

## Food Security Information Note - FOSIN

### Food Situation in the Sahel and West Africa:

#### *Will there be an exceptionally favourable lean period in the Sahel?*

Note 10 – June 2007

#### 1. Indications of an overall positive lean period in the Sahel

The meeting of the CILSS Mechanism for Prevention of Food Crises in West Africa (PREGEC) held 13 to 15 June 2007 in Bamako, Mali was an opportunity to confirm the favourable food trends observed in the Sahel and West Africa since the beginning of the year. Analysis of the general situation in the Sahel and non-Saharan coastal countries in West Africa particularly confirmed that there was no overall upcoming food risk. Local problems could be curbed thanks to populations' adaptation strategies and mitigating actions currently undertaken by governments and development partners.

In addition to this general analysis, other indicators show that the Sahel will experience an exceptionally favourable lean period for the 2007-2008 Agricultural Campaign:

- a. **Good agricultural prospects in the Sahel are expected**, subject to confirmation of seasonal and climatic forecasts. Seasonal prediction in the Sahel and West Africa (PRESAO) for July-August-September 2007 indicates overall humid conditions for the entire Sahelian zone. It is very possible that seeding periods will remain within the normal average (1971-2000) where generally in the region, fields are prepared (clearing, transporting and manure spreading) and also seeding in some cases. In some areas like Dosso, Tahoua and Maradi in Niger, the percentage of agricultural villages having sowed millet during this period is greater than those of 2006 during the same period. In Maradi for example the rate is 28% compared to 5% in 2006. Although the seeding rate remains low due to lack of rainfall from end-May to June, in southern Mali and Burkina Faso hope was restored with the return of rainfall during the last week of June.
- b. **The general downward or stable trend of cereal products seems unwavering** in the start of this lean season, except in

certain areas of some countries like Mauritania, Senegal and Chad where prices are increasing. Thus markets appear generally well-supplied and prices are clearly lower than in May 2006 as well as the average of the last five years for the same period. This facilitates better access to supplies by populations. This positive situation is the cumulative effect of good harvests during the last two agricultural campaigns (2005-2006 and 2006-2007) as well as mitigating actions undertaken within countries following the recommendations of missions responsible for evaluating the food and nutritional situation in February-March 2007.

#### 2. But there are still plenty of challenges!

The overall satisfactory food situation forecasted by PREGEC indicates that the Sahel is definitely safe from a generalised food crisis during this 2007 lean period. This general overview should not however mask local realities and some challenges remain.

- a. **The region is not safe from local food crises** and vigilance must be maintained notably in Mauritania, Chad as well as at-risk zones of all Sahelian countries:
- **In Mauritania** for example, having recorded three consecutive years of insufficient agricultural production, deficient market supply causes a general trend of increased prices of essential cereals notably in rural zones. This situation leads to the deterioration in cattle/cereal terms of trade following a drop in the price of cattle which could exacerbate the food situation in some communities. **In Chad**, despite good agriculture production recorded during the 2006-2007 campaign, the humanitarian situation remains a major challenge in the East of the country due to conflict.
  - **In all Sahel countries**, the structural causes of food insecurity persist for vulnerable populations in at-risk zones. This is a



challenge which no country in the Sahel can avoid for the moment, even with a good agricultural season.

**b. An exceptionally favourable lean period is expected depending** on two particularly important parameters:

- *The start of a wintering season* during the month of July and notably during the seeding period. Continued stability or a drop in cereal prices will depend on the confirmation of seasonal and climatic forecasts by PRESAO. Poor seedling establishment could lead to stock retention thus generating a hike in prices during this lean period where most households depend on the market for their food supplies.
- *The importance and effectiveness of mitigating actions* currently undertaken by various countries in support of vulnerable populations in at-risk zones.

**c. Other risks are** notably those linked to flooding. If PRESAO's climatic predictions are confirmed, risks of flooding are not ruled out as was the case in August-September 2006. This would exacerbate the situation of vulnerable populations. In the beginning of June 2007, flooding was indicated in some areas as in the Kouritenga province of






Burkina Faso, a zone having registered 155 mm of rainfall in 24 hours. According to Red Cross estimates more than 680 households were affected.

