FOOD SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

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KEY POINTS

- A situation of food insecurity still prevails in Northern Mali
- Good rains recorded in August and September mitigate the effects of late start of rains
- In Niger and Nigeria principally, floods damage households' livelihoods
- Start of seasonal decrease of cereal prices in most markets of Sahel, in Benin and in Liberia.

The food situation in Northern Mali remains precarious due to the effects of the conflict on the livelihoods of households, high cereal prices, reduced purchasing power of households and the late implementation of certain food and non-food assistance. Nearly half the population has resorted to emergency or crisis coping strategies.

Provisional estimations of the harvest indicate that the strength and good distribution of rains during August and September mitigated the effects of the late arrival of rains in the majority of agricultural zones in the Sahel. However, in certain zones, rains must continue through October to expect satisfactory yields. Overall, an average year is expected in the region. In terms of the presence of pasture and the size of livestock, the pastoral situation also corresponds to an average year, notwithstanding local deficits of pasture observed in Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Chad.

Niger and Nigeria, and to a lesser extent Benin, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, were affected by flooding that caused loss of life, material and equipment, destruction of housing and infrastructure and damage to cultivated land. This situation could put the affected households in an even more difficult situation due to the loss of their livelihoods, if appropriate response measures are not undertaken.

The first cereal harvests improve the availability of food and cause cereal prices to start to drop, which will improve the purchasing power of households that rely on markets to buy food. However, in Niger, Mali and Chad, main dry cereal prices remain above the five-year average.

Recommendations for regional partners

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

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

→ Support the advocacy for an adequate response to Consolidated Appeals

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

Good agro-pastoral campaign in perspective, with the exception of a few deficit pockets

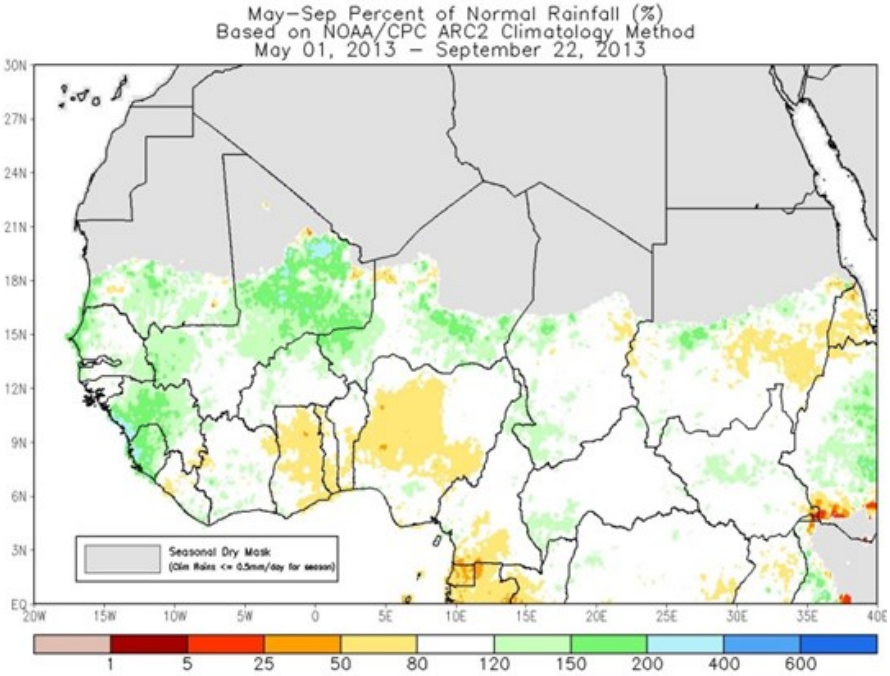
Rains continued during the month of September. Above average rainfall has been recorded in the western part of the region (Figure 1), particularly in Guinea, north and west Mali and Sierra Leone. These rains have reduced the deficit observed in central Mali and northern Senegal.
However, the deficit recorded since the beginning of the season persists along the Gulf of Guinea, from Ghana to Nigeria, which could have a negative impact on crop yields, mainly on maize.

The Regional consultation on the agricultural and food outlook in the Sahel and West Africa (PREGEC) held in Niamey from 17 to 19 September 2013, confirmed the difficult onset of the agricultural campaign that has experienced sowing delays compared to normal and re- seeding. These delays were more prominent in Gorgol and Guidimaka of Mauritania, in Tillaberi, Tahoua and Zinder of Niger, in northern Senegal and in the Lake regions and Biltine in Chad. Expected yields will be equivalent to above the 1971-2000 average and lower in the areas where sowing delays and re-seeding were observed.

