



GIEWS Update

West Africa - Sahel

Elevated risk of deterioration in food security in pastoral areas across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin

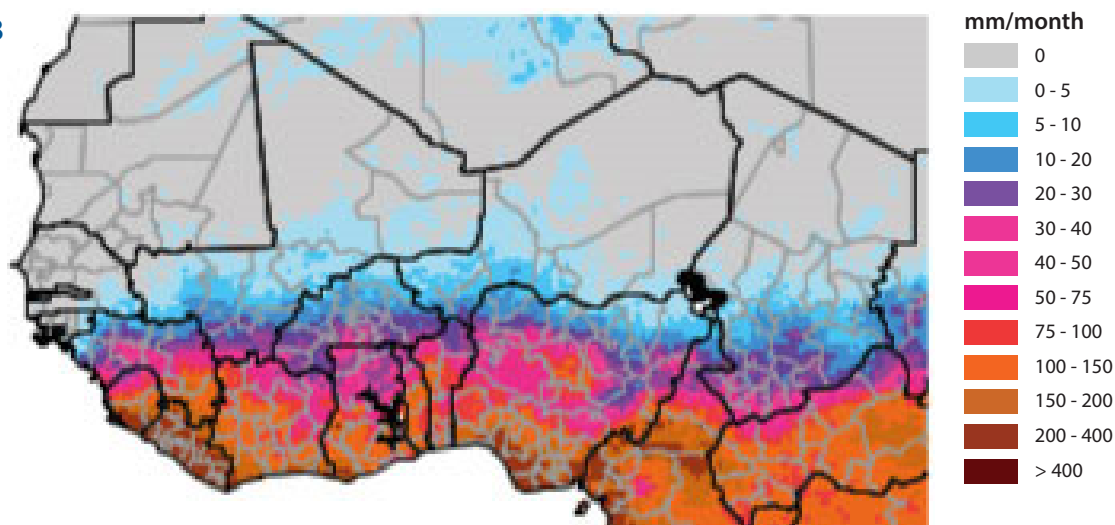
Highlights:

- Poor rains in 2017 affected livestock across the pastoral areas of the Sahel.
- Persisting insecurity hampers access of animals to the grazing areas in northeastern Nigeria, northern Mali and the Lake Chad Region.
- Large concentrations of livestock in safe areas are resulting in shortages of pasture and depressed prices of livestock products and incomes for pastoralists.
- Prices of cereals are generally at high levels as demand is reinforced by the return of transhumant pastoralists moving from southern areas to northern normal grazing areas.
- Livestock prices are at low levels due to declining export demand from Nigeria, resulting in decreasing terms of trade and reducing pastoralists' access to food.
- Around 2.5 million pastoralists and agro-pastoralists are food insecure, and a high risk of livelihood losses are expected during the lean season if mitigation actions are not taken.
- Timely support to pastoralists' livelihoods is needed to prevent a deterioration of their food security situation and undesirable macro-economic implications.

Overview

A poor performance of the 2017 rainy season (June-September) in the Sahel has led to pasture and water deficits that critically affected pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. The poor rains caused an early depletion of pasture and water resources that, coupled with persisting and widespread insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin region, has resulted in a high concentration of animals in atypical areas of Mali and Burkina Faso, where pasture shortages were less severe. Subsequently, rangeland resources suffered an earlier-than-usual depletion during the dry season, with a negative impact on animal body conditions and availability of livestock products. The forthcoming 2018 rainy season is forecast at near-average levels

and, combined with the current below-average vegetation conditions, it is anticipated to result in a slower-than-usual regeneration of rangeland resources, with a negative impact on pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods. A close monitoring of the progress of the rainy season, the pasture availability and the status of animal health is warranted. According to the last "Cadre Harmonisé", the magnitude of food insecurity has significantly increased in the subregion, from 5.2 million people who were in need of immediate food assistance in October-December 2017 to about 7.1 million people in March-May 2018. A timely response to support pastoralists' households is required as recurrent natural and conflict-related shocks have disrupted local livelihoods and eroded the resilience capacity of a large number of households.

Figure 1: West Africa-Sahel - Precipitation**May 2018**EMCWF
WGS84, Geographic Lat/LonSource: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation - www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation.

