



SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT

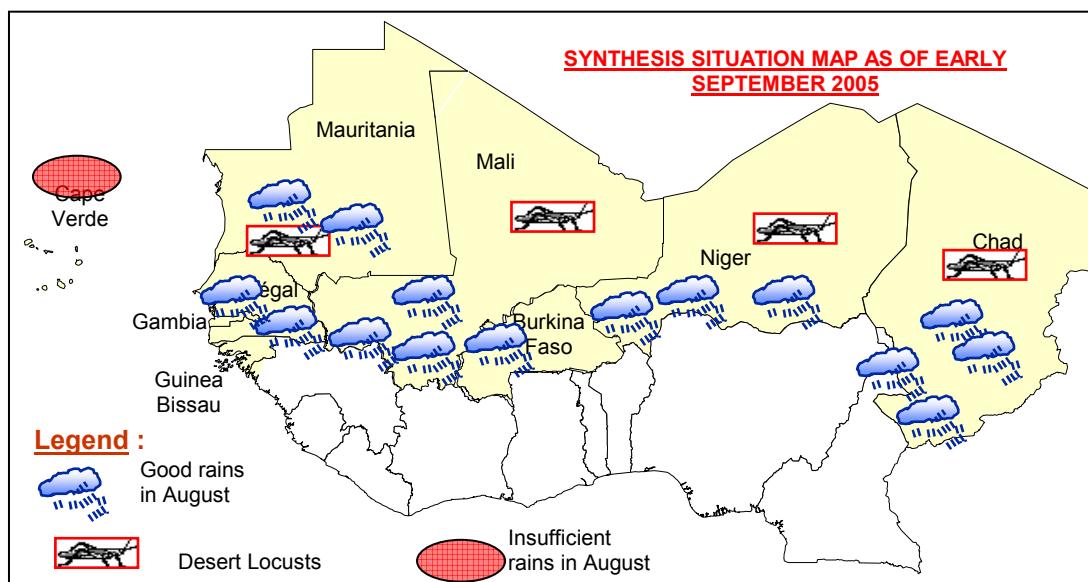
Report No. 4 15 September 2005

HARVEST PROSPECTS ARE GENERALLY FAVOURABLE FOLLOWING SATISFACTORY GROWING CONDITIONS SINCE JULY BUT ACCESS TO FOOD REMAINS DIFFICULT IN LARGE PARTS OF THE SAHEL

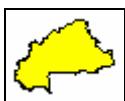
SUMMARY

Good rains continue to fall over the main crop producing zones of the Sahel, with localized flooding reported in August in several regions. Soil moisture has been generally adequate to meet crop water requirement since the beginning of the growing season and overall harvest prospects remain favourable in **Burkina Faso, Chad, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal**. Pastures have regenerated significantly, improving livestock conditions. By contrast, in **Cape Verde**, recently planted maize failed in parts, following irregular rains in August. Only few locusts are reported in the summer breeding areas in the Sahel, except in Chad where good rains and favourable breeding conditions caused swarms to form.

Only very slight decrease in food prices has been observed, and the food situation remains critical in Niger and parts of Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali, although harvesting of early maturing cereal crops has started across the region. The situation is likely to improve after widespread harvesting begins in October. However, prices may not decline to pre-crisis levels, due to depleted cereal stocks in most countries and less favourable weather conditions in several coastal countries, notably in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Close monitoring of prices and household access to food should continue across the Sahel and the northern parts of coastal countries.



SITUATION BY COUNTRY



BURKINA FASO

Adequate rains in July permitted satisfactory crop development. Rains and soil moisture have been generally adequate to allow satisfactory development of crops since the beginning of the growing season, although localised crop failures due to inadequate rainfall are reported in the south-east and the Boucle du Mouhoun region. Millet and sorghum crops are in the heading and early maturation stages. Pastures have regenerated countrywide, improving livestock conditions. The desert locust situation remains calm in the country.

