

NIGER Food Security Outlook Update

March 2011

- 2.6 million people were food insecure in January 2011 according to the results of the joint national survey of early warning system (EWS) and partners on vulnerability to food insecurity.
- Successive waves of arrivals of migrants forced to leave Libya, increase household food insecurity among those dependent on remittances.
- The unexpected trends in the prevalence of acute malnutrition in the region of Tillaberi in October / November 2011 were likely due to a gap between the cessation of assistance in September/October and the delayed start of harvest from October to December.

Update of the outlook for January through June 2011

The findings by the national survey of vulnerability to food insecurity corroborate the good crop and pasture production figures released at the end of the 2010 season. Thus, according to the results of this survey based on food use and consumption data, an estimated 17 percent of the country's total population is either moderately or severely food-insecure. This is an improvement over food insecurity levels at the same time in 2008 (which, like 2010/11, was a good crop year), when 23 percent of the population was classified as food-insecure. The current rate of food insecurity is also a large improvement over the situation back in May of last year (during the food crisis) when, according to the national survey of vulnerability to food insecurity, 48 percent of the population was either severely or moderately food-insecure. However, in contrast to the situation in these comparison periods, when most of the food-insecure population was concentrated in agropastoral areas of the country, in 2010/11, farming areas accounted for the largest share of severely food-insecure households, followed by agropastoral areas. The heavy flooding late last season is to blame. On the other hand, good water availability has helped expand flood-recession and off-season crop production, with harvests of these crops liable to stretch from January to as late as April. These harvests should help quickly turn things around in farming communities.

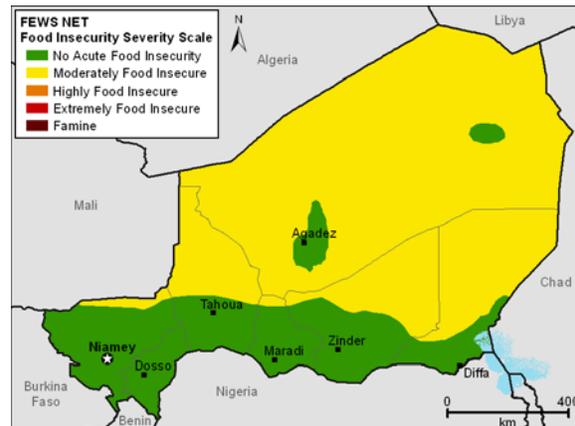
The massive numbers of migrants returning home from Libya, which is in the throes of a sociopolitical crisis, are swelling the ranks of the food-insecure. In fact, the uprising in Libya on February 14th of this year and the accompanying violence are triggering mass migratory movements from that country to Niger. Thus, as of March 15th, approximately 5,000 refugees

This report is an update of the January 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook assessing food security conditions for the period from January through June 2011. The next Outlook report for the period from May through September 2011 will be released in May.

FEWS NET Niger
Niamey
Tel: 00 227 20 31 71 33
hyacouba@fews.net

FEWS NET Washington
1717 H St NW
Washington DC 20006
info@fews.net

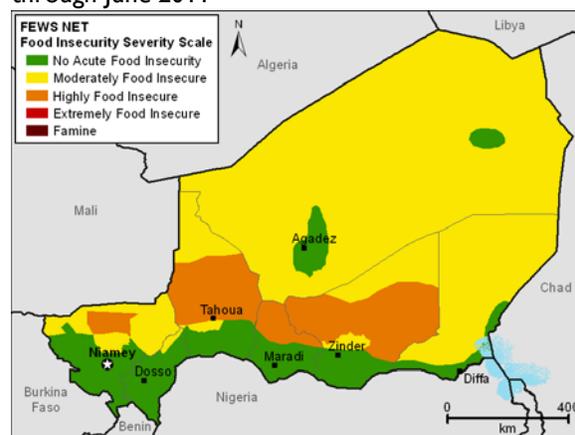
Figure 1. Estimated food security outcomes for March 2011



Pour plus d'informations sur l'échelle d'insécurité alimentaire de FEWS NET, visitez: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Most likely food security outcomes for April through June 2011



Source: FEWS NET

of all nationalities fleeing the violence in Libya had been welcomed into Niger, where three intake centers were set up in Dirkou, Agadez, and Niamey. These population movements triggered by events in Libya have prompted humanitarian organizations active in Niger to contemplate an assistance plan based on a needs assessment for an estimated 60,000 migrants expected to arrive in Niger within a one-month period, or 2,000 people a day. For the time being, a national intake and transit system has been set up to handle corresponding information, statistics, intake, lodging, feeding, transportation, repatriation, security, and medical and social services. The first support and assistance programs for these migrants are beginning to start up, but they are a long way from meeting projected needs. The scale of this return migration from Libya is larger than from Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, which are also under considerable sociopolitical and socio-religious pressure, since migration to Libya is generally longer-term.

In any event, this could have serious repercussions for the food security situation in the Agadez, Tahoua, and Zinder regions, leading to a deterioration in the already precarious security conditions in these areas and a disruption in commodities trade between these regions.

