

# COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

**ECOWAS COMMISSION**



**COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO**

Département Agriculture,  
Environnement et Ressources en Eau

Department of Agriculture, Environment  
and Water Resources

## **ARAA / RAAF**

Agence Régionale pour l'Agriculture et  
l'Alimentation

Regional Agency for Agriculture and  
Food

**TASK FORCE MEETING ON THE REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY RESERVE IN WEST AFRICA**

**ABIDJAN/CÔTE d'IVOIRE, 19-20 FEBRUARY 2014**

February 2014

## Introduction

1. The Task Force meeting for the operationalization of the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) in West Africa was held on 19 and 20 February 2014 in Abidjan/Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.
2. Placed under the chairmanship of the ECOWAS Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Dr. Lapodini Marc Atouga, the meeting brought together sixty participants including delegates from ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS member countries, managers of national bodies responsible for food security stocks management, experts and staff members of sub-regional, regional or international cooperation agencies (ECOWAS, CILSS, AFD, AECID, EU, SWAC/OECD, FAO, WFP, Hub Rural), representatives of Apex organizations and NGOs (ROPPA, Bilital Maroobé Network, ROAC, APESS, OXFAM). See list of participants in Annex 1.
3. Three (3) additional studies have been carried out as part of this operationalization, namely: (i) Establishment of the RFSR Technical Management Unit, (ii) Establishment of the RFSR Infostocks Unit and (iii) Establishment of contractual tools between the RFSR and Operators.
4. The overall objective of the meeting was to:
  - a) Debrief on results of studies in order to (i) gather suggestions and opinions of actors involved in the RFSR, (ii) validate the technical aspects of the RFSR institutional framework and (iii) propose concrete measures to accelerate the establishment of the RFSR;
  - b) Share information on effective implementation of the RFSR: contributions from Member States, the ECOWAS Commission and Technical and Financial Partners.
5. The themes on the agenda (see Annex 2) were presented by a group of consultants (coordinated by the IRAM/AEDES/ISSALA/LARES Group as part of the PASANAO activities). They focused on:
  1. *Establishment and operation of the RFSR Management Unit.*
  2. *RFSR Infostocks Unit.*
  3. *Contractual tools between the Regional Food Security Reserve and stakeholders (mode of procurement, storage and conservation)*
  4. *Modalities for releasing stocks from the Reserve (triggering modalities and Information and Decision Support Products).*
6. The meeting was also informed, through two presentations made by the ECOWAS Acting Director of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Alain Sy Traore, on the state of implementation of the Regional Food Security Reserve by the Commission and on intervention priorities from ECOWAS own resources in FY 2014. The meeting was facilitated by Dr. Yamar MBodj, Hub Rural Executive Director.

## Opening ceremony

7. The opening ceremony noted a speech by the Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Dr. Lapodini Marc Atouga.
8. In his opening speech, Dr. Lapodini Marc Atouga first welcomed all participants to the Ivorian land. He recalled that ECOWAP considers strengthening security storage instruments in the countries and establishing a Regional Food Security Reserve complementing the national and community-based (local) stocks.
9. ECOWAS was joined in this effort by the G20 initiatives deployed in response to the global food crisis of 2008 and the operating principles of the Regional Food Security Reserve were adopted by the ECOWAS statutory Authorities following extensive consultations with States, socio-professional actors, NGOs and Technical and Financial Partners of the ECOWAP.
10. He welcomed the initiative of UEMOA to support its member countries, all ECOWAS members, in strengthening and coordinating national food security stocks through the construction of warehouses, as well as CILSS' initiative for the establishment of the Network of Companies or Boards responsible for managing national food security stocks, through a memorandum of cooperation signed between them.
11. He informed the meeting that the ECOWAS Commission has just implemented one of the key recommendations made by the Conference of Heads of State and Government held on 27 and 28 February 2013 in Yamoussoukro. This Conference has adopted the Additional Act establishing the Regional Food Security Reserve within ECOWAS; therefore, the ECOWAS Commission has made available to the RFSR an initial endowment of US \$ 24 million to accelerate its implementation, starting this year 2014.
12. The Commissioner explained that several technical and financial Partners, including the European Union, the Spanish Cooperation, the French Development Agency (AFD) have programmed financial resources to support the deployment of the RFSR in the short term.
13. Before concluding his speech, the ECOWAS Commissioner recalled the meeting objectives and expressed his gratitude to the *Agence Française de Développement*, the European Union, the Spanish Cooperation and USAID for their constant and multifaceted support and to all those who have contributed in one way or another to the holding of this meeting.

## Conclusions and recommendations

14. The meeting reviewed the consultants' proposals on modalities for the operationalization of the Regional Food Security Reserve, based on the decisions made by the ECOWAS statutory bodies who took an additional act sanctioning the creation of this regional reserve. Participants commended the work and discussed the various proposals.