Food prices have started decreasing in the south, mainly due to increased cereal imports from neighbouring coastal countries, where harvesting of the main crops is underway. However, prices remained very high in the south-west, centre and north, in spite of emergency interventions by the Government and humanitarian agencies, including free food distribution and subsidized sales in affected communities. A tight food situation continues to be reported in several localities. Vulnerable groups need to be continuously monitored and assisted as necessary until the end of the lean season.



CAPE VERDE

Plantings of maize suffered from water stress on most producing islands. After the first rains in late July on Fogo, Santo Antao, Brava and Santiago islands, the weather became mostly dry on all islands except Brava until the last dekad of August, when precipitation resumed. The dry weather conditions affected recently planted maize which failed in parts.

The desert locust situation is calm, but infestations of grasshoppers are reported in Santiago and Brava islands.



CHAD

Growing conditions remain mostly favourable. Rainfall has been adequate since the start of the growing season in May, allowing satisfactory development of crops countrywide. Millet and sorghum are maturing in the Sudanian zone while they are still developing in the Sahelian zone. Harvesting of maize, cassava and groundnuts has started in some regions. Pastures are regenerating, improving livestock conditions. However, flooding was reported in the south and desert locusts remain a potential threat.

Insecurity in neighbouring Central African Republic has led to an influx of about 15 000 refugees since June, bringing the number of Central African refugees to over 35 000. Chad is also home to more than 200 000 refugees from Sudan's Darfur region.

Although a slight decrease has been observed in a few markets in August, cereal prices remain high on most markets in spite of subsidized sales and free distributions by the Government in several communities. The situation should improve as new harvests arrive on the markets.



THE GAMBIA

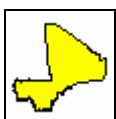
Good harvests are expected in most agricultural zones. Precipitation has been regular and widespread since the beginning of the growing season with reports of floods in several regions. Reflecting the abundant rains, millet, sorghum and upland rice crops are developing satisfactorily, while transplanting of swamp rice is underway. Groundnut crops are flowering/pegging countrywide. Harvesting of maize has started, improving food supply and lowering food prices.



GUINEA-BISSAU

Reflecting abundant and widespread rains, crop conditions are satisfactory and a good harvest is in prospect. Rains and soil moisture were generally adequate in August, allowing satisfactory development of crops. Harvesting of early maturity varieties of maize has started. Millet, sorghum and rainfed rice are heading. Transplanting of swamp rice is underway after desalinisation of swamp rice fields.

The Desert locust situation is calm. However, grasshopper infestations are reported in Bafata, Gabu and Quirina regions.



MALI

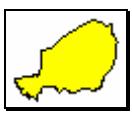
Adequate rains so far have facilitated crop development in most regions. Rains were widespread in July and August, and soil moisture was generally adequate to allow satisfactory development of crops. Millet and sorghum are generally in the leafing or heading stages but harvesting of early millet has started in some regions. Transplanting of irrigated rice is still underway. There are reports of low use of fertilizer on rice in Office du Niger, San and Tombouctou, which may affect rice yield this year. Moreover, grain-eating birds and grasshoppers are reported in several regions. The desert locust situation is reported to be calm, with only scattered adults reported in the north. Pastures are generally good.

Food prices remain very high, and the food situation remains critical in northern parts of the country. However, an improvement is likely following widespread harvesting in October. Nevertheless, prices may not decline much due to depleted stocks and unfavourable weather conditions in several coastal countries, notably in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.



MAURITANIA

Regular rains in August benefited recently planted cereal crops. Following the first showers in late May, good rains fell from June through August over most of southern and central Mauritania. As a result, crops are developing satisfactorily in most agricultural zones. They are already in the tillering or leafing stages. Pastures are adequate countrywide and the desert locust situation remains calm. However, following last year's widespread desert locust invasion and poor rainfall, seed shortages have affected many farmers, in spite of distributions carried out by FAO and the Government.



