

SPECIAL REPORT

FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT MISSION TO MAURITANIA WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON LOSSES DUE TO THE DESERT LOCUST

21 December 2004

Highlights

- Devastating infestations of desert locusts in the main agricultural areas of Mauritania were noted since the start of the rains in June and July, and continued throughout the growing season.
- Millet and legumes (cowpeas and groundnut) suffered serious damage. Sorghum and rice were less severely affected.
- There was insufficient rainfall for good crop and pasture development in many areas which, combined with the damage caused by the desert locusts, aggravated crop losses. Since the level of water in the reservoirs and the River Senegal valley is well below normal, negative effects can be expected for irrigated production which is also at risk from the borer.
- Cereal production this year has been estimated at 101 200 tonnes, a fall of about 44 percent on last year's figures and 36 percent less than the average for the last five years.
- Domestic supplies will only cover 21 percent of the country's cereal requirements, estimated at 478 000 tonnes for the 2004/05 season. Total imports (commercial plus food aid pledges) have been estimated at about 312 700 tonnes and so the remaining cereal deficit is in the order of 64 300 tonnes.
- Markets are characterized by a shortage of dry cereals as last season's stocks run out and due to the sharp fall in supplies from Mali. Food prices are rising on all markets and it is very likely that they will continue to rise in the months to come.
- Access to food is already posing problems for many households, both rural and urban, who are directly or indirectly affected by the crisis. This situation could worsen at the start of 2005 if appropriate measures are not taken quickly to help the populations most affected. The country is, in fact, moving towards a food crisis that will probably be worse than the one experienced in 2002/03.
- The socio-economic groups in extreme food difficulties are to be found, above all, in the North, Aftout, Affolé, south Assaba and south of the two Hodhs. These groups are mainly settled farmers who depend on rainfed agriculture, small livestock farmers and households who make a living from market gardening and date growing.
- The urgent supply of agricultural inputs is recommended to allow the affected farmers to start the new agricultural season in April 2005 in good conditions. In the short-term, the distribution of seeds (especially vegetable seeds) could help to improve the food security of the households concerned.
- The availability of pasture is also very limited due to drought and desert locust damage. There are only three or four months' worth of grazing left for the livestock population which has already begun to move on. The rapid organization of adapted transhumance corridors, the production of fodder crops in the irrigated areas as well as the supply of animal feed are necessary.

1. OVERVIEW

Mauritania is one of the main Sahel countries known, as early as the start of 2004, to be at risk of agricultural production losses as a result of a potentially very large growth of the desert locust population. In August it was noted that a large number of swarms and hopper bands were devouring the vegetation in most of the crop-growing and pasture zones of the country. Therefore FAO, WFP and CILSS joined forces to help estimate pre-harvest agricultural production for the year and to assess the impact of locust infestation on crops, livestock, and household vulnerability. A FEWS-NET representative joined the team and actively participated in the field visit and then in the data analysis process.



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The mission, accompanied by two observers (one from the EU, the other from USAID), enjoyed the cooperation and participation of the Food Security Commission and the Ministry for Rural Development and the Environment (MDRE) who supplied all the available data and organized the field trips. Nevertheless, the results of the agricultural survey used each year to determine the planted area and the type of crops, in addition to estimating agricultural production, were not yet available because the survey was just about to start. The team therefore worked with MDRE statisticians and used the observations made in the field and historical data to estimate the planted area in 2004/05 and to forecast agricultural production and losses due to the desert locust. Four teams went into the field and spoke to rural households, local-level officials, technicians working in the field of agriculture and food security, and the NGOs. These four teams covered the north, south-west, south-east and centre-south of the country.

The main conclusions of the mission are as follows:

Devastating infestations of desert locusts in the main agricultural zones of Mauritania were noted from the start of the rains for the seedlings in June and July. The nature and extent of the damage varied according to the type of crops, the density and duration of the locust infestation in the fields, and the stage of crop development at the time of the invasion. Millet and legumes (cowpeas and groundnut) were almost entirely destroyed. Sorghum and rice were less severely affected.

There was insufficient rainfall for good crop and pasture development in many areas which, combined with the damage caused by the desert locusts, caused further crop losses. The level of water in the reservoirs and the River Senegal valley was well below normal which will probably harm production.

