

Minimal levels of general food insecurity despite delays in social programs

KEY MESSAGES

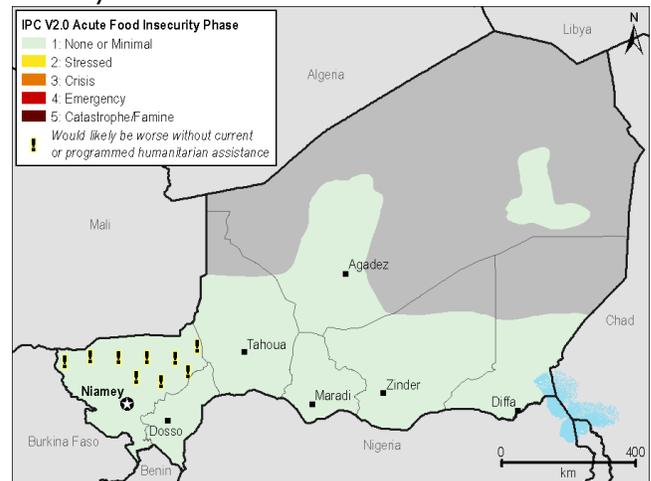
- The government’s social assistance program is designed to meet the food needs of 865,000 recipients, compared with an average food-insecure population of four million for this time of year. The program was originally scheduled to run from January through May. Though the delivery of aid could be delayed by two months, this should not significantly affect the food security situation thanks to good food access and certain ongoing operations by the humanitarian community.
- Market supplies of locally grown crops are normal and account for most available supplies of millet. However, prices are still above seasonal averages with high institutional demand and increasing household consumption, with the normal depletion of household cereal reserves and this year’s smaller than usual flow of labor migration.
- Aside from elevated prices, no major anomalies have been observed to-date on border markets despite potential pressure from the growing numbers of refugees in the western part of the country. Likewise, early reports of crop failures in Nigeria have not yet triggered unusual trends on key cross-border markets.

CURRENT NATIONWIDE SITUATION

The joint CILSS/FEWS NET/WFP food security and market assessment mission observed good food availability due to generally strong harvests. Market supplies of millet, sorghum, and cowpeas are primarily from local sources (60 to 100 percent are from local traders and farmers), compared to the same time last year when imports accounted for 100 percent of market supplies. Normal imports of maize from Nigeria and Benin account for 100 percent of market supplies of this crop, except on the Diffa market whose entire supply of maize is from the Lake Chad area. Most trade is currently between crop-producing areas and high-consumption areas within the country. There is a normal outflow of exports of cash crops (cowpeas, sesame, and chufa nuts) and livestock from Niger to countries such as Nigeria and Ghana.

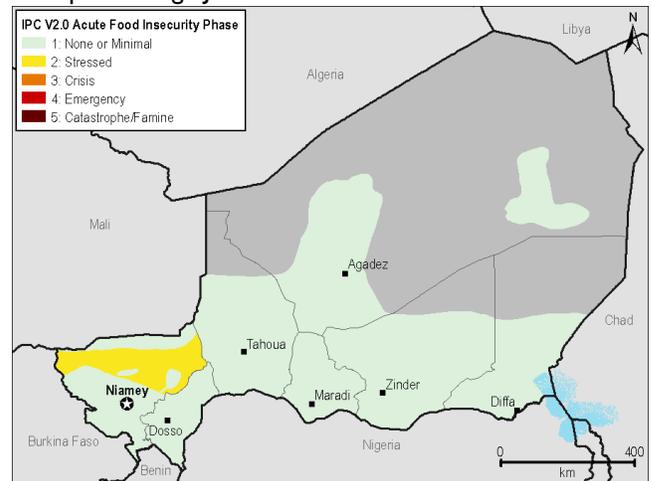
Farmers are playing an increasingly large role in driving consumer cereal demand. Unlike the case in previous months when most demand was from institutions and traders looking to rebuild their cereal inventories, farmers in all parts of the country are becoming increasingly market-dependent with the typically gradual depletion of their food reserves and the

Figure 1 Current food security outcomes for February/March 2013



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2 Most likely estimated food security outcomes for April through June 2013



Source: FEWS NET

These maps show relevant acute food insecurity outcomes for emergency decision-making. They do not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity.

smaller than usual flow of labor migration due to the good local job opportunities, as well as to security problems in certain host countries, particularly Nigeria.

Animal health conditions show significant improvement due to good pasture availability and a timely vaccination campaign that has been extended to include the animals of Malian refugees. Supplies and sales of livestock on markets in the interior are in line with normal seasonal trends. The market value of livestock is above-average and higher than last year due to their good physical condition. There is a normal flow of exports by domestic traders and traders from countries like Nigeria, but the pace has slowed from previous months marked by high consumer demand for the year-end holidays.

In general, staple cereal prices are high compared with the five-year average but lower than at the same time last year. Most crops available for sale on the market are locally grown crops, which are normally more expensive than imports. Thus, this year's prices are above the five-year average by 19 to 25 percent in the case of local cereal crops (millet and sorghum) and by eight to ten percent in the case of imported cereals (rice and corn).

The government has identified and scheduled emergency operations to meet the food needs of approximately 865,000 recipients between January and May of this year and approximately 1.2 million recipients during the lean season, between June and September. It has also scheduled the implementation of early recovery and resilience-building programs for approximately three million beneficiaries. In addition, the country's humanitarian partners are conducting recovery programs in the form of food and cash-for-work activities for approximately 400,000 recipients in all parts of the country to help bolster the government program.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The performance of food security indicators confirms the projected food security outlook for the period from January through June 2013.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH JUNE 2013

- In general, consumer demand is expected to stay strong and cereal prices will stay above-average, gradually approaching 2012 price levels, consistent with seasonal trends. Food availability will be ensured by local harvests of millet and of irrigated crops in March/April and by imports between April/May and September. However, with the losses of tuber and cereal crops and the insecurity in Nigeria, it will be important to monitor trade patterns for cereal imports beginning as of March to detect any eventual anomalies, particularly with regard to millet and sorghum.
- The government's social assistance program will kick off in March. The combination of scheduled program activities, other food resources such as irrigated crops, and income from wage labor should stabilize food security between March and May of this year. However, high prices in the Tillabéri, Maradi, Tahoua, and Diffa regions between June and September will cause conditions to deteriorate.
- The good physical condition of the livestock of pastoral households will sustain their normal market value and their high prices will guarantee good terms of trade for livestock/cereal. With the renewed conflict in Mali, insecurity in that country could interfere with the normal pattern of seasonal migration by livestock in the western reaches of the country into northern Mali between December and June. This situation will need to be monitored to identify any breakdowns in pastoral systems with the beginning of the lean season in pastoral areas, which runs from April to June.
- Most households will begin to drain their cereal reserves sometime between April/May and June. With the end of the season for irrigated crops, their food resources will be sharply depleted, forcing them to fall back on market purchase for their food supplies. The suspension of certain social assistance program activities will limit the food access of growing numbers of poor households with the return of migrant workers. As a result, very poor and poor households will be facing a food consumption gap between April/May and June, particularly in Tillabéri, Ayorou, and Torodi departments where food insecurity will reach Stress levels (IPC Phase 2).