SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT

Report No.1, 13 June 2003

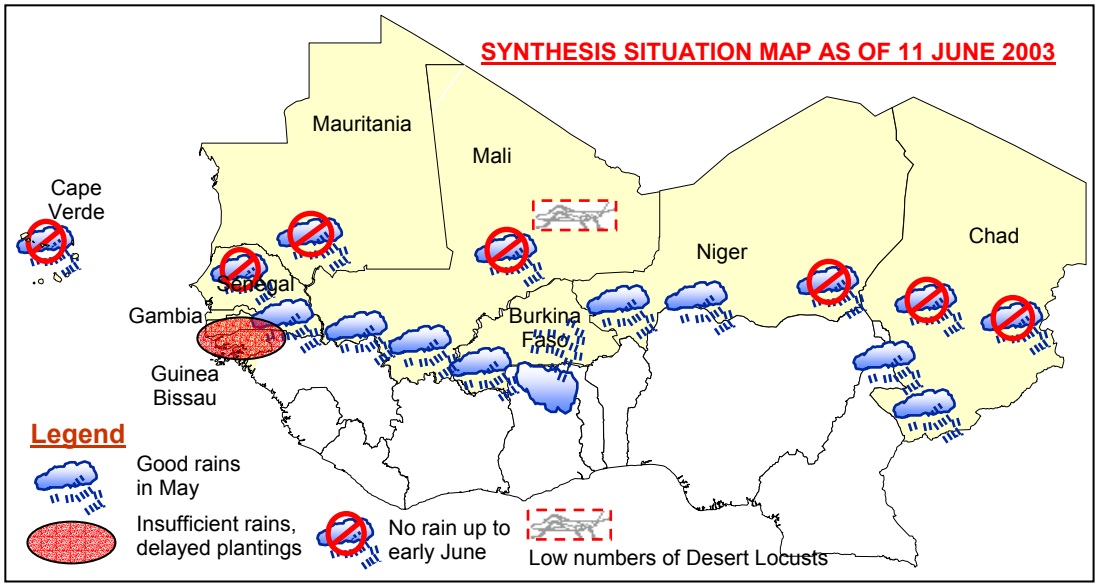
THE RAINY SEASON HAS STARTED GENERALLY ON TIME IN THE CENTRE AND EAST OF THE SAHEL

SUMMARY

The rainy season started in late April or May in southern **Burkina Faso**, **Chad, Mali, Niger** and the extreme south-east of **Senegal.** Seasonably dry conditions prevail in the rest of Senegal, **Cape Verde**, **The Gambia** and **Mauritania**. This corresponds to the normal pattern in the Sahel, except for **Guinea Bissau,** where satellite imagery indicates a delay in the onset of the rains, like last year. This situation may affect crop production as the growing season in this country usually starts in late April/early May.

Land preparation and planting are in progress following the onset of the rains. Seed availability problems are likely in countries of western Sahel (Cape-Verde, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal), where crop production was severely affected by drought last year.

The pest situation is calm, although a few Desert Locusts were reported in early May near Gao in Mali.



SITUATION BY COUNTRY

BURKINA FASO

The rainy season has started on time. The first significant rains were registered in early April in the south and south-west. They progressed northwards in May and covered almost the entire country during the last dekad. Precipitation was generally above average and cumulative rainfall as of late June was above average in most meteorological stations. Sowing of millet and sorghum is underway in the south, west and south-west. Elsewhere, land preparation is underway.

No pest activity is reported. Seed availability is generally adequate following the 2002 record harvest and seed distribution to returnees and refugees from Côte d'Ivoire under an FAO Emergency Agricultural Assistance Project.

CAPE VERDE

Seasonably dry conditions prevail. Planting of maize normally starts in July with the onset of the rains on the main islands. Seed shortages are likely following the 2002 poor harvest.

CHAD

The cropping season has started on time in the Sudanian zone. Satellite imagery indicates that the rainy season started in late May in the south, although significant rains were registered in mid-April in the extreme south. Planting of coarse grains is underway in the south, in the Sudanian zone. Land preparation is about to start in the Sahelian zone.

Seed availibility should be adequate following the 2002 average harvest.

