FOOD SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

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KEY POINTS

- The off-season campaign continues normally across the region
- Cereal prices remain generally stable or are decreasing compared to previous months but are higher than five-year averages
- Decreasing international groundnut prices are causing marketing difficulties in Senegal
- In some areas in Niger, Chad, Mali and Mauritania, the lean season is expected to start early for the most vulnerable households

In West Africa and the Sahel, cereal harvests have allowed prices to decrease across markets. However, prices are higher than their five-year averages (especially for millet and sorghum), which negatively affects vulnerable households depending on markets to meet their food requirements.

Zones that experienced erratic rainfall during the rainy season, causing poor harvests and pasture deficits, will face an early lean season affecting mainly the most vulnerable households. The effects of poor harvests are starting to be observed in some areas in Mali (Mopti and Bandiagara), Mauritania (agropastoral, rainfed and suburban livelihood zones), Niger and Chad (Wadi Fira). The situation needs to be closely monitored to avoid any further deterioration of the food security situation.
A good off-season agricultural campaign will be crucial for the people depending on agriculture in the Sahel, particularly for those that were affected by poor harvests earlier this year.

Recommandations for regional partners

→ Monitor movements of displaced populations from Central African Republic and from Nigeria.

→ Strengthen food security monitoring in countries that are likely to experience an early lean season, especially in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Chad.

→ Advocate for an appropriate humanitarian response in the Sahel and West Africa (2014- 2016 Humanitarian Appeal)

Sections

To go to

Objective: Within the framework of the monthly meetings of the Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group for West Africa, it has been agreed that, in a humanitarian perspective, WFP and FAO provide the group with highlights on the food security situation of the previous month.

2013-2014 agro-pastoral campaign

Off-season campaign ongoing

The off-season campaign proceeds normally across the region and markets are well supplied with vegetable products.
Some problems are nonetheless affecting vegetable production in localized areas, such as the Dogon Plateau (Mali), which is experiencing water shortages due to an early depletion of water points. In Niger, irrigated rice production continues without any particular difficulty.
The marketing of major crops such as cotton and groundnut will be on-going throughout January. Peanut producers in the region face marketing difficulties following the collapse of peanut oil prices in international markets.

Due to the end of the rainy season, pastoral activities are affected by bushfires that damage pastures and the reduction of the water table level, which reduces the availability of water to animals in some areas. In countries like Mali, however, the current state of pastures and animal body condition is considered fairly good. (Source : Afrique Verte)

Locust situation as of 10th January 2014

Ground control operations continued

Ground control operations continued during December against hopper groups, bands, and adult groups in northwest Mauritania, treating nearly 15,000 ha. This caused locust infestations to decline by the end of the month. Nevertheless, another generation of breeding is likely to occur but on a small and limited scale in those areas that remain favorable. Breeding may also occur in north and northeast Mauritania where good rains fell at mid-month. Low numbers of solitarious adults were maturing in parts of Western Sahara where small-scale breeding is expected during the forecast period. In Niger, hopper groups and adults were present in the Ténéré Desert while isolated solitarious adults persisted in parts of the summer breeding areas. No locusts were reported elsewhere in the Region. (Source : FAO)

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Displacement situation in the region

Displacement continue in the region

Mali: Figures released by OCHA in early January indicate that there are 254,800 people displaced in Mali and 168,100 Malian refugees in neighboring countries. This constitutes a 10 per cent decrease on the total number of displaced people in Mali - a decrease of 28 200 persons displaced was recorded compared to last month (OCHA).

Niger : Recent confrontations between the nigerian army and rebel groups in the northeast of the country have caused 1,500 people to flee to the Niger, in the region of Diffa. The results of a census conducted by the Government of Niger and published last November indicated that more than 37,000 people, including 8,000 Nigerians and about 30,000 Nigeriens, arrived in the Diffa region since May 2013. An assessment is underway to confirm these figures (UNHCR).