### A. Governance and institutional arrangements

**The presentation focused on the governance arrangements, including the process of review and decision making and the technical arrangements, with the establishment of the Technical Management Unit for the Reserve (TMUR).**

Participants recommended the following:

- Ensure that the system chosen complies with the ECOWAP guidelines in terms of orientation device, steering, and decision, etc, as well as measures already adopted (especially the regulation establishing the RAAF and the guide to its operation);
- Ensure that the system chosen takes the minimal time possible to enable fast operationalization, which does not require new procedures;
- Ensure that ECOWAS can internalize the system within the RAAF;
- Ensure that the system ensures rapid decision and response, while respecting the principles of independence, fairness, etc.;
- Ensure that close links are established with the national and local levels and that all stakeholders are involved, while respecting the respective roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder.

## **B. Establishment of the Info-stocks Unit**

**The presentation focused on the configuration and functions of the Info-stocks Unit, which is a decision support unit for the RFSR Management Committee.**

Participants highlighted some differences between the document submitted to the meeting and the content of the oral presentation. They pointed out the importance of positioning the Info-Stock Unit on decision support, while drawing from the many existing regional and national information systems, including information provided by producer organisations, civil society organisations, etc. Finally, participants hoped that the information and analyses needed to arbitrate between the various response instruments are clearly included in the document.

The meeting recommends to:

- Align the text of the reference document on the content of the presentation, especially on the Unit's functions;
- Update some data, especially those relating to CILSS and WFP;
- Clearly define the functions of the Unit in terms of operational decision support to the Management Committee, using information generated by the public information systems and stakeholders, and to avoid duplication;
- Strengthen information systems and mechanisms to improve availability and quality of information, including information systems developed by farmer organisations, and networks of community-based (local) stocks.

## **C. Terms of procurement**

**The presentation focused on different ways of supplying the physical reserve.**

Participants recognised that the four terms of procurement (direct purchases, tenders, futures contracts, takeover bids) are all relevant. At the end of their discussion, they recommended to:

- Give priority to direct purchases from producer organisations, in line with the objectives to encourage production and support the structuring of producer organisations for collection, storage and marketing;
- Work closely with national structures to optimize procurement and avoid market disruptions;

- Articulate the purchasing policy of the reserve with the support that must be delivered by other development programmes of production, processing and marketing; which will ensure consistency and full effectiveness of the whole;
- Do not forget the “animal feed” dimension which seeks to preserve the livelihoods of pastoralists and herders and will require the mobilization of the financial reserve.

#### **D. Contracting procedures regarding food storage and preservation**

**The presentation defined concrete modalities for choosing to contract out the functions of food reception, quality control, storage and preservation with national institutions in charge of management of security stocks.**

Participants shared their experiences in contracting for the management of stocks. They hoped that such experiences can be promoted as much as possible. They recalled:

- the importance of making a call for proposals for contracting the storage before initiating the first purchases;
- The extreme importance of issues related to quality control (performed by national services and the external control firm) to consumer safety, reduce losses to a minimum incompressible and avoid disputes amongst stakeholders;
- The need, therefore, to explore the issue of the management of the different types of risks incurred;
- The need to address the issue of food transit at seaports and customs and port laws;
- The need to gradually harmonise management procedures and protocols for the maintenance of stocks; an aspect that could be usefully managed by RESOGEST.

#### **E. Procedures for releasing stocks from the Regional Reserve and decision support to the Management Committee**

**The presentation focused on two aspects. First, it outlined the consultants’ proposals on modalities to trigger the RFSR, following requests from countries. Then, it proposed decision support products that the Info-stocks Unit should develop in order to inform the decisions of the Management Committee for RFSR procurements as well as interventions.**

Participants agreed that the work which was presented further enlightens the feasibility study on how to trigger the RFSR. Participants recognised that the Reserve is a collective construction that must be tested and assessed to adjust the modalities progressively. Similarly, they recognised that the RFSR operations (purchases and interventions) should be guided by a combination of triggers based on information from food security information systems and more qualitative analyses. They drew attention to the risks of destabilization of community-based stocks (local) by stock turnover operations.

Participants recommended to:

- Confirm, through an ECOWAS regulation, that the Harmonised Framework is a unifying and consensual tool that provides concise and complete information on the food, nutrition and pastoral situation. In this respect, it must be privileged and strengthened, especially at the country level where it should be systematized and make more reliable those information systems feeding Harmonised Framework indicators;
- Complement the information provided by the Harmonised Framework with other indicators and other dimensions of the analysis to provide decision support tools to the Management Committee (management of procurement, triggering of interventions/choice of methods);
- Relativize the use of cereal balance sheet that does not sufficiently account for the market situation and cannot be used for non-Sahelian countries;

- Systematically compare “objective” data generated by the information systems with the experience and cross them with the qualitative analysis, etc.;
- consider the importance of logistic and transportation issues, including issues raised by border crossing, transit issues, etc.;
- Systematically develop contingency plans and response plans in countries so as to make them the basis for the dialogue about responses between the different stakeholders, and the basis for determining the contribution of the Regional Reserve;
- Consider other relevant instruments in response to crises such as cash transfers when mobilizing the financial reserve and, therefore, introduce more diverse criteria relating to economic analysis and allowing guiding the choice of instruments;
- Develop an operational proposal in relation to pastoral crises. This should go beyond the issue of animal feed within the Reserve and involve the entire pastoral crisis prevention-management dimension and, more broadly, the whole issue of pastoral development;
- Harmonise standards for cereal quality to promote the regional market and the movement of food from the Reserve within the region.

