

Food Security Information Note - FOSIN

Food situation in the Sahel and West Africa: *Surplus Cereal Production ... But some challenges regarding food security*

1. An overall good food situation

The 2006 winter was overall satisfactory despite pockets of drought and an early end to the rainy season observed in some areas of the Sahel.

Thus, in 2006/07 the Sahel registered a record in gross cereal production of 15,062,600 tonnes, or an increase of 3% compared to that of 2005/06 and of 19% compared to the average of the last 5 years (2001-2005).

Information systems' estimates indicate net food availability of 15,523,700 tonnes for needs calculated at 13,529,700 tonnes.

For coastal countries, production was also good. In Nigeria for example, 2006/07 gross production was assessed at 27.9 million tonnes, or an increase of around 8% compared to that of the 2005/06 Agricultural Campaign.

With regard to animal production, the overall situation is satisfactory, except for some zones in countries having experienced significant pockets of drought or an early end of the rainy season as is the case in Senegal and Mauritania. In these zones, an early drying up of watering points and depletion following the deterioration of pastures has been observed which would result in early transhumance departures.

Food markets remain well-supplied overall and information systems indicate a stabilisation or a drop in cereal prices except in some at-risk zones.

As regards nutrition, the overall situation has improved even in some countries such as Niger where the problem is usually paramount. Information sources indicate that during the first two weeks of January, 2,373 new malnutrition cases were reported (of which 303 were severe) but in January 2007 there was a drop in admissions compared to December 2006.

2. Vigilance Required

Even if 2006/07 cereal production appears overall satisfactory, the following reasons indicate that

vigilance is still required:

2.1. Surplus overall cereal production masks existing disparities between and within countries.

While awaiting the definitive assessment envisaged for March 2007, the provisional cereal balance established in the Sahel indicates an overall surplus situation in which availability varies between and within countries. Thus, Burkina Faso alone has recorded more than half of the regional cereal surplus with 1,099,300 tonnes followed by Chad. However, countries such as Mauritania and Senegal show the greatest deficits estimated at 83,300 tonnes and 187,100 tonnes respectively.

2.2. At-risk populations remain an issue including in surplus-producing countries

In Burkina Faso for example, a country accounting for more than half of the regional surplus, there are still numerous at-risk zones in several departments of the Sahel region, in the Central-North, North, Central Plateau and East. Information systems have identified nearly 6,500 at-risk farmers even if these results are not final incomplete. An evaluation carried out in February, indicates the beginning of a deteriorating food situation with cereal prices rising on provincial and departmental markets.

The food situation of populations in at-risk zones is exacerbated by the loss of land due to floods in August/September 2006, pests and an early end to the rainy season.

Most countries are concerned that the lean season will arrive early (2 to 3 months in advance) in the at-risk zones. At the 22nd annual meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (FCPN) it was suggested that early warning systems carry out an in-depth study in order to better target these at-risk populations and evaluate their needs.

In Chad, for example, some at-risk zones are currently experiencing food insecurity in the Kanem and regions in conflict, in particular. Concerns for the food situation persist and require particular monitoring. UN estimates indicate that there are 75,000 to 112,000 internally displaced persons (IDP)

3. What are the challenges with regard to food security?

3.1. The Major Challenges

a. **The functioning of stock and market management mechanisms.** This issue is vital in order to:

- Assure the reconstitution of stocks, as well as the guarantee of product availability on local markets for better accessibility, notably by impoverished populations. In some countries such as Mauritania, and despite a poor agricultural season, the functioning of the *Village and Food Security Stocks* (SAVS¹) and Malian imports play a determining role in stabilizing cereal prices.
- Play a regulatory role to avoid the exacerbation for producers in high production zones of the drop in cereal prices. This drop in prices could lead to reducing planted areas and consequently cereal production for the 2007/08 Agricultural Campaign.

b. **Access by at-risk populations to food resources.** Facing this challenge remains linked to the well-functioning of the market, collecting systems and distribution as well as the possibilities of improving economic conditions of these vulnerable groups. The combination of pockets of drought and floods require effective actions to be undertaken.