Cereal production, for all countries in the region, would be between 53 000 000 tons and 58 460 000 tons, respectively a decrease of 3 % or an increase of 7 % compared to the 2012-2013 campaign.
Sahelian countries could record cereal production between 20 292 000 and 22 326 000 tons.

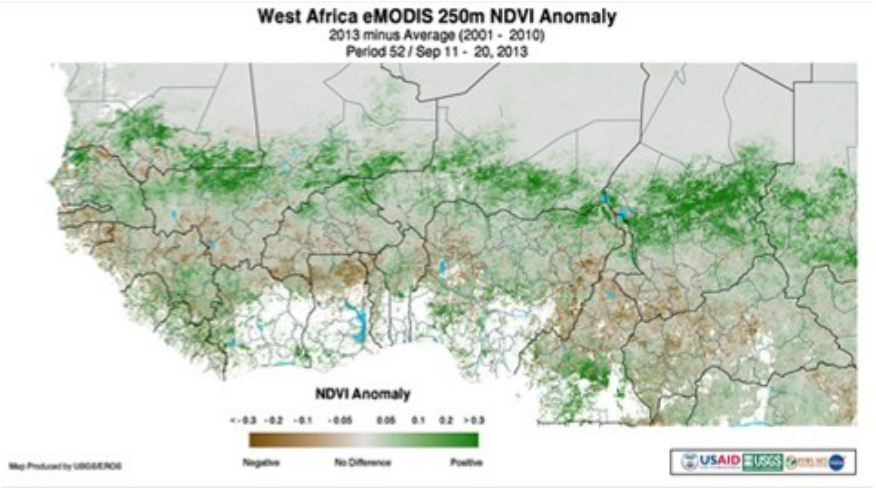
The pasture situation is characterized by a progressive generalization of the grass cover in pastoral areas. However, the state of the pasture is variable (Figure 2) and the deficit is still continuing in northern Senegal, central Mali, southern Niger, central Chad and in Guidimaka and southern Assaba in Mauritania.

Figure 1: West Africa rainfall anomalies from 1st May to 22nd September



Source : NOAA-NCEP

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



Source : USGS-USAID

Locust situation as of 17 September 2013

A generally calm situation in the region with possible small-scale breeding in October

The locust situation remained calm in the Region during August. Despite above average rainfall that allowed for solid growth of vegetation, locust numbers remained low in the summer breeding areas of Mauritania, Niger and Chad, except in the Air Mountains of Niger where mitigation operations targeted groups of and adults from earlier breeding.

The situation is less clear in northern Mali where surveys could not be conducted due to persistent insecurity.

Forecasts through Mid-October show that small-scale breeding will cause locust numbers to increase and, once vegetation starts to dry out, locust populations may concentrate and possibly form small groups. Regular surveys should be conducted in all countries to closely monitor the situation.

More information on...

Floods update

Floods affect the livelihoods of stricken populations

Since the start of the rainy season, a total of 428 870 people have been affected by flooding in West Africa. The countries most affected (in number of people affected) include Benin, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal (figure 3). With regard to agriculture, more than 25 000 hectares of crops (peanuts, millet, sorghum and rice) were destroyed and 2 217 farms damaged in Nigeria. (OCHA, 24/09/13)

Floods negatively impacted the socio economic well-being of populations as many households were displaced and had to relocate in very poor conditions. Loss of food, supplies and equipment as well as the destruction of homes and damages to rural infrastructure and crops is likely to plunge affected households into instability due to the loss of their livelihoods.

In Benin, the situation has deteriorated in Malanville and Karimama following the overflow of the Niger River and flooding that affected 33 000 people in these two localities. The results of a rapid assessment in Karimama indicate that 45 localities were flooded with 27 735 persons affected, including 5 547 households and 13 073 hectares of cultivated land (rice, corn, millet, sorghum, pepper, squash) out of 25 788 were destroyed, over half of total planted area.

