Food Security and Humanitarian Implications in West Africa and the Sahel

Seasonal cumulative rainfalls have been normal to above normal everywhere except in places along the coastline in Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Togo where light deficits were observed.

The expectations of agro-pastoral production in the region are overall satisfactory. However, the floods and the high levels of water could threaten these projections of good harvest.

In West Africa, prices should not observe high increases, given the good expectations of production.

The food security situation in the region is overall satisfactory and was strengthened by early harvests which started in August in coastal countries and in September in the Sahel. However, conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin and northern Mali will represent the main threat to the food security in the region.

### Recommendations for regional partners

- Monitor the progression of the 2016 – 2017 agro-pastoral campaign;
- Monitor the food and nutrition security in the Lake Chad Basin;
- Monitor the food situation in Northern Nigeria (especially rising prices and floods);
- Raise awareness among partners to participate in joint crops assessment and in Cadre Harmonisé analysis in West Africa/Sahel;
- Monitor the Rift Valley Fever situation in Niger;
- Advocate for funding of the food and nutrition security projects included in the 2016 HRP.

**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 conclusions of the technical consultation on agricultural and food prospects held in Lomé, Togo, from 19 to 21 September 2016, organized by the Regional initiative for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises in the Sahel and West Africa (PREGEC), show an early start of the rainy season in the central and eastern Sahel countries, in particular in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. At the same time, rains came late in Western Sahel (Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Senegal). Starting from July, the rains have been abundant and well distributed in time and space, except in parts of the agro-pastoral areas of Niger and Chad. In early September, seasonal cumulative rainfall were normal to above normal in the region, except in places along the coastline in Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo where minor deficits were registered (Figure 1). At the same time, heavy rains caused flooding in Benin, Burkina, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and The Gambia, resulting in damages to crops, infrastructures and losses of human lives and livestock.

In Chad, floods destroyed 2,200 hectares of crops in August, affecting around 6,000 people in the southern region of Salamat. The affected populations will have to rely on off-season crops and will likely become more vulnerable to food insecurity. In Niger, the National Directorate of Water warned that, in the region of Mopti (Mali), the water levels of the Niger River would soon reach the emergency threshold if they continue to rise. Potential floods would directly affect more than 60,000 people. OCHA

This year, the hydrological situation is very favourable for off-season cropping, with important river flows and water volumes that are close or even higher than those observed during rainy years. However, in Mali, the large rise in the level of the Niger River caused losses of acreages for swamp rice crops.

Thanks to this favourable rainfall situation, normal to above normal harvests are expected this year in the region. Cereals production could reach levels between 64 to 75 million tons, which represent an increase between 0.2 and 28 percent compared to last year and the averages of the past five-years. Roots and tubers production could reach 151 and 168 million tons respectively, with increases of 3 to 22 percent compared to last year and the average of the past five years.

Pastoral situation: the situation is overall satisfactory as a result of the good water availability at the water points, the abundance of pasture and control of animal diseases by veterinary services. However, low forage biomass productivity pockets can be observed in Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad. (Figure 2)
Rift Valley fever Situation in Niger: On 20 September, 2016, the Government of Niger made an official statement regarding the Rift Valley Fever (RVF) ravaging the Tahoua region. The RVF is a viral zoonosis affecting animals which can be transmitted to humans. Deaths and abortions in RVF-infected herds cause substantial economic losses. As of September 18, a total number of 52 RVF human cases, including 21 deaths (representing a case fatality rate of 40.3 percent) has been reported in Niger. (OMS Niger, Sitrep of September 19). No case has been officially reported in Mali.

