Objective: Within the framework of the monthly meetings of the Food Security and Nutrition Regional Working Group for West Africa, from a humanitarian perspective, FAO and WFP inform the group with highlights on the food security situation of the previous month.

The decrease in rainfall in October marks the end of the rainy season across West Africa and the Sahel. Following the start of harvests, the good prospects of production, announced with regard to the favourable rainfalls of this rainy season, remain to be confirmed. At the same time, the impact of floods in certain countries has to be evaluated.

Livestock feed supply from natural pasture is characterized by a good development and regeneration of agropastoral lands. The physical condition of animals is also overall satisfactory.

The locust situation remains very concerning throughout the summer breeding areas of the Sahel. This situation, particularly in certain areas of Mauritania, remains a threat that could potentially lead to a resurgence.

The Rift Valley Fever outbreak in Niger may worsen, resulting in more human deaths. In order to avoid negative impacts on livestock and human health, preventive and curative measures must continue.

Recommendations for regional partners

→ Monitor the 2016 – 2017 agropastoral campaign

→ Monitor the food and nutrition security situation in the Lake Chad Basin

→ Monitor the food situation in all of northern Nigeria: North-East (humanitarian crisis) and North-West (rising prices, floods)

→ Monitor the locust situation in Mauritania and throughout the Sahelian band

→ Monitor the Rift Valley Fever situation in Niger
The month of October is characterized by the reduction in rainfall marking the end of the rainy season in the region. Despite the good rainfall, this campaign has recorded floods in some countries, especially in Niger where 123,239 people were affected including 50 deaths. Constant rainfall deficits in Liberia and Togo should also be noted. (figure 1).

In the region, crops are generally at the stage of maturation/maturity. The first harvests are underway for cowpeas, maize and groundnut.

In 2016, yields in fodder production are higher from 25 to 50 percent and equivalent to those of 2015 on the Atlantic coast and eastern half of the Sahel. However, at the centre of the Sahel, particularly in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the situation is not as good. CILSS/Agrhytmet

Niger: Rift Valley fever outbreak in the Tahoua region

As of October 18, the Rift Valley fever (RVF) has hit 132 people (57 women and 66 men) and caused 31 deaths in the Tahoua region according to the health authorities of Niger (figure 3). The health districts in Tchintabaraden and Tassara are the most affected by this outbreak which was declared by the Government of Niger on September 20. The age group of 15 years and over represent 73 percent of registered cases and livestock farmers constitute 65.9 percent of those affected. Livestock also paid a heavy price as a result of this disease; 363 cases of animal abortions as well as 370 deaths of young animals were reported. However, the toll could be much higher. OCHA

Pastoral situation is overall good and even excellent in the pastoral areas of the Sahel front countries. The situation is characterized by a good availability of green fodder (figure 2) and water for livestock watering.

Locust situation (as of September 02, 2016): Outbreak continues in Mauritania

A Desert Locust outbreak continues in western Mauritania where groups of mature adults are present, and egg-laying and hatching are underway, causing early instar hopper groups and small bands to form. Ground control operations are in progress and have treated nearly 6,500 ha since the beginning of the campaign.
2016-2017 Agropastoral Campaign (continued)

Decrease in rainfall marks the end of the rainy season

In November, locusts will decline in southeast Mauritania as a few remaining groups form and move to the northwest where they will supplement egg-laying that started during the last week of September. Second-generation hatching that commenced in early October will continue during November, giving rise to hopper groups and bands throughout October and November.

Elsewhere, small-scale breeding continues in parts of northern Niger where small groups are present, and locust infestations are declining in Chad.

Population movement’s situation in the region

Increase in the number of displaced populations in the neighbouring countries of Nigeria and Mali

**Nigerian crisis:** As of October 31, 2016, the number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Nigeria declined compared to September; going from 1 883 714 to 1 822 541 people. This decrease is due to the return of some displaced people in their places of origin. On the other hand, the number of Nigerian refugees in the 3 neighbouring countries of the Lake Chad Basin (Cameroon, Niger and Chad) slightly increased, going from 169 560 to 178 602 people. The total number of IDPs in the three neighbouring countries of Nigeria reached 462 323 people which corresponds to an increase of more than 10 000 people in comparison to September 2016. UNHCR

**Malian crisis:** As of September 30, 2016, the partners of the Population’s Movement Commission (CMP) recorded 56 729 returnees, which represents an increase of 4 701 people compared to August 2016 (52 028 returnees). At the same time, due to recent clashes that occurred in the region of Kidal, 36 690 internally displaced people were registered during the month of September, representing an increase of 3 648 individuals. In addition, 474 231 returnees were registered by the DNDS (National Directorate of Social Development) and 134 817 Malian refugees in neighbouring countries by UNHCR. Commission Mouvement de Populations (CMP) (October 13, 2016)

Trends on international markets

The food consumption of the majority of countries in West Africa and the Sahel depends on imports of basic products (rice and wheat in particular) whose prices are negotiated on international markets.

The food consumption of the majority of countries in West Africa and the Sahel depends on imports of basic products (rice and wheat in particular) whose prices are negotiated on international markets.

