

FOOD SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

July 2013

Key Points

- ▽ Late start of the growing season due to the late onset of rains
- ▽ Increasing number of refugees in Nigeria, of IDPs in Guinea and return of IDPs in Mali
- ▽ Worrisome food situation in Guinea Bissau due to the failure of the cashew nut agricultural campaign
- ▽ Unusually high millet prices in Niger

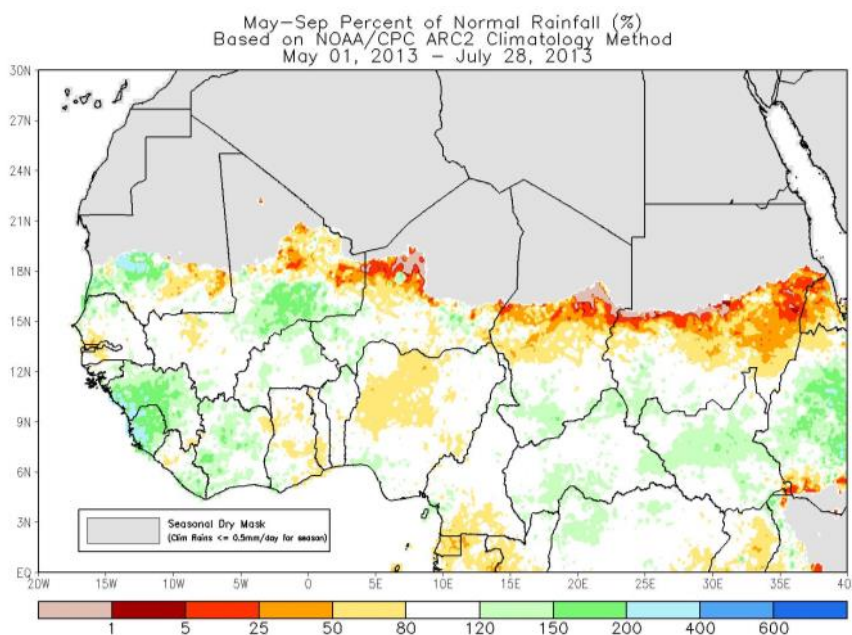
Late start of the rainy season with strong to moderate rainfall

Rains during the month of June 2013 were characterized by the monsoon in West Africa causing severe to moderate rainfall throughout the Sahel (Monthly bulletin n° 2 - Agrhymet).

Compared to the thirty-year average, excessive rainfall was recorded in the center and north-eastern parts of Mali, south-eastern Mauritania, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. However, rainfall deficits were observed in northern areas of Nigeria, northern

Mali, western Senegal, north-western Niger, central and northern Ghana (figure 1). It is nonetheless premature to predict the impact these late rains could have on crop yields at this stage of the campaign.

Figure 1: Percentage of rainfall received compared to normal in West Africa from May 1st to July 28th



Source : www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/fews

How to read the map:

The map compares the rains received from May to July in the region compared to the average rainfall of the last 30 years, as a percentage.

There is a rainfall deficit if percentage is below 100% (yellow/red colors) and conversely for the surplus (green/blue color).

Late start of the rainy season with strong to moderate rainfall (continued)

Regarding the hydrologic situation, the late start of the rainy season in some areas caused intermittent flows in the river basins during the month of June. At the end of June, run-off started on the majority of non-permanent watercourses in Sudanese and Sahelian zones. On

unregulated perennial streams, water levels started rising slightly thus marking the end of the low water flow season.

