

ROSA Newsletter



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VIEWS ON CURRENT ISSUES



Complementary policies to improve food crisis management in the Sahel

Over the last months, the Sahel countries have been facing a new food crisis. This raises the question of the instruments for managing these recurring crises. In this interview, Franck Galtier, a researcher from the CIRAD (Centre of International Cooperation in Agronomic Research for Development)¹ offers solutions. In order to take account of the structural effects of food crises, he recommends supporting targeted emergency aid with complementary policies that aim to limit price increases and recapitalise vulnerable households².

1. How would you describe the present crisis? What are the new elements compared with previous crises?

The present crisis combines the features of the 2005 crisis (soaring cereal prices due to poor harvests) and the 2008 crisis (high price of imported rice). As a result, all cereal prices are very high. In Mali, they have reached a historic high. The price of coarse cereals has already reached the high during the 2005 lean season and the price of rice, the high of the 2008 crisis. The fact that coarse cereals and rice are affected at the same time is especially worrying. In 2005, the price of imported rice fixed a ceiling for coarse cereal prices. In Bamako the price plateaued at 250 FCFA/kg four months before the new crops arrived. But today the ceiling is much higher. So the risk is that the price of coarse grains will continue to increase over the next months to reach extreme levels during the lean season.

It is difficult to predict price trends over the next few months. In normal seasons, prices would continue to increase until the next harvest arrives in October. However, the current situation is more complex. The trend is paradoxical because although cereal prices have increased substantially, production data show harvests that are only slightly lower than the average of the past five years. Two possible interpretations exist for this paradox. The first considers that prices do not reflect real availabilities due to speculation by traders who hold back stock, and panic buying by consumers. The second, which we believe to be more likely, is that production estimates are too optimistic.

¹ He is an economist with the CIRAD, within the mixed research team MOISA "Markets, organisations, institutions and strategies of players".

² This article summarises parts of the analysis from the note on the current food crisis in the Sahel (February 2012).

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If the first interpretation is correct, producers, traders and consumers hold abundant stocks. When these stocks come onto the market, prices will be stabilised or could even drop during the lean season. A second factor could curb the price rise of coarse cereals, i.e. regional trade between Sahel countries, and especially from coastal countries to the Sahel.

Three scenarios can be envisaged for coarse grain price trends in Sahel countries over the next few months: i) stabilisation, ii) partial stabilisation, with imports from coastal countries stabilising the price of maize but not millet or sorghum and iii) a rise in the price of all three cereals. According to the latest bulletins on the present situation³, the first - optimistic - scenario is the most likely.

Another feature of the present crisis is the very low resilience of many Sahel households. Many households have had to sell the little that they had to get through the crises of the past few years, which has lowered their resilience and made them very vulnerable to the current crisis. This is particularly the case since many of them lost most of their assets in 2005 and, since then, crises have been increasingly frequent. Niger, for example, has had crises in 2005, 2008, 2010 and 2012.

2. How can food crises in the Sahel be managed? How can the current crisis be managed?

Targeted emergency aid is essential for responding to food crisis. It is necessary for the Sahel in 2012. But it is not enough to solve the problems posed by the decapitalisation of households. The amounts and costs of emergency relief increase from one crisis to the next because of the decrease in resilience and the increase in the number of people in situations of food insecurity. In order to take account of this structural effect of food crises, targeted emergency aid needs to be supported with two complementary policies.

First, the price rise must be limited to prevent it reaching extremes. This can be done by limiting rice imports temporarily, to lower the ceiling level that rice prices set for coarse cereals. Such a measure would ideally be applied jointly by all Sahel countries to prevent the leakage of subsidized grains to neighbouring countries. For the current Sahel food crisis, this should only be applied if the price rise continues (cf. scenarios 2 and 3 above).

Second, safety nets need to be created to help recapitalise households. This involves asset transfer to vulnerable households over several years so as to restore their capacity to deal with future crises. The example of the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia shows that this type of measure is an effective way of limiting the results of food crises. A safety net programme like this should be set up in the Sahel once the 2012 crisis is over.

It is important to note that these measures are complementary. Limiting prices helps recapitalisation measures and the effectiveness of emergency relief as fewer people would need this aid. In the medium term, actions that are more structural are needed to improve market operations and make production less sensitive to climatic hazards.



³FEWSNET Bulletin (19 March) for West Africa, Afrique Verte for Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger (early March) and OMA for Mali (February).



