SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT

Report No. 1, 9 June 2004

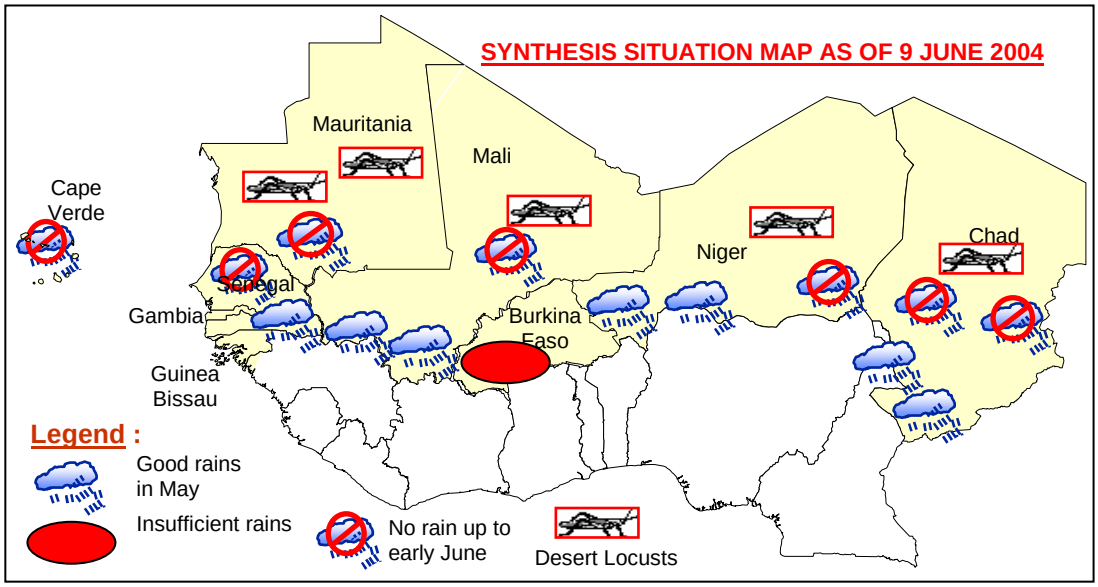
THE RAINY SEASON HAS STARTED AGAINST A BACKDROP OF WORRYING DESERT LOCUST SITUATION

SUMMARY

The rainy season has started following its normal pattern in the Sahel. Seasonal rains commenced 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, Mauritania** and most of **Guinea Bissau**.

Land preparation and planting are in progress following the onset of the rains. Seed availability should be adequate following the 2003 good harvest, except in Guinea Bissau, where the availability of seeds may be limited in the chronically food deficit areas along the northern border with Senegal.

Desert locusts are posing a serious threat to agricultural production this year across the Sahel. The situation is already very serious in Mauritania, where control operations are hampered by lack of resources. Despite intensive control activities in northern Africa, which is facing widespread infestations, it is feared that swarms could move southwards to the Sahelian countries as the cropping season sets, and damage crops in Mali, Niger, Chad and Senegal, in addition to Mauritania. In spite of assistance to several countries affected in northern and western Africa, by FAO and several donors, control operations continue to be hampered by insufficient resources.



SITUATION BY COUNTRY

BURKINA FASO

The growing season has started but limited rains fell in May. Following the first significant rains in mid April in the south and south-west, precipitation progressed northwards in May, but remained generally limited. Land preparation and sowing are underway.

No pest activity is reported. Seed availability is generally adequate following the 2003 record harvest.

CAPE VERDE

Seasonably dry conditions prevail. Planting of maize normally starts in July with the onset of the rains on the main islands. Seed availability should be adequate following the 2003 good 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.

The Desert locust situation should be closely monitored this year. Although the situation remains calm so far, adult groups and swarms are likely to arrive from Northwest Africa in summer breading areas in Tibesti, Kanem, Batha, Biltine and the northeast.

Overall seed availability should be adequate following the 2003 good harvest. In an effort to support agricultural production and food security among the Sudanese refugees and host communities in eastern Chad, a UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal launched in early April included an agricultural component to provide refugees and host communities with agricultural and livestock input including cereal and vegetable seeds.

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.

Seed availability is expected to be adequate following the 2003 record harvest.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Availability of seeds may be limited. Satellite imagery indicates that the weather remained mostly dry until early June, when first rains fell in the east.

Following large scale grasshopper infestations and floods in 2003, cereal production decreased significantly in several regions, where the availability of seeds may be limited. The chronically food deficit areas along the northern border with Senegal are particularly concerned.

MALI

The desert locust situation should be closely monitored this year. Isolated adults are already reported in several locations in the north, and there is a risk of substantial number of adult groups and swarms moving to important cereal producing areas in the centre and the south.

Following first scattered rains in the extreme south in late April, substantial rains were registered in May in the south. Land preparation is underway and first planting has started. They will progress northwards following the onset of the rains. Seed availability is adequate following the 2003 good harvest.

MAURITANIA

The Locust situation is very serious. Swarms have started to form in the north and the centre, where considerable damage to crops is reported in oases and pastures. From about mid-June onwards, a substantial number of adult groups and swarms from Northwest Africa are expected to move to the important cereal producing south. Control operations continue to be hampered by lack of resources. According to official estimates, US$6 million are needed to treat about 500 000 hectares infested

Seasonably dry conditions prevail, although some scattered rains may have been received locally in the south-east. Plantings of coarse grains will start following the onset of regular rains, which normally begin in July.