Figure 2: Vegetation Index Anomaly in West Africa from 11th to 20th July 2013

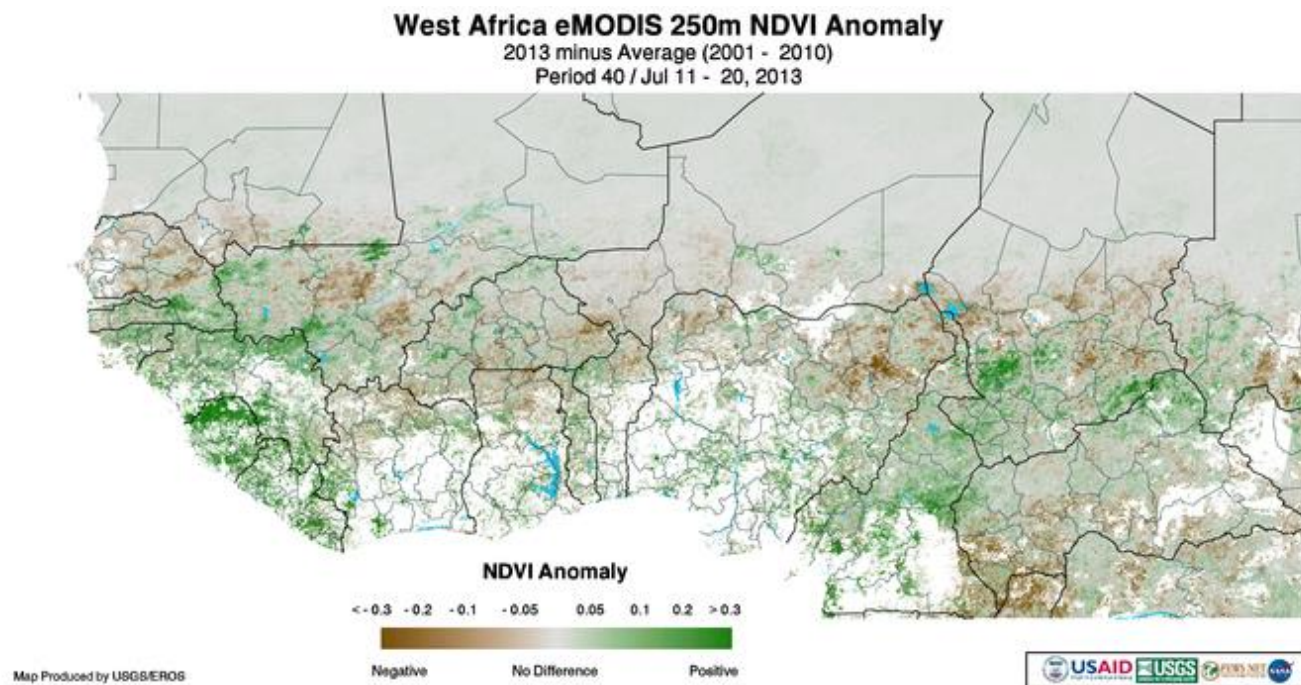


Figure 2 shows the anomalies on vegetation density compared to the 2001-2010 average. In July, a deficit of vegetation is observed in Senegal, southern Mali, Burkina Faso, southern Niger and northern Nigeria.

The deficit areas are marked by cumulative rainfall deficit, which confirms the late arrival of rains in the region.

The agricultural season started in most countries of the region with delays due to irregular rains.

Risk of locusts in the northern areas of the Sahel

Desert Locust populations are in the midst of shifting from their spring breeding areas to summer breeding areas. As a result of good spring breeding, initial locust numbers are expected to be somewhat higher at the beginning of this year's summer compared to normal years. Therefore, it is important that surveys commence in the summer breeding areas and continue on a regular basis to monitor the situation.

Small groups of adults continue to form south of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco and Algeria as well as in south-central Libya. Additional

groups and perhaps a few small swarms are likely to form from any infestations that are not detected or controlled, and move south where they will disperse in the northern Sahel of Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad in the coming weeks. Egg-laying will commence with the onset of the seasonal rains and one generation of breeding will cause locust numbers to increase during the summer ([FAO](#)).

Population displacement in the region

Mali – return movements have started: the returning flow of IDPs and refugees to the north continue to increase but cannot yet be described as large-scale. Based on information collected at monitoring points, IOM reported that 31,384 people had returned to the north as of 31 May. Between 27 June and 12 July, UNHCR registered 8,148 refugees who had returned spontaneously to the regions of Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu.

Humanitarian partners have reported significant return movements in the north over the last weeks; however consolidated figures are

not yet available. According to the protection cluster, the situation in the returning areas is calm and, in general, returnees express their intention to remain in their communities.