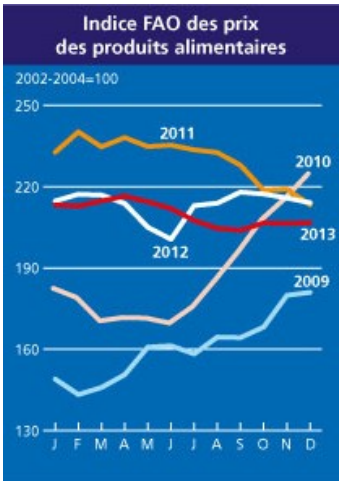
Chad : After the persistent political instability experienced by the Central African Republic (CAR), 14,477 refugees arrived in Chad during the month of December, bringing the total number of refugees from CAR to 80,364 as at 1st January (UNHCR).

Trends on international markets

Food Price Index in 2013 averaged slightly below 2012

The FAO Food Price Index averaged 206.7 points in December 2013, nearly unchanged from November, as a sharp increase in dairy prices and firming meat values largely balanced out a steep decline in sugar quotations and lower cereal and oil prices. Over the full 2013 year, the Index averaged 209.9 points, down 1.6 percent from 2012, but still the third highest annual value on record. Large supplies pushed down international prices of cereals (with the exception of rice), oils and sugar. However, dairy values peaked in 2013, while meat also hit a record.

Figure 1 : FAO Food Price Index



Source : FAO

Trends on international markets (continued)

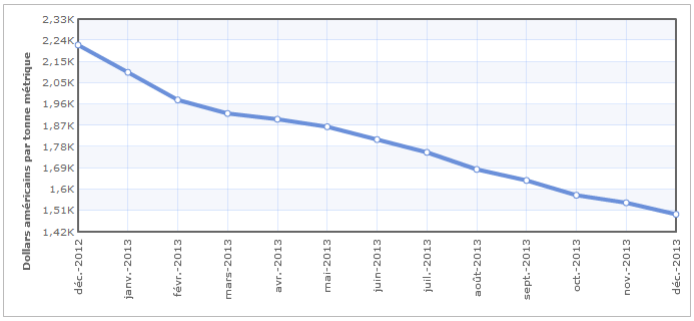
Food Price Index in 2013 averaged slightly below 2012

The FAO Cereal Price Index averaged 191.5 points in December, down 2.8 points, or 1.4 percent, from November and the lowest monthly value since August 2010. Large global supplies, following record harvests in 2013, continued to exert downward pressure on international prices of wheat and maize in particular. By contrast, rice prices were up slightly in December, sustained mainly by firming aromatic and japonica rice quotations. In 2013, the Cereal Price Index averaged 219.2 points, down as much as 17 points, or 7.2 percent, from 2012. (FAO)

In December, the **world rice prices** had mixed trends, with an overall slight high by the end of the month, in relation to November. The Asian market has expected Thailand's early elections, which will affect the future of the purchase program at subsided prices. The 2013/2014 world production will be smaller than forecasted because of impaired harvests in India and China. The weather problems that affected the Asian Southeast may reactivate the world import demand. World trade projections indicate a 2% growth in comparison to 2013. (Interice N°118)

Groundnut oil prices in the international markets declined by over 32% since December 2012. (WorldBank)

Figure 2 : Trend of groundnut oil prices in international market (in USD/Tm)



