SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT

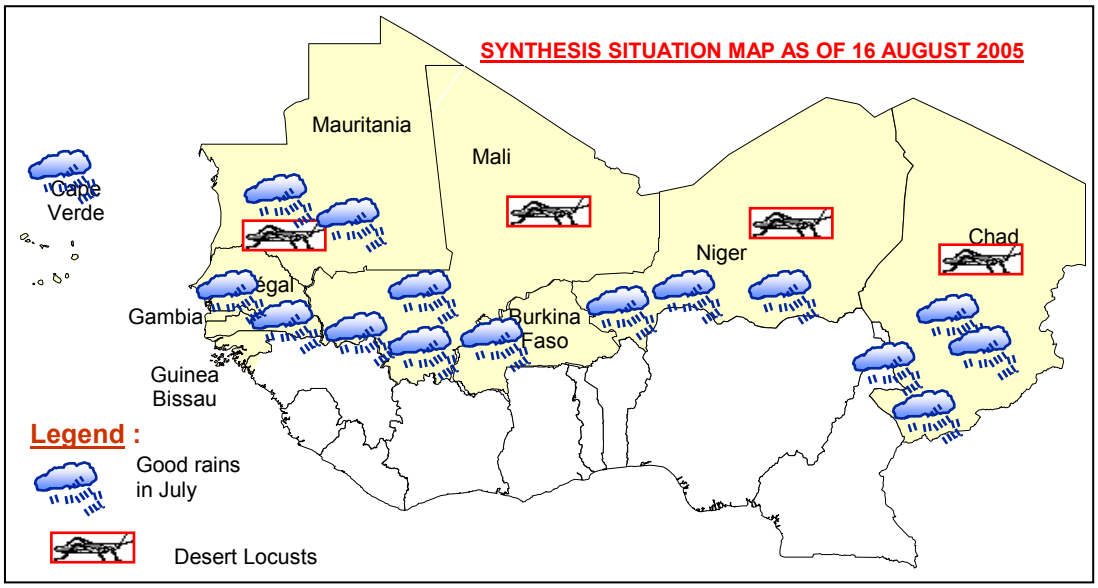
Report No. 3, 16 August 2005

CROPS ARE DEVELOPING SATISFACTORILY REFLECTING OVERALL GOOD RAINS IN JULY

SUMMARY

Good rains continue to fall over the main producing zones of the Sahel and overall crop prospects are favourable so far. Precipitation remained generally widespread and regular in **Burkina Faso, Chad**, the **Gambia, Guinea-Bissau**, **Mali**, **Mauritania, Niger** and **Senegal. Cape Verde** registered its first significant rains in July in Santiago, Fogo and Brava islands. Precipitation decreased somewhat during the last dekad of July in most countries, but satellite imagery analysis revealed that rains were on the increase in early August. Soil moisture has been generally adequate to meet crops' water requirement since the beginning of the growing season. These overall favourable conditions permitted satisfactory crop development in main producing zones. Pastures are regenerating gradually in the pastoral zones. Only few locusts are reported in the summer breeding areas in the Sahel, except in Chad where good rains and favourable breeding conditions caused hopper bands to form in July.

However, the Sahel and northern parts of several coastal countries continue to face a difficult lean season, due to unusually high food prices. In addition to poor rainfall and desert locust invasion which struck the Sahel countries in 2004, the very high prices are due to lower-than-normal food supplies in coastal countries which usually export cereals to the Sahel, and to powerful regional economic forces, in particular major commercial policy changes in Nigeria[1], which influenced supply and demand conditions well beyond its own borders. In Niger, the most affected country, the food situation remains alarming. WFP has begun large scale food distribution recently and has expanded its emergency operation to assist 2.5 million people by the end of the lean season in October. However, the operation is 36 percent funded as of early August. The FAO $4 million appeal for emergency agricultural assistance in Niger also received very limited pledges. More funds and food aid are urgently needed to respond to the critical food situation.



[1] Recent trade and food policy changes in Nigeria led to very high domestic food prices, which led to reduced grains outflow from Nigeria to neighboring countries including Niger. Additional information can be found at http://www.fao.org/giews/english/shortnews/niger050805.htm

SITUATION BY COUNTRY

BURKINA FASO

Adequate rains in July permitted satisfactory crop development. Rains were widespread in July, notably during the first two dekads. Although precipitation decreased somewhat during the last dekad, soil moisture was generally adequate to allow satisfactory development of crops. They are generally in the leafing/elongation stage in the south. Water reserves are well replenished, but overall pasture availability is still limited, and livestock in poor conditions. The desert locust situation remains calm in the country.

The food situation remains tight, notably in the northern part of the country, with high cereal prices and depleted households food stocks. The emergency measures (including free food distribution and subsidized sales in affected communities) taken by the Government helped improve somewhat the food situation in affected communities, but the impact on cereal prices remains limited, and the food situation of vulnerable groups needs to be closely monitored during the lean season..

CAPE VERDE

Significant rains in 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, Sano Antao, 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.

No desert locusts are reported.

