

Food Security Information Note - FOSIN

Food situation in the Sahel and West Africa:

A slow start to the rainy season in the Sahel until mid-July 2007

Note 11 – July 2007

1. Rainfall perspectives at the beginning of the 2007/2008 Agricultural Campaign

Satisfactory rainfall has been predicted for the Sahel. Seasonal and climatic forecasts updated by ACMAD (African Center of Meteorological Applications for Development) confirm that most Sahel countries will receive normal or slightly above-normal rainfall.

Besides these seasonal forecasts, the 2007/2008 Agricultural Campaign throughout the Sahel is off to a rocky start due notably to irregular rains.

- a. In some countries such as **Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad** up until the third week of June 2007 irregular and insufficient rains slowed down the pace of wet plantings.
- b. In other countries such as **Guinea Bissau, the Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal**, the situation is not much better, and seeding is also late. In Mali, for example, by 20 June 2007 only 16% of expected millet seeding was carried out as opposed to 38.63% during the same period in 2006. Percentages for cotton are respectively 32.78% in 2007 and 70.15% in 2006. The situation for cotton is particularly critical as the optimal seeding period takes place before 20 July.

As for cattle, pastures are in the process of regenerating and water reserves are being reconstituted.

With regard to this overall situation affected by replanting and aquatic pressure in some areas, the possibility of recuperating crops affected by lack of rainfall will depend upon the rainfall conditions during August-September, which was the case during the 2006 rainy period.

In Niger for example, by end June 2007, 57% of the villages had completed their sowing activities. A slightly worse situation (46%) was observed during the same period in 2006. This leads to the belief that anything is possible in the Sahel, despite the difficult start to the rainy season.

2. What will be the food situation during the lean period?

According to various information sources the overall food situation is satisfactory despite pockets of food insecurity in some areas.

- a. In some countries such as **Guinea Bissau, Niger and Mauritania**, these pockets of food insecurity are due essentially to problems of food accessibility. In Guinea Bissau for example, the cashew nut trade, a principle source of income for rural populations, continues to be problematic – a situation that could degenerate due to the difficulties experienced by vulnerable populations in accessing food resources.
- b. In other countries such as **Chad**, the conflict situation is a determining factor. The majority of the 140,000 displaced persons (IDPs) do not have access to land and inputs for this agricultural campaign.

However, the overall food situation is still satisfactory with markets being well supplied. Prices are high for some products – This is a normal situation during the lean period, along with producers' cautiousness to put old stocks on the market due to the late start of the rainy season.

In conclusion, no emergency food action is envisaged despite the difficult start to the wintering season. There could be an overall lull even if there are pockets of food insecurity in most of the countries.

3. How to improve such a situation?

As was highlighted in the June 2007 FOSIN, (http://www.food-security.net/medias/File/NISA_10_Juin_2007_Finale.pdf), **an overall satisfactory food situation does not mean that the region is safe from localised food crises.**

Consequently, appropriate actions are needed:

- a. Increased monitoring of at-risk zones in countries, whilst at the same time keeping an








eye on food accessibility issues through actions and measures, aimed at: (i) avoiding a supply stoppage and a hike in prices of staple foods; (ii) improving revenue of vulnerable populations facilitating access to food – As is the case of Guinea Bissau where problems linked to the cashew nut trade could

- b. have negative effects on the income of rural populations.
Increased vigilance also with regard to malnutrition during this lean period to which all Sahel countries must respond

Information Sources

This FCPN Analysis Note is produced based on information or analysis provided by various specialised institutions which are members or non-members of the Network. More information can be obtained from their respective websites.

				
www.oecd.org/sah	www.fews.net	www.cilss.bf	www.fao.org	www.wfp.org
✉: sibirjean.zoundi@oecd.org ☎: +33 1 45 24 19 82	✉: ssow@fews.net ☎: +226 50 37 47 06	✉: amadou.konate@cilss.bf ☎: +226 50 37 41 25/33	✉: henri.iosserand@fao.org ☎: +39 06 57 05 30 99	✉: george.simon@wfp.org ☎: +39 06 65 13 27 96
✉: leonidas.hitimana@oecd.org ☎: +33 1 45 24 17 98	✉: librahim@fews.net ☎: +33 1 45 24 17 98	✉: b.sidibe@aqhrymet.ne ☎: +227 20 31 53 16		

Afrique Verte www.afriqueverte.org; Reliefweb: www.reliefweb.int/
OCHA : www.humanitarianinfo.org & <http://ochaonline.un.org/> SISA/CNSA : www.sisa.africa-web.org

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

With the aim to foster access to information on the food and nutritional situation in the region, with a view to decision-making for actions to be undertaken, the FCPN now has its own website.

You can now consult the site www.food-security.net for your questions regarding the food and nutritional situation and any analytical documents on the topic.

A better understanding of the food security situation in the Sahel

Due to the complexity of the factors linked to food security, it is generally difficult to truly understand the food situation in the Sahel. This is often complicated for media professionals, political decision-makers, and technical and financial partners, etc. to understand that some Sahel countries are experiencing situations of food insecurity despite satisfactory agricultural production.

In order to foster a better understanding of the complexity of this issue, FewsNet produced an analytical note in May 2007 entitled “*The Sahel: An Evidence Base for Understanding the Current Food Security Situation in the Region*”. This issue is accessible via the link: <http://www.fews.net/resources/gcontent/pdf/1001318.pdf>

For a complete analysis of the agricultural and food situation, please consult reports by Fews Net and partners, “July 2007 Food Perspectives” on the sites www.fews.net and www.food-security.net.