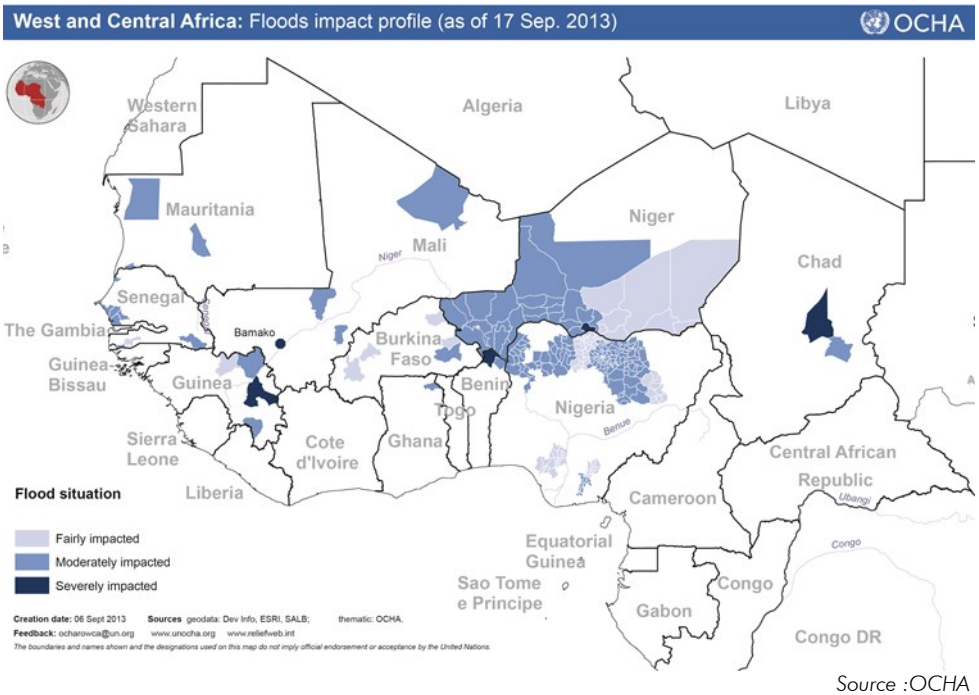
In Mali, floods, following heaving rains that fell in the country, affected a total of around 35,000 persons in the regions of Segou, Kidal, Mopti and Bamako and destroyed 185 cultivated hectares. A post flood rapid assessment conducted by the Directorate for Civil Protection and the NGO ACTED in Segou and Mopti indicated that 3 810 people had been affected and that 135 hectares of crops (rice, groundnuts and millet) as well as food and seed stocks had been destroyed .

In Niger, 28 deaths were reported and 135 943 people (13 659 households) were affected by the floods as well as 6 151 hectares of crops destroyed throughout the country. The most affected regions are Tillabéry (39 681 people), Dosso (39 354 people), Maradi (23 077 people), Niamey (11 466 people) and Tahoua (9 332 people). With regard to agriculture, Tillabéry is the most affected region with 2 902 hectares of crops flooded, followed by Maradi (1 206 hectares) and Zinder (1 028 hectares).

In Nigeria, more than 80 000 people were affected and 2 217 farms were destroyed by the floods. The Abia, Zamfara, Bauchi and Kogi states sustained most damages among the 21 states affected by the floods throughout the country.

In Senegal, in addition to the Dakar region, flooding affected regions of Fatick, Kaffrine, Kaolack, Kedougou and the department of Mbour. The number of people affected is between 73 500 and 105 000 in urban as well as rural areas. In total, more than 700 hectares of cultivated land (food and cash crops) were destroyed. Assessments of the impacts of floods on the agricultural sector continue.

Figure 3 : Floods update



Source :OCHA

Displacement situation in the region

Increasing number of returnees in Northern Mali

Mali: the monitoring of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees movement, undertaken by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its partners from 2 to 8 September 2013, show that 311 people have moved from the north of the country to southern regions. Meanwhile, thousands of displaced people have returned to the north. Most of these people went to Timbuktu (4 514 people) and Gao (2 069 people). The three northern regions of Mali are highly food insecure and the return of the displaced and of refugees should be supported for the most vulnerable among them.

Chad: In addition to 13 087 refugees from the Central African Republic, UNHCR has registered 3 000 Chadian returnees from Nigeria since May 2013 due to the prevailing insecurity in the northern and eastern part of the country. Returnees continue to arrive through the Lake Chad region despite the official closure of the border between Chad and Nigeria.