CHAD

Good rains in July provided adequate soil moisture reserves. Rainfall has been adequate since the start of the growing season in May, allowing a satisfactory development of crops countrywide. Millet and sorghum are generally in the tillering/elongation stages in the Sahelian zone, elongating in the Sudanian zone. Pastures are regenerating, improving livestock's conditions. However, desert locusts remain a potential threat. Good rains and excellent breeding conditions caused hopper bands to form in July, increasing the risk of an outbreak.

Cereal prices remain high in spite of subsidized sales carried out by the Government in several communities; and the food situation is reported to be deteriorating in parts of the country, notably in Mandoul, Mayo Kebbi and Wabi Baghuirmi regions. In mid-July, the "Comité Directeur du Comité d'Action pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et la Gestion des Crises (CASAGC)", the National Early Warning System, recommended targeted free food distributions in these localities.

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. Localised floods were reported in Upper River Division. Reflecting these good rains, coarse grains and upland rice crops are developing satisfactorily.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Good growing conditions prevail allowing satisfactory crop development. After abundant rains in June, precipitation decreased somewhat in July, but soil moisture was generally adequate for satisfactory crop development. Harvesting of early maturity varieties of maize has started in the eastern regions of Afata and Gabu. Transplanting of swamp rice from seedbeds is underway after desalinisation of swamp rice fields.

MALI

Adequate rains so far have facilitated crop development in most regions. Rains were widespread in July, notably during the first two dekads and soil moisture was generally adequate to allow satisfactory development of crops. Millet and sorghum crops are in the tillering/leafing stages, but planting is still underway in the North. Irrigated rice is now being transplanted in the Office du Niger zone.

Pastures are improving countrywide, except in the northern region of Kidal, where they are still poor due to limited rains. However, the pest situation remains unfavourable. High populations of grain eating birds are reported in Ségou (Office du Niger zone) where serious damage was caused on rice crops. Army worm attacks were reported over about 4 000 hectares in Niono, Modogo, Kolongo N'Débougou and Doila regions, with serious localised damage on crops and pasture. Phytosanitary treatments have been carried out.

A slight decrease in food prices has been observed in July, thanks mainly to increased cereal imports from Côte d'Ivoire, where harvesting of the main cereal crops has started. However, the food situation remains critical in parts of the country, notably among pastoral and agro-pastoral groups for which targeted food and agricultural assistances are urgently needed.

MAURITANIA

Widespread plantings have been undertaken reflecting regular rains since June. Following first early showers in late May, good rains fell in June and July over most of southern and central Mauritania. As a result, plantings are well underway in most agricultural zones. However, following last year's widespread desert locust invasion and poor rainfall, seed shortages have prevented many farmers from planting in spite of distributions carried out by FAO and the Government. Pastures are improving countrywide and the desert locust situation remains calm.

NIGER

Good rains in July permitted plantings to be completed but the food situation remains critical. Although precipitation decreased somewhat in a few locations during the last dekad, rainfall was generally widespread and soil moisture adequate to allow satisfactory development of crops. Almost all villages had completed plantings by the end of July. Millet and sorghum are heading in Tahoua and Maradi regions, and emerging/leafing elsewhere. Pastures are regenerating countrywide.

The food situation remains alarming in the country, although the Government has sold about 40 000 tonnes of cereals at subsidized prices, between November 2004 and June 2005. In addition to poor rainfall and desert locust invasion which struck the Sahel countries in 2004, the very high prices that triggered the current crisis are also due to lower-than-normal food supplies in coastal countries which usually export cereals to the Sahel, and to powerful regional economic forces, in particular major commercial policy changes in Nigeria[2], which influenced supply and demand conditions well beyond its own borders.

[2] More information available at http://www.fao.org/giews/english/shortnews/niger050805.htm

According to a market survey carried out recently by WFP, recorded imports were 40-50 percent lower during the first five months in 2005, compared to the same period in 2004, despite the fact that domestic availability then was much larger than availability now.

WFP, which has begun large scale food distribution recently, has expanded its emergency operation to assist 2.5 million people by the end of the lean season in October. However, the operation is 36 percent funded as of early August. The FAO $4 million appeal for emergency agricultural assistance in Niger also received very limited pledges. More funds and food aid are urgently needed to respond to the critical food situation.

