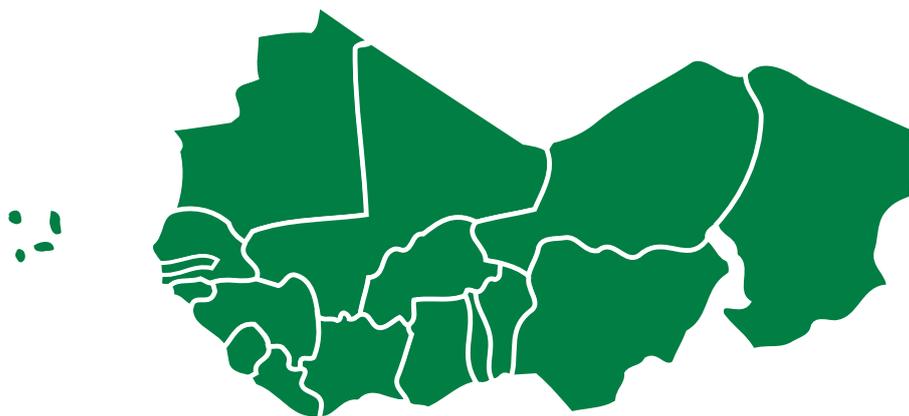


CHARTER FOR FOOD CRISIS PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA



1 FOREWORD

On 10 February 1990, upon a proposal made by the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA), the member countries of the “Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel” (CILSS) and the donor members of the “Club du Sahel” adopted the Food Aid Charter. This code of good conduct intended to minimise the adverse effects of food aid and to ultimately phase-out the need for it.

Building upon an inclusive and participatory revision process conducted between 2007 and 2011, the revised Charter, renamed the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management, was formally adopted by Ministers of Food and Agriculture from ECOWAS Member States as well as Chad and Mauritania on 17 November 2011 at a ministerial meeting held in Conakry (Guinea). It was approved by the 40th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Heads of States and Government Summit held on 16-17 February 2012.

The parties concerned: governments¹, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs)²; technical and financial partners (TFPs)³.

¹ The term “governments” refers to the governments of the 17 countries (15 ECOWAS member countries plus Mauritania and Chad).

² The term “CSOs” includes farmer organisations, trade unions and employer federations, NGOs, professional associations, charities, grassroots organisations, organisations that involve citizens in local and municipal life, the private sector, etc.

³ TFPs include bilateral and multilateral donors and international organisations (UN system and other).



C **ONSIDERING**

1. That the right to food is included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which has been in force since 1976, and that it may be implemented more easily through recourse to the "Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security", approved by the FAO;
2. That food security, as defined by the World Food Summit (1996), includes: (i) physical availability of food; (ii) economic and physical access to food; (iii) food utilisation and; (iv) stability of the other three dimensions over time;
3. The commitment made by the international community at the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996), which was broadened by the UN General Assembly in its Millennium Declaration to commit to "Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than USD 1 a day" (MDG 1);
4. The commitment of the member countries of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS to foster regional integration through appropriate national/regional agricultural and food security strategies, particularly through the establishment of a customs union to facilitate free movement of food commodities within the region and a common trade policy;
5. Donor and beneficiary country commitments to improve development aid effectiveness by complying with the following basic principles: (i) partner countries exercising effective leadership over their development strategies; (ii) donors aligning with these strategies and their partner countries' institutions and procedures; (iii) harmonised, transparent interventions; (iv) results-focused aid management and (v) mutual accountability for development results (Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, OECD 2005; Accra Agenda for Action, September 2008);
6. The donor countries' commitments under the Food Aid Convention (London, April 1999);
7. The aim of the Food Security Strategy Framework (FSSF), which is "to ensure access to adequate food for all Sahelians at all times so that they can live a healthy and active life by the year 2015" by: (i) developing sustainable, productive, diversified and integrated agriculture at the regional level; (ii) developing and facilitating commodity trade and integrating national markets in the sub-region; (iii) improving the access of vulnerable groups and zones to food and basic social services in a sustainable way; (iv) improving mechanisms for preventing and managing situational/temporary crises in line with the achievement of structural food security; (v) building stakeholders' capacities and promoting good governance in food security (CILSS Summit of Heads of State and Government, November 2000);
8. The aims of the UEMOA Agricultural Policy, which are to: "help sustainably meet the food needs of their populations, encourage the economic and social development of member states and contribute to poverty reduction by: a) achieving food security for the Union through the improved functioning of the agricultural market; b) improving the living conditions of farmers through the development of the rural economy and through improved income and social status" (PAU Summit of Heads of State and Government of UEMOA member countries, December 2001);