THE GAMBIA

Seasonably dry conditions prevail. The rains have not yet started and farmers are currently preparing their fields. Planting is expected to start in the weeks ahead with the onset of the rains.

Following the 2002 poor harvest, seed shortages are likely.

GUINEA-BISSAU

The start of the rainy season is delayed. Satellite imagery indicates that the weather remained mostly dry until early June. This situation may affect crop production as the growing season usually starts in late April/early May.

The availability of seeds may be limited in the chronically food deficit areas along the northern border with Senegal.

MALI

The growing season has started in the south. The first significant rains were registered in the extreme south in April. They progressed northwards and remained generally above normal during the two last dekads of May, allowing first planting of millet and sorghum to start in the south.

Seed availability is adequate following the 2002 average harvest. As recommanded by the National Early Warning System, subsidized sales of 8 000 tonnes of animal feed by the Government helped to arrest the deterioration in livestock condition caused by poor pastures. The pest situation is calm although a few adult Desert Locusts were reported near Gao and groups of grain-eating birds were reported in a few places during the last dekad of May.

MAURITANIA

Seasonably dry conditions prevail. Planting will start following the onset of rains in June/July. Dry plantings may be underway in the south-east.

Seed shortages are expected following the 2002 poor harvest and the current critical food situation in the country. No significant pest activity has been reported.

NIGER

The growing season has started in the south. Following first rains in the extreme south-west in early April, the weather remained mostly dry until the third dekad of May, when rains progressed northwards in the south-west, allowing land preparation and first plantings to start. It is estimated that about 9 percent of the villages had finished their plantings as of 20 May, compared to only 2 percent last year and 28 percent in 2001.

Seed availability is generally adequate following the 2002 record harvest. No significant pest activity has been reported. Subsidized sales of 12 000 tonnes of cereals and 2 000 tonnes of animal feeds helped improved access to food for poor households as well as livestock condition affected by limited availability of pastures.

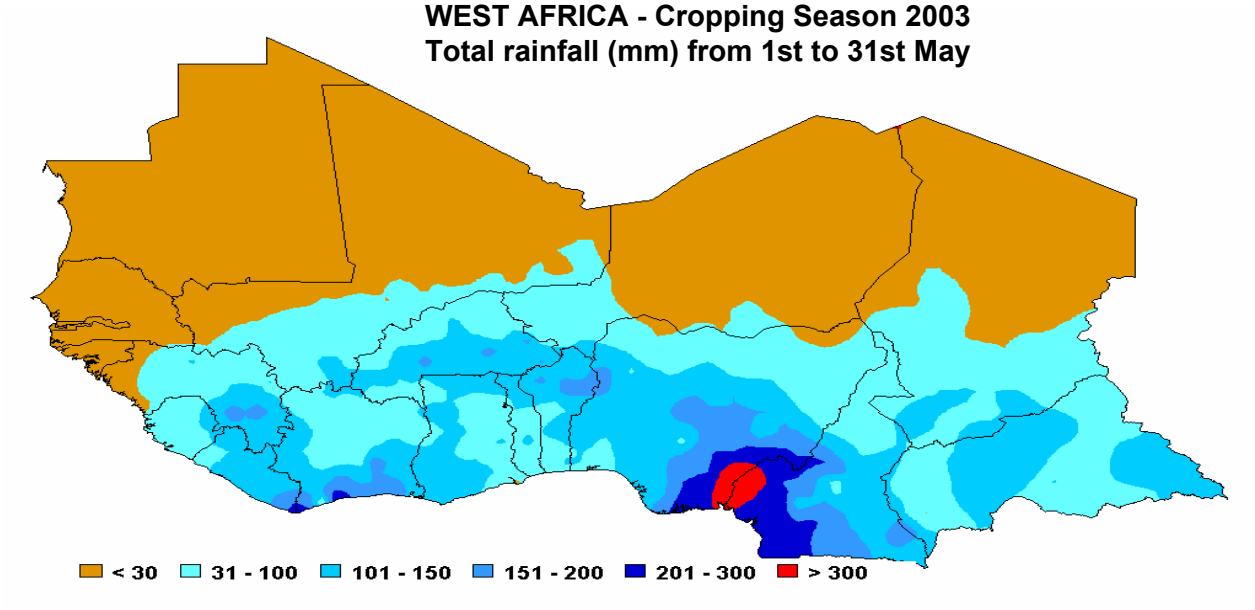
SENEGAL

Rains have started in the south-east. Early but limited rains were registered in the extreme south-east in May allowing land preparation and first plantings to start. Elsewhere seasonably dry conditions prevail.

