

Food security and humanitarian implications in West Africa and the Sahel

June 2012

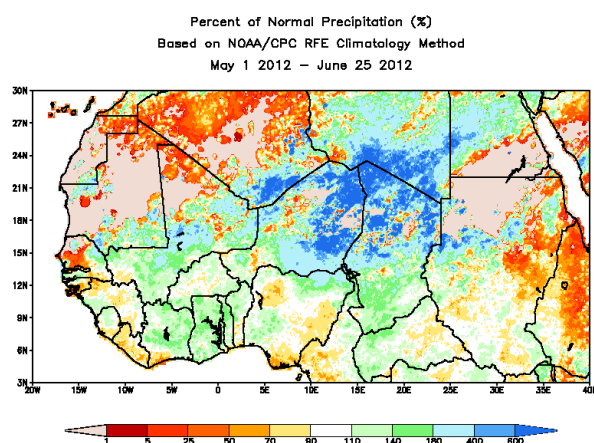
Key points

- ▽ Overall, normal start of the growing season in the Sahel
- ▽ Locust numbers increase in Mali and Niger
- ▽ Food security situation of concern in northern Mali
- ▽ International and regional markets : increase of grain prices in Niger and Senegal and stability in Burkina Faso and Mali (south and center)

Overall, normal start of the growing season

2011-2012 off-season activities are ending. In Niger, the harvest of irrigated rice ended and is increasing food availability for rice farmers and on regional markets. In Agadez, market gardening activities slowed down due to the drying of wells and lower groundwater. Unlike previous months, a slight increase in onion prices and scarcity of vegetables are observed on markets (Afrique Verte).

Figure 1 : Percent of normal precipitation (May 1—June 25 2012)



Sources : US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Planting activities have started with the first rains (figure 1). The satellite detections indicate above average precipitation in southern Niger, the sahelian part of Chad and desert zones of the northern Sahel. Rainfall deficits are reported in Senegal, Dosso

(Niger) and Gao (Mali) which suggest a delayed onset of the rainy season in those areas.

In Niger, the growing season gradually started. During the first decade of June, low rainfall totals have been observed. Low to moderate rainfall has been observed throughout the country during the second and third decade of June. These rains allowed sowing in all areas. Scattered rains have been observed in western Niger and well distributed rains have been observed in central and eastern Niger. As of June 10, partial sowing of millet had been observed in 4 831 villages and in all regions except Agadez.

In eastern Niger (from Guidan Roumji to N'Guigmi), crops are more advanced and have locally reached 40% of their development. By contrast, in western Niger (from Tillaberi to Guidan Roumji) crops are less advanced. The situation is of concern in Dosso and Tahoua. The flow of the Niger river was weak at the onset of the growing season and stronger in the middle of the month. The hydrological situation significantly improved in Niger during the third decade of June. The filling of ponds and rivers continues normally.

In Mali, the first rains were sufficient for some sowing. In most cases, activities are focused on preparing the fields and on manuring and ploughing (Afrique Verte).

In Burkina Faso, activities focused in May on soil care and conservation, and on manuring. In June, ploughing and sowing are becoming more common in areas that received the first rains.

Overall, normal start of the growing season (continued)

The pastoral situation in the area is characterised by improved drinking water availability as rains fill temporary ponds. Few herders around water points, scarcity of grazing land and deterioration of animal health have been observed. The pastoral situation is however slowly improving with the gradual regeneration of grazing land and the filling of water points in all agropastoral areas. Significant movements of transhumant herders are observed from south to north.

In Burkina Faso, despite the general poor physical health of livestock, pastoralists continue to sell them to meet their family needs. The agropastoral situation remains difficult despite the arrival of the first rains in the region (Afrique Verte).

Locust situation

In March 2012, FAO alerted that locusts are likely to move south: environmental conditions of locust deteriorated along the Algerian-Libyan border leading adults to form small groups and swarms, and move to northern Mali (May 27) and Niger (May 30) where rains started 6 weeks in advance compared to the average (figure 2). In the first two weeks of June, swarms have been observed in Niger and probably in Mali.

Therefore, two scenarios can develop. Either locust remain in desert and pastoral areas in northern Mali and Sahel which prevent agricultural areas from destruction but hinder the monitoring of the situation and locust control activities (insecurity in Mali and Niger). Unless controlled, large numbers of swarms could form at the end of the summer and increase up to 250-fold (October 2012). Or, current drought conditions cause locust migration to agricultural areas where planting activities have started (and hence threaten crops) but where control operations can be undertaken. Most of these agricultural areas have been affected by climate hazards and the poor 2011 production which increase food insecurity amongst vulnerable populations.