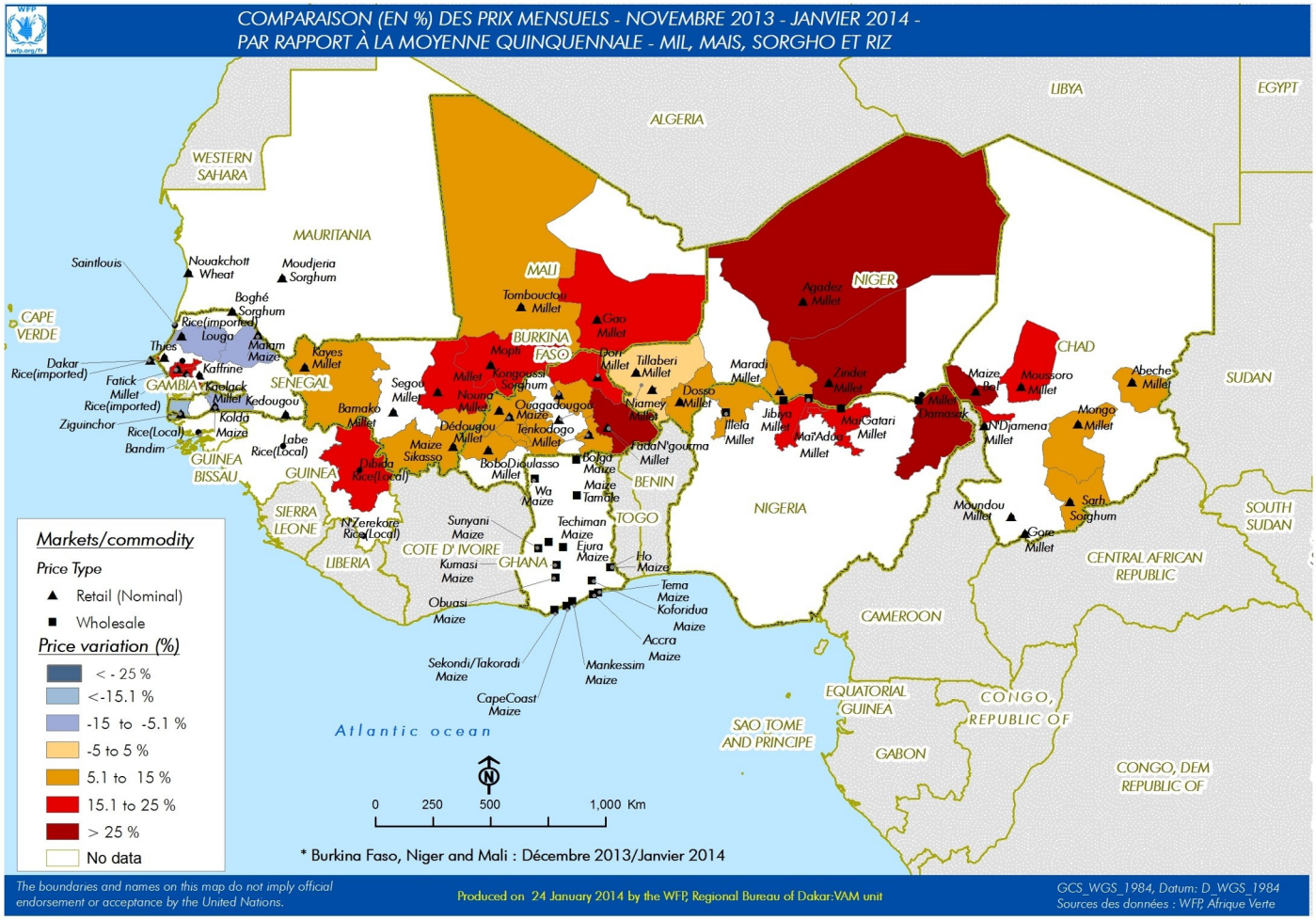
More information on ...

Source : World Bank

Trends on West African Markets

Millet and sorghum prices are higher than their five-year averages

Figure 3 : Comparison (in %) of October 2013 prices to five-year averages (2008-2013) - for millet, sorghum and rice



Source : WFP - VAM

Trends on West African Markets (continued)

Millet and sorghum prices are higher than their five-year averages

In West Africa, markets in the three catchment areas are generally well-supplied with cereals, showing seasonally stable or declining monthly prices, with localized exceptions. Millet and sorghum prices remain significantly above their respective five-year averages in Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Chad, which can be partially attributed to below-average harvests in some regions during the 2013/2014 agricultural campaign. These elevated price levels negatively impact the purchasing power of households that are net buyers of staple foods.

In Senegal, falling groundnut oil prices on international markets in conjunction with an unfavorable US Dollar/FCFA exchange rate has discouraged the Senegalese groundnut oil industry from participating in national groundnut trade, as they are unable to pay the fixed producer price of 200 FCFA per kilogram of groundnuts. The exclusion of groundnut oil producers in the marketing process has caused harvests to flow towards parallel markets, where prices are relatively low (between 130 and 180 FCFA) (Source: World Bank, WFP/FAO).