Past events

Forthcoming events

22 March: World Bank workshop on food security and nutrition: From measurement to results – Washington D.C. (USA) [>>>](#)

12-13 April: Meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) – Paris (France)

17-20 April: Regional seminar « Social transfers for food security and nutrition in the Sahel » – Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)

June : G20 Summit - Los Cabos (Mexico) [>>>](#)

20-22 June : Rio+20 Summit - Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) [>>>](#)

October : 38th session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

For more information:
[Upcoming events](#)

Brussels Development Briefing on pastoralism (22nd February 2012, Brussels): This Briefing was organised in partnership with the African Union Commission, the European Commission (EuropeAid) the ACP Secretariat and CONCORD. The Briefing provided participants with an overview of the main challenges affecting the pastoralists, especially in the ACP countries, and the opportunities provided by existing continental and regional policy frameworks and processes. It will then focus on sharing good practices and experiences from the field across regions. It will also identify what urgent and concrete policy actions need to be in place to increase support pastoralism. Presentations and executive summaries are available online. Video documentation will be available in the coming weeks. [>>>](#)

Meeting of the organisations in charge of managing national food security stocks (RESOGEST) in the Sahel and West Africa (2nd March 2012, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso): The purpose of the meeting was to adopt the cooperation framework of structures in charge of managing national stocks for food security in the Sahel and West Africa. In particular, the meeting aimed to establish a food reserve to ensure the availability of cereals. [>>>](#)

Agreement on land guidelines (9 March 2012, Rome): The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, led by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) are meant to set out principles and internationally accepted standards for responsible practices in land tenure. The guidelines were adopted following intense debates between country delegates, international organizations and civil society representatives since the zero draft was presented by the FAO in April 2011. The final text contains useful guidance on investments in agriculture, redistributive reforms, response to natural disasters and the protection of common pool resources and insists on the importance of protecting the rights of legitimate tenure rights holders, including indigenous peoples. [>>>](#)

Regional consultation on the food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa (13-15 March, Côte d'Ivoire): This meeting is part of the consultation process of the regional system for food crisis prevention and management in the Sahel and West Africa. Discussions focused on the food and nutrition situation in the region. The final results for the 2011-2012 crop year show that the region is facing both food and fodder deficit that result in localized crises. The meeting resulted in several recommendations, in particular to increase support for mitigation actions through flexible and rapidly deployable instruments. [>>>](#)

EC's latest news

Recent and forthcoming activities of the NAS at the delegation level: The Nutrition Advisory Service (NAS) was established by EuropeAid in 2009 to provide technical and strategic advice to EU delegations and Directorates General (DGs). It aims to promote a shared understanding and a common approach across the EU to addressing undernutrition.

At the delegation level, NAS has provided support on policy dialogue, programme/project development and implementation. The advice covers both nutrition-sensitive development and nutrition-specific interventions. Here are some examples of the broad areas for NAS support in a wide range of EU Delegations working in countries where nutrition is a concern.

A major area for NAS support is programme and project design. This entails technical and strategic input in the preparation of concept notes, identification fiches, action fiches and grant application guidelines. NAS has provided support to delegations for applying a nutrition lens to actions in different thematic areas (rural

development/agriculture, water and sanitation, health, etc.) in order to tackle the various causes of undernutrition, facilitate the necessary contribution of these sectors and, maximize nutrition benefits.

Advice at key decision-making stages of monitoring and evaluation has also been a key component of NAS work. Given the importance of selecting the right indicators, thresholds and targets, NAS has been supporting delegations in their political dialogue, including discussions on the National Indicative Programme and the selection of nutrition-relevant indicators for budget support.

In relation to national level coordination and dialogue, NAS has supported a range of activities: advocacy for nutrition in national policies, inclusion of a food security and nutrition dimension in the national strategies, planning and information system. NAS input is also relevant for policy documents that are not nutrition-specific to ensure that other sectors contribute to tackling nutrition.

Developed with the support of the NAS, an EU reference document on nutrition was published in September 2011⁴. This practical document underpins all areas of the NAS activity, including training and awareness raising. This is an ongoing area of work. NAS missions have provided opportunities to raise the nutrition awareness of EU Delegation staff and partners.

Joint NAS/ECHO missions have also been organised to support both the delegations and ECHO. By making the Nutrition Advisory Service available to ECHO, EuropeAid has facilitated LRRD work and coherence across interventions.

Based on past experience, there are some lessons learnt on ways of working to make the most efficient use of NAS services by EU Delegations. NAS has value-added expertise at different stages; however, the earlier the involvement, the better to gain the most out of the service. NAS support is also enhanced when on-going involvement and regular follow-up are agreed upon the delegations as part of an annual request for support.

For the coming months, NAS will prioritise support at delegation level to the programming of the 11th EDF and the Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) and to crisis management (e.g. in the Sahel).

Recent and forthcoming activities of the NAS at the international level will be presented in the next ROSA Newsletter.

ROSA NEWS



New online documents

- ***Briefing paper on the current food crisis in the Sahel, Franck Galtier, CIRAD - 2012***

This briefing is only available in French. It takes stock of the food and nutrition situation in Sahel and proposes complementary policies to respond to food crisis. The author argues that targeted emergency assistance is essential in times of crisis to protect people who are the most vulnerable. However, it does not solve the problem of the de-capitalization of households and that of chronic food insecurity. The briefing paper concludes that, in order to manage the current food crisis in the Sahel, it is necessary to complete relief interventions by policies to prevent food prices from further increasing, and to establish safety nets to recapitalize households with low resilience. >>>

⁴European Commission, *Addressing Undernutrition in External Assistance. An integrated approach through sectors and aid modalities, Tools and methods series, Reference document No. 13, September 2011.* <http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/topic/fighting-hunger-food-security-nutrition>

- **2012 Strategic Document. Response plan addressing the food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel, Food Security and Nutrition Working Group - 2012**

The objective of this strategic document is to enhance preparedness against the risk of food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel and in neighbouring countries in 2012, and make response more effective and timely. This document was developed under the leadership of the regional Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). It was jointly prepared by Action Against Hunger (ACF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) on behalf of the IASC Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group. The strategy was launched December 2011 and a revised version was issued on February 2012. An update is currently under preparation. It provides detailed data on funding needs by country.

