



SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT

Report No. 1, 14 June 2005

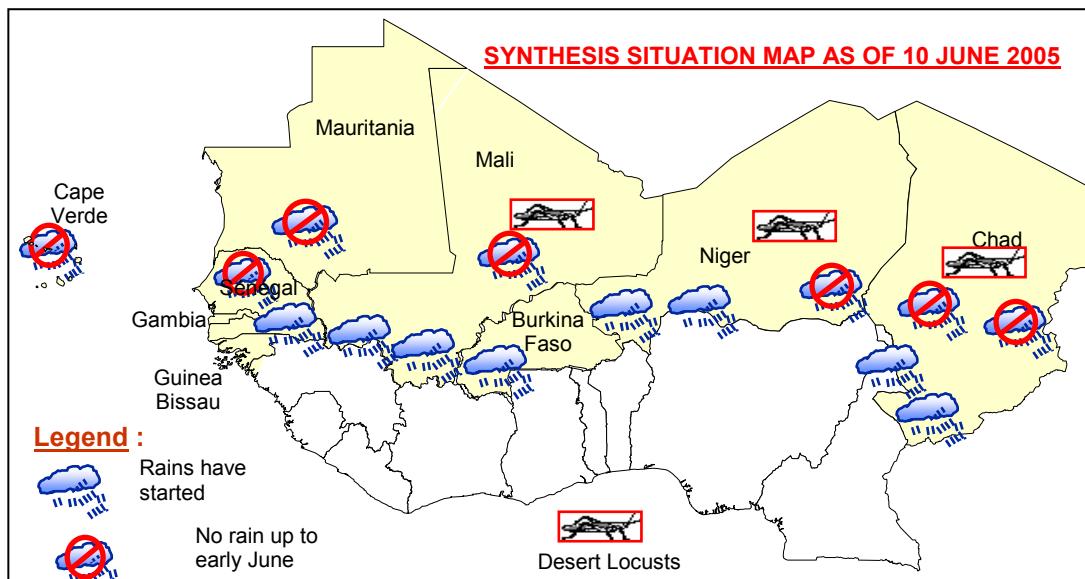
THE RAINY SEASON HAS STARTED AMID FOOD SECURITY CONCERNs ACROSS THE SAHEL.

SUMMARY

The rainy season has started normally 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 problems are likely in Burkina Faso, Cape-Verde, Chad, Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Senegal, where crop production was severely affected by adverse weather and pests last year. Desert locusts remain a potential threat in the subregion. In May, immature locusts were reportedly moving eastwards from Niger, which is already infected, to Chad through northern Cameroon and probably northern Nigeria. Although FAO is not expecting a large scale invasion this year, intensive survey operations should be immediately launched in Mali, Niger and Chad and continue in Mauritania.

The food situation has been worsening in drought- and desert locust-affected regions of the Sahel, in spite of steps taken by the region's governments. In Burkina-Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal, millet prices continue to climb, while livestock prices have been falling. This reduces access to main food staples by vulnerable households, notably pastoral and agro-pastoral groups, which were hit especially hard by last year's combination of drought and desert locusts. Severe malnutrition is reported to be on the increase in Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Several UN agencies have appealed for funds to assist affected populations, including FAO, UNICEF and WFP, but pledges are reportedly still short of requirements. More funds and food aid are urgently needed to respond to the worsening situation.



SITUATION BY COUNTRY



BURKINA FASO

The growing season has started against a backdrop of a tight food situation. Seasonal rains commenced in late April/ May in the southern part of the country, allowing land preparation to start. No pest activity is reported. Availability of seeds may be limited in the northern regions hard hit by last year desert locust invasion and poor rainfall.

The overall food situation remains tight. Millet prices continue to climb, while livestock prices have been falling, reducing access to main food staples by vulnerable households, notably pastoral and agro-pastoral groups, which were hit especially hard. The Government has taken emergency measures including free food distribution and subsidized sales in affected communities. Although the operation helped improve somewhat the food situation in affected communities, the impact on cereal prices remains limited, and the food situation of an estimated 1.6 million people at risk of food shortages needs to be closely monitored.



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 2004 poor harvest.



CHAD

The cropping season has started in the Sudanian zone. Significant rains fell in the extreme south, where land preparation and planting of coarse grains have started. Availability of seeds may be limited in the northern regions hard hit last year by desert locust invasion and poor rainfall. In May, immature locusts reportedly reached the country from Niger. Although a large scale invasion is not expected this year, intensive survey operations should be immediately launched and the situation closely monitored.

