

CHAD Monthly Food Security Report

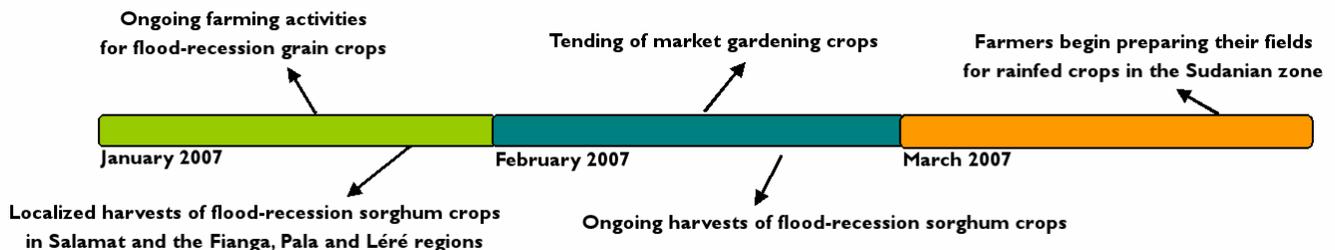
February 2007

As harvests of off-season “*berbéré*” crops continue, grain availability has improved in all parts of the country. Current grain supplies from recent harvests and expected output from harvests of “*berbéré*” crops will augment market inventories, driving down prices for millet (the staple grain crop), as is normal at this time of year. On three of the country’s four largest markets, millet prices have been declining. Despite the deterioration in terms of trade for sheep/millet in February of this year compared with December and January, they are still better than they were at any time between February and November 2006.

Conditions for the refugee population and local communities in areas receiving refugees and IDPs are encouraging, while the food security of IDPs is still being assessed.

Despite ongoing peace talks, renewed fighting in Ennedi between government troops and rebel forces could heighten security problems in that area, seriously undermining food security conditions in the northern and eastern reaches of the country. The redeployment of government troops to counter rebel offensives could reduce the strength of security forces in the most tightly controlled areas, which is liable to create a panic in local villages, triggering a new wave of IDPs.

Seasonal calendar



Food security conditions and status of the refugee population and host communities

In general, food security conditions in all parts of the country, which have been good since the end of the 2006/07 growing season, are improving even further with the favorable production forecast of the ongoing harvests of “*berbéré*” crops. Continuing harvests of winter fruits and vegetables and tuber crops are diversifying the household diet, easing pressure on household grain reserves.

Procurements for rebuilding the national food security reserve during the post-harvest period continue and are operating as a regulatory mechanism for grain prices, ensuring that farmers are paid reasonable prices for their surplus grain crops. Humanitarian organizations active in areas receiving refugees and IDPs are discussing efficient and effective strategies for pre-positioning food and non-food supplies in camps and settlement sites before the onset of the rainy season, which generally begins sometime in June. However, the food outlook is contingent on future developments in national sociopolitical, economic and environmental conditions.

Scheduled distributions of food rations to 223,608 beneficiaries in the 12 camps in Eastern Chad for February took place without any major incidents. Efforts to pre-position food supplies in refugee and IDP camps continue, and the government

and humanitarian organizations are discussing plans for ensuring access to local croplands for IDPs or for getting them back home in time for the start of the 2007/08 growing season.

In the south, with some reluctance, the Central African refugee population has finally accepted the Joint Assessment Mission's recommendations for phasing out emergency food aid and replacing it with sustainable development initiatives, including training and support in brick-making, crafts, small retail business skills, etc. This reduction in food aid cuts the energy level of daily food rations from 1,900 Kcal per person per day to 1,200 Kcal per person per day in the Gondjé camp and from 1,400 Kcal per person per day to 900 Kcal per person per day in the Mboko camp. Food rations at the Gondjé settlement site receiving refugees relocated from areas along the Chadian/Central African border still meet the daily energy requirement of 2,100 Kcal per person per day.

