



Food Situation in the Sahel and West Africa: Renewed hope, but attention is focused on the last moments of a rainy season which began capriciously

1. Brief Analysis of the Overall Agricultural and Food Situation

An analysis produced by several information sources (Agrhymet, Fews Net, and FAO) indicates improved rainfall in the entire Sahel zone. However, August was marked by floods that affected Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria. As of 15 September, heavy rainfall had caused serious damage. In Niger, authorities estimate that 30 000 people were affected by the floods. In western Burkina Faso, nearly 20 000 people were also affected. (<http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200609150662.html>)

The food situation is generally satisfactory, although some areas of Niger and Chad are experiencing food insecurity. Generally, cereal markets remain stable, with a trend of falling prices due to significant imports, and also the start of millet and cowpea harvests in some areas in Niger.

As regards locusts, the situation seems to be calm despite the appearance of some isolated locusts in the south of Mauritania, northern Mali and Niger. However, the situation calls for increased vigilance because of the improved ecological conditions that are favourable to hatching. Some granivorous birds and locusts have been reported in Nigeria, and could affect the food product market in West Africa.

2. Reasons for Hope

2.1 *Agricultural Campaign situation*

Despite a few regional disparities, August was marked by heavy rainfall and floods in some countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria. As regards livestock, available data indicate fresh pastureland growth.

Concerning the locust situation, available information indicates a calm situation overall, even though vigilance is recommended because of improved ecological conditions in most locust reproduction areas. In Nigeria, however, there is

a movement of migratory locusts from Cameroon invading the centre of Nigeria. 50 000 ha are reported to have been destroyed. There are reports of some birds (*quelea quelea* or red billed quelea) from Lake Chad. This situation could have consequences on the supply of food products in the region.

2.2 *Food and Nutritional Situation*

On the whole, the food situation in the Sahel is satisfactory, despite pockets of food insecurity in some areas in Niger, Chad (notably the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees).

In Niger, on 25 August, the WFP and the Government began distributing free food to the most vulnerable people, an operation that involve 650,000 people. Nearly half of the people receiving the food live in the affected regions of Tahoua, Maradi, Zinder, Tillabéri and Dosso.

As regards nutrition, the available survey results indicate an overall improvement of the situation. However, cases of admission to nutritional rehabilitation centres are increasing in Niger.

Markets have also remained stable, and the downward trend of prices seems to continue. Cereal imports from neighbouring countries of the Sahel, as well as the ripening of millet and cowpea in some areas in Niger help bring prices down. The cattle market has improved in terms of trade in favour of the herders. This improvement is due to an increase in the fattening of the animals. On the whole, the marketing of poultry and its byproducts has resumed.

3. Maintaining Vigilance

3.1 *The rainfall situation at end of September and October will be crucial*

As regards agriculture, the resumption of rainfall in August and September is an encouraging aspect. However, the late start of the season has delayed sowing in many countries – This time-lag (even if most of the cultivated varieties are photoperiodic) requires that the rain continue until October. Rainfall in

September and October remains crucial – However, much remains to be seen.

3.2 *The desert locust could pose a threat*

Even though the current situation appears to be calm, the improved ecological conditions as a result of abundant rainfall in reproduction areas need to be closely monitored. This vigilance is recommended in the south and centre of Mauritania, as well as northern Mali and Niger.

3.3 *Floods observed in August could further worsen vulnerable populations' situation*

Most of the floods recorded in August occurred in risky areas.

In Burkina Faso, for example, the northern region (Yatenga, Lorum, Passoré, and Zondoma), the centre-northern region (Bam) and the Sahel region (Oudalan) were greatly affected. An assessment conducted on 7 September showed a total of 7,568 people directly affected, 95% of who are in the north, centre-north and Sahel regions.

In Niger, the situation indicated 15,610 people directly affected with, unfortunately, 4 deaths. Here also, the most affected areas are those most vulnerable to food insecurity: Agadez (Bilma, Tabelot, In Gall), Dosso, Tahoua, Tillabéri and Zinder. Initial estimates placed emergency food requirements at 1,050 tonnes of cereals.

In Burkina Faso and Niger, the floods destroyed farms – This could further worsen the situation of vulnerable populations.