As of 4 July, 527,849 people remain displaced due to the crisis in the north, including 352,455 inside Mali and 174,394 in neighboring countries (OCHA: Situation report n°36 & n°37).

Population displacement in the region (continued)

Nigeria - situation remains volatile: The State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) confirmed the arrival of approximately 910 IDPs (an estimated 200 households) principally from Yobe and Borno States in Dambam town. With regard to cross-border movements, 8,100 Nigerian refugees have fled to North Cameroon, in addition to approximately 6,200 persons (an estimated 1,300 households) who have fled to Niger. To date, UNHCR and local authorities have registered approximately 3,500 refugees, consisting of 60% females and 40

% males. New arrivals from Borno State (northeast Nigeria, one of the three states in a state of emergency with Yobe and Adamawa) are reported on a daily basis. In Cameroon, construction work has started to establish a new site to host refugees in Minawao, 130 km east of the border with Nigeria (Source: OCHA).

Guinea – inter-communal clashes in N’Zerekore: In Guinea, violent inter-communal clashes between members of the Guerze and Konianke tribes in Koule, 45 km from Nzerekore, have erupted on the night of 14-15 July 2013. The clashes caused the death of at least 57 people and wounded over 242 people. Hundreds of people have sought refuge in military camps in Nzerekore and Beyla. There are

also 3,538 displaced people around N’Zerekore. However, the fragile and volatile situation prevents undertaking an assessment of the situation. Field organizations have taken urgent action to respond to food and medical needs of the population. An inter-agency assessment is planned (Source: UNHCR / WFP).

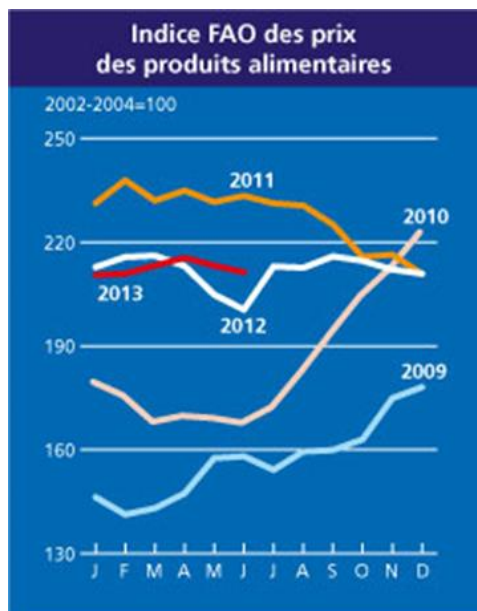
FAO food price index higher than last year but decrease of cereal and oil prices

The FAO Food Price Index averaged 211.3 points in June 2013, almost 2 points (one percent) below its revised value for May, but still nearly 11 points higher than in June 2012. Last month’s decline reflects a drop in sugar and especially dairy prices as well as moderate decreases in cereal and oil prices. On the other hand, latest estimates suggest that international meat prices gained 2 percent in June.

The FAO Cereal Price Index averaged 236.5 points in June, down 2.5 points (one percent) from May but still 14 points above June last year. International expectations for exceptional harvests this year caused international cereal prices to decline.

Wheat prices have decreased mostly due to current seasonal harvesting in the northern hemisphere. Tight supplies are nonetheless likely to persist, maintaining the prices of major coarse grains stable until the start of the harvests in October.

Figure 3: FAO Food Price Index



Source: FAO, [To find more](#)

In June, **global rice prices** have been marked by a decline that is likely to persist due to good Asian harvests and exportable surpluses perspectives. The expected shift in Thai policy should also heavily influence world prices in the coming months.

The Thai government, after announcing a reduction of the intervention price, seems to back down under pressure from the rural electorate. It also seeks to shed its bloated stock to support and save the mortgage program. The equation will be difficult to solve.

In addition to internal pressures, the international situation is unfavorable to exporters as the abundance of export availability contrasts to a declining global import demand in 2013. The attitude of the Thai government will be crucial for the global market (Osiriz May 2013 No. 112).