3.2. How to respond?

a. **Support and strengthen efforts of professional agricultural organisations, local communities in the constitution of local food stocks, and targeted trade operations.** Some actions in support of initiatives geared towards the promotion of local and cross-border markets should be encouraged.

b. **Encourage State commitment in order to seek sustainable solutions to the storage and trade issues:** (i) Development of trade and storage infrastructures in support of local community and private initiatives; (ii) Appropriate policies and investment strategies for the promotion of the transformation of agricultural food products in the region.

c. **Concretely implement development plans aiming to alleviate the vulnerability of at-risk populations and of flood victims or victims of early end to the rainy season.** This could be comprised of the following elements:

- Launching of targeted operations with a view to assuring cereal availability in some zones to break the trend of soaring prices. These actions could imply supplying cereal banks or other local stock mechanisms or even using national intervention stocks according to need.
- Implementing targeted operations that aim to mitigate the animal feeding situation by: (i) Setting up agro-industrial by-products stocks (AIBP), (ii) Promoting feed production in garden-marketing and water control sites, etc.
- Promoting and strengthening agricultural and non-agricultural off-season production activities aiming to improve household income and livelihoods and contribute thus to the access of food and basic products: (i) Market gardening and fruit production, Meat production (fattening of ruminants or of monogastric animals), fish farming, beekeeping, (ii) small-scale trade by strengthening micro-credit activities adapted to the conditions of these vulnerable populations.

¹ *Stocks Villageois de Sécurité Alimentaire*

▶▶ Information Sources

This analysis note was produced on the basis of information provided by various specialised institutions. For more detailed information, please consult the following documents or visit the following web-sites:

CILSS/SE, 2007. Flash CILSS N° 45 – Janvier 2007, 4 p.

FEWS NET, 2007: Executive Overview of Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa, January 24, 2007, 2 p.

FEWS NET, 2007. Tchad : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, Janvier 2007, 3 p.

FEWS NET, 2007. Mauritanie : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, Janvier 2007, 3 p.

FEWS NET, 2007. Chad Food Security Emergency, January 30, 2007, 1 p.

FEWS NET, 2007. Sahel et Afrique de l'Ouest – Rapport Mensuel sur la Sécurité Alimentaire, Janvier 2007, 4 p.

FEWS NET, 2007. Burkina Faso : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, Janvier 2007, 4 p.

FEWS NET, 2007. Mali : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, Janvier 2007, 3 p.

FEWS NET, 2007. Sénégal : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, Janvier 2007, 3 p.

FEWS NET, 2007. Niger : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, Janvier 2007, 5 p.

FEWS NET, 2007. Nigeria: Trip report: Northern Nigeria – Joint Food Supply Assessment Mission, November 2006, 6 p.

DG-PSA Burkina Faso, 2007. Rapport de mission de suivi de la situation alimentaire dans les zones à risqué d'insécurité alimentaire du 11 au 17 Février 2007, 6 p. + Annexes

DG-PSA Burkina Faso, 2007. AgriAlerte N°013-20/02/2007, 2 p.

Afrique Verte, 2007. Point sur la situation alimentaire au Sahel – Suivi de campagne N°70 Point début Février 2007, 5 p.

Afrique Verte, 2006. Afrique Verte Actualités N°44 Décembre 2006, 4 p.

CSAO : www.oecd.org/sah

CILSS : www.cilss.bf et www.agrhymet.ne

Fews Net: www.fews.net

FAO : www.fao.org

PAM: www.wfp.org

Afrique Verte www.afriqueverte.org

OCHA : www.humanitarianinfo.org & <http://ochaonline.un.org/>

SISA/CNSA : www.sisa.africa-web.org

Reliefweb: www.reliefweb.int/

▶▶ For a better understanding of the agricultural and food situation in Nigeria

Nigeria plays a defining role in food security in Sahelian countries, as was demonstrated by the lessons learned from the recent 2004/2005 food crisis.

With the aim to better understanding and taking into account the role that Nigeria plays, a joint FAO/CILSS/FEWS NET mission was carried out in the North of Nigeria.

The Report of this mission that analysed the food and agricultural situation is available through the link:

<http://www.fews.net/resources/gcontent/pdf/1001220.pdf>