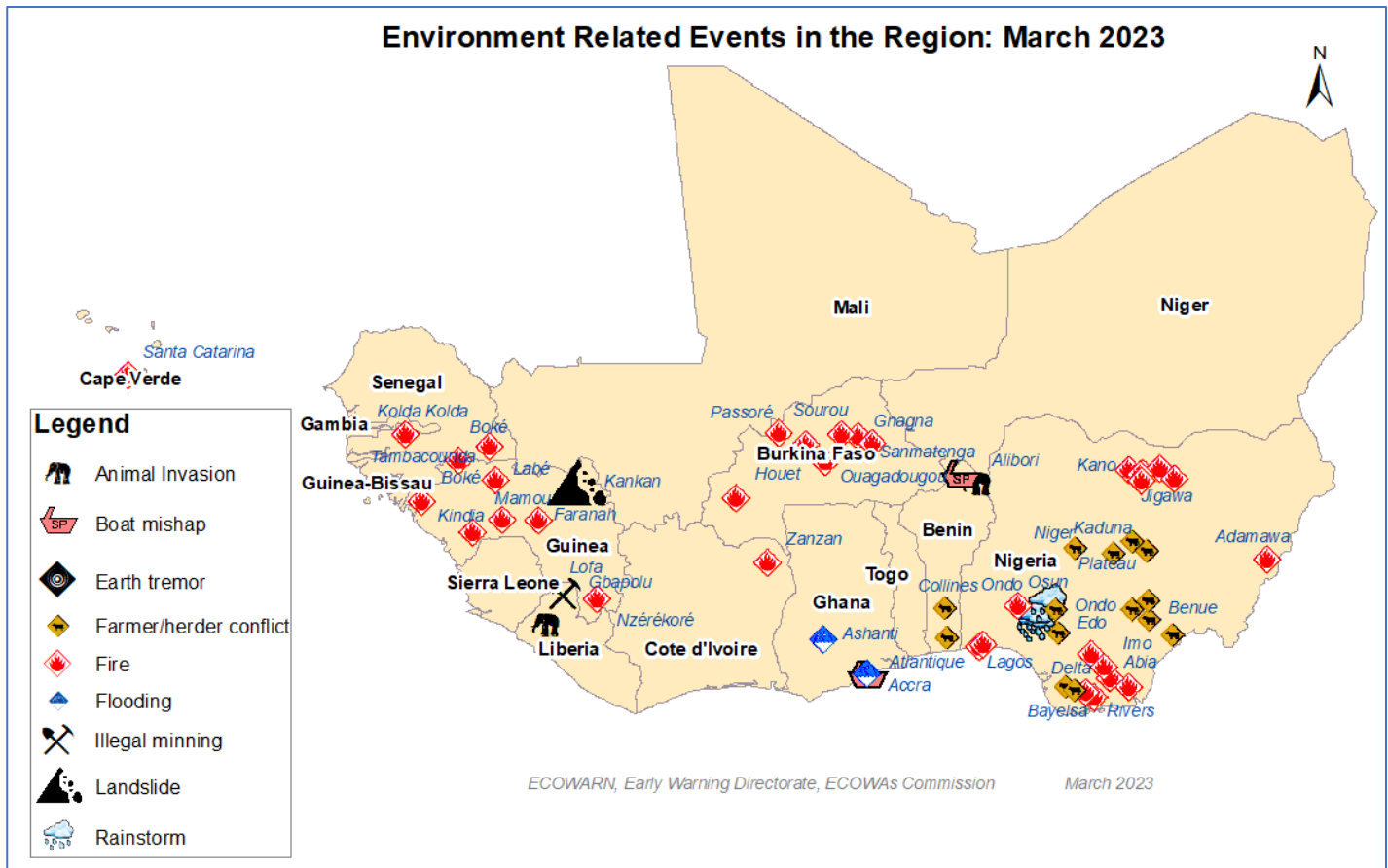




Human Security Report: Climate Change and Environment



During the month under review, as depicted in the above events map, the region witnessed several environmental incidents, such as farmer-herder conflicts, fire, boat mishaps, landslides, flooding, and rainstorms. These events have significantly impacted the environment and its inhabitants. This thematic report on climate change and the environment is crucial to understanding some of the root causes of these events and developing effective recommendations to mitigate their effects in the future.