To meet the food needs of IDPs in these areas, the World Food Program (WFP) and local food security partners conducted a survey from February 9th to 20 to assess the living conditions of IDPs at each camp site. Host communities in these receiving areas for refugees and IDPs have benefited from the quasi-truce in effect since the beginning of the month. Market supplies are relatively good. The smooth flow of trade between secondary markets and the main market in Abéché has helped drive down prices on the area's main market (Abéché). However, renewed fighting could end this respite and disrupt the flow of supplies to local markets and certain Sudanese refugee camps.

Continuing social conflict in the Northeast has delayed the return of IDPs to their native villages. This delay is affecting their current food security status (during the dry season) and will affect their food security in the upcoming rainy season scheduled to begin in a few months. The dry season, which has only just begun, is making access to water, fuel wood and pasture increasingly difficult, while the onset of the rainy season early in June brings with it the problem of access to cropland, seeds, farm implements and shelter. Some IDPs have settled in floodplains and fields that will be used by host communities for growing crops. The inability of IDPs to return home could disrupt the traditional production system and interfere with coping strategies; this in turn could heighten the dependency of the IDPs and their host communities on humanitarian aid during the 2007/08 growing season.

Road thefts by armed gangs are also affecting the flow of trade in foodstuffs in general and grain crops in particular. There have been reports of grain shortages on the Abéché market – the main market in this area – triggering short-term, weekly hikes in prices. Periodic shortages of livestock have driven up the price of sheep by more than 50 percent on the Abéché market.

Food security outlook

The food security outlook for particular regions in Chad is shaped by their status as surplus or deficit areas and by developments in national sociopolitical, economic and environmental conditions. In the most likely scenario (restoration of peace, good agricultural, forest farming and pastoral conditions, etc.), the food security situation in grain-surplus areas or prefectures could range from year-round grain availability to the depletion of household grain reserves relatively late in the year, during the lean period. This could ensure good local market supplies, bolstered from time to time by cross-border supplies (from Sudan, Libya and the Central African Republic), promoting price stability on local markets and facilitating grain access for food-insecure populations.

The food security situation in grain-deficit areas (Guera, Kanem, Tandjilé, Logone Occidental, Logone Oriental and Moyen Chari prefectures) would cover food needs for anywhere from 3 to 11 months, with relatively heavy reliance on grain purchases on local markets. Prices are expected to remain relatively stable thanks to the smooth flow of inter-area and cross-border grain trade and effective coping strategies made possible by this scenario, while the strengthened purchasing power of vulnerable population groups should help bolster their complementary grain access.

In the worst-case scenario (fighting, poor conditions in the livestock sector, an economic depression, etc.), surplus areas or prefectures would deplete their grain stores relatively early due to pressure on grain reserves to meet different household needs. Conditions in these areas could worsen during the lean period.

Future trends in grain-deficit areas or prefectures in the worst case scenario include the rapid depletion of self-produced reserves and the disruption of traditional grain regulation mechanisms, which could trigger steep hikes in grain prices. Together with the weakened household purchasing power associated with this scenario, these price hikes would curtail the complementary grain access of food-insecure residents of these prefectures. The depletion of productive assets and escalating malnutrition problems in these prefectures can also be expected. Some surplus areas (Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti, Wadi Fira, Ouaddai and Salamat) will still face food insecurity depending on the magnitude of conflict present in these areas.

Analysis of grain prices

Market prices

In general, in a good crop year like 2006/07, grain prices are at their lowest in January and February as the availability of rainfed grain crops is high output from harvests of *berbéré* crops expected. According to current estimates, crop production levels in virtually all parts of the country exceed needs by a small margin, except in Guera, Kanem, Tandjile, Logone Occidental, Logone Oriental and Moyen Chari, which are all grain-deficit areas.

