FOOD SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

February 2013

Key points

- **Persistent food insecurity due to floods, high rates of malnutrition and high food prices for the poorest households in the Sahel, consequences of the 2011-2012 crisis**
- **Upward trend of coarse grain prices after post-harvest declines in 2012**
- **Damages caused by floods occurred in July and October 2012 more severe than initially anticipated in Nigeria**

Agropastoral campaign 2012-2013 : ongoing off-season campaign

In Burkina Faso, the 2012-2013 gross national cereal production, that had not yet been made official and integrated into the regional consolidated results, is estimated at 4,898,544 tons. Compared to 2011-2012, cereal production increased by 33.6%. Compared to the average of the last five seasons, the increase in production is estimated at 26.9%.

Off-season crops (November 2012 - April 2013) are ongoing and proceed normally in the region. Availability of vegetables such as garlic, onion, pepper and dried tomato improves significantly on Niger markets which generates additional household income for local producers (January 2013, Information System on Agricultural Markets Bulletin - cash crops in **Niger**). Irrigated and flooded rice crops are underway along the main rivers of the region (Senegal, Niger).

Regarding the conditions of livestock, pastures are still stocked enough, however the decrease in feed and forage value due to lignification and the progressive drying of herbaceous continues. Watering conditions remain fairly good. The health and condition of animals is good overall. Sedentary herds are in the process of moving from wintering gathering areas to areas of origin (Afrique Verte).

Locust situation as of January 4, 2013 : situation generally calm

The Desert Locust situation continued to improve in the region. Nevertheless, groups and small swarms formed in the south of Western Sahara, giving small groups of adults who moved into adjacent areas of northwestern Mauritania, where at least a small swarm was reported near the coast. Limited control operations were carried out in Mauritania. Until mid-March, low numbers of locusts will persist in north-western parts of Mauritania in areas adjacent to Western Sahara and in northern parts of Mali and Niger (FAO).

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. This document describes key elements developed during this meeting.*

Floods

In Nigeria, a recent joint assessment involving FEWS NET, OCHA, WFP, CILSS and the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) has revealed that damages due to the floods that occurred in July and October 2012 are more severe that initially thought. According to these results, the observed declines in agricultural production and income, combined with high food prices and insecurity may lead to unusual levels of acute food insecurity by September 2013.

Indeed, initial cereals and tubers production estimates from November suggested an increase of 2% compared to 2011-2012, which was an exceptional year, and 6% over the five-year average. An update of these estimates shows a 6% decrease in the production of cereals and tubers compared to the five-year average and 12% diminution compared to the 2011-2012 estimates. The most affected speculations are maize (-1%), yam (-8%) and cassava (-3%). Compared to 2011-2012, rice production is thought to fall by 10%. However, despite this, rice production remains close to the five-year average.

It is anticipated that this decline in production will have effects on both the Nigerian and the regional markets.

Major flood losses were also recorded in other livelihood activities such as livestock and fishing. Several months after the massive population displacements and damages to crops, households affected by the floods have not yet fully recovered their livelihoods.

Resumption of hostilities in Mali and population movements

The resumption of hostilities in Mali following the counteraction of the Malian army backed by French and West African army forces has caused the displacement of 21,986 Malian refugees to neighboring countries between January 11 and February 4, 2013 and 14,242 internally displaced persons between 12 and January 31, 2013 (OCHA, February 13). According to a survey conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) between February 2 and 4, 2013, 93% of displaced households surveyed in Bamako and Koulikoro wish to return home in the North. However, these returns are essentially conditioned by the return to security, the school and the agricultural calendars.

According to OCHA, humanitarian access continues to improve in the central regions of the country, and the governor of Mopti officially reopened the Sévaré - Douentza road to traffic during the day. In the north, the partners use the Niger River to deliver aid to parts of the Timbuktu region, and stocks of humanitarian assistance are on the way to Gao. The access is still very limited in the north because of the ongoing military operations, the presence of mines reported in some localities and violence. The situation is particularly worrying in the Gao region where non-governmental armed groups have committed two suicide bombings in two days (February 8 and 9).

A potential food insecurity crisis threatens northern part of the country, where people are heavily dependent on trade flows which are currently disrupted. Partners fear that the humanitarian situation will deteriorate further in the coming weeks in the north and parts of the Mopti region.