Executive Summary

The pastoralist and farmer-herder conflict, exacerbated by climate change, has severely affected some ECOWAS Member States. The citizens are grappling with devastating distress due to the immense destruction of lives and properties worth millions of dollars. With over a hundred fatalities recorded in the region last month alone, Nigeria is the worst affected country. Urgent intervention is required to address this crisis and prevent further loss of lives and properties. Benin also suffered losses due to this conflict, highlighting the gravity of the situation. The impact of climate change on pastoralists cannot be ignored, and proactive measures must be taken to prevent further loss of lives and properties.

In March 2023, the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN Early Warning System) data highlighted that Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Senegal, Benin, and Ghana had the highest environmental-related disasters, primarily due to farmer-herder conflicts, fires, flooding and landslides. These incidents reveal that increased competition for natural resources, loss of livelihoods, forced migration, and displacement are on the rise. The statistics of the recent incidents are disturbing and have significantly impacted the environment and its inhabitants. With over 65 reported incidents resulting in more than 100 fatalities, it is crucial to raise awareness about these issues and find ways to reduce or prevent such tragedies from reoccurring.

Furthermore, the report issued by three UN agencies, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), late last year stated that the number of hungry people in West and Central Africa could reach a record high of 48 million by 2023 due to food insecurity. It is alarming that more than 35 million people in the region, including 6.7 million children, are struggling to meet their basic food and nutrition needs. The report called on governments to prioritise initiatives to address food insecurity and ensure everyone can access adequate food resources. According to the report, the situation in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border region indicates the severity of the food insecurity crisis. The report warned that numbers could rise unless urgent and long-lasting solutions are brought in to address the crisis. [With 25,500 people expected to experience catastrophic hunger during the June-August lean season this year, the issue of food insecurity requires immediate attention.](#)

This March thematic report will shed light on the underlying causes of the threat posed by the environment-related events reported by the ECOWARN and provide recommendations to mitigate their effects. Also, the report will assist policymakers in making informed decisions to combat the rising challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation.

Highlights

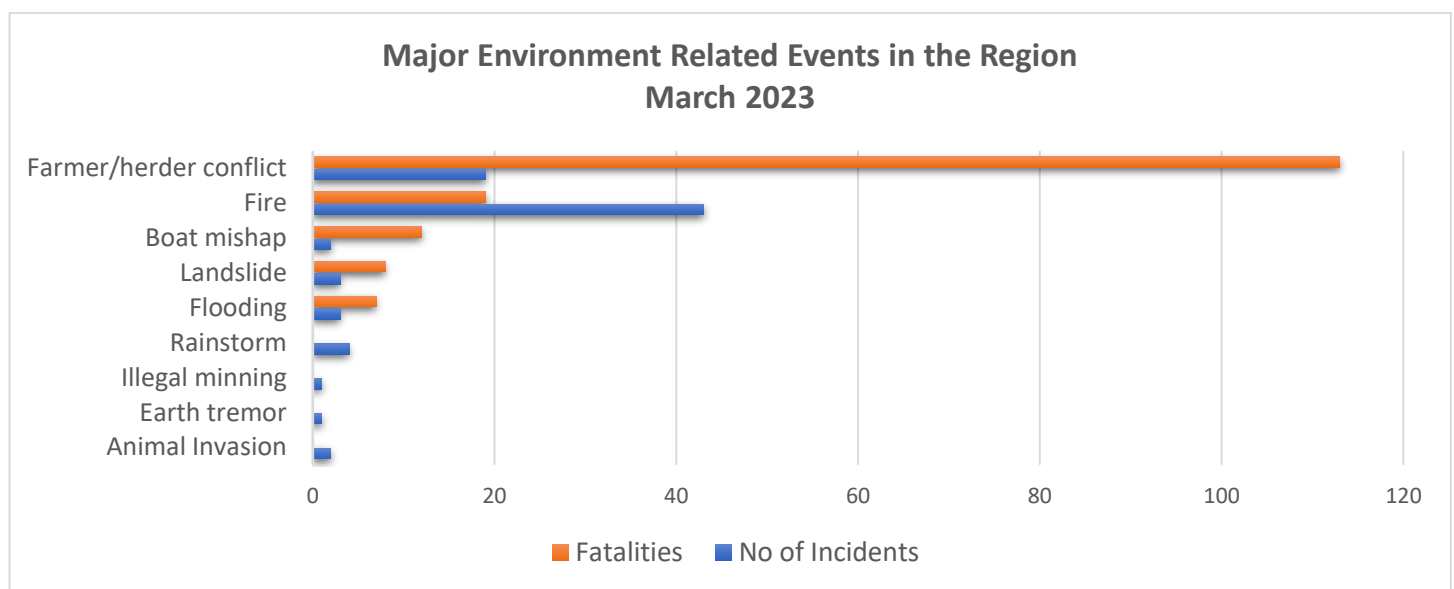
1. Transhumance conflicts accounted for the highest incident figure, with over 100 fatalities in March 2023 alone.
2. Fire incidents accounted for about 19 fatalities and loss of properties.
3. Boat mishaps resulted in 16 fatalities in the month under review.
4. UN says the number of hungry people in West and Central Africa could reach a record high of 48 million by 2023 due to food insecurity.