NIGER

Overall harvest prospects are favourable but the food situation remains critical. Rainfall has been generally widespread and soil moisture adequate, allowing satisfactory development of crops, although localised rainfall deficits may have affected pasture regeneration in the pastoral zones of Tillabery and western Tahoua regions. Stages of crop development vary between elongation/flowering/heading. Overall harvest prospects are favourable.

Although harvesting of early millet, beans and groundnuts has started in some localities, only a slight decrease in food prices has been observed and the food situation remains critical in the country. Improved food supply is expected to lower prices after widespread harvesting begins in October. However, prices may not decrease as much as expected due to depleted food stocks across the region and unfavourable weather conditions in several coastal countries.

In addition to poor rainfall and desert locust invasion which affected the Sahel in 2004, the very high prices that triggered the current crisis are also due to lower-than-normal food supplies and high prices in coastal countries which usually export cereals to the Sahel. According to a market survey carried out recently by WFP, recorded imports were 40-50 percent lower during the first five months of 2005, compared to the same period in 2004, despite larger domestic availabilities then than this year.

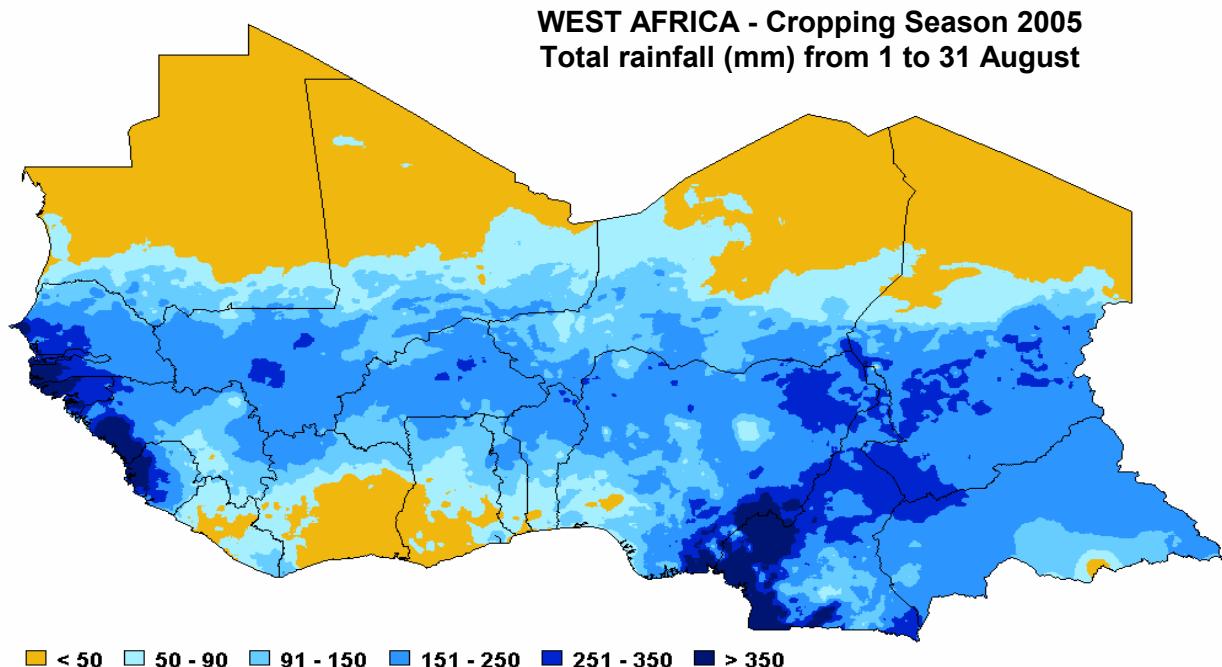
WFP, which began large-scale food distribution in early August, has expanded its emergency operation to assist 3 million people by the end of the lean season in October, in collaboration with the National Food Security Mechanism (DNGCA) and NGO partners. However, the operation is only 57 percent funded as of early September. More funds and food donations are urgently needed to adequately respond to the critical food situation.