Situation in Mali

According to OCHA, as of 26 June, the total number of internally displaced people (IDPs) within Mali was estimated at 158,857 (51 857 in the south and an estimated 107 000 in the north). The number of Malian refugees registered is now 181,742. The number of Malian refugees registered in Burkina Faso stood at 65,009 (in five official sites: Fererio, Gandafobou, Goudebo, Mentao and Damba), at 74,104 in Mauritania and at 42,629 in Niger (+2,250 Nigeriens who had returned from Mali).

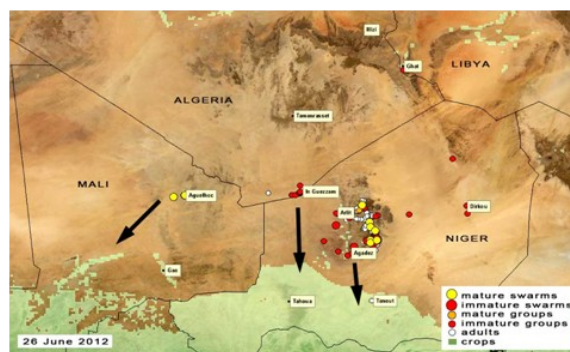
In March 2012, an assessment, conducted by ACF in Asongo, highlighted the erosion of livelihoods. Between 2010 and 2012, poor and very poor households lost almost all of their livestock. This decapitalization impacts the middle-income and wealthy households as well (-49% to 73%) but the impact is higher in agro pastoral areas than in agro-fluvial areas. With the poor 2011 harvest, households are unable to meet their needs and rely heavily on markets. The debt level of poor and very poor households is very high. 51% of interviewed households are food insecure (moderate + severe). 78% of very poor households and 30% of poor households are food insecure.

A WFP Emergency Food Security Assessment will soon take place in the eight regions of Mali, with the support of NGO partners for the three northern regions. The objective is to assess the food security and livelihood situation of IDPs, host households and populations living in zones with high numbers of registered IDPs.

In June, a joint assessment of the pastoral situation has been conducted by FAO, the government and the partners in Brakna, Assaba and Hodh El Gharbi (Mauritania). The assessment found that due to bad agropastoral productions, herds' health is of concern. Livestock mortality rates are high (30 to 60 %) and herders don't have the necessary resources to buy enough fodder and save the remaining livestock. In addition, watering and sanitary conditions remain poor for livestock. Coping strategies developed by herders have reached their limits. The assessment provided recommendations to strengthen urgent response actions.

In both cases, the infestation will continue to increase in case of abundant rainfall or if locust remain in inaccessible areas. Definitely swarms will be present in the region by the end of the summer (October) and when vegetation dries out, locust will then invade northern-west Mauritania, Algeria and Libya.

Figure 2 : Locust situation– 26 June 2012



Source: FAO

Situation in northern Mali

Food situation remains of concern in the three northern regions and partly in Mopti due to the presence of armed rebellion.

Livestock markets are disrupted in Tombouctou, Gao, Kidal and Mopti and in the cercles de Douentza, Tenekou and Youwarou due to insecurity. The supply of livestock is increasing while prices are decreasing in Mopti. This situation is due to the deterioration of herds' physical health and lower demand. In northern Mali, a shortage of fodder is observed (following the previous season). From Kayes to Gao and in the Niger Central Delta (Mopti and Tombouctou), the lean season continues with even more difficulties in areas where herders can't access grazing land due to the presence of rebels. Water availability and grazing conditions remain difficult in the north and the western Sahel (drying of temporary ponds and no rain recorded beyond Gao). Unusual movements of herds have been observed in Tombouctou, Gao, Kidal, the western Sahel and Mopti and herders are moving to neighbouring countries (Niger and Burkina Faso) or to southern Mali (source: SAP Mali). In urban areas of Tombouctou, the food situation is of concern and characterized by low supply and market disruption. However this situation slightly improved with food distribution by humanitarian convoys. In Gao, low supply in grain or rice is observed. In Kidal, supply channels of staple food from Algeria remain disrupted by rebels but seem to work.(source : SAP Mali-mai2012).

International and regional markets : increases in Niger and Senegal and stability in Burkina Faso and Mali (south and centre)

The **FAO Food Price Index** (figure 3) averaged 201 points in June 2012, down 4 points (1.8 percent) from a slightly revised (up) May value of 205 points and still the lowest since September 2012. After the third consecutive month of decline, the June value of the FAO Food Price Index is 15.4 percent below the peak reached in February 2011. Continued economic uncertainties and generally adequate supply prospects kept international prices of most commodities under downward pressure, although growing concerns over adverse weather sustained prices for some commodities toward the end of the month.

