In 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.

**KEY POINTS**

- Average agricultural production levels are expected in the Sahel and West Africa, except in some localized areas.
- The resurgence of locusts in Mauritania requires reinforcement of monitoring and treatment systems.
- The commercial crisis of cashew nut in Guinea Bissau caused a deterioration on household food security.

The extension of the rainy season during the month of October should allow the cropping cycle to complete in areas that have experienced late and irregular rains. However, some sectors, such as that of groundnuts, may suffer losses. Overall, the harvest is expected to reach average levels throughout the region.

The return of migrating locusts in Mauritania during the month of October should be monitored.

The pastoral situation in terms of available pasture and livestock size is also average this year, despite localized pasture deficits observed in Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Chad.

The first cereal harvests are improving food availability and causing cereal prices to decrease, which will improve the purchasing power of households relying on markets for food access. However, in Niger, Mali and Chad, prices of staple coarse grains remain higher than the five-year averages.

The food security assessment in Guinea Bissau reveals high levels of vulnerability among rural households due to the poor cashew nut marketing campaign. The situation should be monitored closely, as it remains at risk of further deterioration.

Food insecurity in northern Mali remains a concern, primarily due to the ongoing return of displaced populations. Refugees and Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs) are most at risk of being affected by food insecurity.

**Recommendations for regional partners**

- Advocate the reinforcement and acceleration of food and non-food assistance to vulnerable populations in Mali.
- Monitor the harvests of the main agricultural season and promote off-season activities.
Since April, insufficient and poorly-distributed rainfall has led to significant rainfall deficits across countries in the Gulf of Guinea, reducing maize yields in Ghana, southern Togo and southwestern Nigeria. Although seasonal rainfall increased in September, drought conditions have persisted in Nigeria and in coastal areas of Togo and Benin (Figure 1).

In the Sahel, the extension of the rainy season beyond 10 October could allow the cropping cycle to complete in areas that have experienced late and irregular rains since the beginning of the rainy season.

In this context, and according to the PREGEC announcement in September 2013, the harvest outlook for the main agricultural season 2013-2014 remains average. Delayed rains could, however, create a water surplus, which may harm harvested crops (grains and groundnut sprouts). Measures should be taken to survey and minimize those damages to limit crop losses.

The pastoral situation contrasts the favorable harvest conditions. While good vegetation growth is observed in northern Sahel, vegetation deficits have been registered in Guinea-Bissau, the South and North of Senegal, southern Mauritania, southern Mali, Burkina Faso and the Gulf of Guinea (Figure 2). In these areas, a decrease in pasture production is expected.

Additionally, four outbreaks of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) in Mauritania have been reported. They have so far affected only small ruminants and cameldids, but the situation should be monitored.

An outbreak is underway in northwest Mauritania, where locust numbers are increasing due to high levels of precipitation and summer breeding this year. In this area, locust densities have reached up to 40,000 adults/ha (4/sq. m). Small hopper groups and swarms are forming, while adult groups are laying eggs. More hopper groups and swarms are expected to form in October, and groups of adults are likely to form in November. A second generation of breeding could occur in December and cause locust numbers to increase further. Ground control operations commenced in mid-October (830 ha).

In Niger, ecological conditions remain favourable for breeding in parts of the Tamesna Plains and Air Mountains, where low numbers of solitary hoppers and adults persist. As vegetation dries out, adults may form small groups during October.

More information on locusts.
Mali: The return of 1,200 refugees from Mauritania was observed in the town of Doukouria in the region of Timbuktu. Many of these returnees are consuming surface water, which exposes them to diseases. The food security of returnees and of the local population in this area is of concern and should be closely monitored. According to UNHCR, 169,745 Malian refugees remain in neighboring countries (OCHA).

As of September 25th, the “Commission des Mouvements de Populations” - CMP registered 311,300 internally displaced persons (IDPs). The decrease in the number of IDPs observed since July 2013 confirms the return trend observed in the past few months (CMP). From September 25th to October 5th, monitoring of population movements revealed that 463 displaced people left the north to reach the south. At the same time, 2,372 displaced people have returned to the north. Most of these people located in Timbuktu (901 persons) and Gao (1,308 persons) (IOM). In the northern arrival areas, food insecurity affects 75 percent of households that heavily rely on Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA).

Chad: Chadian migrants continue to return from Nigeria due to the insecurity caused by the tensions between the Nigerian Army and elements of Boko Haram in the three neighboring regions. Since May 2013, 3,127 Chadian migrants returned home (IOM). In September, 9,400 refugees arrived from the CAR, fleeing clashes between the army and Seleka, reaching a total of 75,064 CAR refugees in Chad (OCHA). The number of refugees from Darfur is still 310,000 people (UNCR).