Cereal production this year has been estimated at 101 200 tonnes, a loss of about 44 percent in relation to last year's results and 36 percent less than the average for the last five years.

For the 2004/05 season, domestic supplies of cereals have been estimated at 101 200 tonnes against expected consumption of 478 200 tonnes and so total import requirements are 377 000 tonnes. Commercial imports have been forecast at 281 600 tonnes and announced food aid will bring in 31 100 tonnes. The uncovered cereal deficit is 64 300 tonnes.

At the moment, the markets are well stocked with imported food (rice and wheat) but the supply of dry cereals and cowpeas is very low because national production stocks have run out and supplies from Mali have fallen sharply as a result of the combination of drought and the locust invasion which has also affected that country's border zone.

The price of food is rising throughout the country and it is very likely that it will continue to rise in the months to come. For many rural households, access to food is already problematic. The risk of the country suffering a food crisis as in 2002/03 is currently very high.

This report has been prepared by S. Hebie, N. Beninati, J.A. Scaglia, F. Egal and Mamadou Diouf, under the responsibility of the FAO and WFP Secretariats with information from official and other sources. Since conditions may change rapidly, please contact the undersigned for further information if required.

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SPECIAL REPORT

FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT MISSION TO SENEGAL

21 December 2004

Highlights

- Cereal production in the 2004 growing season has been estimated at 1 132 700 tonnes, a reduction of 22 percent compared with 2003 but close to the average of the last five years. This decrease in cereal production is explained by the fall in millet areas (-23 percent) and sorghum areas (-19 percent) due to drought at the start of the season, the locust invasion since June 2004, and the substitution of these crops with subsidised groundnut (+30 percent compared with 2003). With the extra production in the off-season, estimated at about 52 366 tonnes, total net cereal production for 2004 – 2005 will be 946 150 tonnes.
- Millet production is significantly down by 34 percent compared with the average of the last five years. In the deficit regions, this led to a sustained increase in millet prices between September and October 2004, which means the food situation will be even more tight for the most vulnerable households if this trend continues.
- The opposite trend was observed for livestock prices because of the degradation of pasture land which caused the north-south transhumance process to start early with adverse effects on crop areas where harvesting had not yet been completed. Hence, the need for the rapid organization of adapted transhumance corridors, the start-up of an animal health programme and the provision of moderately-priced fodder.
- Consumption requirements are in the order of 1 824 480 tonnes. This implies a deficit of 878 330 tonnes which could be offset by commercial imports of 871 550 tonnes of rice and wheat and an expected 6 780 tonnes of rice as food aid. Although Senegal may be able to cover its needs with food imports essentially on a commercial basis, this should not obscure the precarious situation of people living in the zones badly affected in 2004 by locusts and drought.
- The urgent supply of agricultural inputs, particularly seed, is recommended to enable affected farmers to begin the new crop season, beginning in April 2005, in good conditions. In the short term, the distribution of seed and horticultural inputs for the off-season crops may help further to improve food security for the households concerned. The mission estimated that about 124 300 households, i.e. 20 percent of rural households, will need emergency agricultural assistance.
- With a strong mobilization of the country and its partners during the desert locust campaign control campaign which is still under way, the invasion has not spread over the major crop belts. Nevertheless, the plague has not been completely brought under control and extra efforts are necessary.
- For the future, the locust problem is alarming given the high probability of these insects returning in 2005 following spring reproduction in the Maghreb. Therefore, the international community must mobilize to implement a regional strategy that is more pro-active than reactive, integrating the bio-technological, environmental, and socio-economic aspects of locust control.

1. OVERVIEW

In 2004 Senegal has undergone a severe plague of locusts, badly affecting the harvests, particularly in the agro-pastoral regions in the northern half of the country where crop losses were also observed due to the irregularity and/or abrupt end of the rains. A joint FAO/WFP/CILSS crop and food availability assessment mission visited the country from 18 to 31 October 2004 with the following aims: to estimate the harvests for the current year and the damage caused by the desert locust to crops and pastures; to assess the resulting food situation overall; and to predict possible food requirements for 2004/05, including imports and food aid from the international community.



