SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT

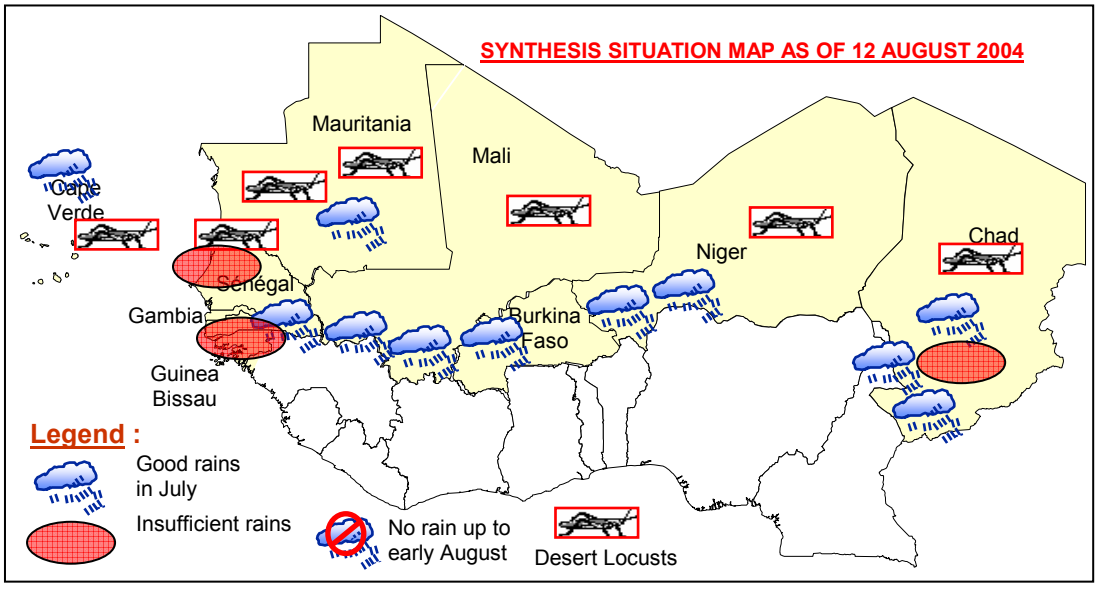
Report No. 3, 12 August 2004

IMPROVED RAINS BENEFITED CROP AND PASTURE DEVELOPMENT IN JULY BUT HARVEST PROSPECTS HAVE DETERIORATED AS DESERT LOCUSTS SPREAD ACROSS THE SAHEL.

SUMMARY

Rains were generally regular and widespread over the main producing zones of the Sahel in July. Precipitation remained generally widespread over most producing areas of **Mali**, **Burkina Faso**, **Niger** and **Mauritania**. In **Chad**, rainfall improved significantly in the Sahelian zone but remained generally limited in the south. In Niger, where crops have been stressed in some areas by prolonged dry spells and the erratic start of the rainy season, rains increased significantly during the last dekad of July and in early August, improving crops conditions. **Cape Verde** registered its first significant rains in mid-July in Santiago, Fogo and Brava islands. Precipitation remained limited over parts of **Senegal**, The **Gambia** and **Guinea-Bissau** in July, delaying planting and transplanting in some regions, but satellite imagery for the first week of August indicates that rains were on the increase. These overall favorable conditions permitted satisfactory crop development in main producing zones but more rains are needed in Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau to prevent water stress.

The Desert Locust situation continues to deteriorate, posing a serious threat to agricultural production across the Sahel. Large locust swarms that escaped massive control operations in northwest Africa have invaded important agricultural areas in Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Niger and Cape Verde. They spread to Chad recently and there is a risk that they could reach northern Burkina Faso, raising serious concerns over the food supply outlook in the Sahel. The number of swarms is expected to increase in the coming weeks across the region. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in the Sahel and a locust plague could have devastating effects not only on food production, but also on agricultural exports and rural incomes. Several countries have appealed for international assistance, which is urgently needed to prevent a potentially disastrous food security situation and a possible reversal of the economic gains made in recent years.



SITUATION BY COUNTRY

BURKINA FASO

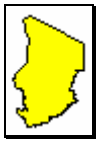
Growing conditions improved in July following irregular rains in May and June. Following the first significant rains in south and south-west in mid-April, precipitation progressed northwards but was erratic in most regions until early July when rains increased significantly over the entire country. With this improvement, millet and sorghum crops, which are generally tillering/leafing, are developing satisfactorily. However, reflecting the erratic start of the rainy season, stages of development vary greatly among regions, and crops are still emerging in several localities of the Sahelian, northern, northwestern, centre and central plateau regions.

No pest activity is reported. The desert Locust situation remains calm so far, but adult groups and swarms may reach the country from Northwest Africa through Niger and Mali. The situation needs to be closely monitored.

CAPE VERDE

Significant rains in mid-July permitted wet planting in most agricultural islands. Following scattered and limited rains in early July, the rainy season really started during the second dekad of July in Fogo, Brava and Santiago islands. Significant rains were registered during the last dekad of July on most agricultural islands. Wet plantings of maize have been underway since mid-July, while dry plantings undertaken earlier are emerging in the humid zones of Santiago and Fogo islands.

