SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT

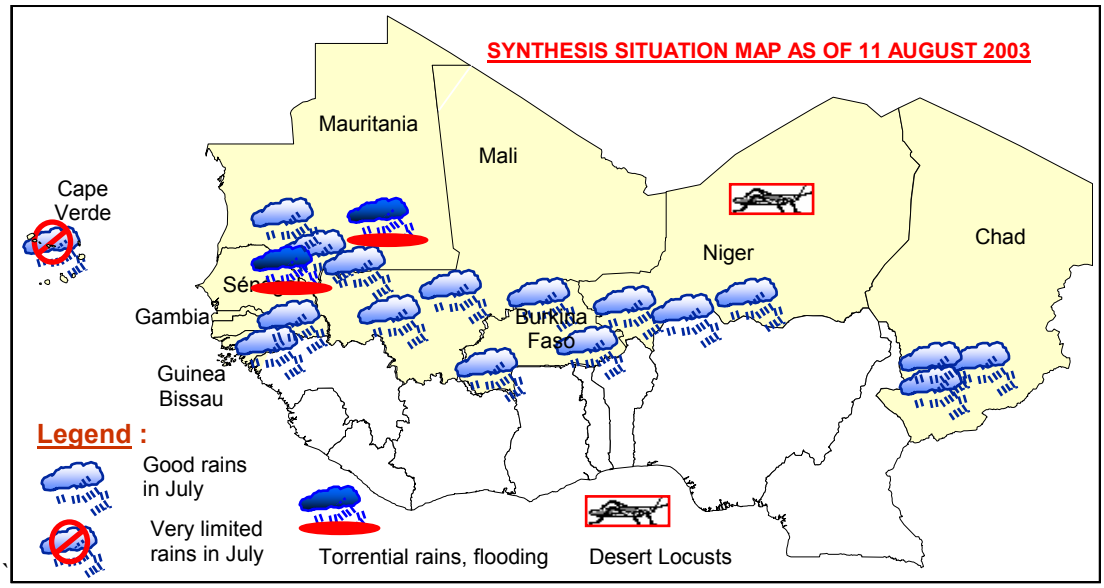
Report No.3, 14 August 2003

MIXED EARLY CROP PROSPECTS IN THE SAHEL

SUMMARY

Early crop prospects are mixed. Following generally widespread rains in July over most producing areas of **Burkina Faso**, **Chad**, **the Gambia**, **Mali** and **Niger**, crops are developing satisfactorily and prospects are generally favourable. In **Mauritania**, improved rains after mid-July permitted plantings in most producing zones. By contrast, precipitation remained limited over **Senegal** until early August, when heavy rains and floods on 8 and 9 August caused considerable casualties in several localities of central and northern Senegal and southern Mauritania. In **Cape Verde**, prospects for the maize crop, normally planted from July, are not favourable due to delayed onset of rains. In **Guinea Bissau**, crop prospects are unfavourable due to a large-scale outbreak of grasshoppers in northern and eastern regions.

Grasshoppers are also reported in Chad, the Gambia, Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Senegal. Grain-eating birds are reported in Mali, while Desert Locusts are reported on a limited scale in Niger. Small-scale breeding of Desert Locust is expected with the onset of the summer rains in southern Mauritania, northern Mali, Niger and Chad.



SITUATION BY COUNTRY

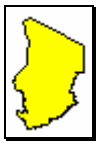
BURKINA FASO

Widespread rains in July permitted satisfactory crop development. Following first significant rains in early April in the south and south-west, precipitation progressed northwards over the entire country in May and remained generally widespread and abundant since then. Although rains decreased somewhat in mid June and late July, crops are growing satisfactorily. They are generally in the leafing stage in the soudanian zone and tillering in the north and the sahelian zone.

Pastures are regenerating countrywide, improving livestock condition. No pest activity has been reported.

CAPE VERDE

The start of the rainy season is delayed. The weather remained mostly dry until late July on most islands. This situation may seriously affect crop production as planting of maize normally starts in July. Land preparation and dry plantings are underway.