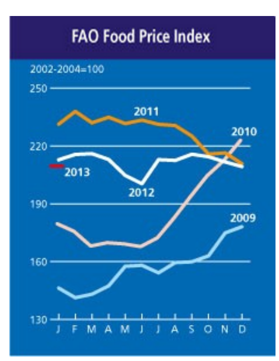
Humanitarian actors involved in the Kidal region also drew attention to the living conditions of about 6,500 displaced people who sought refuge in Tin Zaoutin on the border with Algeria and the local host populations. These people live in precarious conditions in a context already marked by the scarcity of resources. In south of the country, Mopti and Segou, markets are still facing supply difficulties and more than 60% of displaced populations and host communities have difficulties eating adequately (Care, WFP).

Market disruptions persist despite early stages of normalization of the situation and the most remote areas of the Mopti Region (Douentza Tenenkou and Youwarou) face the greatest difficulties in terms of food security and livelihoods (WFP).

Trends on the international markets

The **FAO Food Prices Index** reached an average of 210 in January 2013, a level unchanged from its value in December, which was slightly revised. After three consecutive months of declines, the index remained stable in January, as the rebound in oil/fat has offset the decline in cereals and sugar. The prices of dairy products and meat are also generally stable.

The **FAO Cereals Price Index** averaged 247 in January, down nearly 3 points (1.1%) compared to December. The values of the monthly index are going down since October, mainly due to improved crop conditions. The January decline mainly reflects a fall in grain prices, as rice prices did not change much. Large volumes of wheat exported for animal feed weighed heavily on corn prices, despite the scarcity of resources available.

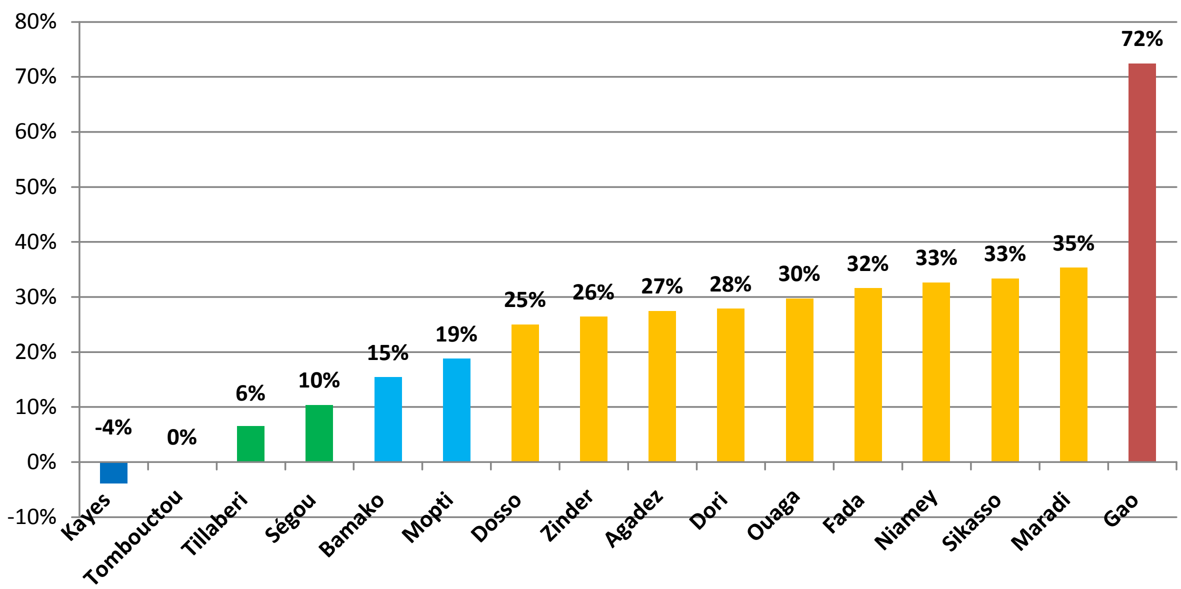


Source : FAO

Markets trends in West Africa

At he beginning of February 2013, after the post-harvest declines recorded in 2012, coarse grain prices are on the rise in almost all markets in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali compared to January 2012. This price level remains higher than the five-year average. Figure 2 shows the high level of price for millet compared to the five-year average, except in Kayes and Timbuktu (Mali). The situation remains worrying in Gao, Mali and in some markets in Niger and Burkina Faso.