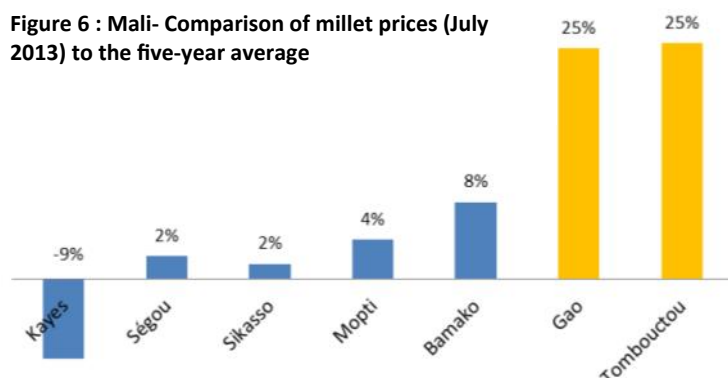
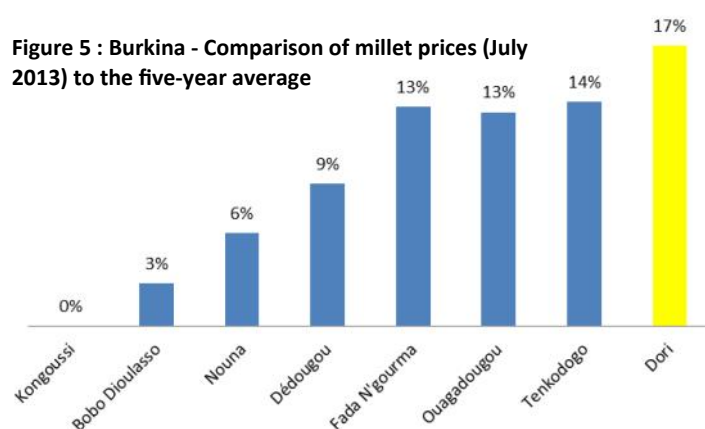
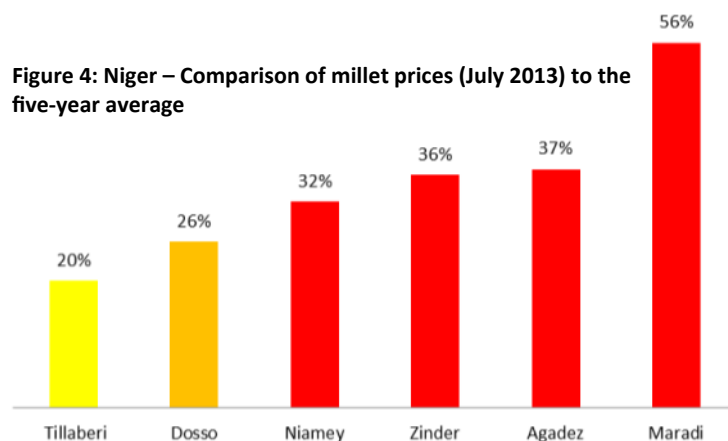
High millet prices in Niger, impact of the crisis in Nigeria, strong demand due to the Ramadan

In Niger (Niamey excepted) the price of a bag of millet increased between 7 % and 15 % in July (compared to June prices) in Zinder, Maradi and Tillabéry. On the other hand, slight decreases were recorded in the price of a bag of sorghum in Maradi -2 % and Niamey -4 %; for maize -4 % in Maradi and -5 % in Niamey (source: Afrique Verte). This slight decline in prices might be due to the arrival of the rains and good agricultural conditions, which prompts major producers to release important stocks of the 2011 harvest in the market as they need to cover the costs of the agricultural campaign (inputs, labor). Sales of millet and maize at subsidized prices and targeted free distributions by the Government partially explain these decreases. It should be noted, however, that prices are still very high compared to normal, with levels above those of the last five years (2008-2012): 25 % and 21 % for sorghum in Maradi and Niamey and 18 % and 11 % for maize (data source : GIEWS).