CHAD

Widespread and above normal rains so far are benefiting crop development. Following first rains in mid-April in the Sudanian zone, precipitation progressed northwards to the Sahelian zone in June and remained generally widespread and abundant since then. Crops are developing satisfactorily. Millet and sorghum crops are tillering in the Sahelian zone and are growing satisfactorily in the Sudanian zone. Soil moisture reserves are adequate.

Pastures are regenerating countrywide. Grasshopper and army worm attacks are reported. Although small-scale breeding of Desert Locusts is expected to occur in the north, their number should remain below threatening levels.

THE GAMBIA

Widespread rains in July benefited crop development. Following first rains in early June which permitted land preparation and first plantings, precipitation covered the entire country during the third dekad and remained generally widespread and regular in July. Reflecting these good rains, coarse grains and upland rice crops are developing satisfactorily.

Grasshopper infestations are reported in parts.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Crop prospects are unfavourable due to large scale grasshopper infestations. Rains were generally well distributed and regular in July. However, crop prospects have been compromised by large-scale grasshopper infestations on sorghum, maize and millet crops in Gabu, Bafata and Oio regions. Over 50 percent of cereal production across the north is officially estimated to be at risk. In early August, the government launched an appeal for international assistance to control the infestation and mitigate damage on crops.

MALI

Crops are generally developing satisfactorily reflecting widespread and regular rains. Following first rains in the extreme south in April, precipitation progressed northwards in May and remained generally widespread and regular since then. Cumulative rainfall as of late July was above average in most meteorological stations. Crops are developing satisfactorily in all agricultural zones. Millet and sorghum crops are in the tillering/leafing stages. Irrigated rice is now being transplanted. Soil moisture is adequate.

Pastures are generally good. Grasshopper attacks were reported in late July in the Sahelian zone and in Kati area but there is no significant damage to crops. Grain eating birds are reported on about 205 hectares of crops in the Office du Niger zone. Army worm attacks are also reported in the Office du Niger and treatments have been undertaken. Low numbers of Desert Locusts are likely to be present in the Adrar des Iforas, Tilemsi Valley, Timetrine and, perhaps, Tamesna. Small scale breeding is probably in progress in those areas that recently received rainfall.

MAURITANIA

Increased rains from mid-July permitted plantings in most agricultural zones. Following first rains in June in Brakna, Gorgol, Hodh El Chargui and Guidimakha, precipitation decreased in early July but improved significantly from mid-July. Good rains had been received by the end of the month in most of southern Mauritania. As a result, plantings are well underway in most agricultural zones. However, heavy rains and floods in the south-east on 8 and 9 August caused considerable casualties in several localities.

Pastures are regenerating, improving livestock condition. Grasshopper infestations are reported in the south. Low numbers of Desert Locust adults are likely to be present in the two Hodhs, Tagant, Brakna, Assaba, Trarza and southern Adrar where small-scale breeding may occur in areas of recent rainfall.

NIGER

Widespread rains in July permitted plantings to be completed. Rains increased progressively towards northern agricultural zones in July. Although precipitation decreased somewhat in a few locations in the south during the last dekad, rainfall was generally widespread and cumulative rainfall as of late July was above last year's level in most meteorological stations. Almost all the villages have completed planting. Millet and sorghum are flowering in Dosso and Zinder regions and are developing satisfactorily elsewhere. Soil moisture is adequate.

Pastures are regenerating. Infestations of grasshoppers, army worms and floral insects are reported in several areas. Desert Locust numbers are forecast to gradually increase in Tamesna and Aïr.

