

Food Security Information Note - FOSIN

Food Situation in the Sahel and West Africa:

An overall satisfactory food situation going into the 2007 wintering period

Note 9 – May 2007

1. Current Outlook: Good Overall Food Situation

As was confirmed at the last meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (FCPN) held in Paris on 5 and 6 April 2007, total cereal production reached **15 102 000** tonnes in CILSS countries for the 2006-07 Agricultural Campaign. This is an increase of **3%** compared to the 2005-06 Campaign and **19%** compared with the average over the last five years.

As a result of this ample production, cereal markets overall appear to be well-supplied. Thus the general price stabilisation trend, observed in March-April, is confirmed. In some countries, such as Burkina Faso and Mali, various information sources indicate a slight drop in prices during this period marking the end of institutional purchases in order to supply national security stocks.

There are some exceptions to this overall trend and there has been an increase in prices in some zones and countries:

- Rural zones in Mauritania
- Niger's Dosso and Agadez zones for sorghum and millet
- In Senegal where there is an increasing lack of supplies with the dwindling trade and family stocks
- In eastern Chad where the normal supply flows are interrupted by conflicts.

Besides these exceptions, the overall market situation and prospects for populations to have access to supplies are positive.

In addition, the desert locust situation appears relatively calm at the beginning of this wintering period. Despite threats in the central region (Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan), presently no alert will be issued in the Sahel and West Africa. In its bulletin on desert locusts

(http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/common/ecg/562_fr_DL343f.pdf), the FAO cites the slightest risk that swarms could travel from the central region crossing the Sahel towards Niger, Mali and Mauritania. But no significant development is expected for the period up to mid-June 2007.

In the Gulf of Guinea countries and in the Sudanian zones of the Sahel countries (southern Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad), the first rains registered from the beginning of April to 20 May were overall normal or above average (1995-2006) according to locality. In Gulf of Guinea countries, seeding is underway while in the Sahel countries soil is still being prepared. Off to a slow start in some Sudanian zones, corn and cotton seeding has begun.

Seasonal climatic forecasts are being established and will provide more details on the rainfall trends as from June.

In **conclusion**, analysis of the current situation indicates that *presently no particular alert will be issued for all of the Sahel countries with the exception of eastern Chad. As for issuing alerts, as has been the case in Niger, similar declarations of a possible emergency situation in Burkina Faso were recently clarified.* [http://www.food-security.org/medias/File/Clarifications_FS_BurkinaM_ai07_doc\(1\).pdf](http://www.food-security.org/medias/File/Clarifications_FS_BurkinaM_ai07_doc(1).pdf).

2. But many challenges still remain

The current relatively satisfactory food situation in the Sahel and West Africa could quickly take a down turn due to two factors: **(i)** the start-up of the rainy season and, **(ii)** country's capacity to respond with recommended mitigating measures for at-risk populations in structurally deficient zones.

With regard to these at-risk populations, there are already indications such as:

- Oncoming rains may exacerbate the inaccessibility of at-risk zones – a situation which would increasingly complicate the implementation of recommended mitigating measures.



- The start of agricultural activities will result in high demand in food crop products and the overall food situation could take a downward turn in at-risk zones. For example, in some zones of Niger (Agadez and Tillabéri), the current price of millet (18.000 CFA Francs/100 kg sack) seems to already exceed the population's purchasing power.
- The late start could result in the disruption of traditional transhumant movement which would result in over-pasturing and a concentration of animals following their late movement back to the North. These disruptions are often sources of conflict between sedentary farmers and transhumant nomads.

3. Take Action!

Several mitigating actions in support of at-risk populations have already been taken or are underway (http://www.food-security.net//medias/File/Nisa_8_Fr.pdf). These actions are timely and the real challenge is **how quickly these actions can be implemented** before accessibility problems are exacerbated in zones where the rainy season has begun.

These actions include in particular specific measures in each country and an approach combining both emergency actions where the situation is critical (for example in eastern Chad where close to 140 000 internally displaced persons and their host populations are in a difficult security and food situation) and development actions aiming to strengthen the livelihoods of vulnerable communities.

The goal is two-fold:

- Ease the severity of the lean period;
- Enable a large part of this at-risk population to escape this structural food insecurity situation.

The next meeting on regional information mechanisms on food security in West Africa, foreseen for 13 to 16 June in Bamako will be an assessment of these mitigating measures at the beginning of the 2007 lean period. Food prospects are better than that of the last two years even in the most vulnerable zones. As a result, there may not be a need for emergency intervention yet increased vigilance on key alert indicators and monitoring the agricultural season is still paramount.

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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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 FCPN officially launched its food security website on Friday 6 April 2007 at the Centre d'Accueil de la Presse Etrangère (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