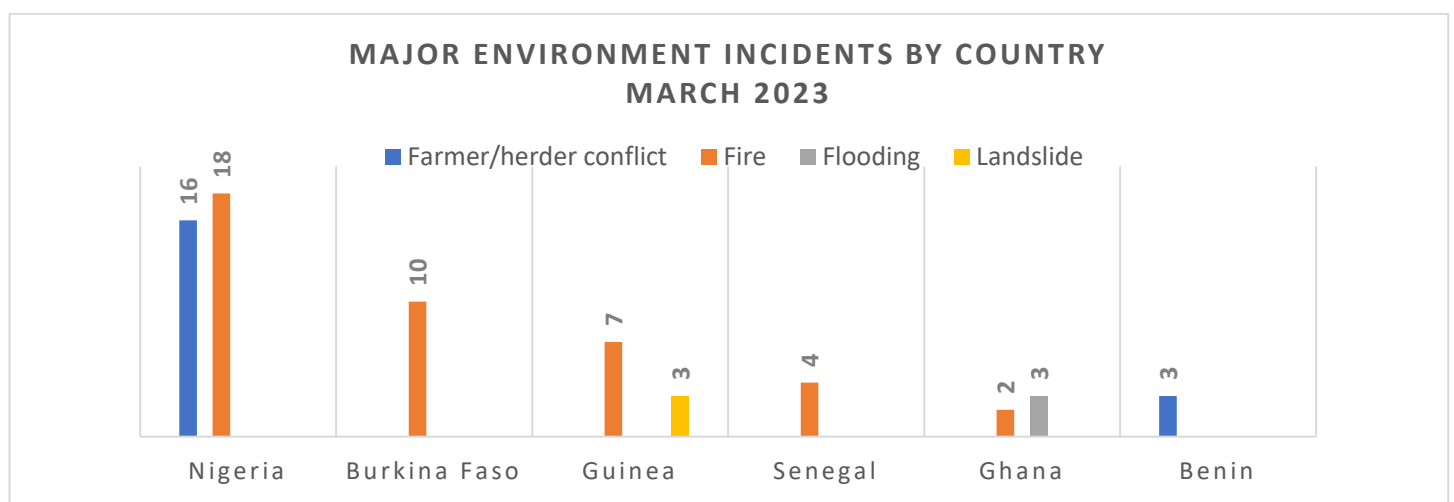
Analysis of Current Developments

Environmental related incidents

The analysis of incidents in the charts below provides a clear understanding of the wide-ranging environmental events that occurred throughout March 2023. According to ECOWARN, transhumance conflict again proved to be the most devastating incident, causing physical and financial harm to local communities. Loss of property, crop destruction, and farmland encroachment was among the reported damages. Besides, other incidents like fire, boat mishaps, landslides, flooding, and rainstorm were closely monitored and reported by ECOWARN. Addressing these incidents and creating sustainable solutions prioritising the environment and local communities well-being is crucial.