Figure 3: FAO Food Price Index



Source : FAO

In June 2012, coarse grain prices increased in Niger compared to May 2012. By contrast, these prices remain stable in Burkina Faso and in Mali (south and centre) notwithstanding localized upward or a downward trend. In Mali, mitigating actions undertaken by the State and other food security actors have supported price stability. In Burkina Faso, this stability could be explained by grain supplies made by producers to face expenses related to the new growing season (inputs, labor force, ...etc.).

In Niger, coarse grain increases are due to high demand and low supplies on markets. According to Afrique Verte, compared to May 2012, the most significant rise has been observed in Maradi, Zinder and Agadez for sorghum (by 13%, 9% and 8% respectively). For millet, the most significant rise has been observed in Dosso and Niamey (by 11% and 8% respectively). Compared to the 5-year average, millet increased by 65% in Maradi (figure 4).

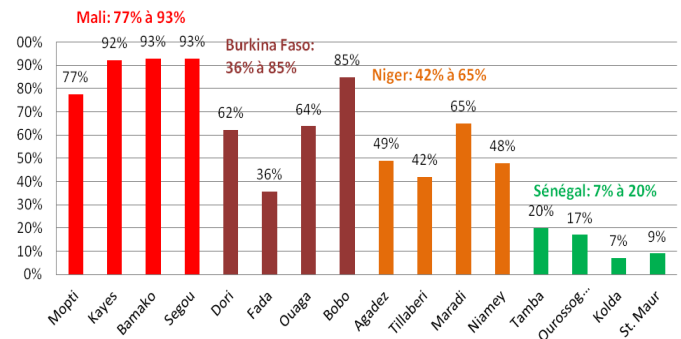
In Burkina Faso, although prices remain stable, millet decreased by 11% in Gourma, maize decreased by 9% in Tenkodogo and sorghum decreased by 7% in Bobo (Afrique Verte). Compared to the 4-year average, millet increased by 36% to 85% with the most significant rise in Bobo (figure 4).

In Mali, compared to May 2012, despite coarse grain prices

remain stable, sorghum increased by 7% in Niamakoro and Faladie. By contrast, maize decreased by 6% in Koulikoro Gare and by 12% in Segou Centre (OMA). Compared to the 4-year average, millet increased by 77% to 93% with the most significant rise observed in Segou and Bamako (figure 4).

In Senegal, compared to the 5-year average, millet increased by 7% to 20% with the most significant rise in Tambacounda (figure 4).

Figure 4 : millet price in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Sénégal (1)



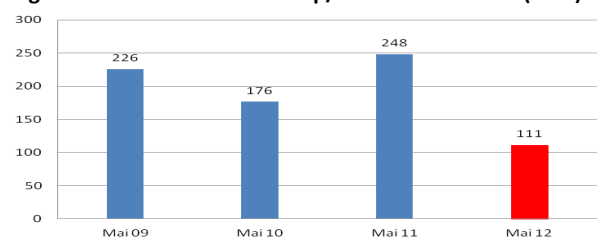
Source: FAO/GIEWS/SIM/CSA Senegal

(1): For Burkina and Mali, this is compared to the 4-year average and for Niger and Senegal, this is compared to the 5-year average.

In Mali, although grain prices remain stable, substantial destocking of livestock in poor physical health is contributing to the deterioration of the terms of trade. In May 2012, terms of trade deteriorated in Banamba by 55% for sheep/millet compared to a year ago (figure 5). In May 2012, in Banamba, a herder selling a sheep could obtain 111 kg of millet as compared to 248 kg a year ago (figure 5). These terms of trade remain unfavourable compared to the 3-year average (- 49%). This deterioration is mostly due to the continuous rise of millet in Banamba.

In Niger, the terms of trade for goat/millet and onion/millet further deteriorated for household selling a goat in Abalak or a bag of onions in Agadez. In Abalak, a household could obtain 60 kg of millet by selling a goat as compared to 71 kg a month ago. In Agadez, a producer selling a 100 kg bag of onions could obtain 85.62 kg of millet in May 2012 as compared to 154 kg last year at the same period (Albichir n° 131).