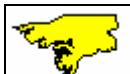
As recommended by the “Comité Directeur du Comité d’Action pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et la Gestion des Crises (CASAGC)”, the National Early Warning System, subsidized sales of cereals began in May, in response to the difficult food situation created by last year poor rainfall and desert locust invasion.

As of late May, the estimated number of Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad was 193 300. More accurate estimates will be available on completion of the joint WFP/UNHCR verification exercise currently underway.



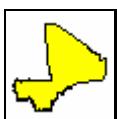
THE GAMBIA

Seasonably dry conditions prevail. 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 2004 good harvest.



GUINEA-BISSAU

Land preparation is underway. Planting is expected to start in the weeks ahead with the onset of the rains. Seed availability is expected to be adequate following the 2004 good harvest.



MALI

The cropping season has started in the south amid concerns for food security in parts of the country. Land preparation is underway and first planting has started in the extreme south, following first rains in May. Planting will progress northwards with rains. Availability of seeds may be a problem in the regions hard hit last year by desert locust invasion and poor rainfall. No swarm of desert locust has been reported so far. However, low numbers of adults are likely to be present and breeding in parts of the Adrar des Iforas, the Tilemsi Valley and in the timetrine. Intensive surveys should immediately commence in these areas.

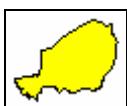
The food situation has been worsening in drought- and desert locust-affected regions of the country, in spite of action taken by the Government. Millet prices continue to rise, while livestock prices have been falling. This reduces access to main food staples for vulnerable households, notably pastoral and agro-pastoral groups, which were hit especially hard. Child malnutrition is reported to be on the rise in spite of free food distribution and subsidized sales by the Government in affected communities. Livestock condition also continues to deteriorate, due to lack of pasture. In addition to food aid, other measures are urgently needed, notably to provide agricultural inputs and assist pastoralists.



MAURITANIA

The country is facing a critical food situation. Seasonably dry conditions prevail. Plantings of coarse grains will start with the onset of rains, which normally begins in July. Dry plantings may be underway in the south-east. Availability of seeds is limited, following last year's widespread desert locust invasion and poor rainfall. No locusts have been reported so far, but low numbers of adults are expected to appear in parts of the centre and south.

Widespread and increasing malnutrition is reported. In response to the deteriorating situation, WFP has started Food-For-Work programmes in Brakna, Gorgol, Assaba and Hodh El Gharbi departments. European Union-funded food distribution, to be implemented by the Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA), is expected to start soon. FAO has appealed for US\$11.4 million to provide agricultural inputs and to assist pastoralists in the affected Sahelian countries, including Mauritania. These funds are urgently needed to respond to the worsening situation.



NIGER

The cropping season has started in the south amid concerns over the food situation in the country. Land preparation is underway and first planting has started in the extreme south, following first rains in May. Planting will progress northwards with the onset of the rains. Availability of seeds is limited, particularly in the pastoral and agro-pastoral zones. Desert locusts continue to pose a threat to agricultural production, with reports of small-scale breeding in the centre of the country. Although FAO is not expecting a large scale invasion this year, intensive survey operations should be launched immediately.

The food situation continues to deteriorate in drought- and desert locust-affected regions of the country, in spite of steps taken by the Government, including selling cereals at subsidised prices in affected communities. The resources of the national crisis mitigation mechanism have already been completely depleted, with little impact on the overall food situation. The Government is now planning to launch a food loan programme. Severe child malnutrition is increasing, with rising admissions at supplementary feeding centres. In response to the crisis, several actions have been taken at international level: FAO launched an appeal for funds to provide agricultural inputs and to assist pastoralists, while UNICEF and WFP appealed for funds to feed some 2.5 million people officially estimated to be at risk of food shortage, including about 150 000 children suffering from severe malnutrition. Pledges are reportedly still short of requirements. Additional food aid pledges and deliveries are therefore urgently needed to arrest to the worsening situation.