**3. Take Action!**

- Maintain and strengthen mitigating actions undertaken in at-risk zones ([http://www.food-security.net//medias/File/Nisa\\_8\\_Fr.pdf](http://www.food-security.net//medias/File/Nisa_8_Fr.pdf)) and for vulnerable populations – so as to limit the extent and severity of the pockets of food and nutrition crisis during this lean period.
- Create conditions for a successful agriculture season, notably ensuring that agricultural producers have better access to inputs.
- Maintain vigilance notably through the analysis and close monitoring of the food and nutritional situation in at-risk zones.
- Maintain monitoring of the desert locust situation even though the current situation seems calm.
- Following new cases of avian flu in Benin and Togo, vigilance must be maintained in order to avoid the disease spreading to other neighbouring countries.

**Information Sources**

This FCPN 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.

				
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✉: <a href="mailto:leonidas.hitimana@oecd.org">leonidas.hitimana@oecd.org</a> ☎: +33 1 45 24 17 98	✉: <a href="mailto:librahim@fews.net">librahim@fews.net</a> ☎: +33 1 45 24 17 98	✉: <a href="mailto:b.sidibe@aghrmet.ne">b.sidibe@aghrmet.ne</a> ☎: +227 20 31 53 16		

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

The FCPN has set up a website to encourage access of information on the food and nutritional situation in the region in view of decision-making for action.

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](http://www.food-security.net).

### ▶▶▶ Better synergised action around food security in the Sahel and West Africa: The Regional Food Security Council (CORESA<sup>1</sup>)

In order to encourage better synergy and complementary action in the Sahel and West Africa for sustainable food security, the main actors (inter-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, States and development partners, etc.) joined efforts to set up a Regional Food Security Council. Its aim is to: (i) to facilitate constant dialogue between principal actors; (ii) to create synergies and complementary action, as well as monitoring and actions to be undertaken. During the first meeting establishing CORESA (11-12 June 2007 in Bamako, Mali), participants unanimously recognised the relevance of such a tool and insisted on the need to establish the most participative approach possible with a view to assuring full commitment by all actors involved. A road map prior to establishing CORESA was adopted at this first meeting (for more information visit the site [www.food-security.net](http://www.food-security.net)).

**For more information, contact:** Mr. Dramane Coulibaly, CILSS ([dramane.coulibaly@cilss.bf](mailto:dramane.coulibaly@cilss.bf))

### ▶▶▶ An integrated information system on agricultural production, market and trade opportunities in West Africa (AGRIS: Agricultural Information System)

Aware of the need for available information and integrated analyses facilitating decision-making, ECOWAS, the CILSS and the UEMOA are involved in the establishment of "AGRIS" (*Agricultural Information System*). A consultation meeting was held on 30 and 31 May 2007 in Ouagadougou in order to mobilise principal actors around the approach and validate the project's concept note. This meeting was an opportunity to develop a road map to set up AGRIS. It was followed-up by a meeting held on 1 June 2007 presenting the initiative to various partners. By establishing this unifying system, ECOWAS, CILSS and the UEMOA and their technical partners aim to provide users not only with the same types of information produced by existing systems but also other types of information in various formats so that they are accessible to decision-makers and all agricultural industry actors.

**For more information, contact:** Mr. Dramane Coulibaly, CILSS ([dramane.coulibaly@cilss.bf](mailto:dramane.coulibaly@cilss.bf)); Mr. Yamar Mbodj, ECOWAS ([mbodjyamar@yahoo.fr](mailto:mbodjyamar@yahoo.fr)); Mr. Mouslim Maïga, UEMOA ([mouslim.maiga@uemoa.int](mailto:mouslim.maiga@uemoa.int)).

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<sup>1</sup> Conseil Régional de Sécurité Alimentaire