SENEGAL

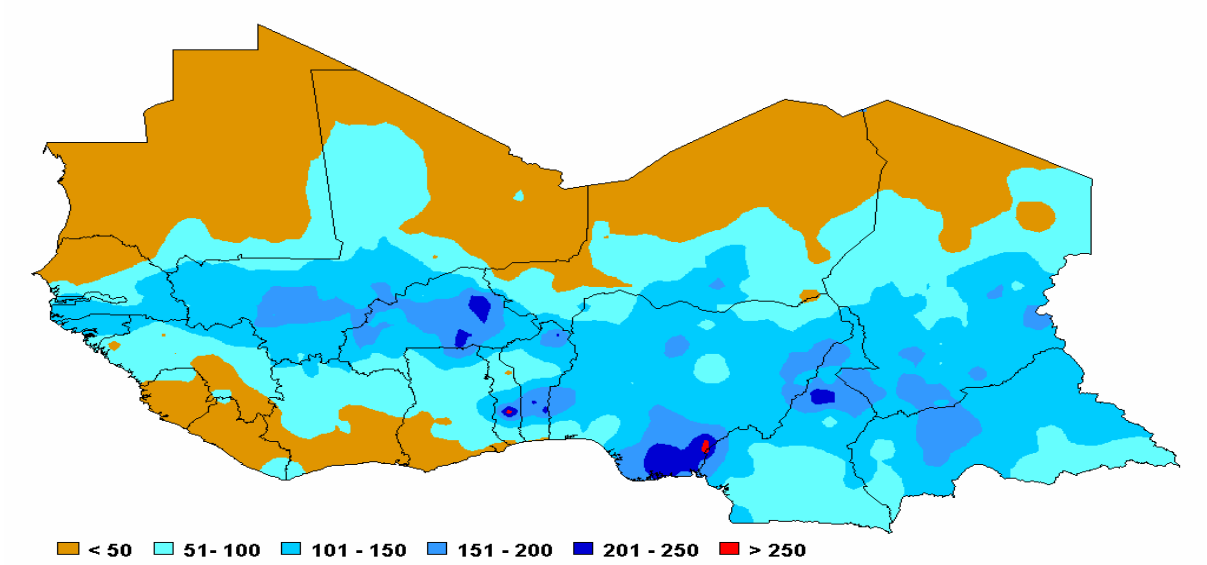
Early crop prospects are uncertain reflecting late and limited rains in the centre and the north until late July. Following early rains in the extreme south-east in May, precipitation progressed slowly to the centre. As of mid-July, estimated cumulative rainfall totalled 40 to 60 percent of normal in much of Senegal's groundnut basin and mostly dry conditions still prevailed in the north. Although western and eastern parts have received beneficial rainfall during the past few weeks, the weather remained generally dry in the centre and the north until early august, when heavy rains and floods on 9 August caused considerable casualties in several localities.

Large-scale grasshopper infestations are reported in the south and the centre. Treatments have been undertaken.

TOTAL RAINFALL AND PLANTING OPPORTUNITY MAPS

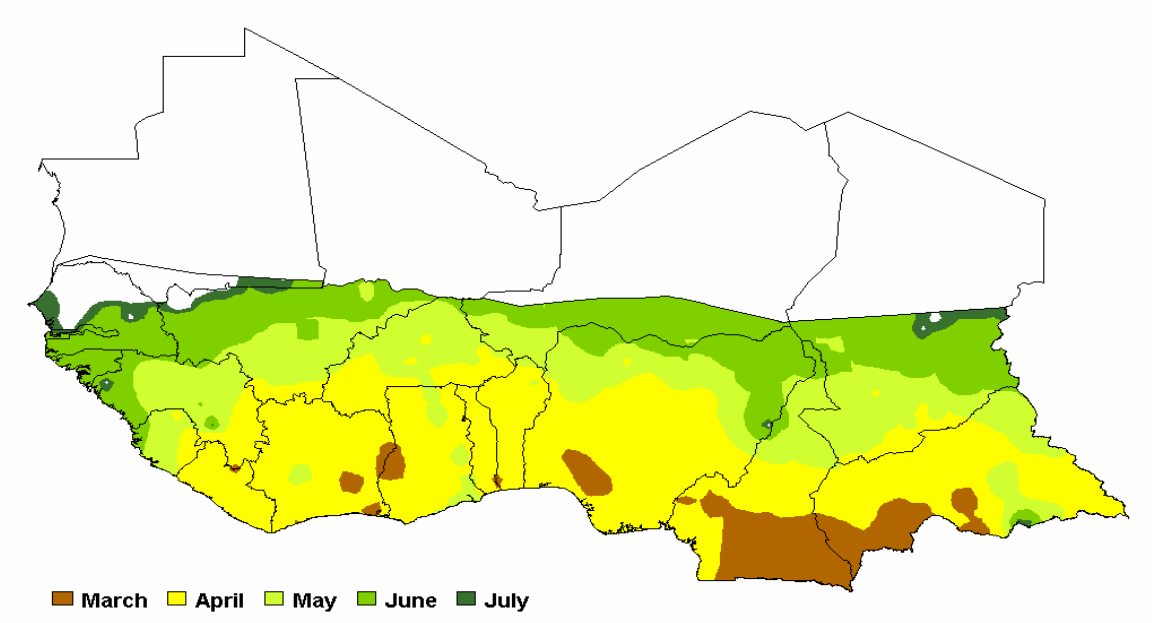
The first map indicates the total rainfall amount from 1st to 20th July. Data is extracted from FAO field reports and the RainFall Estimate (RFE) Satellite Imagery as produced by NOAA/USGS/FEWS/USAID project. The RFE images are obtained by interpolating various parameters recorded on the ground and obtained through remote sensing measurements such as: rainfall, relative humidity, wind speed, elevation, cold cloud temperatures.

