ALERT NOTE

2026-2027 AGROPASTORAL SITUATION IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

ACT NOW TO PROTECT LIVELIHOODS AND PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION IN FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

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Early warning signals are mounting across West Africa and the Sahel. With nearly 57 million people already projected to face acute food and nutrition insecurity during the 2026 lean season, according to the March 2026 Cadre Harmonisé analysis, the mid-season review of the 2026–2027 agropastoral campaign points to significant risks of production shortfalls. Pastoral resources are deteriorating, while the most vulnerable households are increasingly exposed. Meeting from 14 to 16 September 2026 as part of the regional consultation of the Regional System for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises (PREGEC), national and regional experts from countries across the Sahel and West Africa highlighted the combined impact of erratic rainfall linked to the El Niño phenomenon, insecurity, economic disruptions, and constraints on market access on the livelihoods of already highly vulnerable rural populations.

UNCERTAIN HARVESTS IN THE MOST VULNERABLE AREAS

Despite efforts by governments, with support from national and international partners, to sustain agricultural production, the season has been marked by prolonged dry spells and significant rainfall variability. Agricultural prospects are particularly concerning in Chad, Mauritania, Niger, and Cabo Verde, where yield deficits are considered likely. These risks could be further compounded by flooding, insecurity, pest outbreaks, and post-harvest losses.

For millions of households dependent on rain-fed agriculture, a poor agricultural season would mean reduced food stocks, declining incomes, and increased reliance on negative coping strategies. The rapid completion of the agricultural campaign assessment and its integration into the forthcoming Cadre Harmonisé analysis will be critical to refining the identification of high-risk areas and triggering anticipatory and response measures early enough.

A SILENT PASTORAL CRISIS IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE REGION

Following two generally exceptional years in 2024 and 2025, characterised by favourable pastoral conditions across the region, the 2026–2027 pastoral season is marked by deteriorating forage resources.

While conditions remain close to average across much of the region, the situation is particularly concerning in certain areas, notably eastern Niger (Diffa, Zinder,

and Agadez) and the Lake Chad Basin, extending through Kanem, Batha, Wadi Fira, Lac, and Ennedi in Chad.

In these areas, the deterioration of pastoral conditions is creating growing risks for the livelihoods of pastoralist and agropastoralist households. This abrupt deterioration points to a particularly difficult lean season in areas already weakened by drought, insecurity, and growing pressure on natural resources. Insufficient forage reserves risk rapidly reducing livestock body condition, lowering milk production, and increasing the costs borne by livestock keepers to maintain the viability of their herds.

For pastoralist families, the loss of an animal is more than an economic loss: it reduces access to milk, undermines household income, and weakens their ability to recover from shocks. Protecting livestock now also means protecting children's diets and preventing further deterioration in malnutrition.

Declining milk production and livestock losses threaten household income, food security, and resilience, while early and large-scale transhumance is increasing pressure on pastoral resources and the risk of tensions between pastoralist and agropastoral communities.

In the Lake Chad Basin, eastern Niger, eastern Chad, and border areas with Sudan, where insecurity is already restricting access to resources, the convergence of forage deficits, mobility constraints, and fragile markets could push thousands of people into heightened vulnerability.

In Mauritania, although rainfall has been broadly average to normal, its high spatial and temporal variability, combined with prolonged dry spells observed in several southern wilayas, has affected pasture development and limited biomass production. Vegetation deficits persist particularly in the two Hodh regions, raising concerns about the early depletion of forage resources and a deterioration in pastoral conditions if end-of-season rainfall remains insufficient.