An invasion of Desert Locusts in coastal areas of Boa Vista, Santiago, Maio and Fogo islands in early July has been brought under control, following the treatment of infested areas. However, a new invasion has been reported in early August on Boa Vista, Santiago, and Fogo islands, for which urgent international assistance is needed.



CHAD

First swarms have arrived in the country. The first Desert Locust swarms have reportedly arrived in the country and caused damage to crops in the Kanem region in western Chad. The Government appealed for international assistance to control the invasion. Satellite imagery indicated that rainfall improved significantly in the Sahelian zone but remained generally limited in the south.

Rains are hampering assistance to Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad. Most roads have become impassable, making transport of food very difficult. As of early August, the estimated number of refugees was 171 878, of whom over 165 685 were living in camps and transit areas. A recent survey by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) revealed alarming malnutrition rates and worrisome health situation among refugees.

THE GAMBIA

A dry spell affected crops in June. Following adequate precipitation in late May/early June which permitted the start of plantings, a dry spell occurred countrywide in mid June, delaying plantings and stressing crops, notably in the Western Division. Precipitation resumed and improved significantly in July but remained mostly below normal in the Western Division. Reflecting the erratic start of the rainy season, stages of crop development vary greatly among regions and plantings and replantings are still underway in several localities.

The pest situation remains calm. However, the Government has declared a state of emergency and appealed for international assistance, due to the alarming Desert Locusts situation in neighbouring countries.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Limited rains in July may delay rice transplanting. Substantial rains during the first dekad of June permitted land preparation and planting to start. However, satellite imagery indicated that rains decreased significantly in late June and remained mostly below average in July. Recently planted coarse grains may be affected and transplanting of rice from seedbeds to swamp delayed.

Following a steep rise in rice price in the country, due mainly to a decline in commercial imports caused by an increase in the price of that commodity on the international market, the Government arranged the import of a substantial quantity of rice from neighbouring Senegal and other countries to offset the shortfall.

MALI

The risk of substantial Desert Locusts damage to agriculture is increasing in the country. Although good rains fell in July, allowing planting and transplanting to continue countrywide, harvest prospects remain bleak due to a deteriorating pest situation. Desert Locust swarms that were previously reported in the north have recently invaded cereal producing areas in the south and the centre, raising serious concerns over the food supply and economic outlooks of the country. The Malian economy is dominated by agriculture, which accounts for about 40 percent of GDP, with 80 percent of the population dependent on the rural sector. In addition to its potential disastrous food security impact, large scale damage to crops may have severe macroeconomic and poverty consequences, since cotton, which is the main foreign exchange earners of the country, is the main source of income for millions of farmers and contributes up to 45 percent to total exports.

MAURITANIA

Fears of famine mount as swarms invade agricultural areas in the centre and the south. Swarms of Desert Locusts are invading most central and southern agricultural areas and their numbers are likely to continue to increase, unless the country gets enough international assistance to control their spread. In mid July, the Government appealed for urgent international aid to treat 300 000 hectares at a total cost of US$5.6 million. In Mauritania agriculture produces 20 percent of GDP and accounts for 60 percent of employment. The country already faces a tight food situation due to three consecutive years of drought (which necessitated emergency food assistance to 420 000 people in 2003) and the depreciation of the Ouguiya (the national currency), which led to a significant increase in food prices. The food security and poverty impacts of severe Locust damage on a national scale would be tremendous, since the rural population whose coping strategies have been exhausted has become very vulnerable to production shocks. 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.

NIGER

Rains improved in late July but the Desert Locust threat remains very serious. Rains were insufficient in June and early July, delaying planting and stressing crops in several locations, notably in Maradi and Zinder regions. However the last dekad registered abundant rains over most producing areas which will benefit crops stressed by earlier drier conditions. Millet and sorghum are generally leafing. They are already flowering in Dosso and Niamey regions. Nevertheless, crop prospects remain bleak due to deteriorating pest situation. Desert Locusts which were previously reported in the north have recently invaded cereal producing areas in the south and the centre. Over 85 percent of Niger population depend on farming for its survival and agriculture accounts for 40 percent of GDP; large scale damage to crops would have disastrous food security and economic consequences, notably for the poor 60 percent.

SENEGAL

Late and limited rains may affect crop development in the Northwest. Following a dry spell that delayed plantings in several localities in June, precipitation improved significantly from late June, but remained mostly below average in the northwest. Crop development may be affected in the western groundnut basin. Due to the increasing number of Desert Locust swarms arriving in the country from Mauritania, the Government has set up an emergency task force and allocated an emergency fund of US$ 2.4 million to prevent Locusts from causing large scale damage to crops.

*This is the **third 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 July** have been utilized. The satellite images of the first dekad of August 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 **Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)**, also known by its trace on the earth's surface, called the **Inter-Tropical 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 Inter-Tropical Front.*

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