Locust situation (as of 02 September, 2016): The situation is still calm in the region despite ecological conditions became favourable throughout most of the northern Sahel of West Africa during August as a result of good widespread rains. Consequently, low numbers of solitary adults were scattered throughout most of southern Mauritania and Chad. A similar situation may be present in northern Mali ad Niger. Summer breeding will cause locust number to increase throughout the forecast period in all areas and could extend to southern Algeria. By mid-October, an increased number of locusts suddenly appear in west and northern Mauritania as vegetation rapidly dries out in the south, leading to the potential formation of small groups. FAO

Population movement’s situation in the region

A relative stability of the number of displaced people

Nigerian crisis: Since the last update of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in August 2016, the number of people moving has not changed much. The number of internally displaced people is estimated at 2,093,030 and it has not changed. DTM

The number of Nigerian refugees in the three neighbouring countries of the Lake Chad Basin (Cameroun, Niger and Chad) decreased from 187,471 to 169,560 people. The total number of internally displaced people (for these three countries) is estimated at 450,626. UNHCR

Malian crisis: As of 30 August, 2016, the partners of the Population’s Movement Commission (CMP) reported a number of 52,028 repatriated people, which corresponds to an increase of 832 people compared to July 2016 data (51,196 repatriates). At the same time, 33,042 internally displaced people (6,992 households) and 474,231 returnees were registered by the National Department of Social Development (DNDS), as well as 134,693 Malian refugees in the neighbouring countries (Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger) by the UNHCR. Commission Mouvement des populations

Trends on international markets

The FAO Food Price Index reached its highest value in 15-months

Food consumption in the majority of countries in West Africa and the Sahel depends on imports of basic commodities (especially rice and wheat) whose prices are traded on international markets.

The FAO Food Price Index (FFPI) averaged 165.6 points in August 2016, up 3 points (1.9 percent) from July and almost 7 percent above the corresponding period last year. The August value of the Index is the highest since May 2015. Except for cereals, prices of all other commodities used in the calculation of the FFPI rose in August, led by dairy, oils and sugar.

The FAO Cereal Price Index averaged 143.6 points in August, down 4.5 points (3.0 percent) from July and 7.4 percent below its year-earlier level. Seasonal harvest pressure, associated with the completion of wheat harvests in the northern hemisphere, kept wheat quotations under some downward pressure. Maize values also receded on exceptional crop prospects in the United States and ample supplies of low quality wheat, which could compete with maize for use as animal feed. Meanwhile, a combination of thin buying interest and prospects of larger availabilities from imminent crop harvests weighed on international rice prices. (Figure 3)
In August, the world prices strongly dropped due to abundant supplies. Exporters try to sell their stocks before the new Asian harvest, which may last until early 2017, begin to reach the market in the coming weeks.

The drop mainly affected Indian and Pakistanis prices, which decreased up to 10 percent in a month. Despite floods in Asian and US regions, the world production should increase by 1 percent in 2016. However, this increase will not be enough to meet consumption needs. Then it will be necessary to use the world stocks again to meet global demand. The first estimates of stocks in 2017 indicate a further decline to 165 metric tons (Mt). InterRice

However, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced a possible increase in world rice stocks.

### Market trends in West Africa

With good harvest prospects, cereal prices should remain low in the region

The upcoming harvest prospects are normal in most production areas. Therefore, in West Africa, prices should not suffer high increases. (Source: West African Grain Network (ROAC) [www.roac-wagn.org](http://www.roac-wagn.org))

In fact, after strong harvests in 2014 and 2015, stocks of millet, sorghum and maize are still sufficient to meet local demand as 2016 lean season approaches, thus, keeping cereal prices at relatively low levels.

In the Sahelian band, in August, millet and sorghum prices have remained overall stable such as in Burkina Faso and Mali thanks to sufficient supplies from the previous year’s good harvest, as well as to favourable forecasts for the 2016 cropping season.

However, in Niger, prices of secondary cereals such as millet, sorghum continued to increase in August especially in the southern areas like in Maradi’s market, following a strong demand from Nigerian traders and limited stocks provided by farmers.

In Chad, despite a decline in cereal production observed in 2015, secondary cereal prices dropped in July and established themselves at values below those of the previous year at the same period, thanks to sufficient imports from neighbouring countries. On the contrary, in Nigeria, the upward trend of prices of millet and sorghum is continuing since the beginning of 2016. This trend is a result of the depreciation of the local currency and of the consequent increase of fuel costs, as well as the increase of the sub-regional demand.