Trends on international markets

FAO Food Price index still decreasing

The FAO Food Price Index averaged 201.8 points in August 2013, nearly 4 points (1.9 percent) below its July value and 11 points (or 5.1 percent) less than August 2012 levels. Last month's decline, the fourth in a row, was driven by continued falls in the international prices of cereals and oils, as dairy, meat and sugar prices rose slightly.

The FAO Cereal Price Index averaged 210.9 points in August, down 16.4 points (7.2 percent) from July and 49.4 points (or 19 percent) from August 2012 values. This steep decline follows an already sizeable drop in July and is consistent with expectations for strong growth in world cereal production this year, especially, a sharp recovery in maize supplies. While wheat and rice prices were down by 2 to 3 percent, those of maize fell 14 percent despite some gains late in the month, explained by concerns over drought and heat stress conditions in the United States.

In August, global rice prices have continued to fall under the influence of Asian prices. This is the largest decline in two years. Exportable surpluses continue to accumulate and buyers seem in no hurry to return en masse on the market. Asian harvests are expected to be good in general and demand should decline in the major importing countries. It is therefore unlikely that world prices will experience outbursts in the coming months (Osiriz No. 113).

Figure 4: FAO Food Price Index

Source : FAO

Trends on West African markets

Grain prices seasonal decrease has started

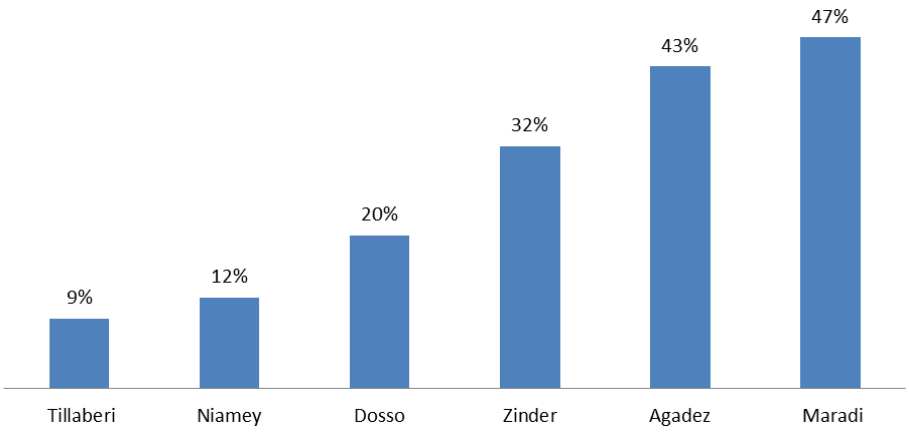
In Chad, in the Sahel belt, an increase of around 2 % for millet and sorghum prices was observed between July and August. In the eastern part of the belt, prices have increased by at least 10 % while in the western parts, millet prices fell and sorghum prices slightly increased by 1.5 %.

These price movements are explained by: selling of commercial stocks with the start of the agricultural campaign, large number of pastoralists who sell part of their herd to buy grains and a decrease in demand compared to last year, particularly for sorghum due to the availability of household stocks (good production in 2012, subsidized sales and assistance). In the Sudanese belt, prices increased by less than 1 %. Commodity prices remained very high in August 2013 compared to last year and to the five-year average. In this part of the country, current price levels have resulted from the decline in production in some areas following flooding and the decreased availability of off-season products (Source: WFP).

In Niger, prices for millet decreased but remained stable for other cereals. Only sorghum prices have increased slightly (2 %). When compared to the five-year average, millet prices (September 2013) have increased by 27% on main markets (figure 5). Regarding cross border trade movement, it should be noted that in some agricultural areas of Nigeria (Damassack, Illéla, Mai-Mai Adua and Gatari), the start of the millet harvest has increased its availability on Nigerien markets. However, maize imports are limited because crops are still maturing in Nigeria. In Benin, the grain supply has generally been satisfactory. Imports are limited, however, due to minor prices differences in this part of the region and transport difficulties between Gaya-Dosso.

On the Namounou (Burkina Faso/national average: approximately 20 000 XOF) – Torodi (Niger/average 28 000 XOF) axis Faso, price differences are notable, which encourages trade via this route (Source: WFP).

Figure 5 : Niger: Comparison of millet prices (September 2013) to the five-year average in some markets.