Figure 2: Millet prices trends (February 2013) over the five-year average (2008-2012)



Source: FAO data / GIEWS

In Niger, according to the NGO Afrique Verte, in early February 2013, the most significant price increases compared to January 2013 were recorded for millet (+8% in Agadez), sorghum (+9% in Niamey and 7% in Maradi) and maize (9% in Niamey). Compared to the five-year average, the coarse grain prices are rising on most markets: millet (6% to 35%), sorghum (5% to 42%), maize (6% to 35%). The widespread increase in cereal prices in Niger is mainly due to:

- the strong pressure on demand from local consumers but also local and foreign traders, in order to replenish stocks, supply markets in deficit areas and meet institutional demand,
- lower imports of cereals from Nigeria (Source: joint market missions, FEWS NET, OCHA, WFP, CILSS, NEMA, February 2013) probably related to the existence of pockets of deficit due to floods and security context: the supply of millet, sorghum and cowpea is largely local (60% to 100% against 0% in the same period in 2012). Availability, however, is satisfactory.

In Burkina Faso, in early February 2013, the most significant increases compared to January 2013 were recorded for millet (+8% Fada), for sorghum (14% in Ouagadougou and Nouna) and maize (+14% in Ouagadougou and +20% in Bobo-Dioulasso) (Source: Afrique Verte). These price increases are due to a low supply in markets compared to a significant demand. Compared to five-year averages, prices of coarse grains are also rising in all markets: millet (18% to 35%), sorghum (3% to 25%) and maize (9% to 21%).

In Mali, increases in coarse grain prices are also observed in almost all markets in early February 2013 compared to January 2013. According to the NGO Afrique Verte, these increases may be related to institutional purchases for the constitution of stocks and to the security situation in the north of the country. Thus, significant increases were observed prices for millet (62% Gao), for sorghum (+17% in Bamako and +28% in Sikasso) and maize (13% in Mopti). Compared to the five-year average, coarse grain prices are high on most markets: millet (10% to 72%), sorghum (8% to 16%) and maize (11%).

In Senegal, Tambacounda, Mpal, Ourossogui and Bakel markets, in early February 2013, the price level for retail millet is lower than last year at the same time, 4 to 20% but still higher than the average of the last five years from 13 to 14% (source: joint missions markets Senegal, February 2013). The current high prices of coarse grains in production areas is due to the exceptionally high level prices of peanut at the producer level.

In the region, the terms of trade (ToT) Goat/Millet or cowpea/millet improved slightly in January 2013 com pared to December 2012, improving accessibility to millet for breeder and agro-pastoralists. Thus, on the Abalak/Tahoua market in the pastoral zone of Niger, the analysis of the term of trade for January 2013 shows that selling a goat allows a breeder to acquire 115 kg of millet against 109 kg last month (source Albichir No. 39). On the Birni Gaouré market (Dosso in Niger), in January 2013, a producer selling a bag of 100 kg of cowpea, can buy 113 kg of millet against 104 kg in December 2012 (source Albichir No. 39). In Senegal, in January 2012, the sale of a kilogram of shelled peanut could buy 0.58 kg of rice, in January 2013 the sale of a kilogram of the same product can obtain 0.85 kg, an increase 46.5% (source: joint missions markets Senegal, February 2013).

Impact on food security

In **Burkina Faso**, in October 2012, just after the harvest, the in-depth food security joint assessment lead by the Directorate General for the Promotion of Rural Economy (DGPER), FAO, WFP and FEWS NET showed that about 1.8 million people are food insecure, primarily in the North, East and Sahel regions. The assessment indicates that food insecurity results from a combination of chronic (structural) and cyclical factors. In fact, some households did not have good harvest because they do not have access to good quality agricultural inputs (seeds and fertilizers).

Also, in some areas of the Sahel, grain maturation was slowed by an early cessation of rains. In addition, households (40%) were highly indebted (in kind and in cash) during the difficult lean season of the previous year. Therefore, they remain in a difficult food security situation after the repayment of loans. Also, according to the survey results, the crisis has eroded household goods, including productive assets (breeding), thus affecting the sources of household income.

UNHCR has registered 5,739 new Malian refugees between January 11 and February 6, 2013. A thorough assessment of the food security conducted jointly by WFP, UNHCR and the Government is in progress. The preliminary results of this thorough assessment which covered 500 refugees households and 500 households from the host population shows that 52% of refugees households are food insecure with 3% are in severe food insecurity. Among local populations 58% are food insecure, with 3% in severe food insecurity.