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The mission comprised experts from CILSS, FAO, WFP and FEWS-NET and an observer from French Cooperation. It is worth noting that the FAO team included a specialist from its Emergency Services in Rome. The latter's mandate was to identify, as of then, the vulnerable groups whose food security had been further reduced as a result of the locusts and/or drought ; and to propose some palliative measures to enable them to re-start their agricultural production. The mission enjoyed the support of all the central and regional departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Water Resources as well as the support of the other services and ministries called upon. Constructive discussions were also held with some agencies of the United Nations (FAO and UNDP), with donors (in particular USAID and the World Bank) and with the NGOs as well as cereal importers.

The mission conducted its field work from 19 to 29 October 2004. Initially some preparatory meetings were held at FAO and WFP offices, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Water Resources (in particular the general secretariat and the departments of animal husbandry, agriculture (DA), plant protection (DPV), and analyses, forecasts and statistics (DAPS). The mission also met with officials from the CSE (ecological monitoring centre) and from USAID.

With the support of national consultants and staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Water Resources, the mission divided into two field groups and was able to cover all the regions affected by the desert locusts. Visits were made to plots sown with millet, sorghum, cowpeas, groundnut, sesame, rice and to citrus orchards. Interviews were carried out with the main regional actors at the level of each of the departments and/or districts visited, on each occasion holding detailed discussions with the various technical services in order to collect the necessary information for an assessment of the effects of the locust infestation and drought on agricultural production. Numerous interviews were also conducted at the village level with farmers, breeders, cereal and livestock traders and with the NGOs working in the field.

At the end of the mission, the preliminary results were presented to officials at the Ministry of Agriculture.

The main outcomes of the mission are as follows:

On the basis of data supplied by the various services of the Ministry of Agriculture and observations made in the field, a review of the 2004 crop season in Senegal revealed that the main natural factors that have most influenced production (to different degrees and with regional and departmental variations) are connected with:

- The phytosanitary situation, dominated by locust invasion, but also marked by exceptional infestations of habitual predators such as grasshoppers, soldier beetles and other flower-eating insects.
- The worsening of the rainfall situation in that, in a great many places, the growing season started late, there were long periods with no rain, and the rains finished early.

These factors have affected agricultural production and the pastures to different degrees, sometimes in the same way and/or only locally according to the regions or departments concerned.

The locust invasion

Of Senegal's 11 regions, 7 have been affected to varying degrees by the locust invasion. These are: in the north, the regions of Louga, Saint-Louis, Matam and, in the centre-south, the regions of Thiès, Diourbel and Fatick, as well as Dakar. The first infiltrations of swarms of desert locusts coming from Mauritania were observed in the northern border areas beginning in June 2004. Then the infestation spread following the lines from Podor to Matam and from Richard Toll Dagana to Thikité, engulfing vast stretches in the north and centre-south of the country and causing widespread damage to crops and pastures.

In the regions of Saint-Louis, Louga, Thiès and Diourbel but also in the region of Fatick (Gossas department), the mission observed crop belts that had been completely laid waste by the desert locusts. The damage was particularly bad as regards millet, black-eyed peas, sesame and, to a lesser extent, groundnut in the Fatick region.

Nevertheless, irrigated crops in the valley of the River Senegal have not as yet undergone very much damage. The main part of the rice and market-garden crops have been spared.

The large cereal production areas, generally considered to be vulnerable due to their dependence on uncertain rainfall, have not suffered from locusts either. This is particularly the case in the region of Kaolack

and, to a lesser extent, the region of Fatick where effective locust control measures were taken as soon as the insects made their first appearance.

As regards pastures, big losses due to desert locusts were recorded in the regions of Louga and Saint-Louis. However, the fodder biomass was only slightly affected in the regions of Diourbel and Matam which also suffered massive locust infestation.

Other pests affecting crops

In a great many places in the centre-south, particularly in the regions of Fatick and Kaolack, the endemic pests such as grasshoppers, soldier beetles and other flower-eating insects caused much greater damage this year than in previous seasons, aggravating the situation in areas already affected by the desert locust, in particular in the departments of Fatick and Gossas (Fatick region). The worst infestations of these predators were linked to the fact that the plant protection measures were centred on locust control.