Figure 5 : Terms of trade sheep/millet in Banamba (Mali)



Sources : OMA/DNPIA

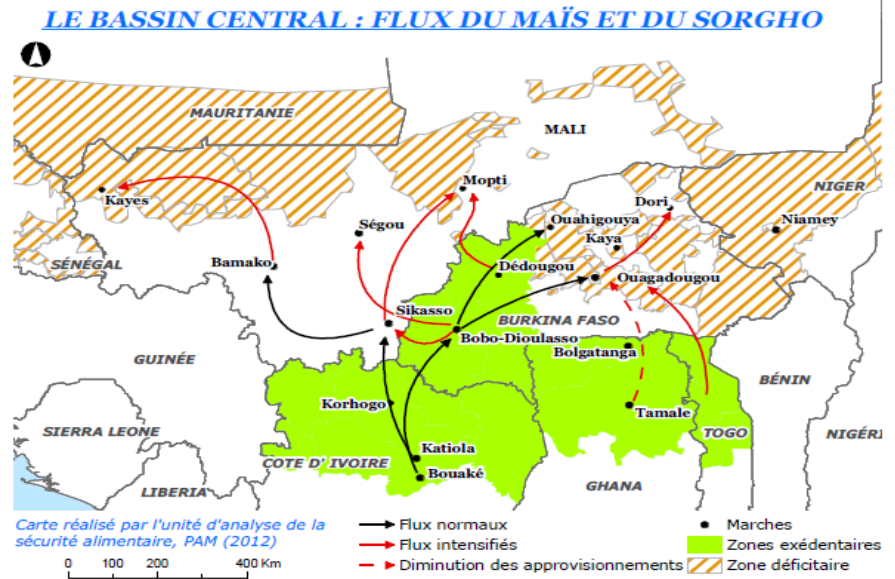
Maize and sorghum flows in the Central Basin

According to the results of the joint (WFP, FAO, ACF, CILSS, FEWS NET) market assessment in the Central Basin, increased **grain flows to Mali** are observed from surplus areas in the basin. A high degree of pressure on stocks in **northern Cote d'Ivoire** and **northern Togo** (maize) and **south west Burkina Faso** (maize and sorghum) is evident: strong demand from food deficit areas, weak supply due to limited sales from producers and large wholesalers. Low south-north tuber flows are also observed, confined in northern Ghana/Burkina Faso.

Resupply times have increased, from 7 to 11 days for maize in northern Burkina Faso, and from 7 to 13 days in central Mali. These long supply delays limit the market chain's ability to react to sudden increases in demand.

More information :

<http://www.wfp.org/content/sahel-central-basin-market-assessment-june-2012>



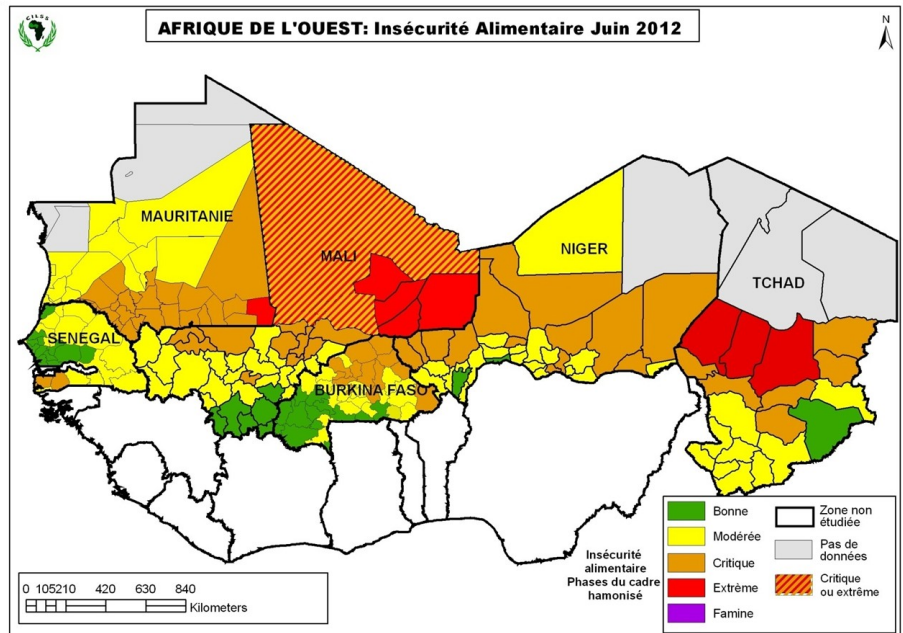
Impact on food security

In Niger, the meeting on the reevaluation of food security held in Maradi (May 29-June 2), confirmed that overall the situation has stabilized (improvement of the Early Warning System vulnerability rate in 23 departments/districts ; stability in 6 departments/districts ; and slight deterioration in 16 departments/districts). Moreover, the number of 'extremely vulnerable' departments decreased from 6 in October to 3 in May : Oualam, Tera and Tillabéri. The overall stabilization is due to early response actions undertaken by the government and its partners.