In Mauritania, prices of imported goods in Nouakchott remained stable in December 2013. Following the arrival of new local and regional harvests on markets in the capital, prices for local commodities declined. Beans (cowpeas) are the exception, as prices rose by more than 28 percent in December 2013 compared to November 2013 (Source: SIM Mauritanie).

In Burkina Faso, the price of sorghum, millet and maize increased in some markets by up to 21 percent between December 2013 and January 2014. This is due to local speculation among traders and farmers, who retain their cereals stocks to profit from the sale of cash crops (Source : Afrique Verte, WFP).

In Mali, the price of imported rice remained stable throughout the country, except for in Timbuktu, where the price of imported rice increased by 50 percent between December 2013 and January 2014. The price of local rice also increased by 40 percent during this same period. The exact reasons for these price increases are yet to be determined. (Source : Afrique Verte)

In Niger, the general price trend is stable or declining for main cereals (millet and sorghum) in the major production areas. All prices for millet, sorghum and maize in wholesale markets of northern Nigeria along the Niger border, did not fluctuate beyond 10 percent between November and December 2013 (Source: Afrique Verte, SIMA NIGER, WFP)

In Chad, maize prices increased by 10 percent in the region of Lac between November and December 2013. In December 2013, the price of maize in the Bol market was up by 55 percent compared to its five-year average. (Source: SIM, FewsNet, WFP).

Impact on food security

Early lean season in Mauritania, Niger, Mali and Chad

In Niger, the Government and its partners conducted a joint national assessment on vulnerability to food insecurity, following a projected deficit of 343,566 tons for the 2013/2014 agricultural season and a potential 30 percent pasture deficit for livestock needs, in addition to flooding in some areas and an influx of refugees and returnees from Nigeria. The assessment was carried out from 24 October to 5 November 2013 among 8,225 households across the country. Results reveal that 2.4 percent of the Nigerien population are severely food insecure and 21.3 percent are moderately food insecure, amounting to a total of 4,197,614 people. The proportion of severely and moderately food insecure people was estimated to be 17.3 percent in 2010 and 34. 9 percent in 2011.

Severely food insecure households are characterized by: food stocks lasting for a maximum of one month; ownership of less than one tropical livestock unit; poor food consumption; and food expenditures representing more than half of total expenditures. High rates of severe food insecurity are found among households in Abalak (7.8 percent), Mirriah (3.4 percent), Guidan Roumdji (2.3 percent) and Arlit (2.1 percent). Nationally, 42.6 percent of households are classified as being at risk and should be monitored.

The food security situation in the coming months will primarily depend on the development of staple food prices on local markets (which reflects general staple food availability on markets and accessibility to these foods among vulnerable households) and a good off-season agricultural campaign, as well as the promptness and efficiency of the humanitarian interventions and the security situation in the region. Should these factors deteriorate; the lean season will be particularly difficult, with negative consequences on the nutrition status of children under the age of five.

In Mauritania, a food security analysis conducted using the Household Economy Approach (HEA) was carried out in January 2014 by the Food Security Commission (CSA), Action against Hunger (ACF) and others partners in five livelihood zones (LZ): pastoral zone (LZ 1), agro-pastoral zone (LZ 5), rainfed zone (LZ 6), the Valley (LZ 7) and the suburban zone in Nouakchott (SU LZ). The analysis showed that the very poor and poor households of LZ6, SU LZ and the very poor households of LZ5 will face survival and livelihood protection deficits as early as March 2014. These households are unable to meet their basic food requirements and protect their livelihoods. The increasing price of the food basket, fewer sources of income and more specifically the low levels of livestock production have contributed to these deficits.