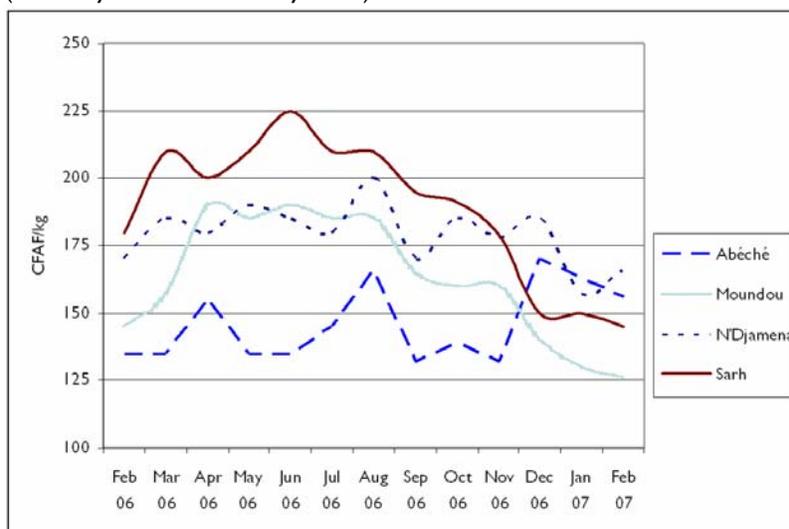
Grain prices are falling on all markets, with the exception of N'Djaména, where prices rose 6 percent between January and February and are 3 percent above the five-year average (figure 1). This unusual hike in prices in N'Djaména is due, in part, to higher shipping costs for grain crops and the reluctance of farmers to sell their grain until the *berbéré* harvest is brought in. In contrast, millet prices came down by 4 percent in Abéché and by 3 percent in Moundou and Sarh between January and February.

Terms of trade

The average price of a sheep peaked in December (at 25,000 CFAF), before edging downwards in January (to 22,500 CFAF) and February (to 21,250 CFAF). The downturn in sheep prices since the beginning of the year is a good indicator of plentiful supplies on the livestock

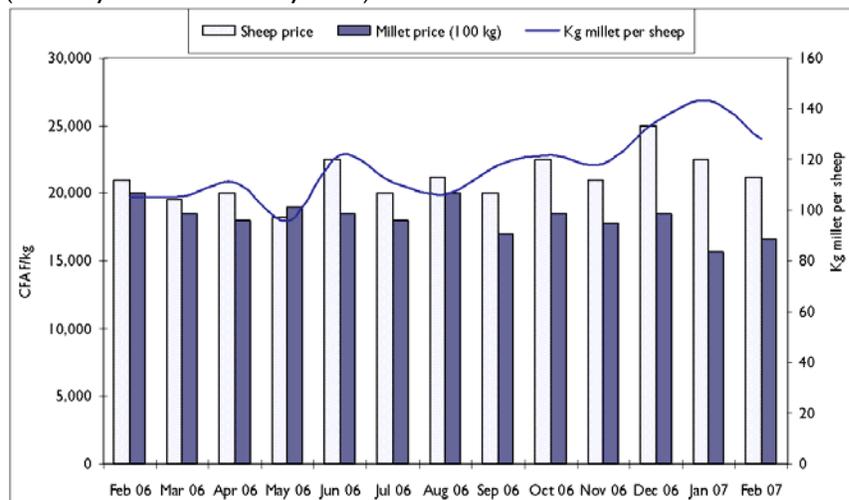
market, with pastoralists selling animals to replenish their grain reserves. Pastoralists are enjoying better terms of trade for sheep/millet in February this year compared with the period from February through November 2006 (Figure 2), with a sheep currently trading for 128 kg of millet, compared with only 105 kg last February and a mere 96 kg last May. Despite the slight regression in terms of trade for sheep/millet compared with December and January, they are still better than in any other previous month since February 2006.

Figure 1. Average monthly millet prices on Chad's four largest markets (February 2006 to February 2007)



Source: SIM; Analysis by FEWS NET Chad

Figure 2. Terms of trade for sheep/millet on the N'Djaména market (February 2006 to February 2007)



Source: SIM/FEWS NET; Analysis by FEWS NET