SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT

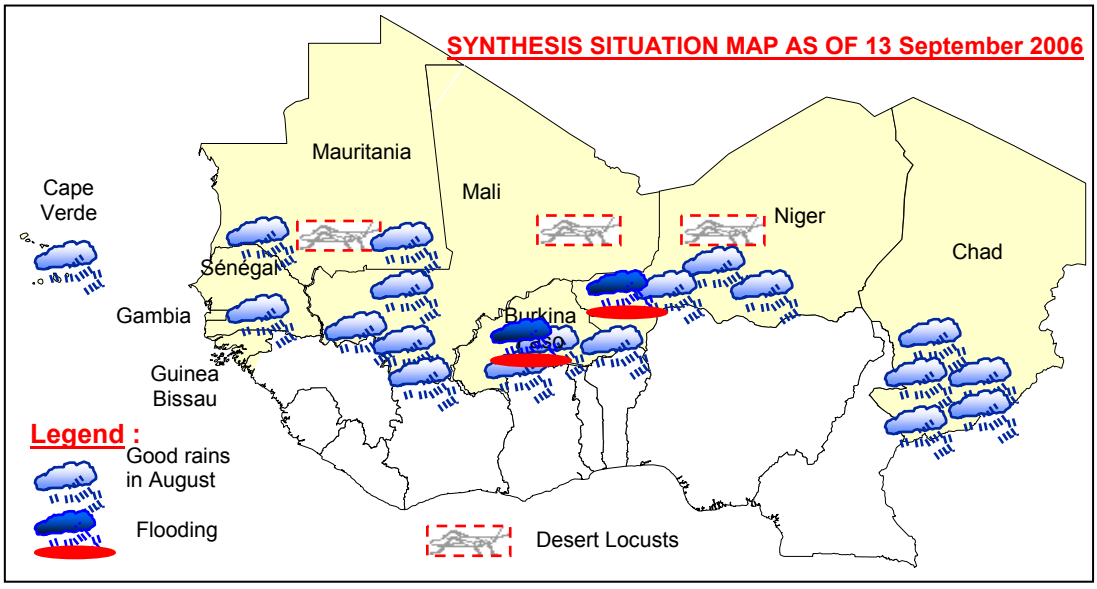
Report No. 4 14 September 2006

INCREASED RAINS IN AUGUST HAVE IMPROVED CROP PROSPECTS IN MOST COUNTRIES

SUMMARY

Following below-normal rains in June/early July in several parts of the Sahel, precipitation improved significantly in August over the main producing areas, thus reconstituting soil water reserves, providing relief to stressed crops and improving crop prospects in most countries. Heavy rains and floods caused considerable human casualties and damage to crops in several countries, notably in Burkina-Faso and Niger. However, in the areas affected by earlier dry conditions, yield potential will be reduced and late plantings or replanting will need rains late in the season to cover their entire growing cycle. From West to East, crop conditions are satisfactory in **Cape Verde** and **Senegal** following widespread rains in August**,** while in **The Gambia** crop prospects are mixed, according to remote sensing rainfall estimates. Adequate rainfall favoured desalination and transplanting of swamp rice in **Guinea-Bissau**. In **Mauritania**, increased rains in August benefited crops in the South-West, but more good rains are needed in the South-Centre and South-East. In **Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad,** crop conditions improved significantly after the scant rains of June. Satellite imagery for early September indicates that good rains continued to fall over most of the Sahel region.

Pastures are regenerating gradually. Grasshoppers are reported in several countries but damage to crops remains limited. The Desert Locust situation remained calm during August, with low numbers of locusts being reported in the summer breeding areas of Mauritania, Niger and Mali.

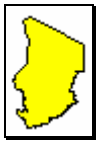


SITUATION BY COUNTRY

BURKINA FASO: Harvest prospects improved significantly following widespread and above-normal rains in August. After erratic and below average rains until late June, which necessitated replanting in most regions and shortened the growing season, precipitation has increased significantly from mid-July, and remained abundant in August. Substantial flooding was reported in the Mouhoun, Cascades and Sahel regions. However, due to the erratic start of the rainy season, stages of crop development vary by regions and are generally late compared to normal years, except in the West and South-West, where cereals are at heading stage and harvesting of beans crops has started. Elsewhere in the country, millet and sorghum are generally in the elongating stage and maize is flowering. Crop development is particularly late in the north-eastern province of Gnagna. Due to the delayed rains and initial dry conditions, rains will need to continue through October to allow crops to reach full maturity. Pastures have regenerated significantly countrywide. The overall pest situation is reported to be calm.

The overall food supply situation has remained satisfactory. Cereal prices, stable since the beginning of the year, have started decreasing in the south, mainly due to increased cereal imports from neighbouring coastal countries where harvesting of the main crops is underway. The downward trend is expected to continue with the start of harvesting in the country.

CAPE VERDE: The onset of regular rains in late July permitted widespread maize plantings on the agricultural islands. Rains continued in early August and became more abundant during the second dekad of the month. Soil moisture reserves are adequate in most areas. Crops are emerging satisfactorily and pastures are regenerating well. Cereal bugs and grasshopper infestations are reported in Santiago Island, where treatments are underway.