According to 'Conjoncture des moyens d'existence', 1 193 994 people could be considered as vulnerable in Burkina Faso, should the situation remain the same until October. With livelihood stress, the number of 1 811 308 could be reached. The situation could further worsen if the deficit in Leraba, Komondjoari and Tapoa reaches another socio-economic group.

The current food and nutrition situation (see map beside) is as follows :

extreme phase : Kanem, Barh el Gazal, Batha (Chad), Gao area (Mali) and la Moughataa de Bassikounou (Mauritania) ;
 critical and extreme phase : Tombouctou and Kidal areas (Mali) ;
 critical phase : most of agropastoral areas in Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.

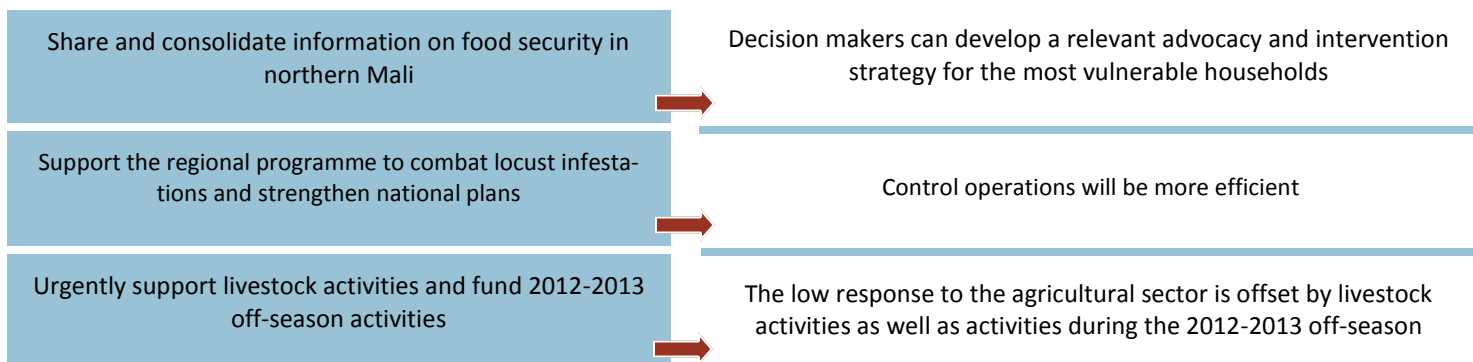


Source : Cellule d'Analyse du Cadre Harmonisé

Guinea-Bissau

In the aftermath of the coup, an interim government has been appointed. Public services have resumed their activities with a gradual return to a normal situation. Schools have resumed classes since the second half of June et will continue until July (to catch up). Most IDPs returned to Bissau. Some IDPs remain in rural areas not because of insecurity but for farming activities and especially for the cashew nut season. The cashew nut production decreased in 2012 compared to a year ago due to dust in January which killed maturing flowers. Following the coup, major cashew nut exporters stopped purchasing cashew nuts and some of them left the country. Therefore, the cashew nut price decreased (lower demand) except in May when prices increased significantly. This rise has been followed by a significant decrease with the onset of the rainy season (first half of June). Cashew nuts are currently sold at 250 FCFA/kg. The informal cross-border trade with Senegal contributed to increase cashew nut price especially in Farim where prices are 25% higher than a year ago. The export of cashew nuts started late and the first shipment left end of May. Export activities should end up end of August at the latest. According to the rapid assessment conducted in June, household food security deteriorated compared to a month ago. 65% of households have a stock covering needs for a period of one month. The terms of trade for cashew/rice remain unfavourable to producers in so far as cashew nut price decreased and imported rice price increased. Food security is likely to worsen especially during the lean season (between July and September) if targeted action is not taken urgently.

Recommendations for the regional food security and nutrition working group



Conclusions

- ▽ The food and nutrition crisis is continuing in the Sahel and response activities are ongoing. In northern Mali, insecurity combined with the locust threat hinder food access for populations left behind.
- ▽ In the Sahel, high grain prices, especially in the Central Basin, is an aggravating factor which hinders household food access and jeopardizes the status of the most vulnerable households.
- ▽ Locusts in northern Mali and Niger threaten crops and pastures in both countries and in Chad. The monitoring of the situation and control operations should be supported.



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