The nutritional situation is deteriorating, as reflected by the rising numbers of admissions of malnourished children to therapeutic feeding centers between January and February of this year, which is a more or less normal seasonal trend. The results of the national survey of child nutrition and survival conducted in October-November of last year reflect anomalies in trends in malnutrition and mortality rates in the Tillabery region. Last year's food security conditions in this region varied according to the flow of outside aid, which was plentiful in June and, by comparison, extremely limited in October, which is normally the start of the harvest season. However, with the rains continuing through the end of October, harvests did not actually get underway until November. In any event, thanks to what was, in fact, a good harvest, malnutrition and mortality rates are expected to fall back in line with normal seasonal trends in this area. Thus, the anomalies in trends in acute malnutrition and mortality rates observed in October/November of last year are not considered indicative of a need for special emergency aid programs in the Tillabery region over the next few months.

Pastoral areas of Tahoua, Maradi, and Zinder

In general, there is good pasture availability, but seasonal lakes and ponds have begun to dry up, creating watering problems for animals in the northern part of the country. Livestock have begun to turn to underground water sources, whose physical access and affordability pose a problem. Animals belonging to better-off households are able to take advantage of the good pasture availability in these areas thanks to water supplies brought in by tank trucks. Middle-income households have started to head south with their animals, where there are adequate water supplies, but grazing enclaves either have only sparse vegetative cover or have been invaded by undesirable species, which often spring up after a good season following poor rainfall conditions. However, so far, this has not affected the physical condition of livestock. Terms of trade for goats-millet ranged from 150 to 300 kg of millet per male goat in February of this year, compared with the five-year average of 93 to 160 kg, thanks to a strong local demand for small animals for the rebuilding of livestock herds.

The so-called «food security project for disaster-stricken pastoralists» mounted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock-Raising in conjunction with the national food crisis prevention and management network and its partners furnished a target group of 4,500 poor households in pastoral areas with 337,500,000 CFAF, or 75,000 CFAF per household, in January-February of this year (to cover two to three months worth of food consumption). However, even with this assistance and local coping strategies, poor households are still not getting enough milk, which is a very important part of their diet.

The intake and transit centers for migrants, particularly the Dirkou facility, are highly dependent on imports of food pastes from Libya and Algeria. The disruption in trade as a result of the fighting in Libya will have a major impact on prices, driving them up sharply. Thus, should the response to this influx of migrants from Libya fall short, within a month, a surge in armed banditry is likely in this part of the country, which could disrupt the flow of trade between different areas and drive up prices on provisioning markets for pastoral areas, with poor households facing potentially large food access deficits.

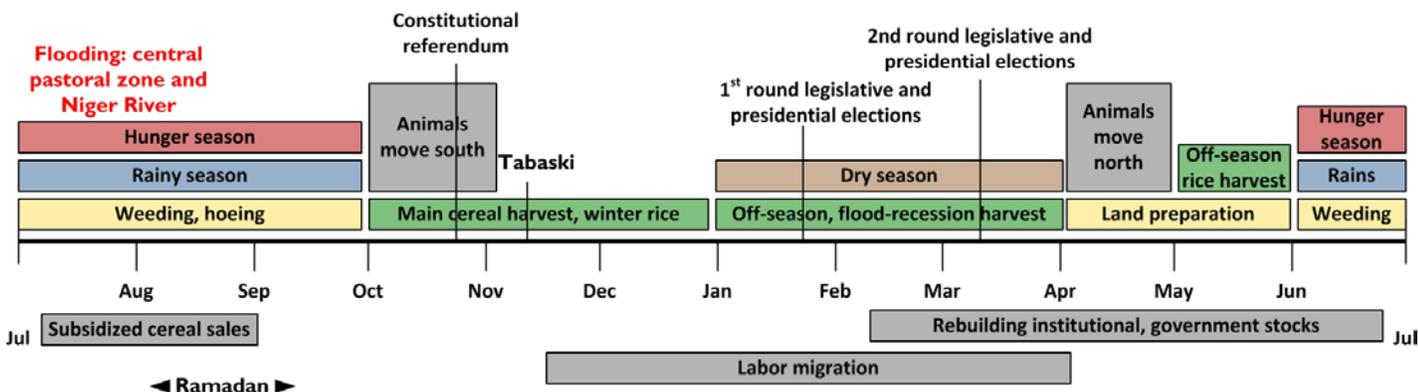
Agropastoral areas of Tahoua, Maradi, and Zinder

In general, these areas are reporting a steady supply of grain and cash crops thanks to good trader inventories, as well as supplies from farmers. Prices are still comparatively stable. Harvests are well underway in market gardening areas and, on the whole, are strengthening the food situation and incomes of farm families.

In spite of good harvests of grain and cash crops and the underlying good food security conditions in these areas, according to the findings by the national survey of vulnerability to food insecurity conducted by the SAP (the national early warning system) in January of this year, the largest share of the country’s severely food-insecure population is concentrated in this belt within the country’s agropastoral zone which, with 6.5 percent of its population classified as severely food-insecure, is ranked as its second most severely food-insecure area. Moreover, with rates of severe food insecurity ranging from 6.6 to 8.8 percent, residents of the Tahoua, Zinder, and Maradi regions have the worst food access deficits.

Thus, not only are households in these areas dealing with what, so far, are moderate food deficits, but also with an erosion of their livelihoods, which means that a larger share of household expenditures must go to purchasing food. The severity of these deficits could be heightened by market disruptions and a sharp drop in household income as a result of the mismanagement of the repatriation of migrants from Libya. The social reintegration problems facing these migrants will make them completely dependent on longer-term aid, which could drive them to take any and all kinds of risks contributing to the unraveling of the social and economic fabric in these areas.

Seasonal calendar and timeline of critical events



Source: FEWS NET