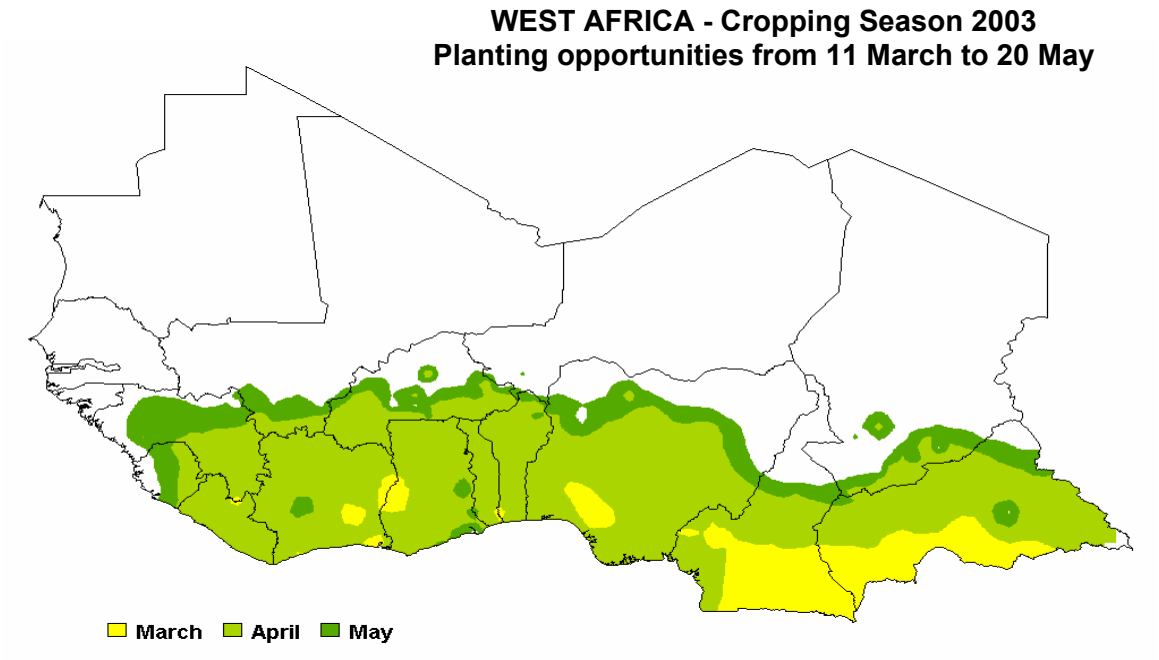
Seed shortages have been reported in several areas, following the 2002 reduced harvest.

TOTAL RAINFALL AND PLANTING OPPORTUNITY MAPS

The first map indicates the total rainfall amount from 1st to 31st May. 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.



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



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

*This is the **first 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 May** 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.*

Please note that this report is available on the **Internet World Wide Web** at the following address: HTTP://WWW.FAO.ORG/GIEWS/ then click on English and Sahel Reports.

The report can also be received automatically by **E-mail** as soon as it is published, subscribing to the ***GIEWS/Sahel report ListServ***. To do so, please send an E-mail to the FAO-Mail-Server at the following address: mailserv@mailserv.fao.org, leaving the subject blank, with the following message:

subscribe GIEWSSahel-L

To receive the report in French, do the same with the message:

subscribe SMIARSahel-L

To be deleted from the list, send the message:

unsubscribe GIEWSSahel-L (or *unsubscribe SMIARSahel-L*)

This report is prepared under the responsibility of FAO/GIEWS with information from official and unofficial sources and is for official use only. Since conditions may change rapidly, for further information, please contact
Henri Josserand, Chief, Global Information and Early Warning Service, FAO Headquarters- Rome
Fax No.: 0039-06-5705-4495, E-Mail address: GIEWS1@FAO.ORG
Web site : HTTP://WWW.FAO.ORG/GIEWS/