Trends on international markets
The FAO Food Price Index continue to decline

The FAO Food Price Index averaged 199.1 points in September 2013, 2.3 points (1 percent) below its August value and down 11 points (or 5.4 percent) since the beginning of the year. The decline in September marked the fifth consecutive decrease in the value of the index and was driven by a sharp fall in the international cereal prices, whereas prices of all other components of the index, namely dairy, oils, meat and sugar, rose slightly.

The FAO Cereal Price Index averaged 197.7 points in September, down 12.9 points (6 percent) from August and as much as 65 points (or 25 percent) from September 2012. The sharp decline in September follows an already sizeable drop registered during the previous two months, reflecting a generally favourable supply outlook, in particular for maize and rice. International wheat prices, which had fallen sharply for three consecutive months, were largely unchanged from August values due to increased demand and less favourable production prospects in the southern hemisphere countries.

In September, world rice prices decreased in relation to the previous month. Since mid-September, however, prices have stabilized marginally. The market seems to advance cautiously facing unconfirmed rumors of China’s intent to purchase massive quantities from Thailand, reducing the availability of exports from the latter. The global export market remained otherwise calm in September compared to previous months. Demand should remain stable in 2013 due to improved production in in most leading producing and consuming countries. It is thus unlikely that global prices will experience any significant shocks in the coming months. (InterRice n°115)
Trends on West African markets

Downward trend in grain prices following the first harvests

Harvests are reaching markets in most West African countries, creating a general downward trend in grain prices from September to October. In Burkina Faso and Mali, prices are generally lower in October 2013 compared to October 2012 values. With an increased market supply and declining prices for most cereals, household food access is expected to improve in these countries.

In Niger, however, millet and maize prices remain significantly higher than last year and the five year average (between 21 and 48 percent) outside Niamey and Tillaberi markets.

With an increased market supply and declining prices for most cereals, household food access is expected to improve in these countries.

In Mali, price increases were observed for imported rice and millet in northern markets between September and October 2013. Millet prices in Gao increased by 28 percent, recovering from a significant drop in August/September, while imported rice prices in Gao markets continue to be the highest throughout the country. This can be explained by the region’s remoteness and the proximity to conflict-affected areas. The lowest prices for millet (18,000 CFA / 100KG) are observed in Kayes markets, while the Timbuktu market is most expensive (24,000 CFA / 100KG). Observed country-wide price differences are explained by supply levels and household purchasing power (Source: Afrique Verte).

In Burkina Faso, most prices for coarse grains declined, while the price of imported rice has remained generally stable. As observed in Mali, the arrival of the ongoing harvest in the markets explains this price movement. In Ouagadougou, millet prices decreased by 2.4 percent, while prices for sorghum (local) and maize dropped by 6 percent and 12.9 percent, respectively. Country-wide, October 2013 maize price levels are generally lower (5-15 percent) than the five-year average. Millet prices are generally higher compared to the five-year average (5-25 percent). (Source: Afrique Verte)

In Niger, with the arrival of the ongoing harvest, most grain prices decreased in September and early October. The most significant decreases in millet prices were observed in the southern districts of Maradi (-29.6 percent) and Dosso (-11.5 percent). Prices remain significantly higher for millet (21-48 percent) and maize (10-28 percent) compared to five-year averages, with the exception of Niamey (-8 percent). (Source: Afrique Verte)
**Trends on West African markets (continued)**

In **Nigeria**, prices have followed seasonal decline trends, and overall prices for major staple foods are lower than last year for millet (-7.2 percent), maize (-7.2 percent) and sorghum (-5.7 percent) but remain significantly higher than the five year average (increases of 29.2 percent, 13.4 percent, and 28.7 percent, respectively). The Savannah region of Nigeria has experienced precipitation deficits throughout this agricultural season, which could negatively impact regional cereal production. As Nigeria accounts for half of West Africa’s food production and is a main source of regional trade, the situation must be closely monitored over the next few months. (Source: WFP)

![Figure 6: Nigeria — Wholesale prices in Naira (2013) and five-year averages for millet, maize and sorghum](image)

**Impact on food security**

Rural households in **Guinea-Bissau** more vulnerable due to poor cashew nut campaign

In **Guinea-Bissau**, an in-depth food security assessment was conducted in August 2013 by WFP, FAO, Plan International and their government partners to evaluate the effects of a poor cashew marketing campaign and low market prices on household food security. Results of the assessment reveal that for 74 percent of households, the dip in cashew nut prices was one of the main shocks during the last six months. This has led to low household income, decreased access to basic food stocks such as rice, and a reliance on negative coping mechanisms. Nearly 27 percent of households do not have adequate food consumption to meet their needs, and more than half of households spend over 75 percent of their budget on food (compared to 26 percent in 2010), making less money available for health and education and leaving households vulnerable in the long term, particularly to malnutrition. Reliance on emergency or crisis coping mechanisms such as mortgaging the present harvest and selling productive assets limits the ability of households to emerge from the crisis on their own.