9. The aims of the ECOWAS Regional Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP/CAADP), which are to “guarantee food security and safe food for West Africa’s rural and urban populations through initiatives to attain food sovereignty for the region; reduce the reliance on imports by prioritising food production and food processing through the leveraging and exploiting of the region’s comparative advantages” (ECOWAS Summit of Heads of State and Government, January 2005);
10. The main codes of conduct in force in the field of humanitarian aid (notably SPHERE, Good Humanitarian Donorship – GHD) to which aid agencies, humanitarian NGOs and the United Nations humanitarian agencies are committed;
11. The action framework of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Prevention, adopted in 2005 in Hyogo for the 2005-2015 period: for disaster-resilient nations and communities.

AWARE

1. That food crises in the Sahel and West Africa can result from a combination of structural, cyclical, natural and human factors;
2. That these crises occur in a context that combines: the intrinsic vulnerabilities of the region, the endemic poverty of certain population groups; risks created from climate change and socio-political change; and finally the profound changes linked to population growth, urbanisation, increasingly fragile natural environments and the opening up and globalisation of economies;
3. That these crises, more complex and multidimensional than in the past, are negatively impacting nutrition and sometimes causing famine, and that these crises affect the most vulnerable, such as pregnant and breastfeeding women, children under five, people living with HIV and AIDS, orphans, handicapped people, displaced populations, refugees and the elderly, as well as specific groups, such as pastoral farmers and fishermen;
4. Of the increasing role played by civil society and local authorities or local government in managing public goods and food security;
5. That whatever efforts they make, no country can be completely safe from cyclical food crises, and that food aid and adaptation or mitigation strategies (mobilisation of local food stocks, off-season cropping, income generating activities, asset creation, etc.), are important tools for increasing access to food and meeting the food and nutrition needs of vulnerable populations hit by crises;
6. That since the 2000s, the context for and the practices relating to food aid have changed significantly, due in particular to a drop in surpluses and global food stocks, increased use of local and triangular purchases, the adoption of several codes of conduct by food aid donors and the existence of innovative mechanisms such as monetary transfers and food vouchers as well as direct purchases from farmers.

Hereby declare their adherence to the following provisions:

2 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The provisions of this Charter are intended to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of food crisis prevention and management in ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS member countries.

The parties concerned adhere to the following principles:

- Respect for human dignity and particularly the dignity of people facing a food crisis, no matter its scale;
- The need to prioritize supporting local food production (crops, livestock, forest products other than wood, fishing), including its financing, household incomes and the smooth functioning of markets as an appropriate, sustainable strategy for food crisis prevention and management;
- The need to promote regional solidarity in times of crisis by avoiding actions that could disrupt the smooth functioning of the regional market;
- Recognition of the key role of local, national and regional institutions in defining, implementing and assessing food security strategies and policies;
- The need to involve grassroots environmental, social and economic organisations as well as civil society in assessing the food and nutritional situation, identifying actions to be taken and implementing and monitoring those actions;
- The need to involve local actors in the development of intervention strategies that are co-ordinated by national and regional institutions. These strategies should be based on reliable information that is recognized by the parties concerned and regularly provided by national and regional authorities;
- Coherence, with interventions (related to sustainable development or emergency operations) consistent with the policies and mechanisms of governments, communities and regional institutions;
- The duty to intervene through emergency humanitarian action adapted to the local socio-cultural environment and dietary preferences when a crisis poses significant risks for people's basic human rights, including the right to live;
- The need for transparency through independent assessments of interventions; this should stimulate discussion about best practices and encourage all stakeholders to comply with the Charter principles.

Based on these principles, the parties concerned recognize that any food crisis prevention or management action must be structured around the following pillars:

- **Pillar 1:** Information and analysis of the food and nutrition situation;
- **Pillar 2:** Consultation and co-ordination;
- **Pillar 3:** Consensual analysis for choosing food/nutrition crisis prevention and management tools.