[>>>](#)

- **Levine S. et al., System failure? Revisiting the problems of timely response to crises in the Horn of Africa, Humanitarian Practice Network Paper - November 2011**

Investments in early warning over a number of years has brought significant improvements in humanitarian response in pastoral areas in the Horn of Africa. However, evaluations have shown that interventions to protect and support people's livelihoods have consistently arrived too late to achieve their intended impact. This Network Paper grows out of work done under the Pastoral Areas Coordination, Analysis and Policy Support (PACAPS) project, a component of USAID's Regional Enhanced Livelihoods in Pastoral Areas (RELPA) programme.

[>>>](#)

Nutrition

- **A life free from hunger, Save the Children - 2012**

This report analyses the causes of malnutrition, focusing on chronic malnutrition and stunting in children and identifies solutions. It calls for national and international action on six key steps. Of particular interest, chapter 5 examines the political factors that contribute to the global burden of hunger and malnutrition, and recommends how governments, multilateral agencies, business and individuals can play their part in tackling the problem. This report is accompanied by a series of country briefings on tackling child malnutrition in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan and Tanzania.

[>>>](#)

- **Working multisectorally in nutrition : Principles, practices, and case studies IFPRI - December 2012**

Improving nutrition in developing countries is likely to require a multi-sectoral approach that involves a variety of ministries and organisations addressing particular aspects of the problem. This report aims to examine how these multi-sectoral efforts can be made effective. It uses case studies from Senegal and Colombia of successful multi-sectoral efforts to integrate action on nutrition. The lessons offered in this book can be used to inform and orient multi-sectoral work, not only in combating malnutrition but also, more broadly, in engaging in cross-sectoral and interagency endeavours as a whole.

[>>>](#)

Social transfers

- **The impact of cash transfers on nutrition in emergency and transitional contexts: A review of evidence, ODI - January 2012**

This study examines the impact of cash transfers on nutrition in emergency and transitional settings. Drawing on 54 evaluations and project documents from humanitarian programmes since 2004, literature on cash transfer programmes and correspondence with aid agencies, it examines how cash transfers could address malnutrition and its causes in crises and transitional contexts.

[>>>](#)



External resources and links

- ***Urgent measures needed to face the prevailing food crisis in the Sahel region, Food Crisis Prevention Network, Food Security Information Note (NISA) 45 - February 2012***

This briefing note presents and analyses the problematic food and nutrition situation in the Sahel. It is described as a slow-onset crisis and exacerbated by the general rise in prices of virtually all food products. This further compromises the access of poorer households to food. Country response plans are being developed, but the main challenge remains their immediate application.

http://www.food-security.net//medias/File/nisa45_fevrier2012.pdf

- ***The 2012 Sahel Crisis website - FAO***

It contains information and documents on food security situation in the Sahel region and an overview of FAO's response to the current food crisis, together with its main partners.

<http://www.fao.org/crisis/sahel/the-sahel-crisis/en/>

More information is also available on the FAO and emergencies' page on West Africa and the Sahel

<http://www.fao.org/emergencies/country-information/list/regional/westafrica-sahelprogramme/en/>

- ***Two new consultations on social protection and climate change, FSN Forum FAO – March 2012***

The Global Forum on food security and nutrition launched two new consultations on behalf of the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security, on: i) social protection for food security and ii) climate change for food security. Visit the [FSN Forum](#) to share your inputs on the version 0 draft of the reports that have been prepared by the Project Teams. Comments received will help further elaborate the reports, which will be presented at the Committee in October 2012.

- ***Bulletin on Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) - January 2012***

This bulletin describes the progress made in the SUN initiative, launched in September 2010. It focuses on i) progress on scaling up nutrition at country level and ii) new stewardship arrangements for the SUN Movement that are being put in place during the first half of 2012.

<http://www.scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/SUN-Information-Note-January-2012.pdf>

- ***Field Exchange: The ENN Magazine, Issue 42 - February 2012***

Field Exchange is a tri-annual magazine containing field articles, research and news pieces for those working in emergency nutrition and food security. This issue presents 5 field articles (including Philippines, Zambia, Sudan, Guinea), a focus on coverage assessment, 17 research articles and 2 evaluations.

<http://www.ennonline.net/pool/files/fex/fieldexchange42.pdf>



Photos: European Commission, Dominique Violas
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This bulletin was written by the GRET team in charge of animating ROSA.

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The points expressed do not reflect the official position of the European Commission.