

## **ECOWAS undertakes technical rotation of part of the cereals of the Regional Food Security Reserve in Ghana**

2,750 tons of cereals composed of 1000 tons of maize, 750 tons of white rice, 500 tons of millet, 500 tons of sorghum all stored in the National Food Buffer Stock Company (NAFCO) warehouses in Tamale and Yendi. This is the quantity of the cereals of the Regional Food Security Reserve that ECOWAS availed for Ghana to feed beneficiary students under the Government's flagship of "Free Senior High School Program".

The handover ceremony took place on Friday 28 December 2018 in Tamale, a city located at about 634 kms from Accra, the Capital city of Ghana. This ceremony is the concrete response of ECOWAS to the request submitted by Ghana to the ECOWAS Commission on 11 September 2018 seeking authorization to use the stocks of 2,750 tons of cereals of the Regional Food Security Reserve stored in Ghana.

The quality control of these food products has been monitored and taken care by NAFCO since the entry of the stocks into its warehouses in 2017. These cereals are therefore safe and suitable for human consumption.

This is made possible thanks to the Support Project to Food Security Storage in West Africa that the European Union is funding with a budget amounting to 56 million Euros.

Like the cereals given to the Governments of the Republic of Niger and Burkina Faso last August, 6528 tons to Niger and 4303 tons to Burkina Faso, the 2750 tons of cereals availed for Ghana have been purchased from small producers of the West Africa region.

While receiving these cereals, the Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture, Dr Sagre Bambangi, in the presence of the Ghana ECOWAS National Office Director, Mr. Harold Agyeman, expressed his gratitude to the ECOWAS Commission for its favorable response to his country's request.

As for the NAFCO Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Hanan Abdul-Wahab, he pleaded for the strengthening of bilateral relations with the ECOWAS Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (ARAA/RAAF) as his company is positioning itself to further increase its storage capacity in accordance with the standards of the regional organization.

The Government of Ghana has re-assured the ECOWAS Commission that the grains to be used will be refunded grain by grain with the same quality specifications and packaging by March 2019 to maintain the Regional Food Security Reserve stock level in Ghana at the exact locations of Yendi and Tamale.

For the ECOWAS Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Mr. Sékou Sangaré, who represented the President of the ECOWAS Commission at the handover ceremony, the regional organization will always support its member States whenever possible in providing positive answers to their requests relating to food and nutrition security.

« We sincerely hope that the Ghana School Canteen Program will be consolidated and will quickly diversify to take over the food supply of all Ghanaian cities and gradually extend to all ECOWAS member Countries as well”, Mr. Sangaré said.

For him, this is a major challenge and he has no doubt on Ghana's willingness to support ECOWAS in the development of the Regional Food Security Reserve along this path and also to facilitate the free movement of goods and services in the region.

“Together with Ghana, we have to work towards removing all the barriers that hinder the economic and social integration of our countries and our populations, and by so doing, to promote the Ecowas of Peoples”, he indicated.

“The Regional Food Security Reserve allows member countries to quickly express their solidarity to those countries whose populations are in difficult food and nutritional situations. It also helps to ensure profitable markets for small producers, to encourage them to produce more and have access to markets within the framework of their professional organizations. The Regional Food Reserve therefore enables better regulation of market prices, prices which shall be profitable for both consumers and producers”, Commissioner Sangaré concluded.

To recall, the Regional Food Security Reserve was created on 28 February 2013 in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, by the Ecowas Heads of State and Government at their 42<sup>nd</sup> ordinary Summit. It aims to (i) complement the efforts of the member States to provide rapid and diversified food and nutrition assistance, (ii) express regional solidarity to member States and affected populations through transparent, equitable and predictable mechanisms, (iii) contribute to food sovereignty and to the political, economic and trade integration of West Africa.