The participants in the regional technical consultation on the validation of the final results of the 2017-2018 cropping season and the food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa, held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 26 to 28 March 2018, issued the following statement:

1. The agricultural production trends that were announced in November 2017 in Bamako for the 2017-2018 cropping season are confirmed, but slightly down for cereals in some Sahelian countries. Cereal production in the region is estimated at 67.7 million metric tonnes, up by 2.5% and 11.7% compared to the 2016-2017 cropping season and the five-year average, respectively. However, in comparison with the past season, significant declines are recorded in The Gambia (-29.17%), Burkina Faso (-11.03%), Guinea Bissau (-7.01%) and Chad (-5.46%). The most critical situation is that of Cabo Verde, which has not recorded any agricultural production for this year due to drought. Production of tubers at 188 million metric tonnes is up by 6.5% from the cropping season 2016-17 and 21% above the average of the last five years. However a significant decrease (-20.3%) is recorded for taro, particularly in the coastal countries. Productions of cash crops, estimated at 8.04 million metric tonnes for groundnuts, 7.5 million for cowpeas, 1.78 million for soybeans and 3.73 million for sesame, are up compared to last year and the five-year average.

2. The pastoral situation remains a concern and is characterised by the early depletion of residual fodder biomass and temporary water points. This has led to early departure of transhumant herds to host areas, which has led to high concentrations of herds of animals in the pastoral enclaves and nature reserves, where risks of epizootic diseases are to be feared. On the health front, outbreaks of African swine fever have caused significant losses in southern Benin.

3. The situation of the agricultural markets is reflected in a general rise in the prices of local products, and a relatively low level of prices for imported cereals. Prices for local foodstuffs, cereals and tubers have remained higher than the average of the last five years in most countries. In addition to the decline in production in the Sahelian belt, this rise in prices is attributable to the effects of the depreciation of certain local currencies and inflation in several countries. International prices are still favourable, although slightly upward trends have been observed in recent months on the cereals price index. Prices of cash crops, especially cowpeas, remain broadly stable in comparison with the five-year average; this augurs a stable income for producing households. In perspective, price increases could continue in the coming months in the Sahelian markets, especially for millet and sorghum, if nothing is done.
4. In livestock markets, cattle and small ruminant prices are stable relative to the five-year average, with a downward trend. The largest decreases in Mauritania and Chad are due to difficult pastoral conditions and low demand. As a result, terms of trade for livestock/cereals and cash crops/cereals have deteriorated significantly in the region. This could further affect the purchasing power of pastoral and agro-pastoral households and their access to food.

5. The nutritional situation remains worrying in the region. However, there is a trend towards improvement in some areas where States and their partners have implemented prevention actions. Nevertheless, the estimate of the number of admissions expected in 2018 could increase between now and the lean season, from 1.1 million to 1.6 million expected cases, i.e., 46% increase especially in the six Sahelian countries if multi-sectoral preventive measures are not implemented immediately. Mitigation measures must include specific actions for the most vulnerable, including children, pregnant and lactating women.

6. The Cadre Harmonisé analyses, which were conducted in all CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA countries, reveal a deterioration of the food and nutrition situation in the Sahelian belt (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad) due to deteriorating food conditions and livelihood erosion amongst poor and very poor households. On the other hand, it is stable in the Gulf of Guinea countries and improving in the north-eastern States of Nigeria (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe) thanks to ongoing humanitarian interventions. Thus, according to the results of the analyses, during the pre-harvest hunger period (March-May 2018), about 7.1 million people, mostly pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, are food and nutrition insecure. This situation is aggravated by persistent civil insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin, the Liptako-Gourma Loop (Burkina, Mali and Niger) and in central Mali. If immediate and appropriate responses are not provided, the number of people concerned could reach 10.6 million people by the lean season (June-August 2018).

7. In view of all the above, the meeting made the following recommendations:

To the States:

- Accelerate rapid implementation of national response plans: i) to assist populations in crisis and food and nutrition emergency in the Sahel countries, with special attention to the most vulnerable groups, especially young children, pregnant and lactating women; ii) to protect the livelihoods of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist populations under pressure by focusing on the supply of livestock feed and other pastoral vulnerability management tools;

- Maintain monitoring and surveillance of crop pests, particularly the armyworm to prevent the risk of widespread dissemination;

- Invest in resource mobilization for the financing of data collection operations required for food and nutrition security analyses through the Cadre Harmonisé cycles;

- Maintain information monitoring on markets and cross-border trade flows.

To CILSS:

- Continue building the capacity of the members of the national units to master the analytical approach of the Cadre Harmonisé and the use of its tools;

- Continue capacity building of national MISs.

- Invest in the inclusion of animal and fish production in regional syntheses

- Strengthen dialogue and consultation between stakeholders for a peaceful management of cross-border transhumance.

To the partners:

- Continue support to the States in financing data collection operations necessary for the smooth running of the Cadre Harmonisé;

- Continue supporting inter-governmental organizations as well as the States in the fight against the armyworm that threatens agricultural production in the region;

- Support the States in the rapid implementation of responses for the prevention of pastoral crisis risks;

- Strengthen the scaling up and operationalization of of resilience-building interventions for vulnerable communities

Done at Ouagadougou, on 28 March 2018

The Meeting
At least four in five households are able to meet their food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical coping strategies or relying on humanitarian assistance.

Even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households in the area have the following or worse: reduced and minimally adequate food consumption but unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in irreversible coping strategies.

Even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households in the area experiences the following or worse: large food shortages and acute malnutrition at high or higher-than-normal rates.

Even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households in the area experiences the following or worse: extreme food consumption gaps resulting in very high acute malnutrition or excess mortality; OR extreme loss of livelihood assets that will lead to food consumption gaps in the short term.

Even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households in the area experiences total lack of food and/or other basic needs and are clearly exposed to starvation, death and deprivation. Note: Evidence for all three criteria of food consumption, wasting and crude death rate (CDR) are required to classify famine.