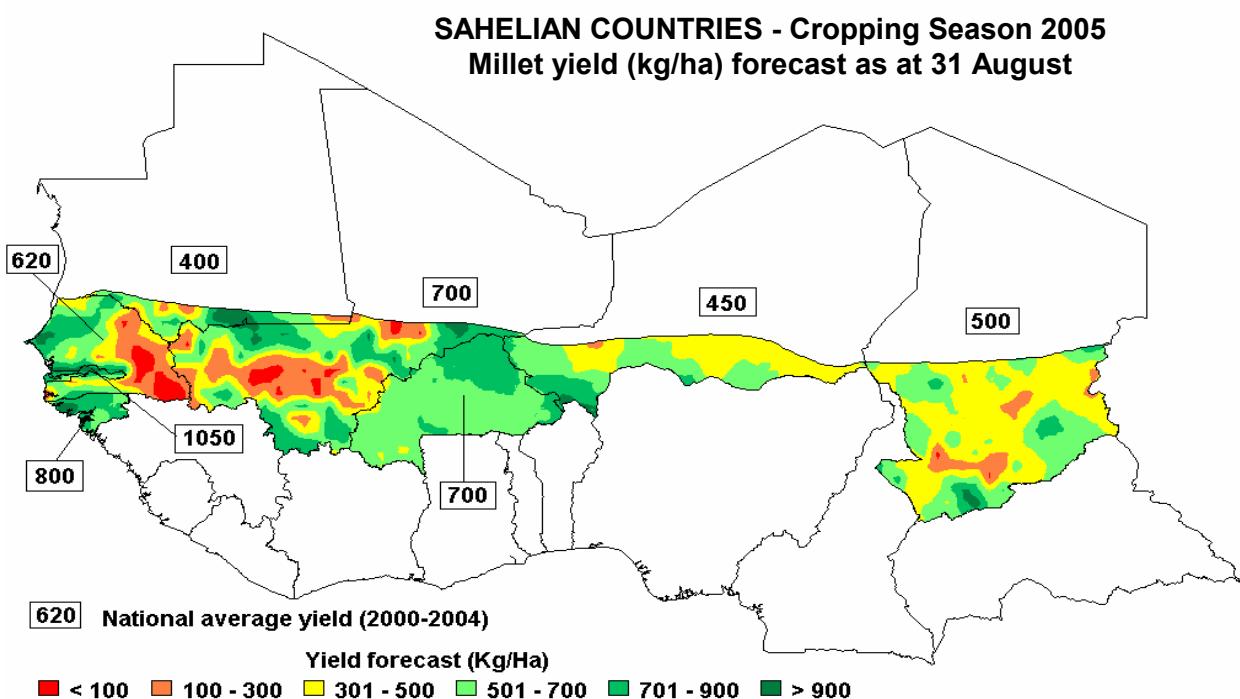
SENEGAL: Crop prospects are favourable following regular rains since July. Abundant rains caused flooding in several areas, notably in Dakar region. However, the impact on crops was limited. Millet and sorghum are generally at the heading stage in the south. Maize is maturing. In the north, coarse grains are tillering/leafing. Overall crop conditions are reported to be good and cereal production is expected to increase. Pastures are regenerating, improving livestock conditions.

TOTAL RAINFALL AND CROP YIELD FORECAST MAPS

The first map indicates the total rainfall amount from 1 to 31 August. Data is extracted from FAO field reports, data received through GTS (Global Telecommunication System) of WMO (World Meteorological Organization), 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 forecasted yield of millet for the Sahelian countries for the 2005 cropping season. The map is obtained by applying to each country a function which relates, in a statistical way for the period 1984 to 2004, the output parameters from the FAO crop specific water balance model to the crop yield. For 2005, the water balance model is using average rainfall from 1st September to the end of the crop cycle.



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

This is the fourth 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 agrometeorological crop monitoring field reports and information provided by FAO Representatives up to 31 August have been utilized. The satellite images of the first dekad of September have 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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