



The food situation in the Sahel and West Africa: *Hopes for a good season have been confirmed*

1. Brief analysis of the general agriculture and food situation

The 2006 season is almost over in most Sahelian countries with the final stages of harvesting and storage operations.

Despite the season's late start, various sources report that the 2006-2007 agricultural season has been generally very good. This confirms forecasts made by the CILSS, FEWS NET, FAO and WFP following the regional conference on food and agricultural prospects in the Sahel and West Africa, held in Mindelo (Cape Verde) from 26 to 28 September 2006.

The technical consultation meeting held in Bamako, Mali, from 6 to 9 November 2006 predicted provisional total cereal production of **15,062,600 tonnes** within the CILSS zone. This represents a 3% increase as compared to the 2005-2006 campaign and is 19% higher than the average of the last five years.

Consequently, various information sources are predicting a general drop in cereal prices and satisfactory supply to most of West Africa's cereals markets.

Watering points for cattle and pastures also appear to be well-supplied.

2. Hopes for a good agricultural season were confirmed

2.1. *Cereal production in the Sahel is increasing*

Compared to the average of the last five years, average production per inhabitant in 2006 is up by 9% in **Mali**, by 7% in **Niger**, 17% in **the Gambia**, 10% in **Burkina Faso**, 29% in **Guinea Bissau**, 10% in **Mauritania**, 1% in **Cape Verde** and 24% in **Chad**. In **Senegal**, however, output has dropped by 9%.

With regard to cereal and food supply, most CILSS countries have a net surplus

(including imports) with the exception of Senegal and countries where there is a structural shortfall, namely Cape Verde and Mauritania.

The food and agriculture situation in West Africa's coastal countries is deemed satisfactory

An assessment made during the technical consultation meeting involving Benin, Guinea, Nigeria and Togo concluded that production levels are satisfactory in the coastal countries. This should result in increased availability of cereals throughout the region if markets function correctly.

2.2. *Locusts no longer pose a threat to winter production in 2006*

Although locusts did affect north-west Mauritania at the start of October, and have appeared in smaller numbers in Tamesna in Niger and Timbuktu in Mali, the locust situation is under control. These pests do not pose a threat to the agricultural campaign which is now ending.

3. The generally satisfactory food situation should not overshadow pockets of food insecurity

Despite very good overall cereal production, we should not lose sight of the problems of accessibility and food insecurity faced by populations in at-risk zones and flooded areas.

Problems which merit particular attention are:

- The situation faced by those in at-risk zones where extreme poverty severely restricts access to basic foodstuffs.
- Populations affected by flooding or by insufficient rainfall, who will experience shortages despite a satisfactory food situation.
- The way in which agricultural markets operate, which this year could be the determining factor in allowing access to an agricultural production deemed to be satisfactory.

4. What should be the response?

- a. Improve Early Warning systems, particularly in at-risk zones in various countries, to ensure that appropriate action is taken to improve accessibility for vulnerable populations.

- b. Increase the States' involvement in managing the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, enabling them to respond to the problem of access to foodstuffs. Appropriate action should be taken to reduce poverty in at-risk zones.
- c. Strengthen the analysis and monitoring of agricultural produce markets in the Sahel and West Africa.
- d. Focus on the management of surplus production in order to avoid producer prices collapsing. This involves specific measures to address the creation and management of cereal stocks at all levels: producers, local communities (cereal banks), national food security stocks, etc.
- e. Implement **development plans aimed at easing the vulnerability of populations affected by flooding or lack of rain**. These could include the following:
 - Promotion or development of off-season crops (maize, river sorghum, vegetables and fruits,

etc.) by improving water storage and managing irrigated land.

- Improvements in producer access to innovation (sowing, production techniques, materials, etc.), agricultural services and agricultural markets are key to this approach.
- Diversification and development of other revenue-generating activities such as milk and meat production and other non-agricultural economic activity in order to improve vulnerable communities' subsistence which in turn improves their access to food and basic commodities.
- Promotion of fodder crops in water-managed areas, the harvesting of natural fodder to support animal production activities during the dry season.

Information Sources

This briefing is based on information supplied by a number of specialist institutions. For further detail, please refer to the following documents and websites:

CILSS/SE, 2006. Communiqué de Presse : Réunion de concertation technique sur les bilans céréaliers et alimentaires exposé 2005/2006 et prévisionnels 2006-2007 des pays du CILSS et des pays côtiers de l'Afrique de l'Ouest non membres du CILSS, 06 – 09 Novembre 2006, Bamako, Mali, 4 p.

Fews Net, 2006: Executive Overview of Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa, November 8, 2006, 2 p.

Fews Net, 2006. Tchad : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, Octobre 2006, 5 p.

Fews Net, 2006. Mauritanie : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, Octobre 2006, 2 p.

FAO, 2006. Perspectives de récolte et situation alimentaire N°03 Octobre 2006, 36 p.

Conseil National Sécurité Alimentaire Burkina Faso, 2006. Flash Info Sécurité Alimentaire N°016, Novembre 2006, 2, P.

FAO, 2006: Criquet pèlerin : de petites bandes commencent à se former au Nord-Ouest de la Mauritanie (<http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/fr/info/info/index.html>)

FAO, 2006: Bulletin sur le criquet pèlerin N° 337 (4.11.2006), 9 p.

Afrique Verte, 2006: Point sur la situation alimentaire au Sahel: Information sur les prix des céréales: Burkina Faso – Mali – Niger: Suivi de campagne n°67: Point début Novembre 2006, 5 p.

DGPSA Burkina Faso, 2006 : Résultats prévisionnels de la campagne 2006-2007 et de la situation alimentaire, 32 p. (www.sisa.africa-web.org)

DGPSA Burkina Faso, 2006 : AgriAlerte n° 011 – 25/10/2006, 1 p. (www.sisa.africa-web.org)

SWAC: www.oecd.org/sah

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

Fews Net: www.fews.net

FAO: www.fao.org

WFP: www.wfp.org

Afrique Verte: www.afriqueverte.org

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

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