Effects of the rainfall situation on crops and pastures

In some areas, the damage caused by grasshoppers and other predators has compounded the harmful effects of the late start to the growing season, dry spells, the early end of the last rains on planted areas, crop development and yields. Therefore the erratic start to the rainy season combined with the ravages of the grasshoppers meant that re-planting was necessary in a good many places, in particular in the regions of Louga, Saint-Louis, Thiès, Diourbel and Fatick.

In the pastoral zones of the north and centre-north of the country (in particular in the regions of Saint-Louis and Louga), the pastures also suffered from a worsening of the rainfall situation. This caused the grass to dry out, grass which had, in some places, already been attacked by desert locusts. This means that there will be a severe shortage of fodder biomass in some places in these pastoral and agri-pastoral zones. In November 2004 the Ecological Monitoring Service and the Animal Husbandry Department will run a survey on the available biomass to obtain a quantitative estimate of the carrying capacity of these natural pastures.

The rainfall deficit also affected water courses, and ponds were insufficiently filled. In places (for example in the locality of Ziguinchor) recession crops were not possible and nor was transplanting of the rice crop because of the low level of the water courses. In the same way, the drying out of the ponds hindered the market-gardening season and caused shortages in livestock drinking water.

Production estimate and provisional cereal balance

Overall, estimates of total cereal production for the 2004 season, amounting to some 1 132 700 tonnes, are clearly down (by 22 percent) compared with the previous season, but are still close to the average for the last five years. As regards consumption requirements, and given the extra off-season production estimated at about 52 366 tonnes, stocks and planned imports, the provisional net cereal deficit for 2004/2005 is about 878 330 tonnes. The deficit could be made good by commercial imports of rice and wheat, and by a forecast 6 780 tonnes of rice in aid. The forecast commercial imports of rice and wheat are higher than this level.

The downturn in cereal production, particularly for millet, is explained principally by a reduction in the growing areas to the benefit of groundnut in particular. In fact in 2004 groundnut benefited from State support in the form of subsidized seeds and fertilizers, leading to an increase of about 30 percent in growing areas and there will be a corresponding increase in production, particularly in the groundnut regions of Kaolack and Fatick.

Other crops such as maize and cassava have also expanded remarkably as a result of special government programmes supporting production and crop diversification.

The strong return of the groundnut and the good results of the maize and cassava crops should, at the national level and for the households directly involved, largely compensate for the drop in millet production.

Pockets of vulnerability and adaptation strategies for the populations concerned

The above-mentioned fall in cereal production is by no means considerable nor unusual at the national level since the regions attacked by the locusts and/or hit hard by drought only account for 20 percent of national cereal production. However these regions, in particular Thiès, Diourbel, Louga, Saint-Louis, Matam and, to a certain extent, Fatick (Gossas department) are considered to be at high risk of food insecurity in 2004. In fact these regions have a structural cereal deficit which will worsen in 2004/2005. As the mission observed, the

anticipated shortage of millet on the markets of Thiès, Diourbel, Fatick (Gossas) and even Kaolack (Nioro) has been pushing up millet prices since September 2004. It is feared that the food situation of vulnerable households will be further endangered if this trend continues.

Moreover, the increased scarcity of pastures in the Louga and Saint-Louis regions has not only led to the sale of livestock, mainly horses and small ruminants, at very low prices compared with the previous three months, but also to the early start of transhumance towards areas where the harvests are still standing which could lead to often bloody fighting between livestock breeders and settled farmers. Appropriate palliative measures are necessary, including the rapid organization of transhumance corridors and the start-up of a livestock health programme, as well as the sale of fodder at reasonable prices.

We can see that in the most affected regions, in terms of family resources, rainfed agriculture comes after livestock breeding, remittances from migrants, and irrigated crops. Nevertheless, in these regions, the rural families for whom rainfed agriculture constitutes the main, and often the only, source of revenue, are going to find themselves in difficulties. This means that there will be pockets of vulnerability and so correct targeting by means of specific surveys will be necessary. Some regions are already planning to do this.

In the meantime, the families whose livelihoods have been further damaged by the situation described above, are reacting by bringing forward the seasonal migration and transhumance of livestock, by selling some of their animals as indicated previously, or by attempting off-season market gardening, and by actively seeking income-generating activities.