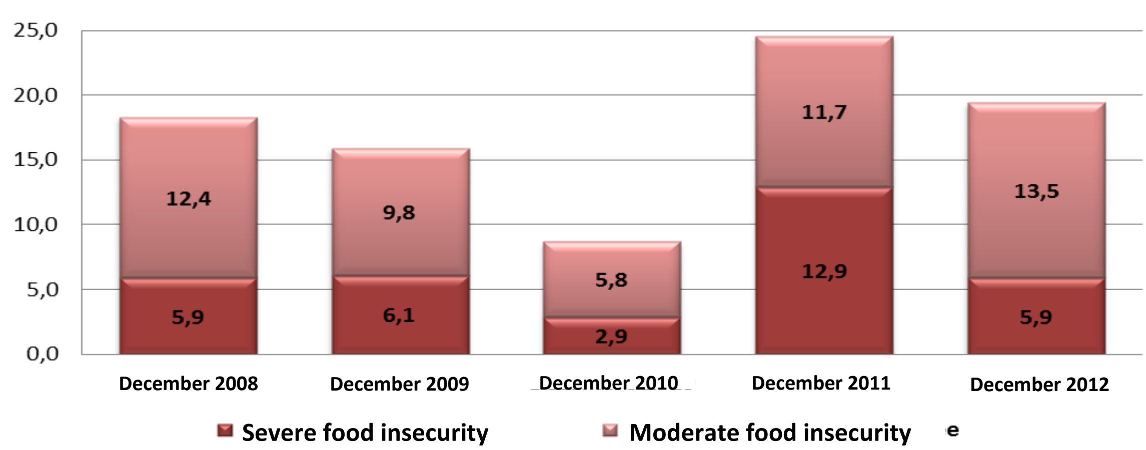
In **Mali,** the results of the nutritional survey in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Segou, Mopti and Bamako District in August and September 2012 were published: they indicate that the prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) was 8.9% according to WHO standards. This rate, which is below the emergency threshold of 15%, show a slight decrease compared to the July 2011 survey (10.0%), which covered throughout Mali.

Two regions have their GAM rate above the warning threshold of 10% (Kayes: 10.1% and Ségou: 12.2%). The rate of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) regions of southern Mali has also remained stable: 2.3% compared to July 2011 (2.1%).

In **Niger**, the government has announced the launch of direct purchases of 20,000 tones of millet from local producers to rebuild its National Security Stocks. With the production deficit in Northern Nigeria after the floods, the impact of this announcement on markets and food security of vulnerable households should be closely monitored.

In **Mauritania**, according to preliminary results of the follow-up food security survey conducted by WFP and the CSA in December 2012, 16.5% of households are food insecure. In rural areas, 19.5% of households are affected with 5.9% in acute food security and 13.5% in a moderate situation. Compared to December 2011 - a crisis year -, the percentage of rural households affected by severe food insecurity has decreased by more than half. Across the country, **560,000 people** are affected by food insecurity.

Figure 3 : Evolution of food insecurity rates post-harvest in rural areas - Mauritania (2008-2012)



Source: ESAM 2012 (WFP and partners)

Recommendations for the regional food security and nutrition working group

Monitor food security and nutrition in the Sahel including Mali and neighboring countries affected by the Malian crisis	Humanitarian and development decision makers are informed in time to make the right decisions
Monitor evolution of prices in particular in Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria and Chad	Monitoring of the access to food by the poorest households
Support advocacy for an adequate response to Consolidated Appeal (CAP), launched in 2013 including Mali	Humanitarian needs resulting from the 2012 Sahel crisis and reported in the CAP are covered

Conclusions

- **The high food situation prices in most markets in the Sahel lowers the purchasing power of the most vulnerable households, in particular those with very limited access to agriculture who did not benefit from the favorable climatic conditions that led to good productions in 2012. The Food security status of these households is still compromised and, coupled with inadequate access to health care, acute malnutrition will persist in 2013**
- **The humanitarian situation in northern Mali remains a concern and could worsen in the coming months**
- **Recent assessments results in northern Nigeria show a potential for higher-than-expected food insecurity levels**

Information on food security in West Africa

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Mark your calendars !

> Regional Technical Committee meeting of Cadre Harmonisé : from March, 4 to 8, Dakar
> Meeting of the Committee of Cadre Harmonisé, March 11, Dakar
> Prevention and Management of Food Crises Network meeting (PREGEC), from 12 to 14 March 2013, Dakar