Rainfall

In the Sahel, the cropping season in 2017 was characterized by an early onset of the rainfall during the third dekad of April which favoured sowing in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad. Due to favourable soil moisture conditions, planting continued until the third dekad of July for rice in Senegal and Mauritania. However, several cases of re-planting have been reported following numerous rainfalls, dry spells and strong winds that buried the young shoots of millet in June-July in Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. In addition, rains suddenly stopped in September across the region. The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) crop assessment indicates that cereal production in 2017 was below average and less than in 2016 in some Sahelian countries, including Burkina Faso and Chad.

Dry spells and unevenly distributed rains led to the wilting of pasture plants and localized shortfalls in biomass production. Fodder production at the end of the cropping season in October was below the level of the previous year and the average of the previous five years. Although the filling of semi-permanent and permanent pools reached its highest level in August following regular and high intensity rainfall, no significant rains were recorded in September in most pastoral zones. As a result, most temporary and semi-permanent water points in pastoral areas across the regions dried up in October. The situation was

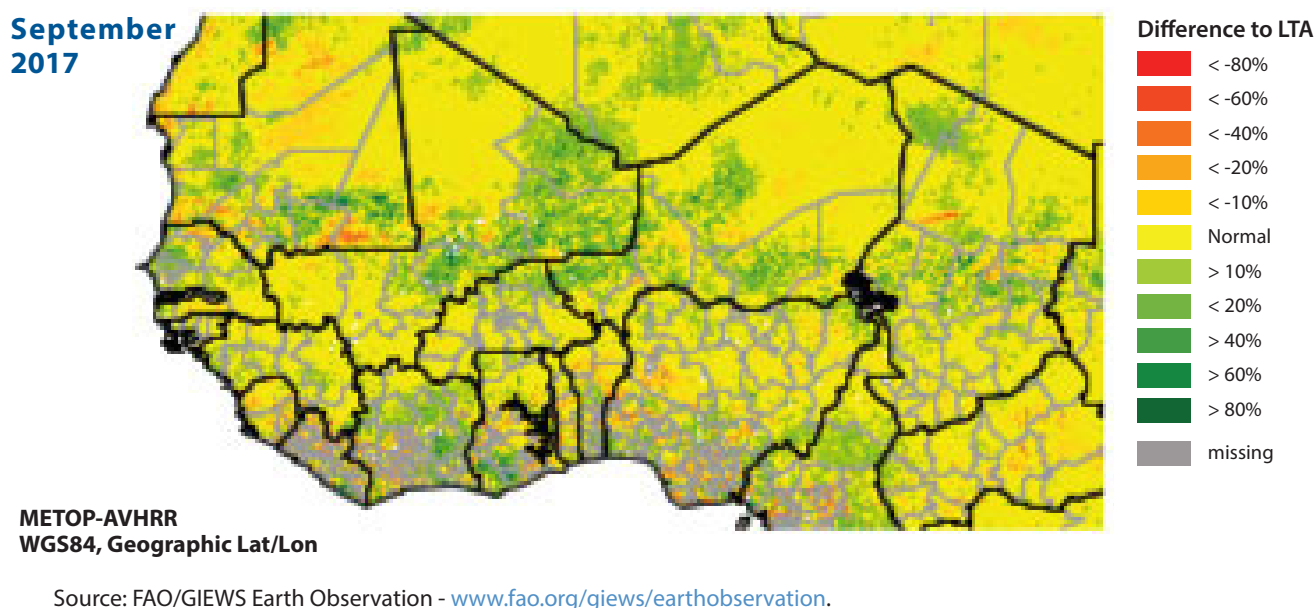
marked by an unusual depletion of fodder stocks and a premature start of the lean season in February rather than in March. It caused a strong concentration of livestock in limited grazing areas generating conflicts among herders and between farmers and herders, and increasing pressure on the environment.

According to the results of the 5th Seasonal Weather Prediction Forum (PRESASS) in Sudano-Sahelian countries in May 2018, rainfall amounts are forecast at above-average to average levels from June to August in most countries. These climatic conditions, assuming normal availability of inputs and no outbreaks of pests, are broadly favourable for agricultural production. However, in the coastal zone from Senegal to Liberia, cumulative rainfall is expected at a below-average level, adversely affecting crop development and increasing incidences of pest outbreaks, notably millet caterpillar.