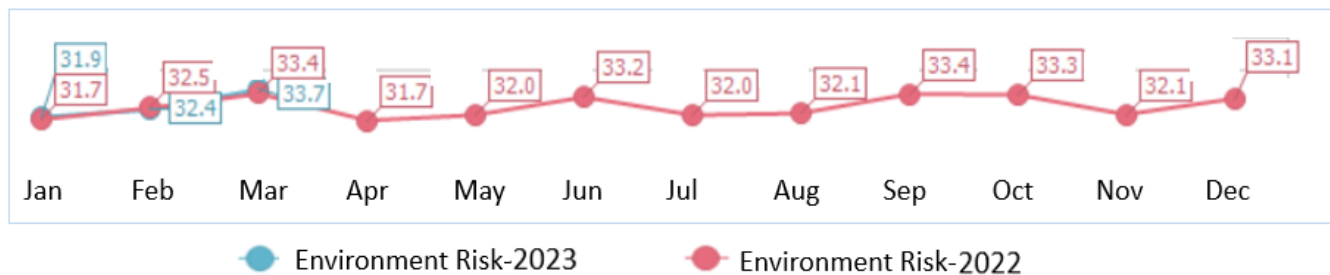
Major incidents chart in the region - March. 2023. [Source: ECOWARN](#)



Major Incidents chart by country - March. 2023. [Source: ECOWARN 2.0](#)



Monthly Situation Risk Score for Environment in the Region: 2022 - 2023



The situation risk graph for the region above provides valuable insights into the region's risk level. The undulating risk level recorded in the graph indicates that there were periods of increased and decreased risk throughout the year. The downward trend observed in April 2022 was a positive sign; however, this was short-lived, as an upward trend was sustained from May till December 2022. As we move into 2023, it's important to note that a similar trend is reoccurring between January to March, where an upward risk trend pattern is reported. The overall risk level for the region is still within the minimal threshold based on the ECOWARN System risk calibration levels.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION

Environmental pollution and degradation continue to significantly challenge human health and the environment in West Africa. This month's report highlights the concerns of environmentalists in four ECOWAS Member States, namely Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, in addressing and reporting on the impact of pollutants on the environment.

Ghana

Plastics polluting the sea is a global environmental crisis, and Ghana is no exception. According to the World Economic Forum, the country produces a staggering 840 000 tonnes of plastic waste annually, with only a small portion being recycled. This unrecycled waste poses a significant threat to people and marine animals, as Christopher Gordon of the Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies at the University of Ghana noted. [In response, Ghana 2019 launched its national plastic action plan to encourage businesses to make products out of recycled plastic. However, few have heeded the call, and much work remains to address this pressing issue.](#)

Niger

The pollution of the Niger River in Niamey has raised concerns among environmentalists. As the river is at its lowest during the dry season, strict measures is required to prevent further narrowing. The effects of this pollution are not limited to Niger alone but also affect the populations of Mali, Benin, Guinea, and Nigeria, which rely on the river as a water source. The visible effects of pollution are alarming, with water taking on abnormally dark colours due to chemicals and waste dumping. [Environmental activists are calling on the Nigerien authorities to regulate the dumping of household and industrial waste into the river and to raise awareness.](#)

Also, the issue of radioactive waste pollution is a growing concern in many parts of the world. In Niger, the fear is especially palpable as a million tonnes of partially radioactive waste remain abandoned in the Arlit region. [While an ambitious 10-year scheme is in place to secure the waste and prevent environmental and health risks, residents are understandably worried and sceptical.](#)



Senegal

Waste management has become a critical issue in Senegal due to the increasing number of discarded plastics. The country is struggling with fly-tipping, polluted landfills, and debris-covered beaches. President Macky Sall's proposal to ban single-use plastics in 2020 and turn Senegal into a "zero waste" nation is a step in the right direction. However, activists are sceptical about whether the state can achieve this goal after decades of chaotic management in dealing with the problem. [Senegalese recyclers seek solutions to tackle the waste crisis, hoping to find ways to reduce pollution and promote sustainable living.](#)