The situation should stabilize after December 2013 thanks to the lowlands rice harvest in lower valleys. However, between January and April 2014, the situation will likely deteriorate due to the depletion of stocks. The evolution of the situation will depend on November presidential elections, the ability of households to pay back their debts, and the results of the current harvest.

In the short term, the assessment recommends implementing food assistance programs that help to build assets of vulnerable communities, including road and land rehabilitation projects. Nutrition and school feeding activities should continue. In the medium term, recommendations include implementing local purchase programs to encourage local production, promoting small animals husbandry and encouraging local transformation of the cashew nut, especially by women.

![Figure 7: Household food security in Guinea-Bissau](image)
In Chad, results of a Household Economy Analysis (HEA) conducted in September in Belom camps show that risky economic activities are the primary sources of income for the very poor (40 percent and 37 percent of households respectively in Belom I and Belom II) and the poor (33 percent and 30 percent in Belom I and Belom II). These include agricultural wage labor, self-employment (manufacture of bricks, sale of firewood/straw/cord) and sale of non-timber forest products. The middle and the better-off generate most of their income from small trade activities, sale of livestock and agricultural production. Poor households hardly meet their basic energy needs and depend heavily on the market for food purchases, leaving them vulnerable to price fluctuations. Incomes of the poor and very poor are primarily dedicated to food, which reduced the funds available to invest in livestock and agriculture.

The mission recommends promoting access to land and agricultural inputs for the poor and very poor, encouraging breeding of small animals among these households through distribution of animals and improving access to credit for poor households to allow them to invest and thus diversify their livelihoods.

In Niger, a joint mission was conducted in September 2013 by WFP, the Government of Niger and UNHCR to assess the general situation of refugees and their needs in order to determine the appropriate response to the situation. In areas hosting refugees in the Tahoua region (Intikan, Tazalit) and in refugees camps in the Tillaberi region (Mangaize, Abala, Tabareybarey), livelihoods of refugees and the host population are similar which can create income opportunities and allow for peaceful cohabitation. However, in the Tillaberi region, lack of financial means and raw materials prevents refugees from successfully carrying out income-generating activities. In local host communities in Bosso, Maine, TAM and Kabalewa regions, conflicts between refugees and host populations exist due to limited access to agro pastoral resources and damages to refugees’ cattle in the host population fields.

The mission recommends promoting income generating activities and assessing the implementation of cash transfers in the relevant zones.

Guinea Conakry: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment

One out of three households in food insecurity

In 2012, a Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment was conducted based on a representative sample of 4,334 households (for the first time in the country) at the district level.

Results show that:

→ One out of three households is food insecure, or 3.5 billion Guineans
→ Households in rural areas (41 percent) are more affected than in urban areas (31 percent)
→ Food insecurity is linked to a chronic problem of physical and financial access to food among households, exacerbated by localized shocks (floods, ethnic conflicts)
→ Vulnerability to food insecurity has been increasing since the 2009 CFSVA, from 25.5 percent in 2008 to 30.5 percent
→ Poor diversification of diet due to a reliance on grains has a negative impact on nutrition
→ Food insecurity of households is strongly correlated to poverty, isolation, lack of education and poor agricultural production that often results from abandonment of agriculture in favor of traditional mining activities.

The geographic distribution of food insecurity is unequal: Kindia, Koundara, Beyla, Forana and Nzérékoré districts have been most affected. In these districts, a market analysis shows that:

→ Demand for food commodities is greater than the supply, leading higher prices than in the rest of the country
→ Markets are poorly integrated and exchanges are unfavorable for producers who sell at a loss. The proximity of strong cross-border markets reinforces this situation.
→ Middlemen receive 90 % of profits and are the real beneficiaries of trade.
Mark your calendars!

- Training on CH analysis in Sahel (Burkina Faso, Cap Vert, Gambie, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal et Tchad): 4 – 8 November 2013
- CH regional analysis in Lomé: 11 – 15 November 2013
- PREGEC Lomé: 20-22 November 2013
- RPCA Abidjan: 25-27 November 2013

@Information on food security in West Africa

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