NIGER

The Locust situation should be closely monitored. Immature adults, swarms and adult groups were reported in several locations in the north. More groups and swarms are expected to form in Niger or arrive from Northwest Africa. The important cereal producing areas in the south may be affected.

The first rains were registered in the extreme south late April where they allowed land preparation to start. Substantial rains covered most of the producing areas in late May. Land preparation is underway. Plantings are progressing northwards following the onset of regular rains. About 46 percent of the villages have planted as of late May, which is higher than at the same time last year.

SENEGAL

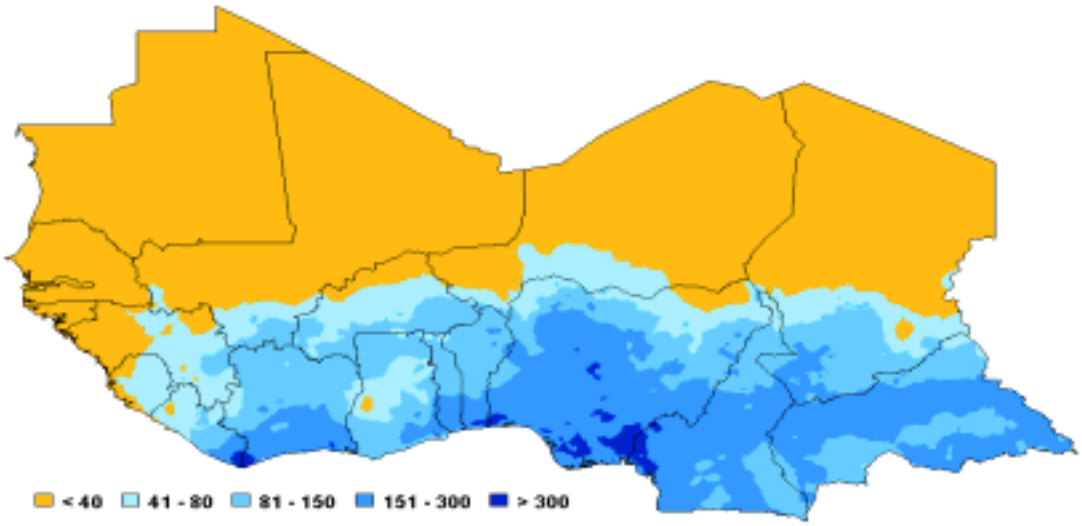
Seasonably dry conditions prevail in most parts. Satellite imagery indicates that limited rains fell in the extreme south-east in late May, but seasonably dry conditions still prevail in most parts. Rains are expected to start and progress towards the centre and the north in June. Seed availability should be adequate following the 2003 bumper crop.

The Desert locust situation needs to be closely monitored this year. Although the situation remains calm so far, there is a risk of adults groups and swarms infesting the north from northern Africa.

TOTAL RAINFALL AND PLANTING OPPORTUNITY MAPS

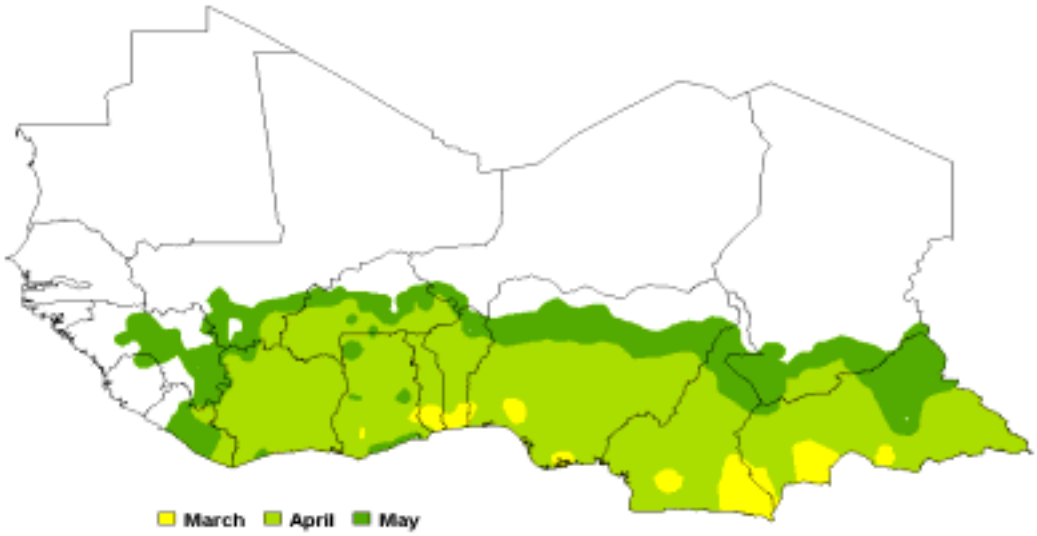
The first map indicates the total rainfall amount from 1st to 31st May. Data is extracted from FAO field reports and the Rainfall Estimate (RFE) Satellite Imagery as produced by NOAA/USGS/FEWS/USAID project. The RFE images are obtained by interpolating various parameters recorded on the ground and obtained through remote sensing measurements such as: rainfall, relative humidity, wind speed, elevation, cold cloud temperatures.

WEST AFRICA - Cropping Season 2004
Total rainfall (mm) from 1st to 31st May



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.

WEST AFRICA - Cropping Season 2004
Planting opportunities from 11 March to 20 May



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

*This is the **first GIEWS report of the 2004 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 2004 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.*

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