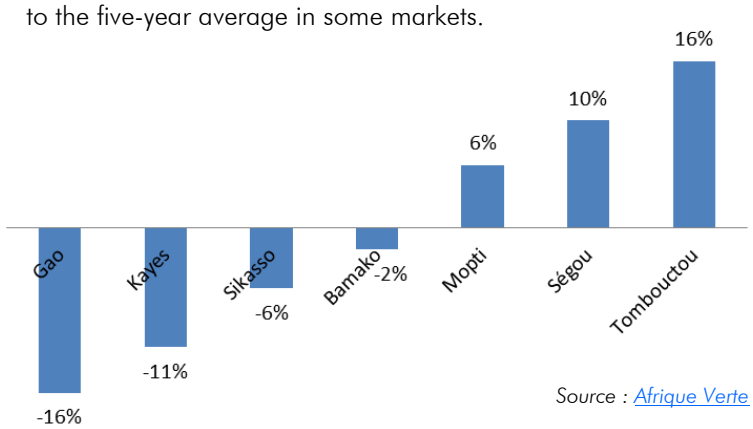
Source : Afrique Verte

Trends on the West African markets (continued)

Grain prices seasonal decrease has started

In Mali, cereal prices have remained stable overall in the region, but significant decreases were observed for millet in Gao (-31 %), for rice in Timbuktu (-14 %) and for corn in Kayes (-7 %) compared to the month of August. Compared to the five-year average, millet prices (September 2013) decreased by 9 percent on most markets (figure 6). Price decreases in the northern part of the country can be explained by improvements in cross border trade and a readjustment of prices—abnormally high because of the conflict—towards normal values. The market grain supply is generally satisfactory. Milk production and the availability of fresh corn and tubers also improve food access for many households.

Figure 6 : Mali: Comparison of millet prices (September 2013) to the five-year average in some markets.



Source : Afrique Verte

In Burkina Faso, the cereal prices trend is stable or declining in most markets. No price increase was recorded between July and August. The food security situation remains satisfactory in most areas. Compared to five-year average (September 2013), millet prices increased in most markets by around 7 %.

In Benin, maize prices fell at the national level by approximately 30 percent to July prices and around 8 percent compared to the five-year average. Stock sales and the new maize harvest explain these seasonal price decreases (Source: WFP).

In Liberia, retail prices of the main staple food, rice, are currently on average lower (-4 %) than averages for the same period in 2012. The purchasing power of casual laborers, especially in the construction sector, continues to improve as a result of stable prices of rice imports and increasing wage rates. Around this time of the year, demand for imported rice is normally at its peak. Most Liberian households usually exhaust their stocks during this period and increasingly rely on markets to access basic food commodities. Although demand for imported rice is increasing, prices are stable, an unusual trend relative to the last four years. This is primarily explained by the continued import of cheap rice and new maize harvest. (Source: WFP)

Benin: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA)

One out of four households is food insecure

This survey, conducted by WFP and the Government of Benin during the pre lean season (16 February to 22 March 2013) on a sample of 15 000 households allows for results representative of conditions at a national, departmental and municipal level. Preliminary results of this survey indicate that at the national level, 23% of households consume inadequate amounts of food, of which 5 % have poor consumption while 77% have acceptable food consumption.

Households with poor or borderline food consumption are concentrated in the departments of Mono (49%), Atacora (48%) and Couffo (47%). There are, however, significant disparities between the comunes within these departments. This is the case in the departments of Alibori (communes of Karimama, Banikoara, Gogounou, Kandi, Malanville, Segbama) and Atacora (communes).

The percentage of households with poor or borderline food consumption is twice as high in rural areas (30%) as in urban areas (15%).

In departments where the FCS is very poor, it was observed that:

—> Poverty rates, already high, increased further: in Atacora, rates jumped from 32.3% to 39.7% between 2008 and the present.

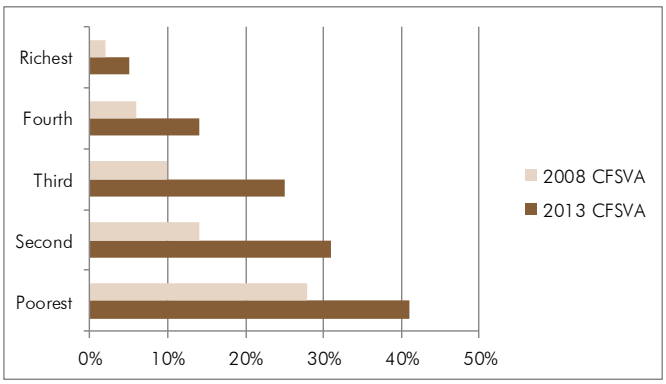
—> Households face shocks such as drought and late rains (affecting 24 % of households in Alibori), floods (10 % of households in Atacora and Alibori) and elevated prices (18 % of the households in Mono).