In Burkina Faso, coarse grain prices increased on most markets in July compared to their levels in June. This is due to the increased demand related to the Ramadan and to uneasy access to surplus areas markets during the rainy season. Thus, in Ouagadougou in July, coarse grains prices increased by 8 % for millet, 19 % for local sorghum and 11 % for maize (source: Afrique Verte). The decrease of production in Nigeria following the 2012 floods has prompted the Central Basin countries including Burkina Faso to become important sources of supply for Niger and northern Nigeria. The progressive increase of prices in Burkina might cause similar increases in destination markets in Niger and Nigeria, which are currently experiencing strong demand because of Ramadan.

In Mali, the price trend of coarse grain prices is stable except for millet, which increases due to a higher demand caused by the Ramadan. For July, the price of millet recorded an increase of 3 % in Bamako, 6 % in Kayes and Sikasso, 5 % in Mopti and 11 % in Gao. Timbuktu, however, experiences price stability for millet and sorghum. Moreover rice, which is the most consumed staple food in the area, prices decrease by 9 % for local rice and by 13 % for imported rice. This decrease is largely due to the improvement of trade flows from the south of the country (source: Afrique Verte).

In Chad, markets are functioning normally and availabilities are normal. The Sudanese strand is however characterized by weak trading stocks and uneven imports from the CAR and Cameroon. With regard to prices in the sahelian zone of the country, only millet experiences a significant increase. With regard to the Sudanese zone of the country, all cereal prices are experiencing normal seasonal increases between 5 % and 15 %. This increase in prices is caused by the strong demand resulting from the depletion of household stocks during the lean season and the Ramadan period. To reduce this increase, the National Food Security Office (ONASA) carries out food distributions and subsidized grain sales.



In Guinea-Bissau, according to the preliminary results of the market survey conducted by WFP in May 2013 in 10 rural markets (Begene, Ingore, S.Domingos, Bissora, Bula, Gabu, Pitche, Sonaco, Buba and Mansoa), the main barrier to accessing food for vulnerable households is low purchasing power due to the failure of the cashew nut campaign, which is the main source of income for 80% of the population (WFP, 2010). For cereal traders, the main obstacle is low access to bank loans because of dissuasive measures taken by banks such as being in possession of a regularly credited account and having real estate collateral (land title, construction permits, etc...). Low household demand moreover pushes traders to have lower rice and vegetable oil stocks than their actual capacity.

Impact on food security

In Guinea Bissau, the household food security situation continues to worsen following the bad cashew nut marketing and the decline in prices resulting in the loss of households' purchasing power. According to WFP, 48 % of the population is facing a large food deficit and households are starting to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as skipping meals and selling their animals. Urgent action needs to be taken.

In Burkina Faso, a joint assessment mission on Malian refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, Wis-nioniogo, Mentao Goudebou was conducted by WFP and UNHCR in May 2013. The results show that 15 % of refugee households interviewed have poor or borderline food consumption, against 13 % in the host population. Malnutrition rates estimated during the Nutritional Status Assessment based on SENS methodology (Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey) are high but are below critical thresholds, except in Goudebou where rates are alarming (SAM: 5.3 %, MAM: 19.1 %). The anemia rates among respondents are above the critical threshold of 40% in all camps.

In Goudebou, the situation is direr amongst refugees: 22 % of people surveyed do not meet their food needs. Issues raised by refugees in Goudebou include unwanted diet changes, lack of proximity of livestock, humanitarian response delays and distance to markets. Refugees support programs have nonetheless positive effects on the host population living around the camps as it leads to greater food availability (distributed humanitarian aid) and increased water accessibility as well as work opportunities in camps. The price of some basic commodities has increased in the area and pressure on natural resources as well as conflicts between herders and farmers are likely to increase during the rainy season.

In Chad, UNHCR and WFP conducted an assessment on the food situation of 22,131 Central African refugees relocated in the Belom camp in Maro (southern Chad).