3 INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

OF THE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY SITUATION

Specific principles

The parties concerned recognize the need to:

- Collect, process and analyse data using harmonised criteria and methodologies recognized by the States;
- Have sustainable, functional information and analysis tools for providing complete, thorough, timely diagnoses of food security threats as well as the risks facing different population groups and their ability to respond to them. These tools include farm surveys and various monitoring activities (seasonal crop monitoring, market monitoring, monitoring and analysis of household vulnerability and livelihood, monitoring the nutrition situation, etc.) that will be conducted using recognized methodology. The co-ordination of these information systems is ensured by an analysis unit commonly referred to as an Early Warning System (EWS);
- Create synergies between the parties that will allow them to conduct shared analyses, building upon the diversity of information sources and analyses from national, regional and international players;
- Complement short-term diagnoses with regular information and more in-depth analyses, making it easier for governments, intergovernmental organisations, and technical and financial partners to make decisions.

Commitments

The governments and IGOs undertake to:

- Regularly produce reliable and timely information that is needed for decision-making;
- Co-operate to support the establishment or reinforcement of efficient, operational information systems within national and regional institutions;
- Provide these information and Early Warning Systems with sustainable funding and appropriate institutional anchorage;
- Improve the reliability, independence and accessibility of information by 1) drafting a consensual set of guidelines on producing, verifying and disseminating information; and 2) implementing a procedure for assessing information quality based on an independent certification structure;
- Promote research to improve the understanding and forecasting of risks, expand knowledge of local adaptation strategies and improve analyses of household, community and country vulnerability;
- Promote dialogue and exchanges among stakeholders/institutions on the aforementioned issues.

The governments, TFPs and CSOs undertake to:

- Co-operate in order to (a) prevent duplicate information, particularly between national, regional and international information systems and (b) produce joint vulnerability analyses based on harmonised, consensual methodology. This closer co-operation should enable the actors to make well-targeted recommendations to national and regional decision-making bodies, NGOs and UN agencies;
- Share the information produced primarily within consultative and co-ordination structures in order to harmonise the resulting analyses before they are more widely disseminated, particularly to the media. Information should also be shared about any actions an actor intends to carry out in response to a crisis situation that has been identified in compliance with national and regional decisions;

The CSOs undertake to:

- Support the institutional anchorage of information systems for improved sustainability and ownership by local actors;
- Monitor and question the various intervening parties in order to improve the functioning of national information systems.

The TFPs undertake to:

- Support the initiatives of governments, IGOs and CSOs to harmonise and improve information quality;
- Focus their interventions on the priorities of governments and IGOs and co-ordinate them so as to strengthen government efforts to establish sustainable, effective information systems.

4 CONSULTATION AND CO-ORDINATION

Specific principles

Dialogue between actors and the co-ordination of actions are pre-requisites for ensuring fast decision-making and the greater synergy and coherence of interventions. They thereby guarantee the effectiveness of collective action in food crisis prevention and management. In this regard, **the parties concerned** recognize the need to improve the governance of food crisis prevention and management by combining the following principles:

- **Principle of accountability:** governments and IGOs are responsible for making prompt decisions on the necessity of intervention and ensuring their effective implementation;
- **Principle of participation:** All government and non-government actors, particularly CSOs, should be involved in the process of discussion, consultation and decision-making.

Commitments

The parties concerned undertake to:

- Provide technical and financial support to set up sustainable dialogue and consultation structures and to promote the diversity of stakeholders;

- Ensure more specifically that each Sahelian and West African country has a single, readily identifiable national consultation body or structure that is responsible for disseminating information. All parties undertake to act in compliance with the decisions taken by that body;
- Take part at least twice a year in peer reviews of the food and nutrition situation that will be conducted within the national consultation systems;
- Promote transparency in the preparation of recommendations to be approved by the national consultation bodies;
- Strictly comply with decisions taken by the national consultation bodies to ensure the effectiveness of collective action;
- Encourage joint statements/communiqués (governments, CSOs, TFPs) on the food/nutrition situation.

5 **CONSENSUAL ANALYSIS** **FOR CHOOSING FOOD AND NUTRITION CRISIS** **PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS**

Strategic framework for food crisis prevention

The parties concerned recognize the need to make prevention a top priority by favouring national food policies. In this regard, **the governments and IGOs** undertake to:

