Abundant precipitation at the start of the main cropping season

Planting of the 2013 main season maize crop is underway both in the bimodal Centre-South and in the unimodal North. According to satellite-based observations, the onset of seasonal rains occurred about a month earlier than normal, with abundant precipitation in February. While this early start is not expected to have a significant impact on the maize crop, it is likely to be particularly beneficial for the germination of yams, which have been planted earlier (February-March) and are particularly vulnerable to dry conditions at the start of the season.

In 2012, mixed rainfall situation resulted in an average crop

Harvesting of the 2012 food crops was concluded late last year into early 2013. The temporal distribution of rains during March to June (the main maize growth period in the bi-modal Centre and South) was erratic although the cumulative levels of rainfall were similar to the long-term average. By contrast, abundant rains benefited crops in the north, despite localized floods. Official production estimates are not yet available but the cereal output in 2012 is tentatively put at about average levels.

According to the preliminary findings of a joint Government/FAO/WFP Food Security Assessment Mission that visited Northern Cameroon in January-February 2013, the 2012 cereal output in the North province, estimated at 509 601 tonnes, was 16 percent lower than the previous year, while in the Far North region, despite an increase in cereal production, localized production shortfalls occurred for the second consecutive year. The Logone and Chari department (Far North region) has suffered in 2012 from the lingering effects of a severe cereal production shortfall caused by the drought conditions which prevailed in 2011; additionally, both Far North and North regions bore the brunt of flooding in September 2012, which affected 60 000 individuals, causing damage to crops and population displacement.

Inflation rates forecast to remain stable in 2013

According to the IMF, the average inflation rate is forecast to remain stable at about 3 percent in 2013. In the last several years, rates of inflation were highly volatile, varying from a low of 1 percent in 2007 to 5 percent in 2008 then declining to 3 percent and 1 percent in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Rates rose again in 2011 to 3 percent, stabilizing in 2012.

Chronic food insecurity in the north due to recurrent climatic shocks
The Food Security Assessment Mission found that cereal stocks were already depleted as early as March 2013 in 21 districts out of a total of 47 in the Far North region, where 1.78 million people (about 46 percent of the region’s total population) reside.

In addition, based on preliminary data from the 2012 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, jointly carried out by UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, in northern Cameroon the chronic malnutrition rates (44.8 percent in the Far North Region, 43.3 percent in the North region) exceed the "critical" threshold of 40 percent set by the World Health Organization. Similarly, the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates of 6.3 percent in the Far North and 5.5 percent in the North are higher than the "precarious" threshold of 5 percent.