Livestock production, body conditions, trade and movements

Livestock rearing conditions in Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) have been severely affected by pasture and water shortages. The ongoing lean season has been harsher and longer than usual for pastoral populations due to the early depletion of rangeland resources following the poor 2017 rainy season. The lean season is expected to end in August, about one

Figure 2: West Africa-Sahel - NDVI anomaly (relative difference to long-term average)



month later than usual. Sedentary pastoralists have been purchasing animal feed supplements and crop residues during the past several months. Shortage of pasture and water in some pastoral areas across the Sahel led to earlier-than-usual movements of herds to southern parts of the region. With the massive influx of herds from Northern areas, overgrazing problems and pasture deficits could cause an increase in inter-communal conflicts between transhumant pastoralists and farmers.

Burkina Faso

Livestock sales are an important source of income for pastoralist households in June, when the pastoral lean season peaks and herders sale the last animals before the establishment of the rainy season. However, market activities have been reduced particularly in the communes affected by civil insecurity, including Djibo and Koutoubou (Soum Province). The markets are functioning only during parts of the day, with virtually no presence of foreign buyers (mostly from Nigeria) that contribute to the decline of livestock prices.

Chad

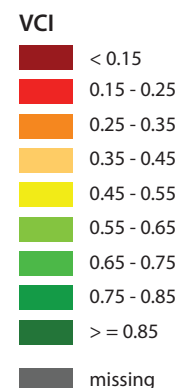
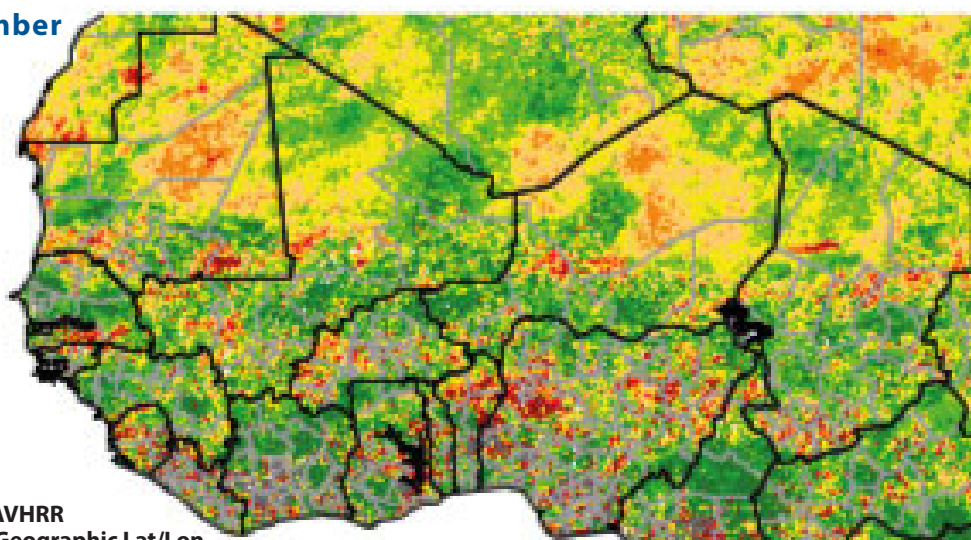
Livestock rearing conditions continue to deteriorate in the districts of Kanem, Bahr El Ghazal, Batha and Hadjer Lamis due to lack of pasture and straw. In addition, the

dry land pasture near Lake Chad was totally exhausted and grazing activities are becoming difficult due to the conflict.