- Look for sustainable solutions to the structural causes of food /nutritional insecurity, particularly through:
 - ▶ Ensuring that each country has a policy and an operational strategy for food and nutrition security along with implementation programmes drawn up on a participative basis and validated by all stakeholders;
 - ▶ Implementing overarching development and investment policies that encourage local food production (national and regional), including policies on agricultural training, farmer support, strengthening national and regional food markets and increasing the incomes of vulnerable population groups;
 - ▶ Promoting more productive agriculture through provision of significant support to pastoral farmers and fishermen in terms of access to land and credit, agricultural inputs, water control, market organisation;
 - ▶ Ensuring that biofuel development policies are coherent with food and nutrition security objectives;
 - ▶ Implementing policies and programmes aimed at promoting the consumption of local food products;
 - ▶ Fostering food and nutrition research and training and strengthening food safety through measures such as legislation and regulation;
 - ▶ Funding effectively from their own financial resources the implementation of priority food and nutrition security policies and programmes;
- Prohibit the implementation of any agricultural and/or trade policy] or the making of any commitment that would hamper efforts pursued by the countries and the region towards food and nutrition crisis prevention;
- Ensure the right to food in accordance with national priorities, particularly through new laws and action plans as well as financing.

The TFPs undertake to gradually channel via government and IGO budgets the funds earmarked for designing and implementing food security programmes.

Food and nutrition crisis management strategy framework

"Food crisis management" aims to end food insecurity, whether temporary or chronic.

The parties concerned agree on the following two concepts:

1. There are two types of food insecurity that affect both rural and urban populations:
 - ▶ **Temporary or transitory food insecurity:** limited over time, caused by a specific event and affecting a significant proportion of the population. It can vary in severity and extent. It is short-term and often consists of a sharp decline in food accessibility and consumption compared to usual conditions.
 - ▶ **Chronic food insecurity:** persistent inability to access sufficient or sufficiently nutritious food. This type of food insecurity is caused by structural factors and generally associated with extreme poverty.

Between temporary and chronic food insecurity lies **cyclical food insecurity**, generally experienced by rural communities who suffer a difficult "hunger gap" each year before harvest time. This type of food insecurity is both temporary and repetitive.
2. "Malnutrition develops when the body does not get the proper amount of energy (calories), proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients required to keep the organs and tissues healthy and functioning well. A child or adult can be malnourished by being undernourished or over-nourished. In most parts of the world malnutrition occurs when people are undernourished. Primary reasons for undernourishment, especially of children and women, are poverty, lack of food, repeated illnesses, inappropriate feeding practices, lack of care and poor hygiene. Undernourishment raises the risk of malnutrition. The risk is greatest in the first two years of life. The risk further increases when diarrhea and other illnesses sap the body of the proteins, minerals and nutrients required to stay healthy." Source: Facts for Life (2010), UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP and the World Bank.

The parties concerned recognize:

- That the two types of food crises often coincide in time and place and interact to increase the vulnerability of the population;
- That **the response must be specifically tailored to each food crisis situation**, according to the severity, extent and possible evolution of the crisis and its proximate, underlying and structural causes;
- The consequent need to define prior to any intervention an **operational food crisis management strategy framework**. This strategy framework should be drawn up on a participative basis under the national consultation system of the concerned country. It should be conducted in the following stages: (i) analysis of the situation and the response depending on the causes and available instruments; (ii) response planning; (iii) response implementation; (iv) response monitoring and assessment; (v) post-crisis programme implementation. The strategy framework should address the crisis from the following angles: (a) reduce the immediate effects; (b) protect the livelihoods of the directly affected vulnerable population groups directly; (c) address the structural causes of food insecurity.

The parties concerned therefore undertake to:

- Ensure that all interventions are designed under the national strategy framework for food crisis management, are unanimously agreed upon and are designed to help guide the choice of suitable tools for each crisis;
- Define the response options or instruments ("**response analysis**") using the food crisis management strategy framework according to the origin or causes of the crisis;
- Support the RPCA, which produces and regularly updates a "toolbox" containing options to facilitate all types of intervention;
- Define by consensus the criteria and tools for assessing response effectiveness;
- Include in post-conflict programmes actions to help structurally vulnerable households gradually escape from the vicious circle of poverty and food and nutrition insecurity.

6 FOOD AID AND ASSISTANCE

IN RESPONSE TO FOOD AND NUTRITION CRISES

Aims

Food aid is one form of emergency intervention that helps resolve food crises. It is intended to provide a timely, appropriate response to situations of shortage or deficit. A wider range of tools is needed, however, to respond to the specific features of each crisis. This set of tools is called “food assistance”.