The mission estimated that about 124 300 vulnerable households, i.e. 20 percent of rural households need emergency agricultural assistance. The households worst affected by the desert locust, drought and other problems are located in Diourbel, Thiès, Fatick, Saint Louis, Louga, Podor and Matam.

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SPECIAL REPORT

FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT MISSION TO MALI, WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON LOSSES DUE TO THE DESERT LOCUST

21 December 2004

Highlights

- At the time of writing this report, the Mali government had not yet published its preliminary harvest estimates. The mission based its own estimates on historical production data together with data on crop losses from a survey carried out in August by the Ministry of Agriculture's early warning system. According to information updated to the end of October, 2004-2005 total cereal output, which should amount to 2 933 000 tonnes, is up by 11 percent compared with the averages for 1999-2000 and 2003-2004. This figure is equal to 86 percent of the exceptional volume of production recorded last year.
- The greatest crop losses due to locust infestation and drought were in rainfed millet (37 000 tonnes), cowpeas (3 000 tonnes) and sorghum (9 000 tonnes). Although there have been considerable localized losses, there have not been any major repercussions at the national level and good results have been recorded in the large agricultural regions in the south.
- The development of pasture has also been affected by desert locust attacks and the rainfall situation. Locust damage has been fairly localized, affecting woody and pastoral areas more noticeably, especially along the border with Mauritania. The percentage of pastures damaged by locusts and drought ranges from 7 percent in Koulikoro to 18 percent in Gao.
- The southern cotton-producing regions have not been affected by locust infestation and have suffered from drought to a lesser extent than many regions in the north of the country.
- Domestic cereal supplies and the country's regular imports are covering the people's needs. The countrywide food situation should therefore be satisfactory in 2005.
- Nevertheless, in the areas infested by desert locusts, there have been large crop losses and the food situation of the people is already precarious. Some measures will have to be taken to alleviate food shortages in these regions.
- Countrywide, the food situation of households is adequate.

1. OVERVIEW

At the start of 2004 it became clear that, in the Sahel, Mali was one of the countries most at risk of agricultural production losses due to a potentially enormous growth in the desert locust population. In August, large numbers of swarms and hopper bands began to devour the vegetation along a strip of the crop and pasture zone between the 15th and 17th parallels. As a result, FAO joined forces with WFP and CILSS to help establish the annual forecast for agricultural production before the harvest and to assess the impact of locust infestation on crops, livestock and household vulnerability. A FEWS-NET representative joined the team and actively participated in the field visit and subsequent analysis of the data gathered.

The mission, accompanied by an EU observer, worked in collaboration with Mali's government institutions responsible for monitoring the agricultural season, namely:

- the CPS (Planning and Statistics Group)
- the DNAMR (National Department for Rural Support)
- the DNSI (National Department for Statistics and IT)
- the SAP (Early Warning System Project)
- the (Food Security Commission)
- the DNM (National Department for Meteorology)

At the time of the mission, the CPS was putting the finishing touches to the analysis of a detailed agricultural survey of around 12 000 households countrywide. The sample was about six times larger than the one employed for the usual annual survey and so it was expected that the information would be much



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more precise than that obtained in recent years. However, at the time of writing of this report (the beginning of November), the survey conclusions were not yet available and the government of Mali had not published its official estimates for agricultural production in 2004-2005. As a result, the mission established the estimates given in this report on the basis of its own survey of crop losses and other reports published by the above-mentioned government bodies. Three teams went into the field to interview rural households, local authorities, technicians involved in the field of agriculture and food security, and NGOs. These teams covered the seriously infested regions of Mopti, Ségou and Koulikoro.

The findings of the mission are as follows:

The locust threat, first reported in June in the northern part of the country, was evident in July and, by August and September most of the regions above the 14th parallel had been affected by infestations of desert locusts.

The largest crop losses due to locust infestation affected the production of non-rainfed millet (37 000 tonnes), cowpeas (3 000 tonnes) and sorghum (9 000 tonnes). Although these losses were spectacular and extensive at the local level in a good number of the 78 *communes* affected, national cereal production is largely guaranteed by the zones situated further south of the regions affected and Sikasso region.

Given the relatively limited area and importance of the agricultural zones infested by locusts, total cereal production for 2004-2005, which should reach 2 933 000 tonnes, is up by 11 percent compared with the averages for 1999-2000 and 2003-2004. This figure is equal to 86 percent of the exceptional volume of production recorded last year.

