

Food Security Information Note - FSIN

Food Situation in the Sahel and West Africa:

Overall satisfactory 2006-2007 agricultural situation ... but challenges remain with regard to food security

Note 8 – April 2007

1. An overall satisfactory food situation

The Food Crisis Prevention Network (FCPN) meeting held on 5 and 6 April 2007 provided an analytical framework of the definitive results of the 2006-07 agricultural campaign in the Sahel and West Africa.

CLSS countries' total definitive cereal production is 15 102 000 tonnes, an increase of 3% compared to the 2005-06 agricultural production campaign and 19% compared to the average over the last five years. Thus, with regard to the results of the 2005-06 campaign, production has increased in all of the countries except for Mauritania and Senegal where their production dropped by 13% and 23% respectively.

Cereal production in West African non-CLSS coastal countries indicates an overall satisfactory situation. In Benin, Guinea Conakry and Togo, total production reached, respectively: 1 095 505 tonnes, 2 117 858 tonnes and 888 984 tonnes. In Nigeria, cereal production of the 2006-07 revised campaign was 28 871 000 tonnes compared to 26 942 000 tonnes in 2005-06, with an increase of 7%.

The food situation in the Sahel remains overall satisfactory. On the markets, sufficient cereal production has instigated a drop in prices except for Mauritania and eastern Chad where prices tend to be higher. For Mauritania, this situation is due to a reorientation of market supply coming directly from cross-border Malian and Senegalese markets to Nouakchott. Thus, cereal prices have returned to the same levels as they were prior to the exceptional increases observed during the 2005 crisis. For example, in March 2007, millet prices were much lower than those of 2006 at the same time of year. The current

price levels remain close to the average over the last five years. Cereal and cattle trade evolves in favour of the nomadic livestock breeders and the sale of NDjaména average size sheep enables a livestock breeder to purchase 128 kg of millet in this 2007 period as compared to 105 kg in 2006.

Looking ahead, the 2007 regional market's evolution should be comparable to that of 2006 with relatively stable prices, close to the average of the last five years, guaranteeing better access to food for the most vulnerable populations.

In conclusion, analysis of the current food situation indicates that currently no particular alert should be issued for all Sahel countries. This is particularly useful for Niger as contradictory information is often circulated announcing a situation similar to that of 2005.

2. But there are still challenges to face

Even if 2006-07 cereal production appears overall favourable, there are still major challenges to face in order to guarantee a satisfactory food situation. There are two main challenges:

2.1. Improved access to food by at-risk populations

Even if most countries have registered an increase in cereal production and nonetheless a surplus in agricultural food products compared to 2006, the internal disparities within the countries could hinder access to food by the most vulnerable populations, a situation aggravated in some countries by conflicts such as in Chad. Thus, countries' capacity to develop and implement appropriate mitigation actions in favour of at-risk populations is a major challenge to be faced.

Joint missions (CLSS/FAO/FEWS NET/OCHA/WFP) were already carried out in March 2007 and recommendations were made.



Generally, the recommended strategy for countries consists of combining emergency actions where situations are most critical as in eastern Chad with development actions aimed at improving livelihoods of vulnerable communities.

- a. Burkina Faso and Niger: Mobilisation and reinforcement of cereal stocks and banks particularly in at-risk zones in order to contribute to price stabilisation in identified at-risk zones.
- b. Niger, Chad, Mauritania and Guinea Bissau:
 - Set up the "Food for work" mechanism, subsidised sale prices, "Cash for Work", as well as taking charge of children suffering from malnutrition;
 - Strengthening the coordination between humanitarian agencies in Chad to better target vulnerable populations, notably internally displaced persons, and for more effective alleviation actions;
 - Monitoring cashew nut prices, a product playing an important role in Bissau Guinean household revenue;
 - Establishing a crop diversification strategy in Guinea Bissau in order to avoid heavy dependency of populations on the cashew nut for their food security;
 - Expanding and re-supplying village security food stocks (SAVS) in the most vulnerable zones of Mauritania.
- c. The Gambia: Support the supply of inputs through the setting up of cereal banks as well as resorting to imports to stabilise prices.

- d. Senegal: Support supply of cereal and peanut seeds, and promote the long-term establishment of mechanisms enabling a better supply of inputs and marketing of agricultural products within the context of State disengagement.

2.2. Management in the region of food crops supply and demand






The general trend of cereal price reduction or stability is a positive aspect for vulnerable populations contributing to better access to provisions but poses at the same time risks with regard to the deterioration of producers' economic situation. If this trend of falling in cereal prices persists, it could have negative effects such as the reduction of planted areas and consequently on cereal production for the 2007-2008 agricultural campaign.

This presents a challenge for countries of the region in terms of existing supply and demand regulatory mechanisms - enabling on one hand better access to food and on the other for producers to benefit from a price that could provide a fair return on investments for agricultural production.

What mechanisms should be set up within a liberalisation context? This question comes back again to fundamental strategic thinking on the organisation of food crop product markets in the region, including basic concerns in relation to States' commitment to seek sustainable solutions to storage and marketing problems through: (i) the development of trade and storage infrastructures in support of local community and private initiatives; (ii) the setting up of appropriate policies and investment strategies for the promotion of agricultural food processing in the region.

Information Sources

This FC PN analytical note was produced on the basis of information or analyses provided by various specialised Network (non) member institutions. More information can be obtained from the respective websites.

				
www.oecd.org/sah	www.fews.net	www.cilss.bf	www.fao.org	www.wfp.org
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Afrique Verte: www.afriqueverte.org

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

SI SA/CNSA: www.sisafrica-web.org

Reliefweb: www.reliefweb.int/

For better access to information on the food and nutritional situation in the Sahel and West Africa

To encourage accessing information on the food and nutritional situation in the region in view of decision-making for action, the FC PN officially launched its food security website on Friday 6 April 2007 at the Centre d'Accueil de la Presse Ettrangère (CAPE) in Paris.

For any information, questions, analytical documents you may need with regard to the food and nutritional situation please access the site at: www.food-security.net

For increased investment on the structural causes of food insecurity in the Sahel and West Africa

In order to mobilise Sahelians and actors of the West African region and to support their efforts in the implementation of actions aiming to provide responses to the structural causes of food insecurity, the consortium FAO /FAD /WFP, in partnership with other technical partners and regional actors (CILSS, ECOWAS, ROPPA, SWAC, UEMOA, etc.) officially launched an initiative entitled, 'Sahel Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative - SARDIT', on 9 and 10 March 2007 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

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