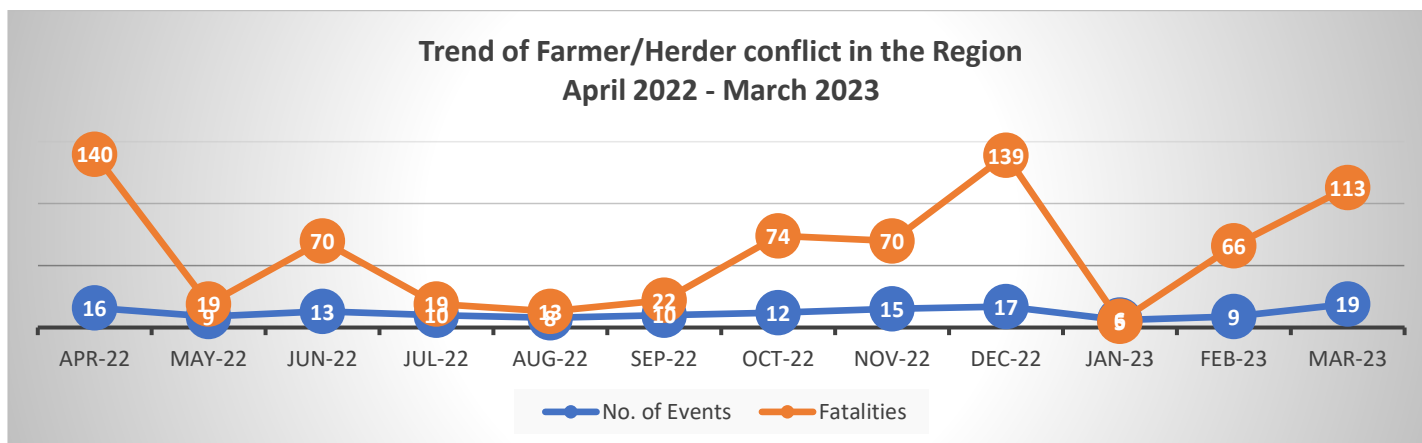
Nigeria

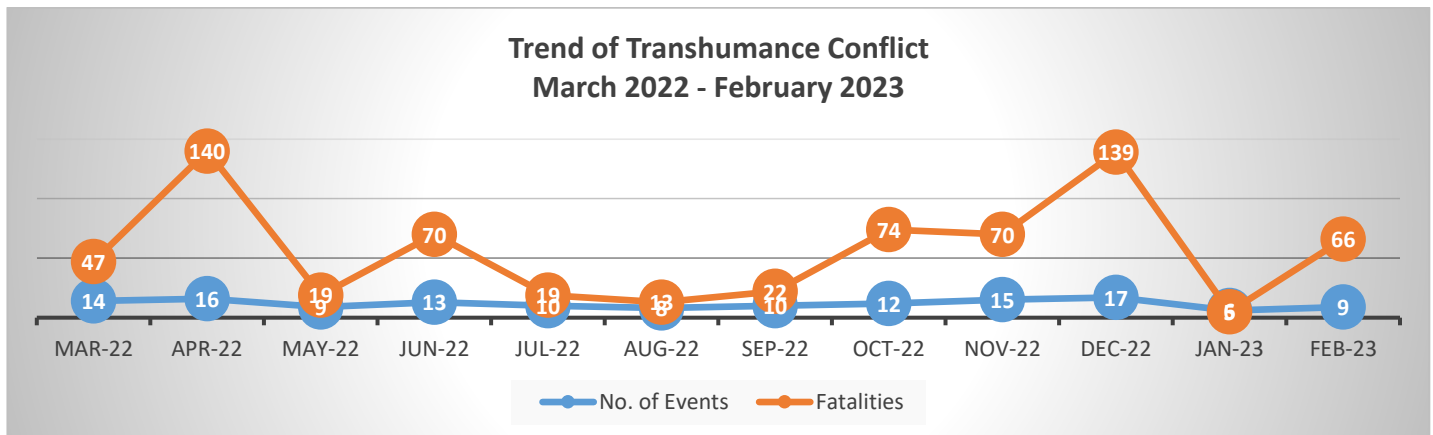
The abandoned mining sites in Nigeria have become a ticking time bomb with severe health risks. As of 2017, over 1,200 sites were identified and left without proper closure or reclamation, posing significant physical dangers to the surrounding environment. [The weakened and collapsing mine shafts, sinkholes, and water-filled pits are threatening many lives, including elderly people in mining communities who are susceptible to co-morbidities associated with mining activities.](#) It is imperative that the government takes measures to address these abandoned mining sites' health risks and prevent further damage to both the environment and human lives.

FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS

The ongoing conflicts between farmers and herders in Africa, especially in the West African region, have been a long-standing issue. As the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation to Niger stated, these tensions date back centuries. However, the situation has become more critical in recent years due to various factors such as armed conflict, climate change, rapid population growth and competition for natural resources. The escalation of these issues has put immense pressure on the region's delicate ecosystem, exacerbating herder-farmer conflicts. Despite the African Union initiative's goal to silence the guns by 2030, addressing the root causes of these conflicts is crucial to achieving peace and sustainability in the region.

The statistical analysis conducted by ECOWARN between April 2022 to March 2023 reveals a grim picture of the conflict between pastoralists and herders, **with 751 fatalities recorded in 115 incidents between April 2022 and March 2023 (recall a total of 658 fatalities from 135 events recorded between March 2022 to February 2023).** The trend chart below depicts a sharp rise in fatalities in April and December 2022, followed by a drop in January 2023. However, February and March 2023 witnessed a disturbing surge in fatalities, with March 2023 recording 113 fatalities, indicating that the issue of transhumance conflict remains unresolved. This data highlights the urgent need for effective measures to address this ongoing crisis and prevent further loss of lives.

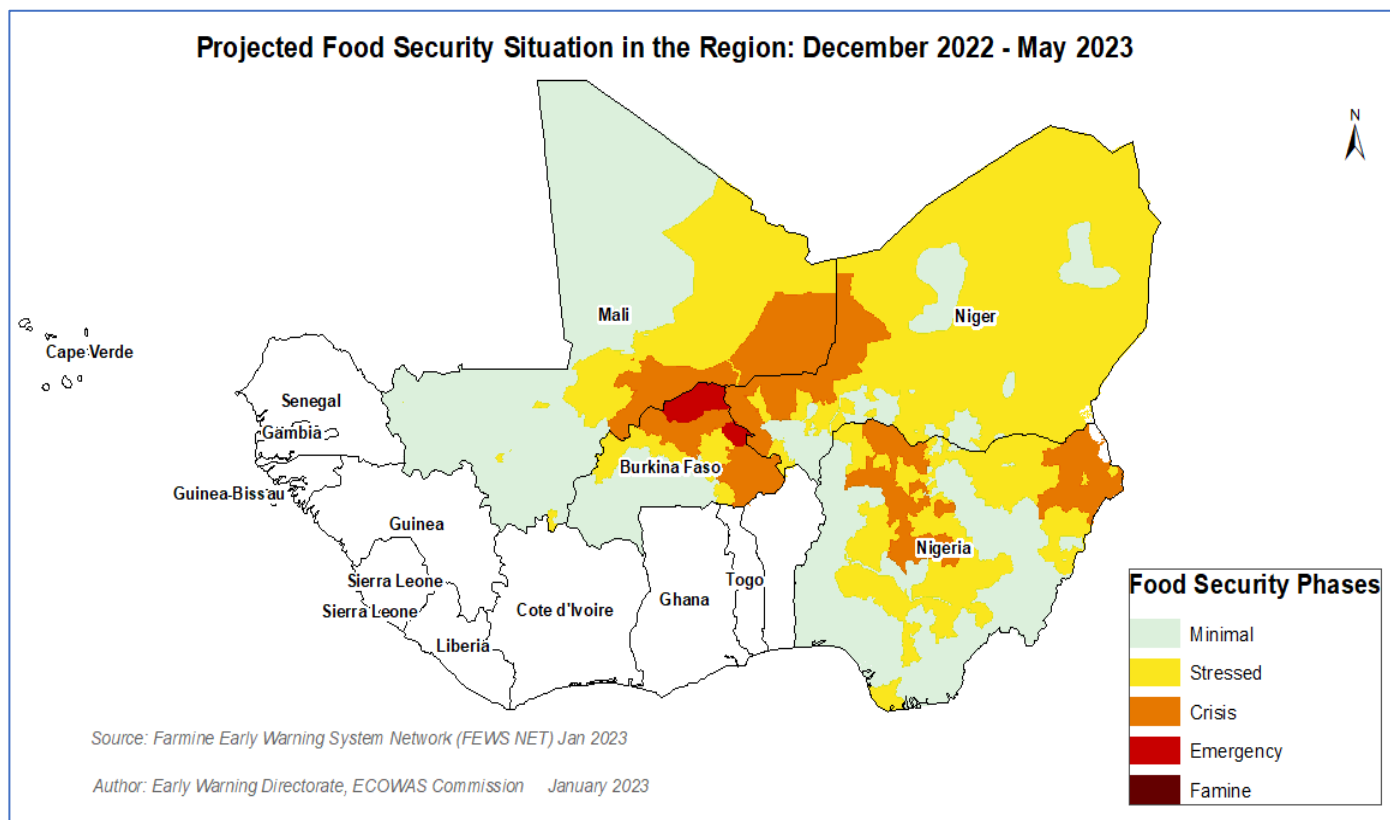




Twelve months of incidents related to pastoralists – herder conflict.