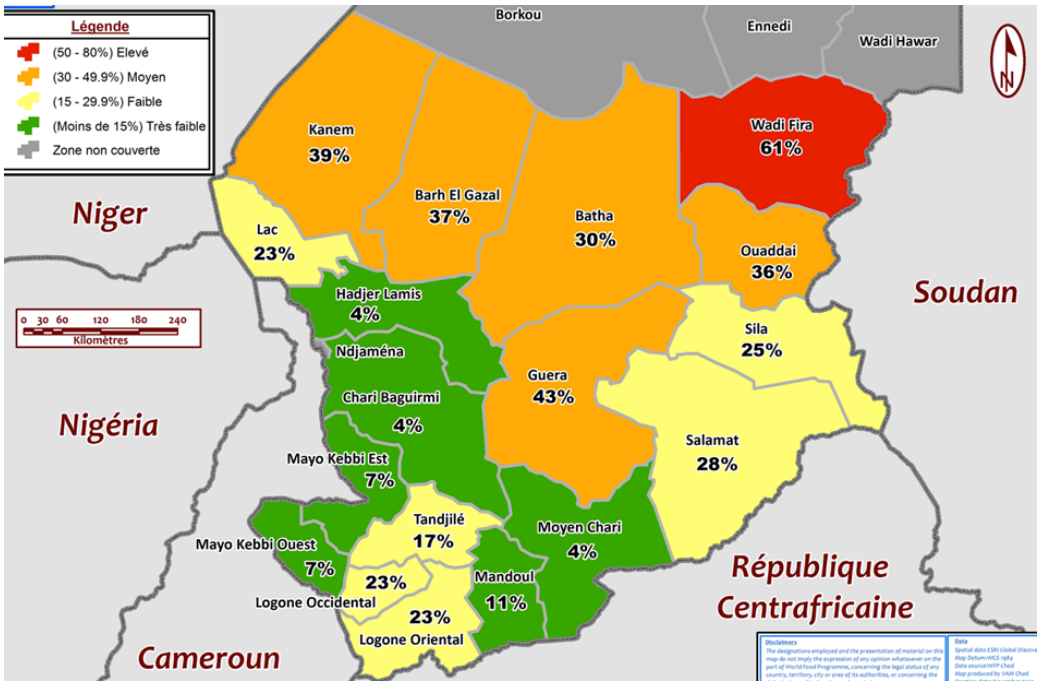
Impact on food security (continued)

Early lean season in Mauritania, Niger, Mali and Chad

In Chad, the annual assessment on household food security conducted by the Government and WFP between October and November 2013 indicates that 21 percent of households are affected by food insecurity, representing 2 million people, of which 2.5 percent are severely food insecure. There are twice as many food insecure households in the Sahelian zone (1,320,988 people) than in the Soudanian zone (697,834 people). The Wadi Fira region has the highest rates of food insecurity at 61 percent. Households in the region of Wadi Fira are least likely to be involved in agricultural activities and have the lowest productive land area (1.9 ha/household), followed by households in the regions of Lac and Kanem. More than half of the surveyed households are classified as very poor. These households lack the sustainable productive assets needed to improve farming and livestock productivity. Appropriate humanitarian interventions will need to be implemented as early as February.

In Mali, in the communes of Dogon plateau in Bandiagara, poor harvests have been recorded in some areas following insufficient rainfall. According to a recent Government assessment, Bandiagara is still the region with the greatest risk of being affected by food insecurity. Furthermore, based on the food security assessment conducted in July 2013 in the southern regions of Mali, Bandiagara is one of the regions with the highest proportion of severely or moderately food insecure households: 48.7 percent, compared to the national average of 34 percent. This situation is due to poor harvests and the collapse of the tourism industry. The situation in this zone should be monitored and appropriately addressed. (WFP Mali, IRIN)

Figure 4: Distribution of population in food insecurity in the regions of Chad



Mark your calendars !

→ Launch of the 2014-2016 inter-agency Strategic Response Plan for the Sahel, February 3, 2014 in Rome

→ Meeting of the Cadre Harmonisé Technical Committee in Niamey, 2 to 9 February 2014

→ Joint market and food security assessment missions, 10 to 25 February 2014

→ Cadre Harmonisé national analysis, 23 February to 7 March 2014

→ Meeting of the Cadre Harmonisé Regional Analysis Group in Bamako, 12 to 15 March 2014

→ Meeting of the Regional Network for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises (PREGEC) in Bamako, 18 to 20 March 2014

@ Information on food security in West Africa

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