Above-average harvest gathered 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 May-June with the normal onset of the rains.

Harvesting of millet, sorghum, maize and rice (paddy) was completed in December 2019. Overall, the 2019 national cereal production is estimated at 2.9 million tonnes, 7 percent above the five-year average and similar to the 2018 output. However, production shortfalls occurred in the provinces of Kanem, Bahr El Ghazal and Hadjer Lamis due to prolonged dry spells in June and early July, causing some damages on crops at seeding and tillering growth stages which favoured pest attacks on the newly planted crops in July.

Pastoral resources have been affected by prolonged dryness in June and July and floods caused by late rains in October, leading to a fodder deficit of about 30 million tonnes of dry matter. The largest fodder deficits were recorded in the provinces of Barh El Ghazal, Batha, Borkou, Ennedi Ouest, Hadjer Lamis, Kanem, Ouaddai and Wadi Fira. As a result, an earlier-than-normal and harsh pastoralists' lean season is expected to start in April in these areas, causing competition between farmers and breeders to access natural grazing areas.

Cereal import requirements forecast at above-average level

Despite the above-average 2019 production, import requirements for the 2019/20 marketing year (November/October) are expected to remain at an above-average level of about 200 000 tonnes. Local traders will likely maintain the high level of imports of 200 000 tonnes to replenish their stocks and to supply the northern regions of Tibesti, Borkou and Ennedi as the persisting insecurity continues to disrupt trade flows from Libya.
Prices of coarse grains generally stable, but down from year earlier

Most markets are well stocked following the above-average production of cereals in 2019, the contribution of the good levels of residual commercial stocks and imports from the Sudan and Cameroon. Prices of coarse grains followed mixed trends in January, despite adequate cereal availabilities at the national level. Prices of millet strengthened in January 2020 while those of sorghum declined or remained relatively stable. The Libyan border closure and conflict continued to disrupt market activities and supported prices in several markets in Lake Chad and Tibesti regions.

In most livestock markets, the supply of animals is adequate. The prices rose in January 2020, compared to the previous months, due to an increase in export demand to the Sudan as a result of an improvement of security along the border. The livestock-to-cereals terms of trade are generally favourable to pastoralists. However, the market value of the animals is expected to moderately deteriorate between April and June in the areas affected by fodder deficits or limited access to fodder resources due to insecurity.

Food assistance still needed for vulnerable population

Food security conditions remained precarious in 2019, particularly in Lac and Tibesti regions due to persisting insecurity that resulted in the disruption of livelihood activities and population displacements. According to UNHCR, as of February 2020, the country hosts about 465 000 refugees from neighbouring countries, including the Central African Republic, Nigeria and the Sudan, affected by persisting civil conflict. According to IOM, as of December 2019, about 170 000 people were displaced due to insecurity in Lake Chad Region. The majority of the displaced people, refugees and host communities are highly dependent on humanitarian assistance to satisfy their basic needs.

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 453 000, up from the 312 000 estimated in March 2019. If appropriate measures and responses are not implemented, this number is projected to increase to nearly 1 million during the next lean season between June and August 2020, well above the 520 000 food insecure people that were estimated for the period June-August 2019.

COVID-19 and measures adopted by the Government

In view of the evolving COVID-19 situation, the Government has taken some necessary measures to close the land borders and the suspension of air traffic, with the exception of cargo aircrafts. The Government has developed a contingency plan of XAF 15 billion with the technical support of donor partners. A special fund is set up, comprising of internal resources and the contribution of international solidarity. Official restrictions on population movements, combined with heightened levels of fear, have led to a reduction of income-earning opportunities in some places. Field reports indicate cases of food hoarding in several local markets.