The food security situation is generally direr for the refugees whom arrived in Chad in January and March 2013 (71.2% are food insecure) compared to earlier refugees (arrived in Chad in 2002, 2008 and 2009) of Belom 1 and Belom 2 (respectively 41 % and 38 % food insecure). The lack of access to agricultural lands (low quantity and quality), poverty, the lack of diversified livelihoods and unsustainable income generating activities are the main causes of food insecurity for the refugees of Belom. The depletion of current household stocks and increases in food commodities prices can lead to a deterioration of the food situation in the short and medium term. The assessment recommends general food distribution to new refugees, the promotion of IGR and support to agriculture.

According to the Technical Committee of the Food Security Cluster in Chad held in July, household food security is relatively stable in the Sahelian zone; however, the poorest households have difficulty accessing food. In the Sudanese zone, pressure is raising due to the depletion of household stocks and the use of negative coping mechanisms.

In Ghana, the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring Bulletin of May 2013 reported that the food basket price has decreased in most regions. Households in the Upper East and Upper West regions however experience higher prices that could deteriorate their food security and nutrition situation. In these two regions household stock levels are running low, presaging a difficult lean period for the poorest. Malnutrition conditions remain a concern in the Northern Region.

VULNERABILITY IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) provides an in-depth assessment of the food security situation in Nigeria. This is very important as it equips policymakers with timely and relevant information that will aid the targeting of interventions. Some of the most pertinent findings of the study are listed below :

- ◆ Food insecurity and poverty are intricately linked. Some 29 percent of households in the poorest wealth quintiles have unacceptable diets (9 percent poor and 20 percent borderline) compared with 15 percent in the wealthiest (2 percent poor and 13 percent borderline).
- ◆ The poorest livelihoods are farmers.
- ◆ The general state of water and sanitation facilities available to households in all wealth categories is very poor, with consequent health implications. Forty-five percent of respondents do not have access to decent toilets, and 85 percent have no proper means of refuse disposal.
- ◆ The vulnerable and food insecure are mostly found in rural areas and the North West and North East regions of Nigeria.
- ◆ Most households in all regions and at all wealth levels purchase food, but rural households and poorer households (by wealth and livelihood) also rely heavily on own food production.
- ◆ Nigerians generally consume a starchy diet, but wealthier households can afford more nutrient-rich foods.

This study is based on data collected in 2010 and 2011 on a sample of 5 000 households drawn from a sample of 22 000 households representative of the Nigerian population. The report was published in July 2013.

Recommendations for the regional food security and nutrition working group

Continue to monitor food security and nutrition in the Sahel, including Mali and neighboring countries affected by the Malian crisis and also in Guinea Bissau

Humanitarian and development decision makers are informed in time to help decision-making

Continue to monitor the evolution of prices in particular in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Chad

Monitor access to food for the poorest households

Support advocacy for an adequate response to Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), launched in 2013 including Mali

Humanitarian needs resulting from the 2012 Sahel crisis and reported in the CAP are covered in time

Conclusions

- ◆ The agricultural season has started in most countries in the region. Some delays have been observed due to irregular rainfall in most countries. It is nonetheless too early to predict the impact of delayed rains on agricultural yields at this stage of the campaign and a close monitoring of the affected areas is required.
- ◆ Whilst the most vulnerable are still experiencing the lingering impact of the 2012 Sahel crisis, the region is affected by population displacements: in Mali, the return of displaced persons (refugees and IDPs) is ongoing, whereas in Nigeria people are fleeing the insecurity in the north of the country to other parts of the country or to neighboring countries (Niger and Cameroon). The food situation of these vulnerable households requires regular monitoring and humanitarian assistance if needed.
- ◆ Market disruption in general and prices increases in particular persist, particularly in Niger (high prices of coarse grain), Burkina Faso (high prices of coarse grains) and Guinea Bissau (collapse of raw cashew nut prices, which is the main source of income for the majority of rural households). These price variations affect the purchasing power of households in the region and the monitoring of food and market must continue.



Information on food security in West Africa

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Mark your calendars !

> Technical committee of Cadre Harmonisé:
from 3 to 5 September 2013 in Niamey

> Technical committee on market analysis
and response on food security in the Sahel:
from 10 to 12 September in Niamey