Finally, participants raised several concerns:

- The need to define precise rules for the mobilization of the financial reserve so as to meet the diverse needs of countries and mobilize, in a balanced and complementary manner, the two tools, namely the physical stock and the financial reserve;
- The need to improve the assessment of pastoral crises, incorporating elements associated with safety and mobility;
- The issue of barriers to trade between countries, which can significantly delay the mobilization of food and affect the speed and impact of the Regional Reserve. States shall take effective measures to ensure the free movement of food, especially in times of crisis;
- The importance of implementing the overall security storage strategy, including the other lines of defence and including networking of community-based (local) stocks;
- The importance of quickly developing all ECOWAP tools and especially the RAAF and the Regional Fund, and build capacities of the various categories of actors involved to support the deployment of such tools.

#### **F. ECOWAS’ budget allocation for the RFSR**

The ECOWAS Commission presented the approach and priorities that it seeks to promote, namely:

- Establishment of the Reserve to ensure the region’s sovereignty: recruitment of TMUR staff, equipment, setting up of Management Committee, etc.;
- Execution of initial purchases for the physical reserve;
- Constitution of part of the financial reserve.

At the end of the deliberations, participants commended the Commission and encouraged it to quickly engage the initial actions.

Before declaring the meeting closed, the ECOWAS Commissioner thanked all technical and financial partners for their continued support.

**Done in Abidjan, 20 February 2014.**

## Annex 1: List of participants

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## Annex 2: Agenda

Date/Time	Heading	Remarks
<b>Wednesday, 19 February 2014</b>		
<b>08h00-09h00</b>	<b>• Installation of participants</b>	<b>ECOWAS Secretariat</b>
09h00-09h15	Opening of the meeting -Opening speech by the <b>ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner, Mr. Lapodini Marc Atouga</b>	ECOWAS Director of Agriculture, Mr. Alain Sy Traore
09h15-09h25	-Presentation objectives/expected results /agenda of the meeting, by <b>Amadou Mactar Konate, PASANAO/ARAA Coordonator</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner
09h25-10h25	<b>I-Update on the state of implementation of the Regional Food Security Reserve, by the ECOWAS Director of Agriculture, Mr. Alain Sy Traore, followed by questions of clarification</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner
<b>10h25-10h35</b>	<b>COFFEE/TEA BREAK</b>	<b>ECOWAS Secretariat</b>
10h35-12h00	<b>II-Establishment and operation of the RFSR Management Unit, by the PASANAO Consultants, followed by discussions</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner
12h00-13h00	<b>III- Infostocks Unit, by PASANAO Consultants, followed by discussions</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner
<b>13h00-14h30</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>ECOWAS Secretariat</b>
14h30-16h00	<b>IV-Contract tools between the Regional Food Security Reserve and stakeholders (method of supply, Storage, preservation), by PASANAO Consultants, followed by discussions</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner
<b>16h00-16h15</b>	<b>COFFEE/TEA BREAK</b>	<b>ECOWAS Secretariat</b>
16h15-18h00	<b>IV-Contract tools between the Regional Food Security Reserve and stakeholders, followed by discussions</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner
<b>18h00</b>	<b>Break for the day</b>	
<b>Thursday 20 February 2014</b>		
09H00-11H00	<b>V-Modalities for releasing food from the Reserve (triggering modalities and Information Products and support for decision-making) by PASANAO Consultants, followed by discussions</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner
<b>11h00-11h15</b>	<b>COFFEE/TEA BREAK</b>	<b>ECOWAS Secretariat</b>
11h15-13h00	<b>V-Modalities for releasing food from the Reserve, followed by discussions</b>	
<b>13h00-14h30</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>ECOWAS Secretariat</b>
14h30-16h00	<b>VI-Information on Priorities of ECOWAS resource allocation for Member States, by the ECOWAS Director of Agriculture, Mr. Alain Sy Traore, followed by questions of clarification</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner
16h00-16h15	<b>COFFEE/TEA BREAK</b>	<b>ECOWAS Secretariat</b>
16h15-16h45	<b>VII-Wrap-up and statement of conclusions, by Dr. Yamar MBodj, Executive Director of Hub rural</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner
16h45-17h00	<b>Closing of the meeting</b>	ECOWAS/AEWR Commissioner