At the time of the survey, households having difficulties accessing food purchase the cheapest and least desired foods (42% of households) and use household savings (21%) to better access food. Analysis of market data conducted as part of this study showed that, unlike what is commonly observed in the Sahelian countries:

Commodity prices in Benin markets are relatively stable, with little variation of prices. Markets are fairly well-integrated, especially for corn and rice; among cross-border markets, Malanville is relatively well integrated with Niger and Nikki with Nigeria.

This year, however, an increase of almost 200% compared to 2012 maize exports from Nikki to Nigeria markets has been reported. This pressure on Nikki markets has been one consequence of flooding and of conflict and has affected certain maize-producing regions of Nigeria since 2012.

Figure 7 : % of people having poor or borderline food consumption by wealth quintile



Impact on food security

Situation still precarious in Northern Mali

In Cameroon, a joint assessment mission by WFP, UNHCR and the Government was conducted from 12 to 14 June 2013 on Central African refugees and the host population in the East and in Adamawa. Results show that newly arrived refugees in Cameroon (following 2012 sociopolitical unrest and occupation of Bangui by the SELEKA in March 2013) are more affected by food insecurity than the protracted refugees that had been living in Cameroon since 2005.

The newly arrived refugees spend a greater portion of their small income on food expenditures, increasing their vulnerability; just 39% have acceptable food consumption to 90% of protracted refugees and the host population. They most often use emergency coping mechanisms such as begging, in addition to having low access to land. Host communities and refugees live relatively well together, apart from several disputes related to livestock and control of basic infrastructure.

The mission recommends that food assistance continues for the next six months through income-generating activities and an acceleration of identification procedures for new refugees.

In Burkina Faso, the results of the second joint mission for monitoring and evaluation of the agro pastoral campaign and the food and nutrition situation of households (conducted from 1 to 7 September 2013 by the Government and its partners) indicate that the food situation of households is satisfactory, with at least two meals per day. The availability of milk, non-timber forest products and ongoing food assistance and cash transfer operations has enhanced the food and nutrition situation. These operations allow vulnerable households to avoid worsening their situation given their level of vulnerability.

In Mali, a survey on the food security of households in the North was conducted in July 2013 by FAO, WFP, the Government, the Early warning system of the government and their partners (ACF, OXFAM, Save the Children, Islamic Relief, CARE, CISV and GARDL).

The results show that despite improved household food consumption, especially due to increased food assistance since May 2013, the food security situation of most households in northern Mali remains very precarious due to the delayed implementation of certain food or non-food interventions, primarily caused by continued insecurity. The situation has pushed the population (about half in the regions of Kidal - 46.6% - and Timbuktu - 50.6%) to use emergency or crisis strategies (sale of productive assets, practice of illegal or risky activities, reduced expenditures on education or health), endangering their productive assets and their livelihoods in the short and/or medium term. The large majority of households spend more than 75% of their income on food, making them vulnerable to market fluctuations.

Risks that put pressure on this already vulnerable population include bad harvests due to erratic rains early in this season and the inability of some households to plant because of a lack of means, the loss of livestock, increased pressure placed on resources by the returnees and persistent insecurity.

The mission recommends developing rehabilitation activities and restoring livelihoods (from February/March 2014), implementing a nutrition and food security surveillance system through sentinel sites, and focusing special attention on the agricultural campaign.

Mark your calendars !

→ Preparation of CAP Appeals for 2014 in the Sahel : September 2013 - February 2014. Regional workshop : 29-30 november 2013

→ Crops assessment joint mission (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone et Togo) : 23 september – 11 october 2013

→ Crops assessment joint mission (Burkina Faso, Cap Vert, The Gambia Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal et Chad) : 21 october– 1st november 2013

→ Cycle of CH training and analysis (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea et Togo) : 7 – 12 october 2013

→ Cycles of training on CH analysis in Sahel (Burkina Faso, Cap Vert, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal andTchad) : 4 – 8 november 2013

→ Cycle of CH regional analysis in Lomé : 11 – 15 november 2013

→ PREGEC Lomé : 18-20 november 2013

→ RPCA Abidjan : 24-26 november 2013

@ Information on food security in West Africa

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