4. How to respond? Where to be vigilant?

- a. In countries with artificial rain operations, such as the “saaga” in Burkina Faso or “sarji” in Mali, sowing should be accelerated at the end of September and in October depending on the rainfall trends.
- b. Even though the situation of desert locusts appears to be relatively calm, there should be increased surveillance and control in the reproduction areas so as to be able to take precautions ahead of time. Similarly and in view of Nigerian products on food markets in the region, invasions by locusts and granivorous birds in Nigeria should be closely monitored.
- c. Develop adequate measures in the countries to ensure that the situation of flood victims in vulnerable areas does not get worse – in addition to emergency food measures, development actions could be envisaged for people whose farms and herds have been destroyed. In flood-affected regions, the availability of lowland water becomes a major asset for developing off-season crops (maize, flood recession sorghum, vegetables and fruits). The distribution of vegetable seeds and small farm tools, as well as the extension of these off-season crops could mitigate production shortfalls and even generate local surpluses.

▶▶ Sources of Information

This analysis is based on information provided by various specialized institutions. For more details, please consult the following documents and visit the following websites:

CILSS/Agrhymet, 2006. Mensuel Agrhymet N° M06/06, Août 2006, 19 p.

Fews Net, 2006: Niger: Food Security Warning, Issued 16 August 2006, 1 p.

Fews Net, 2006. Tchad : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, Août 2006, 4 p.

Fews Net, 2006. Chad: Food Security Emergency, Issued August 2006, 1 p.

Fews Net, 2006. Burkina Faso : Rapport mensuel sur la sécurité alimentaire, 15 Août 2006, 4 p.

Fews Net, 2006: Executive Overview of Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa, September 13, 2006, 2 p.

WFP, 2006: World Hunger – Chad – Food security Overview
(http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=148)

FAO, 2006: Situation Update, 4 September 2006: Breeding in West Africa: heavy rains in several areas
(<http://www.fao.org/ag/locust/en/info/index.html>)

FAO, 2006: Emergency Operations and Assistance: Leading the fight against the desert locust
(<http://www.fao.org/ag/locust/en/info/tce/index.html>)

Afrique Verte, 2006: Point sur la situation alimentaire au Sahel: Information sur les prix des céréales: Burkina Faso – Mali – Niger: Suivi de campagne n°65: Point début Septembre, 5 p.

PAM, 2006. Distribution ciblée de nourriture au Niger où la saison maigre sévit
(<http://www.wfp.org/french/?m=93&k=152>)

FAO, 2006: Sahel Weather and crop situation report. Report N° 4, 14 September 2006, 4 p.

OCHA, 2006. OCHA situation Report N° 1 : Floods - Niger, 2 p.

OCHA, 2006 : Afrique de l'Ouest : Situation des inondations au 31 août 2006
(<http://humanitarianinfo.org/westafrica/mapcenter.htm>)

DGPSA, 2006 : AgriAlerte n°001-23/08/2006 ; n°002-25/08/2006 ; n°003-30/08/2006 ; n°004-11/09/2006 ; n°005-13/09/2006; n°007-18/09/2006 (www.sisa.africa-web.org)

SWAC: www.oecd.org/sah
CILSS: www.cilss.bf and 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/>

►► For better understanding of food crises in the Sahel and West Africa

From 11 to 19 May 2006, a joint mission to assess the cereal and cattle sub-sectors and markets went to Niger and Nigeria, in Maradi, Katsina and Kano areas. The mission was made up of representatives from the CILSS, FEWS Net, the Sahel and West Africa Club, RESIMAO, UNICEF, OCHA and WFP.

Food Security and Cross-border trade in the Kano-Katsina-Maradi (K²M) zone, Joint Mission Report, July 2006

Download the final version of the report from: <http://www.fews.net/resources/gcontent/pdf/1001083.pdf>

Several documents produced by Fews Net on understanding food security and nutrition, and incorporating nutrition data into early warning systems. The following documents can be downloaded from the Fews Net website.

1 (Fr.) Comment comprendre les données nutritionnelles et les causes de la malnutrition au Niger ?
Rapport spécial du réseau des Systèmes d'Alerte Précoce contre la Famine (FEWS NET), Juin 2006
<http://www.fews.net/resources/gcontent/pdf/1001071.pdf>

2 (Fr.) Alerte précoce de nutrition et sécurité alimentaire au Niger: Recommandations au Réseau des Systèmes d'Alerte Précoce contre la Famine (FEWS NET) et ses partenaires en ce qui concerne la surveillance et le traitement des lacunes au niveau des informations au Niger
Juin 2006
<http://www.fews.net/resources/gcontent/pdf/1001070.pdf>

1 (Eng.) Understanding nutrition data and the causes of malnutrition in Niger
A special report by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), June 2006
<http://www.fews.net/resources/gcontent/pdf/1001044.pdf>

2 (Eng.) Nutrition and food security early warning in Niger:
Recommendations for the Famine early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) and partners to monitor and address the information gaps in Niger June 2006
<http://www.fews.net/resources/gcontent/pdf/1001045.pdf>