CHAD: Growing conditions remain mostly favourable. Rains in August were abundant and widespread after irregular and below average precipitation delayed plantings in the Sahelian zone through mid-July. However, due to the late and erratic start of the rainy season, stages of development vary greatly in the regions and are generally late compared to normal years. In the Sudanian zone, millet, sorghum and maize are generally ripening, while rainfed rice crops are elongating. In the Sahelian zone, coarse grains are elongating. Pastures are abundant countrywide. The overall pest situation is calm. Grasshopper infestations were reported on cereal crops only in Pala region.

The security situation in eastern Chad remains unstable and volatile, constraining humanitarian access to the Sudanese refugees living in the eastern part of the country.

THE GAMBIA: Early crop prospects are mixed. The start of the cropping season was late and rains have been irregular in most regions according to remote sensing rainfall estimates. Crops and pastures will need rains late in the season to cover their entire growing cycle.

GUINEA-BISSAU: Reflecting abundant and widespread rains, crop conditions are satisfactory and a good harvest is in prospect. Rains and soil moisture have been generally adequate since the beginning of the cropping season, allowing satisfactory development of crops according to satellite imagery. Transplanting of swamp rice is underway after desalinisation of swamp rice fields. Harvesting of early maturity varieties of maize should have started.

MALI: Harvest prospects improved significantly reflecting abundant and widespread rains in August. Precipitation remained generally widespread and abundant in August and crops are developing satisfactorily. Stages of development vary greatly, due to the late and erratic start of the rainy season. For millet and sorghum crops, stages of development vary from emerging to heading, while harvesting of early maize crops has started in some regions and transplanting of irrigated rice is still underway. According to the results of the mid-term assessment carried out by the Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire, the area planted with cotton decreased by about 8 percent compared to last year, while

millet area is likely to increase significantly. In the areas affected by earlier dry conditions, yield potential will be reduced and late plantings and replanting will need rains until October to cover their entire growing cycle.

Pastures are generally good. Grain-eating birds are reported in several regions, notably in Mopti, Tombouctou, Koulikoro, Dioila. Grasshopper infestations are reported, notably in the pastures of Kayes, Ségou, Mopti, Koulikoro. Army worms and rodents are also reported in a few places. The desert locust situation is calm but scattered adults are likely to be present in the north with small-scale breeding expected.

MAURITANIA: Early crop prospects are mixed. Following the start of the rainy season in July, crop growing conditions have been favourable in most parts of Trarza and Brakana regions with sufficient and well distributed precipitation. By contrast rains were mostly erratic and below normal in the south-centre and south-east (eastern Ghorgol, Guidimakha and the two Hodhs), where crops were stressed and re-plantings carried-out in several areas. Yield potential of rainfed crops may be compromised if the situation does not improve in September. Seed shortage is reported in most regions, which may also affect area planted.

Pastures have improved significantly in Trarza and Brakna regions but their regeneration has been hindered by the dry spells in Ghorgol, Guidimakha and the two Hodhs. Scattered solitary mature adults of Desert Locusts are reported in the centre (Tagant, northern Brakana) and in the south (Trarza, the two Hodhs). Small-scale breeding is underway and locust numbers are expected to increase during September.

NIGER: Growing conditions remained favourable in August. Good rains from late July through August remained widespread over the main producing areas in early September. Crops are developing satisfactorily. However, heavy rains and floods caused considerable casualties and damaged crops in several localities, notably in Agadez (Bilma, Tabelot, In Gall), Dosso, Tahoua, Tillabéri and Zinder. As regards the pest situation, infestations of injurious insects are reported on millet in all agricultural regions and treatments have been undertaken. By contrast, grain eating birds are reportedly posing a serious threat to crops in Dosso, Tahoua, Tillabéri, Zinder and Diffa. The Desert Locusts situation is calm but scattered solitary immature and mature adults are reported on the Tamesna Plains and in parts of the central Aïr Mountains, where small-scale breeding is expected to occur, causing locust numbers to increase slightly.

Due to the erratic start of the rainy season, stages of development vary in most regions from elongating to flowering, but millet crops have reached maturity in Dosso, and harvesting of beans has started in Maradi and Zinder. Due to the delayed rains and initial dry conditions, rains will need to continue through October to allow crops to reach full maturity countrywide.

The beginning of harvesting in the country along with increased cereal imports from neighbouring coastal countries are expected to improve food supply and lower prices on markets. However, due to the lingering effects of the 2005 food crisis (1.8 million people are estimated to be in severe food insecurity and 2.1 million in moderate food insecurity), WFP and the Niger Government have begun targeted free food distribution to 650 000 people on 25 August 2006. 200 000 people not covered by targeted distributions but who live in areas poorly served by rural markets are reportedly benefiting from the restocking or creation of village cereal banks.

SENEGAL: Crop prospects improved, reflecting increased rains in August. Following irregular and insufficient rains in most parts of the country at the beginning of the cropping season, precipitation increased significantly in August over the main producing areas, thus reconstituting soil water reserves, and improving crop prospects. Matam received its first rains in August. Satellite imagery for late August/early September indicated that crops continued to benefit from good rains, notably in the South. However, as plantings were delayed and replanting carried out in several regions including Kolda, Tamba, Bakel, Kaolak, Diourbel and Matam, crops and pastures will need rains late in the season to cover their entire growing cycle.

*This is the fourth **GIEWS report on the 2006 season on weather and crop conditions in the Sahelian countries of western Africa**. Geographic 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 October.*

*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 **31August** 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. They are described below:*

***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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