Assessing needs and supplying food aid or assistance

The parties concerned recognize that:

- The assessment of food aid requirements should be jointly carried out by all stakeholders and should exclusively aim to improve the food and nutrition security within beneficiary countries. It should be conducted through the national consultation system on the basis of information supplied by the information systems. It should take into account the strategies adopted by affected communities and should rely on structures set up by the concerned governments;
- Assistance operations must comply with the recommendations of the national consultation systems in order to ensure that responses match needs;
- The determination of needs is ultimately the responsibility of the government and within its remit, except in the event of a humanitarian crisis that disrupts State structures;
- Consultation among stakeholders is essential for ensuring that responses match identified needs and for avoiding interventions that are likely to disrupt the smooth functioning of markets (price slump or increase, speculation, etc.);
- Assistance and food aid should be provided on a timely basis.

Consequently, **the parties concerned** undertake to:

- Improve/harmonise their criteria for assessing food/nutrition aid requirements by including analyses of:
 - ▶ Food availability (domestic output, stocks, imports, exports and aid);
 - ▶ Markets (supplies, prices, trade flows, state of market operations at the national, sub-regional and international level);
 - ▶ Access to food resources by households and affected communities (local production, food prices in the affected area, people's purchasing power and sources of income, household coping strategies and mechanisms, socio-cultural barriers to access to food, etc.);
 - ▶ The conditions of food use and nutrition in affected areas (health, water, hygiene, education, dietary habits and practices), particularly for the most vulnerable, such as pregnant and breast-feeding women, children under five, people living with HIV and AIDS, orphans, handicapped people, displaced populations, refugees and the elderly.
- Promote first and foremost setting up/strengthening food reserves at the local, national and regional level;
- Satisfy the specific nutritional requirements of the most vulnerable, such as pregnant and breastfeeding women, children under five, people living with HIV and AIDS, orphans, handicapped people, displaced populations, refugees and the elderly, by providing sufficient, safe and nutritious food;
- Earmark food aid primarily for emergency situations and for those most vulnerable groups identified according to the vulnerability analysis criteria, whether there is an emergency or not;
- Choose alternatives to food aid wherever possible and use it only when it is the most effective and appropriate means of assistance for the crisis in question.

In such cases:

- ▶ Use local purchases when available and preferably triangular operations. For triangular operations, preferably use sub-regional and regional markets;
- ▶ Pay particular attention to the impact local purchasing can have on food prices and hence on vulnerable population groups;
- ▶ Except in emergency situations, use only preferred foods that match the dietary habits of the beneficiary communities;
- ▶ Respect the “Duty to inform beneficiary countries on food safety and the traceability of food aid and their right to accept or reject such aid.”

The governments undertake to:

- Supply information on existing or expected surpluses and on food prices in the country’s markets, as this will facilitate making local or triangular purchases;
- Refrain from any restriction of local or triangular trade between surplus and deficit areas and allow free regional food trade;
- Take security measures to protect the population and ensure the safe delivery of food aid in times of crisis.

The IGOs undertake to:

- Strengthen government actions through regional assistance mechanisms for managing food and nutrition crises and other natural disasters;
- Promote policies conducive to the application of the principles and commitments of this Charter.

7 ASSESSING AND MONITORING **THE APPLICATION OF THE CHARTER**

The RPCA shall co-ordinate the monitoring and assessment of the application of the Charter. Assessment is based upon criteria adopted by the parties concerned at the national, regional and international levels. It is based upon:

- Permanent in-site monitoring of indicators through national food/nutrition security information systems;
- Yearly independent reviews of the application of the Charter.

The annual RPCA meeting shall examine assessments, draw conclusions and make consensual recommendations.

The parties concerned agree to:

- Incorporate the Charter application criteria into national and regional food and nutrition security information systems;
- Conduct independent annual reviews of the application of the Charter and the implications for the food and nutrition situation;

They also agree to:

- Systematically disseminate the results and recommendations of the independent annual review of the application of the Charter;
- Support the establishment by governments and IGOs of independent mechanisms/frameworks/committees (including CSOs, local elected officials, members of parliament, etc.) for monitoring and making assessments at the national and regional level;
- Implement local, national and regional programmes to strengthen the capacities of CSOs in order to enable their participation in the review of the application of the Charter.



© SWAC/OECD, CILSS, February 2012.

The large-scale consultation process which led to the approval of this Charter has been facilitated by the CILSS Executive Secretariat and the SWAC Secretariat.

Postal address

SWAC/OECD

2, rue André Pascal
75775 Paris, Cedex 16, France

Phone

+33 (0)1 45 24 19 82

E-mail

swac.contact@oecd.org

www.oecd.org/swac

CILSS

03 BP 7049 Ouagadougou 03
Burkina Faso

+226 50 37 41 25/26

cilss.se@cilss.bf

www.cilss.bf