SENEGAL

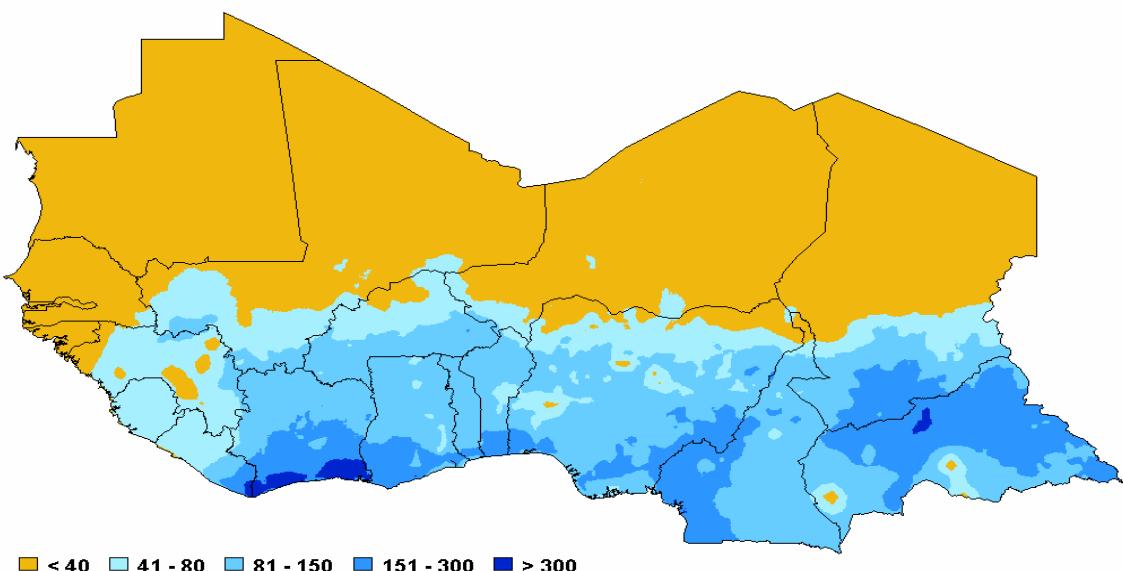
Seasonably dry conditions prevail in most parts, although some rains fell in the extreme south-east in May. Rains are expected to start and progress towards the centre and the north in June. Availability of seeds may be limited in the regions hard hit last year by desert locust invasion and poor rainfall. No locusts were reported in May.

The country is facing a difficult lean season, with high millet prices, particularly in drought- and desert locust-affected regions. With scarce pasture and water and high prices of animal feed, livestock condition is also reported to be deteriorating in spite of increased movement of herds. Assistance is needed, mainly in the livestock sector.

TOTAL RAINFALL AND PLANTING OPPORTUNITY MAPS

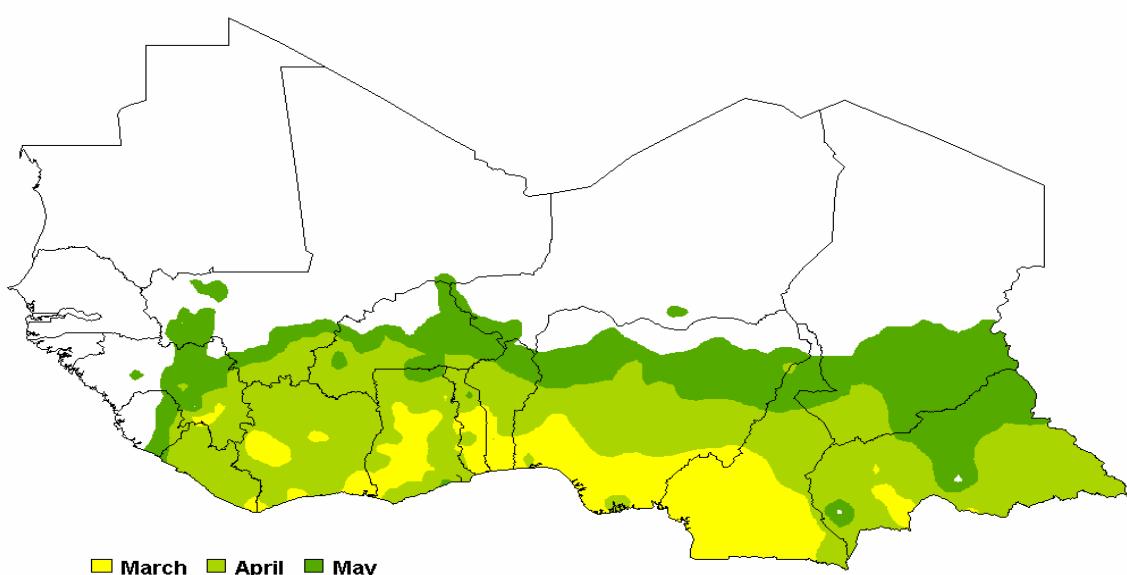
The first map indicates the total rainfall amount from 1st to 31st May. Data is extracted from FAO field reports and the Rainfall Estimate (RFE) Satellite Imagery as produced by NOAA/USGS/FEWS/USAID project. The RFE images are obtained by interpolating various parameters recorded on the ground and obtained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

WEST AFRICA - Cropping Season 2005
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 2005
Planting opportunities from 11 March to 20 May



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

Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture

This is the first 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 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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