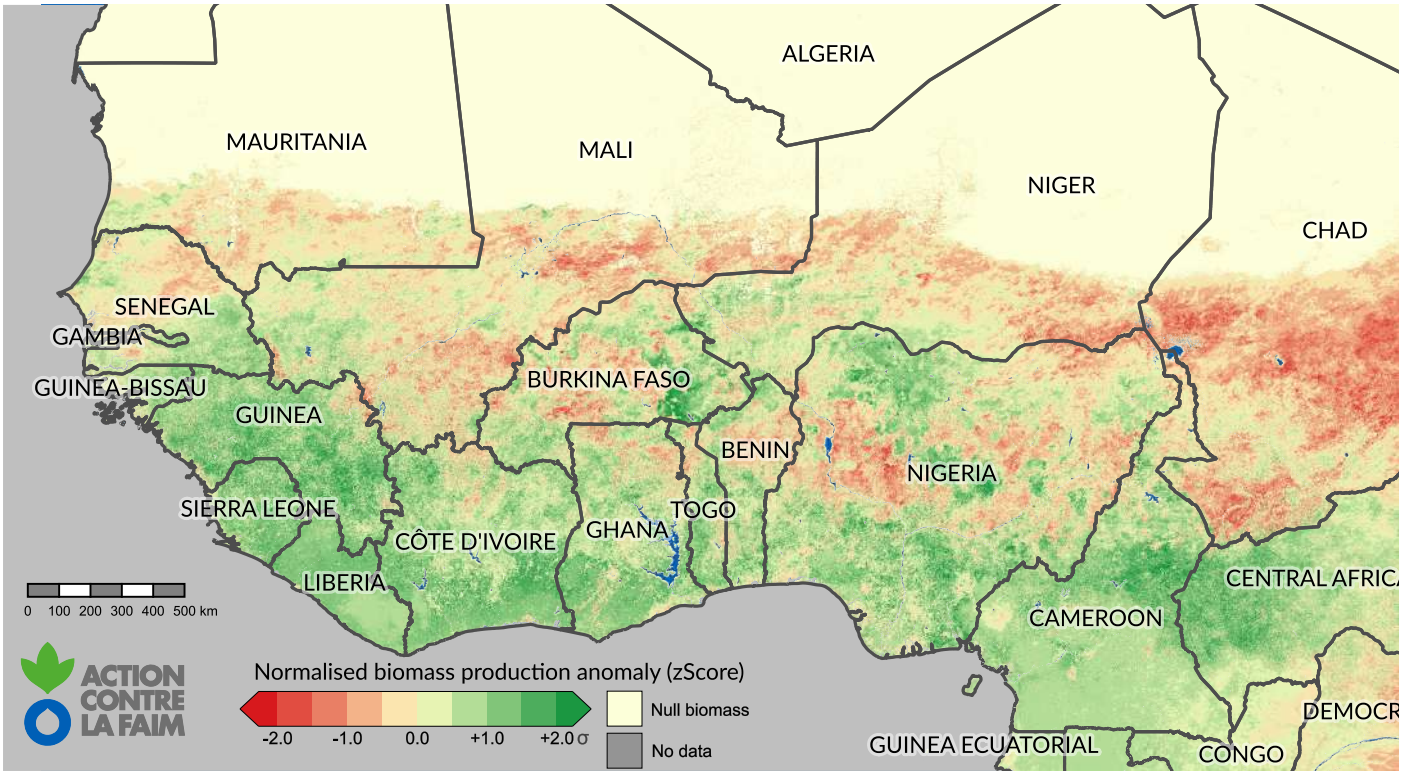
ACT BEFORE THE CRISIS ESCALATES

The conclusions of the PREGEC consultation converge on one clear message: action is needed before the crisis worsens. The coming months will be critical for anticipating the lean season, assessing the true scale of needs through the forthcoming Cadre Harmonisé analysis, pre-positioning the resources required, and supporting the livelihoods of the households most at risk.

In 2026, humanitarian response plans remain severely underfunded in several affected countries, with only 15% of needs funded in Niger, 23% in Mali, and 20% in Burkina Faso. This funding shortfall limits the ability to anticipate crises and underscores the urgent need to mobilise adequate and flexible resources to protect livelihoods before the situation deteriorates further.

Map of biomass production anomalies compared to the 1999-2025 average (end of August 2026)

Produced using products from the European Copernicus Land Monitoring Service



Source: Geosahel.info

A CALL FOR SOLIDARITY AND EARLY INVESTMENT

West Africa and the Sahel are approaching a tipping point. The combination of likely agricultural production deficits, deteriorating pastoral conditions, particularly in the eastern part of the region, forced displacement, and rising food insecurity threatens the resilience gains achieved by millions of households. Faced with this convergence of risks, technical and financial partners must act before the crisis reaches its peak.

TO GOVERNMENTS AND REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Action Against Hunger calls on governments and regional organisations to rapidly translate the Cadre Harmonisé results into budgeted and operational national response plans ahead of the next lean season. It is also essential to ensure safe and unhindered access to the most vulnerable populations and to agricultural and pastoral areas, while facilitating livestock mobility, access to markets, grazing areas, and water points. Finally, stronger coordination among authorities, regional organisations, communities, and humanitarian partners is essential to ensure rapid, coherent, and effective responses before food stocks and forage resources are depleted.

This mobilisation must be led by national authorities, with the effective participation of local and pastoralist stakeholders. Stronger regional coordination is also essential to ensure safe transhumance, preserve access to pastoral resources, and prevent cross-border tensions.

TO DONORS AND OPERATIONAL PARTNERS

Action Against Hunger calls on technical and financial partners to rapidly mobilise sufficient, predictable, and flexible funding to accelerate the shift from early warning to early action. These resources should support early warning systems, off-season agricultural campaigns, the anticipatory distribution of agricultural inputs, livestock protection, and early food security and nutrition interventions. Funding modalities adapted to access constraints are also needed to enable local actors to respond in a timely manner in the most vulnerable areas, before livelihoods deteriorate further and the costs of intervention increase.

Funding must support an integrated response combining livelihood protection, food security, access to essential services, and the prevention and treatment of malnutrition, with priority given to the most vulnerable populations.

Flexible funding that is accessible to local organisations is essential to ensure a rapid and context-appropriate response, particularly in hard-to-reach areas.

Action Against Hunger calls on governments, regional institutions, and donors to mobilise now the resources needed in the areas most at risk. Early warning must trigger early action before pastures are depleted, livestock are sold in distress, and the nutritional status of vulnerable populations deteriorates.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACTS

Fanta Touré Diop, Regional representative
ftoure@wa.acfspain.org

Youssouf Kane, Regional food security and livelihoods advisor
ykane@wa.acfspain.org

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