

EB.1/2012: WEST AFRICA REGIONAL PRESENTATION

1. New trends:

Sahel food and nutrition crisis

As I address you today, we are at a critical stage in the preparation and response to the Sahel crisis for three reasons: First, in some areas of affected countries, the lean season is about to start or has even already started, hence leaving people with very limited coping mechanisms already now. Further, this stage is critical since we need commodities in place as soon as possible in order to be able to respond to an increased number of people in need of food and nutrition assistance. And finally, this stage is critical since our preparations and early actions have been initiated much earlier than during the past Sahel crisis, but we need to consolidate this early action and preparedness to have the expected impact to save lives of the most vulnerable affected by this crisis.

[Map 1 \(Sahel region\)](#)

This year's food and nutrition crisis seems to be much more complex than the past ones, and factors are multiple; among the key factors however it should be noted that people had very little time and opportunities to recover from the past crisis (2005, and 2009/2010) in a context characterized by chronic poverty and high malnutrition rates.

The reduction in agropastoral production and very high prices of basic commodities are putting already vulnerable communities in difficult conditions and will force many to adopt negative coping strategies including for example selling of livestock, early migration, and the reduction of number of meals to name just a few examples. Malnutrition rates in the Sahel are usually high, and we know from the past that food security problems usually lead to increased malnutrition and mortality rates.

Countries affected so far include Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso and northern Cameroon; as northern Nigeria is also of concern particularly

regarding malnutrition rates, WFP is working with partners there in assessing the situation.

Through its regional response framework which copies have been made available to the Board Members only in English, WFP hopes to reach 8.8 million people who will need to be provided with food and nutrition assistance until September, requiring over \$800 million and 570,000 MT of various commodities. The actual response will however depend on the readiness of individual Governments, on resources available on time, as well as other contextual and operational factors. It is crucial that preparations to support the most vulnerable during the lean season, are made now; to do so, WFP will need the support of respective Governments; it is however noted that Governments are at varying levels of preparedness. Concern is that any potential additional needs that may come up during the lean season could be difficult to address if not planned and prepared for now. Additional funding and availability of food may become major challenges during the peak of the lean season.

In Niger in response to early warning indicators, WFP has started an initial scale up as early as November in line with the Government interim support plan through cash-for-work and food-for-work activities as well as nutrition activities. Following recent findings from the latest vulnerability assessment, WFP is now preparing for an emergency operation to support 3.2 million beneficiaries (US\$200 million) from April – September 2012 during the peak of the lean season. For Mali and Mauritania, emergency operations have been finalized, and in Chad, Senegal and Burkina Faso, WFP is currently refining its scale-up plans, some of which may be submitted to the Board for approval by correspondence.

In order to mitigate and reduce the extremely long lead times, WFP is adopting various measures, including internal advance financing mechanisms, the forward purchase facility, commodities loans, regional purchase where and whenever possible. Under the forward purchasing facility, some 14,950 mt of assorted commodities have already been procured and some 47,500 mt are being

procured. However, urgent donors contributions are required to purchase those commodities from the FPF as well as other commodities.

Through assessment conducted over the past weeks, we know that by contrast with the 2010 emergency, Sahelian food markets are showing signs of stress in 2012. Coarse grain prices have sharply increased and market supply in some food deficit areas is weak. This has an impact on food security of affected communities, as well as on WFP's response. More specifically, this year's market conditions affect regional procurement options as well as the opportunity and the value of cash transfer entitlements which will have to be revised upward.

While regional procurement remains a priority and procurement missions are planned to identify all possible options, WFP keeps all options open and looks also at international markets in this particular context

WFP is very grateful for the generous contributions received for the Sahel so far, and is calling for additional contributions to guarantee a response at full scale over the coming months.

Northern Mali crisis and impact on neighbouring countries:

WFP is closely monitoring the rapidly evolving situation following the clashes in northern Mali triggering displacement within Mali and population movements to Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso (updated numbers). WFP is currently working with affected governments and partners in assessing the needs and evaluating response options. Areas bordering Mali are hosting communities that are extremely vulnerable themselves; it is therefore likely that support will be required rapidly as local resources are already very stretched. As of today, the number of refugees and IDPs are as follows:

Mauritania: 10,000 – Niger: 10,000 – Burkina Faso: 6,000 and Mali: 30,000 IDPs.

Risks:

The major risk we are facing at this stage is insecurity affecting mostly all countries in the Sahel. The situation in Nigeria is being monitored closely related to possible spill over effects to neighbouring countries. In Mauritania, Niger, Mali and Chad, many areas are only accessible with escorts, hence rending access to humanitarian sites difficult.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am confident that, as in the past and learning from previous experience, we can take up the challenge jointly and respond to the basic food and nutrition needs of vulnerable people in the Sahel together over the coming months.