Market supplies have been satisfactory throughout this year following excellent harvests in the 2003/04 season. Until September, cereal prices were significantly down compared with the previous season. However, in the zones affected by locust invasion, prices have begun to increase since July (the critical lean period) despite a relatively good level of supplies to markets in these areas.

For the 2004/05 season, cereal supplies have been assessed at 2 934 000 tonnes as against the 2 951 700 tonnes required and so 17 700 tonnes will have to be imported. In practice, this indicates a balanced situation for the country if exports are maintained. On average, Mali imports nearly 100 000 tonnes of cereals according to government statistics but it exports the same amount. The risk of a cereals shortage this year is therefore very low.

The markets should be well supplied. Prices will be higher than in 2004 when they were particularly low following record harvests in the 2003 season, but the food situation countrywide should be satisfactory.

Nevertheless, in the zones infested by desert locusts, the millet and cowpea crops have been practically destroyed. The price of cereals will clearly rise in these areas and the local populations will have few resources to pay for them. Their food situation will therefore be precarious. Some form of assistance should be planned urgently to address a food crisis in these regions.

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SPECIAL REPORT

FAOWFP CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT MISSION TO NIGER

21 December 2004

Highlights

- Agricultural production in 2004 has been severely affected by locust infestations and drought in the northern regions of Niger causing a total loss of cereal production estimated at an average of 26 percent in the affected regions, and 7 percent at the national level, taking account of the weight of these regions for total cereal production. Production losses have been caused for two-thirds by drought and one-third by desert locusts.
- Net cereal production for 2004/2005 has been estimated at about 2 651 571 tonnes of millet, sorghum, maize, rice and fonio. The provisional cereal deficit for 2004/05, having taken into account estimated commercial imports, is 278 350 tonnes, or about nine percent of national needs, estimated at 3 156 660 tonnes. This deficit will have to be covered by the government and its development partners. Although the deficit does not seem enormous at the national level, this should not obscure the fact that more than 3 million people in some 3 000 villages, located mainly in the agri-pastoral zone in the centre and north of the country, are now extremely vulnerable to food insecurity.
- These vulnerable populations have reacted quickly by adopting some strategies that could prejudice both social harmony and medium and long-term development. Amongst others, these strategies include: early transhumance with the risk that livestock will invade crop areas before they have been harvested; destocking of animals, selling them off at poor prices; and excessive fuel wood extraction as an alternative source of revenue but leading to an acceleration of desertification.
- There is a need for an urgent and targeted supply of food, agricultural inputs and fodder in order to enable affected households to begin the new crop season in good conditions beginning in April 2005.
- The mission recommends that desert locust control should be carried out effectively not only in Niger but also at the regional level in order to prevent outbreaks of swarms from the start of the 2005 crop year. Control should probably continue beyond the next season, as the locust problem seems to have taken a firm hold.

1. OVERVIEW

In 2004 Niger suffered severe locust infestation which, in addition to variable weather and irregular rainfall, has noticeably affected the harvests in some regions of the country. A joint FAOWFP/CILSS mission visited the country from 4 to 18 October 2004: to make an estimate of this year's harvests and the damage caused by the desert locust to crops and pastures; to assess the resulting food situation overall; and to predict possible food requirements for 2004/2005, including imports and food aid provided by the international community.

From 2 to 4 October the experts and representatives of FAO, WFP, CILSS-AGRHYMET and FEWS-NET, together with the ministry officials, adopted the mission's programme of work and held some preliminary information sessions with the national departments involved in various ways with the question of food security: the DPV (plant protection department), the DCV (subsistence food crops department), the national Met Office, the SAP (early warning system), the CCA (food emergency unit), and the SIM (information systems on livestock and agricultural markets).

The mission enjoyed the support of all the central and regional departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water as well as the support of the other services and ministries which were called upon. Fruitful discussions were also held with some agencies of the United Nations (FAO and UNDP), donors (in particular USAID and the World Bank), and some NGOs and cereal importers. The mission divided into three groups and was able to cover all the regions suffering from desert locust infestation.