Mali

The pastoral conditions were characterized by major rainfall and forage deficits that have affected the condition of livestock in many areas of the country. In Nioro and Nara localities (Kayes Region), the national directorate for animal production indicated that 80 to 90 percent of the watering points have been depleted. Bushfires and the influx of animals from neighbouring pastures aggravate this deficit. For example, in Nara (Kayes Region), the pastures of the circle will be able to maintain only about 200 000 TLU¹ during the 2017/18 crop year, while the actual need is 356 268 TLU, without counting transhumant livestock coming from elsewhere. The early departure for transhumance has affected more than 70 percent of the herds in some localities, including Yélimané (Kayes Region), which has had a 25-day gap without rainfall. This situation is even more alarming in the northern and central regions and the northern areas of Kayes and Koulikoro where the earlier-than-average deterioration of pastures continues to extend the pastoral lean season. In these areas, a higher number of animals are being affected by the pasture deficit. Access to grazing

¹ TLU = Tropical Livestock Unit

Figure 3: West Africa-Sahel - Vegetation Condition Index (VCI)**September
2017**

METOP-AVHRR
WGS84, Geographic Lat/Lon

Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation - www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation.

areas of Timbuktu and Gao provinces where livestock normally concentrate (November-May) is limited due to civil insecurity.

Mauritania

The pastoral situation remains worrying in the districts of Trarza, Brakna, Gorgol, Tagant and northern parts of the country (eastern Adrar, Inchiri and southern Dakhlet Nouadhibou districts). Due to overgrazing, the southern areas bordering Mali have experienced an early depletion of pasture resources in May while, on average, the grazing period lasts until late June/early July with the appearance of new green leaves.

Niger

The pastoral situation continues to deteriorate particularly in Diffa and Tahoua regions due to the unusual depletion of fodder stocks for the third consecutive year. The Livestock Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture reported a yearly aggregate pasture deficit of about 11 million tons of dry matter. The demand for export of live animals remains below average due to the weak exchange rate and the persisting conflict in Nigeria.

Senegal

The pastoral lean season is underway across the country with the return of transhumant households to their zones of origin. The pastoral conditions remain

difficult in northern and central districts of Matam, Podor, Diourbel, Thiès, Fatick and Kaolack, where straw residue is currently the main source of animal feed.

Food access

Livestock markets were well supplied in June as most pastoralists sold parts of their herds to purchase food for human consumption or animal feed to limit the negative effect of the pasture deficit. Prices of small ruminants (sheep and goat) in May were in line with the seasonal decline and relatively stable or slightly falling compared to the previous month. The downward trend for cattle prices and weak demand for livestock exports continue due to worsening animal body conditions. The weak exchange rate in Nigeria and the civil conflicts in northeast Nigeria, northern Mali and Lake Chad Region are constraining livestock imports. As a result, the terms of trade between livestock and cereals are well below the seasonal average, reducing the purchasing power of pastoral and agro-pastoral households with severe consequences on their access to food.

Food security outcomes

The food security situation for pastoral populations remains extremely critical across the Sahel due to the extended lean season, the high market prices of staple foods and the added cost of maintaining livestock herds. With the general decrease in income due to poor

pastoral conditions leading to lower purchasing power, most households are expected to face increasing difficulties to adequately cover their food expenses until September. Most household spending will only be sufficient to guarantee access to a minimal amount of food, but most of them will move to cheaper and less preferred foods to meet their minimum dietary needs. This will prolong the current unfavourable food security conditions in pastoral livelihood zones until August when the next rainy season is likely to be fully established. Animals will face elevated risks of death from starvation, hypothermia or drowning due to weakness and poor health conditions with the onset of the rainy season if no assistance is provided. Destocking operations of livestock should continue and increase until August helping to improve the

food security situation for pastoralists. Assistance programmes for pastoralists aiming at selling animal feed at subsidized prices by the governments are underway across the region. According to the March 2018 "Cadre Harmonisé" analysis, between March and May 2018, about 3.2 million people were estimated to be in Phase 3: "Crisis" and above in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal compared to around 1.8 million people which were estimated to be in Phase 3: "Crisis" and above between October and December 2017. If no mitigation measures are taken to attenuate the vulnerability of the rural families who depend on rainfed agriculture or livestock rearing, the number of severely food insecure is projected to reach a caseload of 4.9 million people by the end of the lean season, between June and August 2018.

This report is prepared by the **Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS)** of the Trade and Markets Division of FAO. The updates focus on developing anomalous conditions aimed at providing early warnings, as well as latest and more elaborate information than other GIEWS regular reports on the food security situation of countries, at both national and sub-national levels. None of the information in this report should be regarded as statements of governmental views.

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