Above-average cereal production harvested in 2019

Seasonal dry weather conditions are prevailing in most areas of the country and planting of the 2020 crops is expected to begin in June-July with the normal onset of the rains.

Harvesting of the major crops, including millet, sorghum and rice (paddy), was completed in November 2019. The 2019 national cereal production is estimated at 2.7 million tonnes, 28 percent above average, but 4 percent below the record 2018 output. Despite the average production at the national level, several localities recorded production shortfalls due to pockets of drought at the start (June) and the end (September) of the seasons as well as flooding that affected crops particularly in Bakel and Podor regions.

In most pastoral areas, seasonal rains are expected to start in July. The pastoral lean season is progressing normally with an average availability of pasture across the country, with the exception of some areas in the east that are facing localized pasture deficits. The domestic transhumant herds are expected to return from southern areas to pastoral areas in July with the normal onset of the rains. The animal health situation is generally stable, with no major disease outbreaks recorded.

Above-average import requirements forecast

The country relies heavily on imports to cover its total domestic cereal consumption needs. Although the 2019 cereal production is estimated at an above-average level, import requirements in the 2019/20 marketing year (November/October) are forecast at an above-average level of 2.3 million tonnes. An increase in rice imports is expected due to the slight decline in rice production in the Senegal river valley and the intention of traders to build their stocks.
Cereal prices stabilized due to adequate supply

Despite the seasonal contraction in supply, markets are well stocked as a result of regular internal trade flows and imports. Prices of coarse grains were relatively stable or declined in February on account of good domestic supplies. However, the reduced 2019 output and strong domestic demand, particularly in urban areas, kept prices above their values a year earlier.

Pockets of food insecurity remain among most vulnerable population

According to the March 2020 “Cadre Harmonisé” analysis, the aggregate number of severely food insecure people (CH Phase 3: “Crisis” and above) is estimated at about 436 000, significantly up from the 151 000 people estimated in March 2019. If appropriate measures and responses are not implemented, this number is projected to increase to nearly 766 000 people during the next lean season between June and August 2020, well above the about 341 000 food insecure people that were estimated for the June-August 2019 period. The deterioration in the food situation and the increase in the number of food insecure population is due to the effects of adverse weather events (drought and floods) on cereal and fodder production.

COVID-19 and measures adopted by the Government

In view of the evolving COVID-19 situation, the Government has decreed a State of Emergency, with the implementation of a total country lockdown and curfew. The Government has also taken some sanitary, social and economic measures. The Government has created a national social solidarity fund of XOF 1 000 billion, which will be sourced from public resources and open to voluntary contributions. Mandatory restrictions on population movements, combined with heightened levels of fear, have led many people to remain at home. Although these measures have not affected the access to food, further restrictions on population movements could hamper the access to land and have a negative impact on the 2020 agricultural production.

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