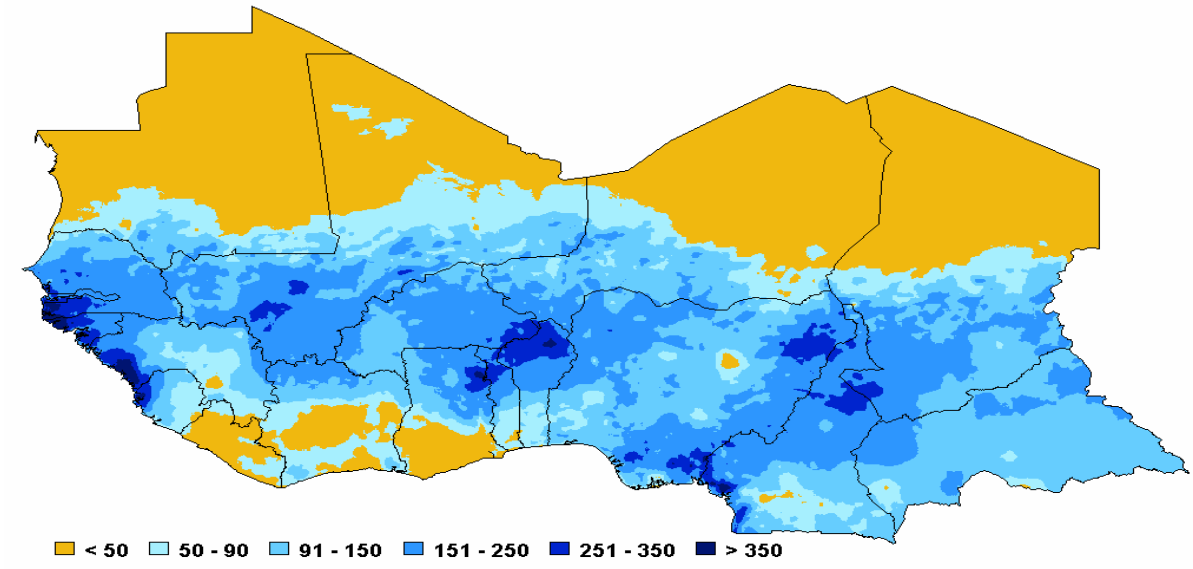
SENEGAL

Widespread rains from early July permitted plantings to progress northwards. Above normal rains reached the northern regions in early July. They remained regular and widespread during the second dekad of July. Cumulative rainfall as of the end of July is above last year's level and above normal except in Cap-Skiring, Goudiry, Kédougou and Bakel. Satellite images for the first days of August indicate that rains remained adequate across the country. In general, millet, sorghum and maize crops are developing satisfactorily. They are tillering/elongating in the south and emerging in the north.
Pastures are improving, notably in the South and the centre. The overall pest situation is calm. Army worm attacks were reported in Kébemer, Dagana, Ziguinchor and Nioro, but no locusts were reported.

TOTAL RAINFALL AND PLANTING OPPORTUNITY MAPS

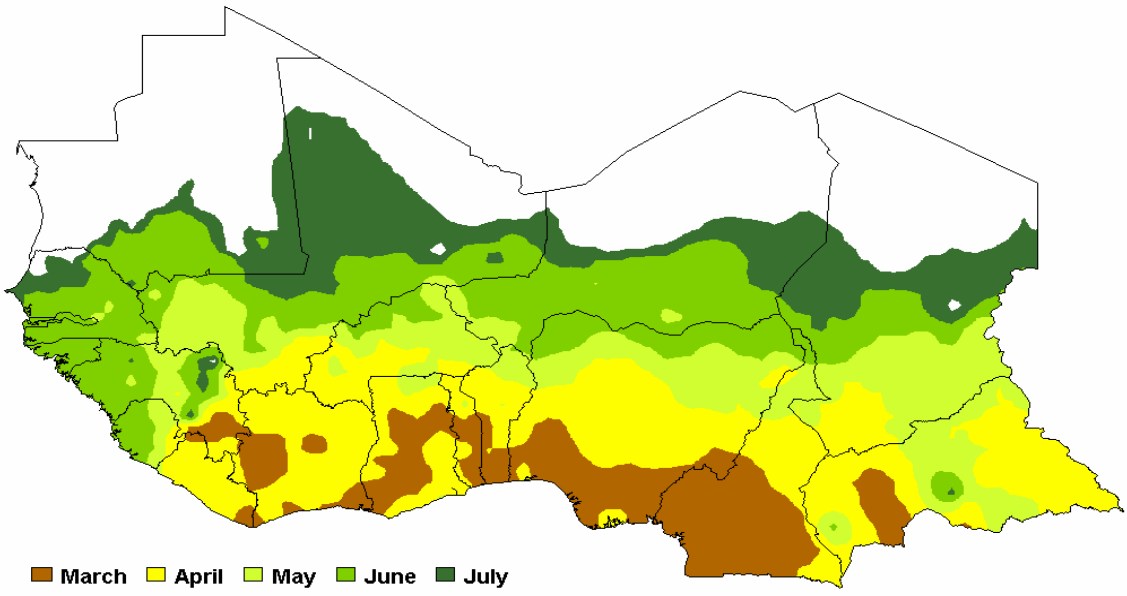
The first map indicates the total rainfall amount from 1st to 31stJuly. Data is extracted from FAO field reports and the RainFall Estimate (RFE) Satellite Imagery as produced by NOAA/USGS/FEWS/USAID project. The RFE images are obtained by interpolating various parameters recorded on the ground and obtained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

WEST AFRICA - Cropping Season 2005
Total rainfall (mm) from 1st to 31st 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 2005
Planting opportunities from 11 March to 20 July



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

*This is the **third GIEWS report of the 2005 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 2005 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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