The FAO Food Price Index (FFPI) averaged 170.9 points in September 2016, up almost 5 points (2.9 percent) from August and 10 percent above the corresponding month last year. The September value is the highest since March 2015. Apart from a small decline in July, the FFPI has been steadily going up since the start of the year, mainly supported by a surge in sugar prices and more moderate increases for dairy products, meat and oils. Last month’s rise in the FFPI was driven mostly by stronger dairy and sugar quotations.
The FAO Cereal Price Index averaged 140.9 points in September, a decrease of 2.7 points (1.9 percent) compared to August and of 8.9 percent compared to its year-earlier level. The decline in September marked the third consecutive month of decreases, largely due to ample global supplies, especially export availabilities. This year’s record wheat production, coupled with an expected rebound in global rice production and above-average performance of coarse grains, maize in particular, have continued to weigh on cereal export quotations.

In September, world prices of rice showed a sharp drop again due to abundant exportable supplies. Prices reduction was particularly significant in Pakistan and also in Thailand, where the government continues to sell out its old stocks.

In cross-border markets with Nigeria, price differentials remain favourable to the import of cereals mostly to domestic consumer markets. Exchange rates (FCFA / Naíra) remain unfavourable for exporters of livestock and cash crops (dried pepper, nuts edge, sesame and cowpea) to Nigeria.

In Chad and in the Lake Basin, despite the security risks, trade flows from the Lake Region continue timely with exports of natron, skins, fish, donkeys, groundnuts and beans to Nigeria. Carriers are obliged to make detours to import or export the main products traded in the zone. To do so, they leave Kano in Nigeria, pass through Diffa, Zinder and Guiguimi in Niger to enter Daboua in the western part of the Lake region. As for those who take the risk of passing through the inland waterways, traffic takes them a week to import the products from Nigeria to the Lake (Chad). These inland waterways are officially closed by the police, and carriers bear considerable costs.
Impact on Food Security

Deterioration of food security in some regions of Mali and Chad

In Chad, mVAM data for September 2016 conducted among 877 households in the eight regions of the Sahelian band (Lake, Bahr el Gazel, Kanem, Batha, Wadi Fira, Sila, Guéra and Ouaddai) reveal an overall stable downward trend of the food situation. This overall trend masks some disparities. An improvement is only observed in the Lake and Kanem regions of western Chad. The emergence of the new season and the fall in food prices have contributed to improving the food situation in these regions. On the other hand, in the Barh El Gazal, Ouaddai and Sila regions, despite the supposed end of the peak of the lean season, the food situation further deteriorated. In these regions, the depletion of household stocks and the lack of resources to buy them appear to be the main reasons for the deterioration of the situation.

Female headed households have poorer food consumption than male headed households. A deterioration is also observed among displaced households in the Lake region. Despite being slight, this trend shows that the food situation of displaced populations remains precarious.

In September, 74.2 percent of households surveyed experienced difficulties in accessing food (due to lack of food or money), compared to 77.8 percent in the previous month, a decline consistent to the overall trend of food consumption. (WFP Chad, mVAM - September 2016)

In Mali, the Early Warning System, in collaboration with its partners (WFP, FAO, FEWS NET and Food Security Cluster) conducted a national survey on food and nutrition security (sample of 9 950 households).

Preliminary results of the analysis show that a quarter (25 percent) of Malian households are food insecure, of which 3.1 percent are severely food insecure. The most affected circles are Gao (77 percent), Ansongo (71 percent), Kolokani (70 percent), Tominian (60 percent), Koro (58 percent) and Menaka (54 percent). Compared with last year at the same time, the situation of food security deteriorated significantly in the circles of Gao, Menaka, Kolokani, San, Ansongo, Tominian and Kati. Difficulties in accessing food are the main causes of vulnerability to food insecurity.

Poor households headed by women and people with low levels of education, households depending on donation and assistance for their living from everyday farming and non-farm work are the most affected by food insecurity. (WFP Mali, ENSAN - September 2016)

In Niger, mVAM data collected between August - September 2016 from 340 households receiving WFP food assistance show a decrease in the proportion of households with poor food consumption compared to June 2016, 44 percent in June compared to 4 percent in August 2016. The proportion of households with medium or high food diversity also increased from 18 percent to 63 percent between June and August 2016. By the beginning of June 2016, the security situation had considerably degraded in the region of Diffa and more particularly in the department of Bosso, following a series of attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram. This new crisis has led to forced displacement and suspension of food distributions for security reasons. Since the June attack there have been no major security incidents to report. Between July and August, humanitarian organizations were able to continue their food assistance, with the majority of households receiving food assistance (78 percent in July and 76 percent in August). This has contributed to improving the food situation of the beneficiaries.

From 59 percent in June, the proportion of households that reported experiencing food difficulties in the last 7 days decreased to 26 percent in August. The regularity of food assistance, and consequently the improvement of food consumption, has led to a gradual decline in the proportion of assisted households using survival strategies. (WFP Niger, mVAM to Diffa - October 2016)
Calendars !

→ Cadre Harmonisé analysis workshops:
  ◊ Sahel countries: 7 to 11 November, 2016

→ Meeting of the Cadre Harmonisé Technical Committee (CT-CH) to consolidate the CH analyses in Cotonou, Benin from 14 to 19 November, 2016;

→ Regional PREGEC meeting in Cotonou, Benin from 21 to 23 November, 2016;

→ Regional workshop for the presentation of the early warning systems assessment study in Cotonou, Benin from 24 to 25 November, 2016;

→ Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) meeting in Abuja, Nigeria from 12 to 14 December, 2016.