WEST AFRICA - Cropping Season 2003
Total rainfall (mm) from 1st to 20th July



The map below shows the estimated planting time (opportunity) as defined by the dekad (10-day) satisfying the following requisites: 25 mm of rainfall during the first dekad and a total rainfall of at least 20 mm during the two next dekads. Data used for this analysis are from FAO field reports and RFE imagery.

WEST AFRICA - Cropping Season 2003
Planting opportunities from 11 March to 10 July



Data source: NOAA, FAO - Prepared by: FAO/SDRN, Agrometeorology Group

*This is the **third GIEWS report on the 2003 season on weather and crop conditions in the Sahelian countries of western Africa**. Geographical coverage of these reports includes the nine CILSS (Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) member states: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. Reports are issued each month from June to November. The final report for 2003 with the first production estimates will be issued in late-November*

*These reports are prepared with data from, and in close collaboration with, FAO Representatives, the Agro-Meteorology Group and the Environmental Monitoring Group (SDRN), the Emergency Centre for Locust Operations (ECLO), the Emergency Operations Service (TCEO), the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's). In this report, satellite imagery provided by FAO/ARTEMIS, field data on rainfall, FAO agro-meteorological crop monitoring field reports and information provided by FAO Representatives up to **31 July** have been utilized. The satellite images of the first dekad of June has also been utilized for final updating.*

*In these reports, reference will be made to four different **eco-climatic zones** based on the average annual precipitation and agricultural features, i.e. Sahelian zone, Sudano-Sahelian zone, Sudanian zone and Guinean zone:*

***Sahelian zone**: Where average annual precipitation ranges between 250 and 500 mm. This zone is at the limit of perennial vegetation. In parts where precipitation is less than 350 mm, only pastures and occasional short-cycle drought-resistant cereal crops are grown; all cropping in this zone is subject to high risk.*

***Sudano-Sahelian zone**: Where average annual precipitation ranges from 500 to 900 mm. In those parts of this zone where precipitation is less than 700 mm, mostly crops with a short growing cycle of 90 days are generally cultivated predominantly sorghum and millet.*

***Sudanian zone**: Where average annual precipitation ranges from 900 to 1 100 mm. In this zone, most cereal crops have a growing cycle of 120 days or more. Most cereals, notably maize, root and cash crops are grown in this zone.*

***Guinean zone**: Where average annual precipitation exceeds 1 100 mm. Guinea-Bissau and a small area of southern Burkina Faso belong to this zone, more suited to root crop cultivation.*

*Reference will also be made to the **Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)**, also known by its trace on the earth's surface, called the **Intertropical Front**. The ITCZ is a quasi-permanent zone between two air masses separating the northern and southern hemisphere trade winds. The ITCZ moves north and south of the equator and usually reaches its most northerly position in July. Its position defines the northern limits of possible precipitation in the Sahel; rain-bearing clouds are generally situated 150-200 km south of the Intertropical Front.*

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