (SIAR), and local and community early warning mechanisms, etc.;
- ii. Climate change adaptation programmes and capacity-building for disaster risk reduction;
- iii. Governance related to population and development strategies, gender, and the prevention and management of conflicts related to the use of natural resources;
- iv. Governance/organisational capacity of governments, inter-governmental organisations, civil society, private sector, etc.;
- v. The RPCA and the application of the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management;
- vi. Research-Action and knowledge-sharing through innovative and proactive approaches.

14. In the short term, ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions, supported by CILSS, will continue implementing the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management, which is essential for ensuring co-ordinated and efficient action. Within this framework, the consensus-building mechanisms on the analysis of food and nutritional vulnerability (Enhanced Harmonised Framework) will be made operational. Simultaneously, the implementation of the regional food reserve strategy will be accelerated. The stakeholders of the Alliance agree to meet in the coming months to examine additional support needed for the implementation of these regional priorities.

15. In the perspective of the next meeting of the RPCA in 2013, stakeholders will endorse a regional roadmap based on the present declaration and results of the ongoing consultation process – including the main quantitative objectives, specific objectives, priorities and monitoring and evaluation and impact indicators. Simultaneously, inclusive consultations will be organised in target countries to identify the priorities of operational frameworks for financing, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, on the basis of existing national policies and plans. A comprehensive assessment of priorities and additional requirements in terms of financing will be undertaken at the latest in December 2013.

Ouagadougou, 6 December 2012

The stakeholders of the AGIR Alliance