However, according to the update of the production and consumption estimates made by USDA (see below), rice prices which are already very low on international markets, are not expected to rise. Furthermore, also this year, imported rice threatens to compete with local cereals in the sub-region.

In Togo, maize prices decreased in July in most of the markets thanks to the arrival of the first harvests of the 2016 cropping season, which should reach good levels despite the late start of rainfall (FAO). In Ghana, inflation remains high despite a decreasing trend from a high of 19.2 percent in March 2016 to 16.9 percent in August. Food inflation, however, remains at 8.5 percent for the same month. In Sierra Leone, the inflation exceeded 10 percent in July. The depreciation of the local currency against the US dollar prompted importers to sell rice at retail instead of passing the responsibility to wholesalers. Rice is an important commodity of the food price index and there is a risk that its price increases in the coming months.
Market trends in West Africa (continued)

With good harvest prospects, cereal prices should remain low in the region

**Figure 4: Monthly comparison of cereal prices (%) in August 2016 and July 2016 - Maize, Millet, Imported Rice, Local Rice and Sorghum**

### Impact on Food Security

The food situation is overall satisfactory with the exception of conflict zones

According to the conclusions of the regional technical consultation on food and agricultural prospects in the Sahel and West Africa, held in Lomé, Togo from 19 to 21 September 2016, the food security situation is overall satisfactory in the region and it has been strengthened by the early harvests started in the month of August in coastal countries and in September in the Sahel. However, the conflicts in the Lake Chad basin and Northern Mali represent the main threat to food security in the region. Thus, in northern Nigeria, nearly 5.8 million people need immediate food and humanitarian assistance including 4.5 million in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. **PREGEC notice, September 2016.**

Moreover, it should be noted that the baseline studies of the Household Economic Analysis (HEA) reveal that a significant proportion of the most vulnerable rural households no longer practice agriculture as the main livelihood activity, and therefore, does not benefit from the favourable weather conditions.

In Mali, due to the unsecure conditions in the north of the country, WFP launched, in August 2016, its mobile survey (mVAM) in the Gao region. In total, 250 food assistance beneficiaries were surveyed. The results of this first round, show that nearly 30 percent of the surveyed households have a poor or borderline food consumption, and 36 percent of them have poor food diversity (households consuming at most 4 food groups in the last 7 days).

Three out of 10 households resorted to coping strategies (consuming less preferred and less expensive food, reducing the number of meals eaten per day, limiting the quantity of food per meal, etc.) to face food shortages. **WFP Mali, mVAM - August 2016**
Impact on Food Security (continued)

The food situation is overall satisfactory with the exception of conflict zones

In Chad, the results of the mVAM mobile survey, conducted in July 2016 among 886 households in the regions of the Sahelian band, show a difficult food security situation for households living in the regions Kanem, Batha, Wadi Fira who suffered the adverse effects of the previous year’s poor rainfalls on their livelihoods (agricultural production, livestock). Female-headed households have a worse food consumption compared to male-headed households.

Three quarters of surveyed households have experienced food access difficulties (lack of food or money). The use of coping strategies is more prevalent in the regions of Batha and Guera where 9 out of 10 households use them to cope with agriculture production deficits. *WFP Chad, mVAM - July 2016.*

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**Calendars!**

→ Joint missions CILSS/FAO/FEW NET/PAM/Government for crops assessment:
  - Coastal countries: 03 - 07 October, 2016
  - Nigeria: 10 - 14 October, 2016
  - Sahel countries: 31 October - 04 November, 2016

→ Cadre Harmonisé (CH) analysis workshops:
  - Coastal countries: 10 - 14 October, 2016
  - Sahel countries: 07 - 12 November, 2016

→ Regional synthesis of CH in Cotonou, Benin from 14 to 19 November, 2016;
→ PREGEC meeting in Cotonou, Benin from 21 to 23 November, 2016;
→ RPCA meeting in Abuja, Nigeria from 12 to 16 December, 2016.