

Food Security Information Note FOSIN

Food situation in the Sahel and West Africa: Cereal production slightly below 2006 production

Note 14 – October 2007

1. An agricultural season in which there were both droughts and floods

Sahelian and West African agricultural producers were subjected successively to two types of climatic shocks:

- **A small pocket of drought** at the beginning of the agricultural campaign with irregular or insufficient rainfall. This situation led to a late start to the agricultural campaign which did not get underway until mid-July 2007, resulting in late re/seeding.
- **Severe flooding**, in particular during August-September. More than ten Sahel and West African countries were affected to various extents. While provoking a humanitarian crisis, these floods also caused serious agricultural damage with food security consequences: destruction of food crop stocks, livestock as well as crops. Northern Ghana was the area most affected. The provisional assessment in Burkina Faso indicated that 22 212 hectares of crops were destroyed.
- **A second pocket of drought** in which rain came to a dead stop during the 2nd, 3rd or 4th week of September, a crucial period in cereal maturation. This second pocket of drought came at a time when a continuation of the rainy season was needed in order to make up for the late start to the agricultural campaign.

All in all, some Sahel and West African countries are receiving enough water or even more than usual. The forecasts of the African Center of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) have been confirmed although this situation has not resulted in a food crop production increase in the Sahel due to the cumulative effects of the two shocks experienced by producers during the agricultural campaign.

2. Consequences on agricultural and food crop production

With regard to food crop production, at the cereal and food assessment technical consultative meeting held from 29 to 31 October 2007 in Dakar it was estimated that 2007/2008 provisional cereal production for CILSS countries was **14 931 000 tonnes**, or equivalent to that of 2006-2007 production and 17% higher than the average over the last five (5) years. Compared to last year, production is greater in Mauritania (26%), unchanged in Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Mali, Niger, Senegal and lower in Cape Verde (-31%) and Guinea Bissau (-9%). Compared to the average over the last five years, expected 2007-2008 production is 46% less in Cape Verde and 11% less in Senegal. Everywhere else production is higher compared to the average over the last five years except in the Gambia where it is unchanged (5%).

A look at the agricultural and food situation in West African coastal countries reveals that provisional production is higher compared to 2006 in Guinea Conakry (1%), Togo (5%), Benin (10%) and 7.3% lower in Ghana. Production data for Nigeria and other coastal countries is currently being analysed but not yet available

On the basis of established assessments for all of the CILSS countries, expected net available cereal is estimated at **13 185 550 tonnes** to satisfy human consumption needs which are estimated at **13 945 500 tonnes**, hence there will be a deficit of roughly **759 940 tonnes**.



A rather significant structural deficit has been recorded in Cape Verde, the Gambia Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal. These deficits will be compensated by forecasted imports.

With regard to other production such as cotton, some countries are registering a reduction in sown surface area. This drop is estimated at 38% for Mali due to the reconversion of cotton surface area to crops such as sorghum and millet. In addition to the reduction in sown surface area, there could also be a drop in cotton yield due to the cumulative effects of late seeding and an early end to rainfall.

The food situation in this post-harvest period remains generally satisfactory. Cereal markets are well-supplied with local or imported cereals. Local cereal prices are overall less than what they were in 2006 and below the average over the last five years. However, in Nigeria, Senegal and Mauritania cereal prices are higher than elsewhere. Low production of sorghum and corn crops in Nigeria and Ghana should be monitored in order to assure that industrial demand (poultry farming, breweries) is met.

The price situation can thus rapidly evolve. In zones likely to experience food problems as a result of production deficits, speculation by holding back stock in order to drive prices higher and the demand by poultry-farming and brewing industries can lead to an abnormal increase in prices and hence cause access to be difficult for vulnerable populations. This could create a fragile balance between cereal supply and demand.






3. What can be done?

Despite this overall satisfactory situation, local circumstantial and structural production deficits could lead to localised food difficulties. This is coupled with the consequences of floods. While awaiting a definitive evaluation of the food and agricultural situation, the following issues should be considered:

- a. Anticipate the **implementation of management tools and mechanisms** for possible crises, more particularly in countries recording lower food crop production such as Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and in the north of Nigeria. This could involve:
 - Promoting mitigating actions: storage, complementary supplies through imports, regulation and fluidity of market, etc.
 - Strengthening complementary production through capitalising on irrigation opportunities. For example, some zones which have been affected by flooding could be used for flood-recession farming.
 - Strengthening the capacities of at-risk populations, notably those having been severely affected by the floods and the early rain stoppage, to be able to access food. To help reach this objective, income-generating activities could be implemented (market gardening production, small trade, animal fattening, etc.)
- b. **Strengthening improved market functioning** in order to make up for the local deficits and encourage better access to cereals for the more vulnerable populations. States should assure the free circulation of unprocessed material in the region. Regional market functioning should improve so that the region would depend less on imports in a context of rising global prices.
- c. Place **the issue of agricultural vulnerability and water management in the Sahel and West Africa** once again on the agenda of strategic thinking and discussions with decision-makers. 95% of agriculture in general and food crop production in particular depends on rainfall. While taking into account the potential of available resources in the region, the issue is now which strategies and policies to adopt in order to become more independent.

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.

				
www.westafricaclub.org	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.josserand@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 ☎: +227 96 97 70 11	✉: b.sidibe@aghrymet.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.sisabf.net

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 to information on the food and nutritional situation in the region in view of decision-making for action.

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

Greater strengthening of the regional market in order to promote food and nutritional security in the Sahel and West Africa

Following the joint initiative CILSS, FEWS Net, Sahel and West Africa Club, UNICEF, UNOCHA, WAMIS-net and WPF on "Food Security and Border Trade in the Kano-Katsina-Maradi - K²M zone", launched in May 2006, a regional actors workshop was held from 17 to 20 September 2007 in Katsina, Nigeria.

One of the key objectives of this workshop was to define operational actions to carry out in the short-term to prevent and manage food crises at the local level. For more information on the conclusions of the workshop and the prospects of this initiative, please consult the following link:

http://www.afriquefrontieres.org/images/pdf/edito/fr/programme_katsina_fra.pdf