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At each stage in the field, the teams met with the local authorities and held working sessions with regional and local agriculture and livestock departments to examine the progress of the 2004 crop season, focusing attention on the desert locust but also looking at rainfall since these are the two most important factors to influence agricultural yields and production and fodder supplies. The teams went into the field to assess the state of crops and pastures, talk to farmers and breeders about production conditions, expected yields, and their strategies in the face of damage caused by the desert locust, drought or other pests dangerous to crops. The teams also visited the markets to observe the price movements of the main food products, in particular, cereal and livestock prices.

The field visits were followed by meetings with Niger's interested central services and its development partners. In particular, the mission held working sessions with officials from the DSCN (statistics and national accounts department), the DCV (subsistence food crops department, agricultural statistics section), the DPV (plant protection department, locust control coordination section), the SAP (early warning system), the CCA (food emergency unit), the Ministry for Animal Resources, CILSS-AGRHYMET, the European Union, French Cooperation, USAID, and UNDP.

The documentation submitted to the mission by the central services were used to complete the information gathered in the field and during meetings with the various officials. Amongst others, they examined the Bulletin issued at ten-day intervals on the general crop situation by the agricultural statistics department, the summary of the food situation in vulnerable areas issued by the CCA, and the bulletin issued by SIM (information system on agricultural markets).

The preliminary results of the mission were confirmed on 13 October 2004 at a round-up meeting attended by officials from the central services mentioned above and by Niger's development partners. These results were then edited and presented to the Ministry for Agricultural Development on 18 October in the presence of representatives from CILSS, FEWS-NET, FAO, and WFP.

The analysis of the information collected by the mission shows that the factors influencing the 2004 crop year in Niger are basically of two kinds:

- Insufficient rainfall which is particularly affecting the agri-pastoral and northern areas of the country. The first rains were recorded in several places in the month of April when planting could begin in some 1 500 villages compared with 950 in the same period in 2003. However, when planting was well under way, in May the rains stopped, according to zone, for a period of three to six weeks, with very harmful effects for the seeds in the northern zones of the departments of Mayah, Dakoro, Aguié (Maradi region), Tanout and Gouré (Zinder region), Maïné Soroa, Diffa and N'Guigmi (Diffa region), Tahoua, and Illéïa (Tahoua region). This meant that replanting was necessary as soon as the rains began again in July. In some zones in the regions of Dosso, Maradi and Zinder, millet and sorghum developed satisfactorily but water stress on crops and pastures continued in several places, especially those where the rain had stopped earlier towards end August/beginning September.
- The phytosanitary situation has been dominated by locust infestations. The infiltration of swarms of desert locusts in the crop zone was observed beginning in August, followed by hatching of hoppers on a massive scale in Tamesna and the north-east of the Tansout district. In September, some swarms were reported to be moving in the Irhazer, Air and Tamesna as well as in the north of the regions of Tahoua, Tillabéri, and Zinder. Hopper bands were also seen in the regions of Tahoua and Maradi. The mission was able to see the vast stretches of crops and pastures devastated by the desert locusts as they moved across the region. Towards the end of October, some 195 000 infested hectares had been treated. Nevertheless, the available means at the time (three aeroplanes, one of which chartered by FAO) did not seem sufficient to address the size of the problem. Other pests also damaged crops here and there. In particular, these were grasshoppers and other insects and grain-eating birds.

This situation led to a large fall in levels of crop yields for millet and sorghum in all the regions affected by the desert locust and drought. Using rapid methods of enquiry at meetings with producers, in addition to information supplied by departmental agricultural services, the mission was able to estimate the production losses in relation to 2003 for millet: from 20 to 47 percent in the Tillabéri region, from 8 to 30 percent in Tahoua and were about 15 percent in Maradi/Zinder. As regards sorghum, the corresponding levels were 25 percent, 12-38 percent, and 26-30 percent.

It proved difficult to establish exactly the part of the damage that could be attributed specifically to locusts. Nevertheless the mission estimated that locust infestation was responsible for a third of all losses and the rest could be attributed to other factors, in particular drought.

It should be noted that some zones which were not affected by locusts enjoyed fairly good rainfall and these areas recorded good harvests in 2004. Amongst others, these areas were the departments of Dosso, Zinder (south), Maradi (south) and Kollo in the Tillabéri region.

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