FOOD SECURITY

The map below paints a disturbing picture of the food security situation in West Africa. According to the projections, four member states are likely to face various levels of food insecurity. Burkina Faso is in the red alert zone, with the population poised to experience all four stages of food insecurity. Guinea-Bissau is not far behind, and its local WFP representative has already issued a warning about a significant increase in food insecurity this year. Urgent attention is needed to address this critical challenge and ensure people can access nutritious food. The food security situation has been a growing concern, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the redesigned of the Naira in Nigeria, the closure of over 40 mining sites due to security concerns and the restrictions on grains outflow from Burkina Faso and terrorists' activities in the region, all contribute towards the continued upward trend of consumer prices and food insecurity. The crisis has further highlighted the fragility of our food system, which is already being challenged by climate change. Therefore, urgent action is required to prevent further deterioration of this issue. The World Bank has rightly emphasised the importance of a climate-smart response to tackle food security issues in West Africa. International cooperation is crucial to ensure that all communities have access to food and address the dire situation in the Sahel and West Africa.



Recommendations

Faced with these significant threats, the EWD proposes the following recommendations:

Risks	Events to follow	ECOWAS - Direction/ Department Protocols/Instrument	Member States (MS)
1. Fire disaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alarming trends of fire outbreaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire disaster safety regulation Awareness creation of what fire is. Coordination of national fire safety campaigns Risk assessment study / Identifying and classifying high-risk households and areas. Implementation of Appropriate Legal and Policy Frameworks for Preventing and Responding to Emergencies and Disasters (ECOWAS Humanitarian Policy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training on fire prevention and how to use firefighting gadgets to control fire outbreaks. Promotion of national and local fire safety campaigns Policies on fire outbreak disaster preparedness



<p>2. Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The end of the rainy season; the build-up to the transhumance season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Ranch Policy, • Study on good transhumance practices in ECOWAS for the capitalisation and consolidation of achievements and good practices (ECOWAS/UNOWAS team), • redefine and raise awareness of the narrative in terms of transhumance. • Education of communities on inter-community dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate the recommendations of this study with the relevant stakeholders through the National Centers • redefine and raise awareness of the narrative in terms of transhumance, • promote the ranch policy. • Sensitize communities on inter-community dialogue
<p>3. Food insecurity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme climatic events • Soaring prices of products and foodstuffs • famine reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the food needs of the region due to flood. • improve the targeting and resources of the regional security reserve and make it a significant player in the response, • provide immediate humanitarian assistance to people in need, • Evaluate and strengthen the standard agricultural policy and implement a zero-hunger policy (Department of Agric/Private Sector/Macro/EWD) • Increase the Regional Reserve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climate-friendly development and agricultural policy • mechanisation and modernisation of agriculture, • promotion of agro-industry. • make and increase national food reserves. • joint health, safety, and environmental/food responses • national zero-hunger policy through better targeting and aggressive responses
<p>4. Boat- accidents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing trends of boat overloading • Skipper's Inexperience/ Excessive speed • Weather & climate change • Level of precipitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the ECOWAS Emergency Management Mechanism (Humanitarian/EWD) • Raise public awareness through sensitisation. • Relevant monitoring policy/measures in place, i.e., building capacities of Member States in emergency management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise public awareness through sensitisation. • Relevant monitoring policies/measures in place • Metrological weather forecasts in Member States strengthened.
<p>5. Environmental Pollution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human-induced pollution activities • Health Implications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise public awareness through sensitisation. • Deployment of ECOWAS Environmental Policy • Deployment of ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitization/awareness creation on the environmental impact of pollution • Relevant monitoring policies/measures in place • West African organisations to formulate harmonised and convergent policies