



SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT

Report No. 2, 10 August 2007

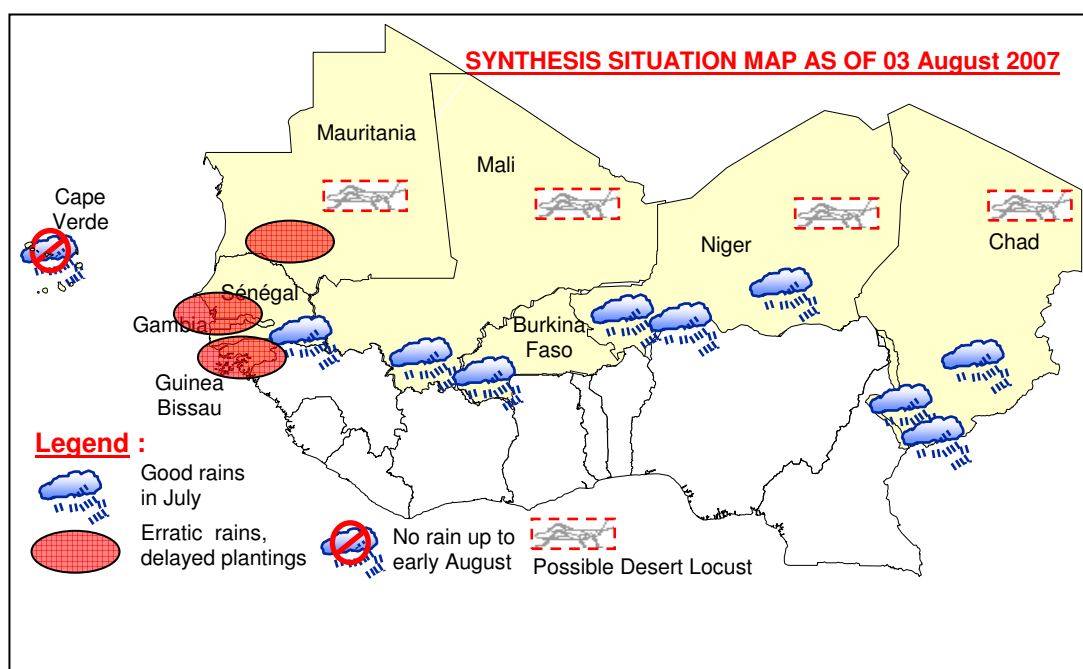
EARLY CROP PROSPECTS MIXED IN THE SAHEL

SUMMARY

Early prospects for the 2007 cereal crops are mixed in the sub-region. Limited and irregular rains since the beginning of the season over most parts of the **Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania** and **Senegal** have delayed plantings, affected growing crops and raised serious concerns over the food supply outlook. Re-plantings were carried-out and yield potential has been seriously compromised in several areas. In **Cape Verde**, prospects for the maize crop, normally planted from July, are poor due to delayed onset of rains. A recovery in crop prospects in these countries will heavily depend on the performance of rainfall in August. In central and eastern parts of the Sahel, by contrast, crop growing conditions have improved with increased and better-distributed rainfall in July in most agricultural regions of **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali** and **Niger**. However, substantial replantings were necessary.

Pastures are regenerating gradually in the central and the eastern parts of the Sahel. The Desert Locusts situation is calm but small-scale breeding is expected in parts of Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad as the rains increase in these areas.

The food supply situation remains generally satisfactory in most parts of the subregion reflecting the bumper 2006 cereal harvest. However, localised food insecurity continues to be reported in few countries, notably in **Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania** and **Niger** due mostly to insecurity and lack of access.



SITUATION BY COUNTRY



BURKINA FASO: Growing conditions improved in July following irregular rains in May and June. The onset of the cropping season was delayed and replantings carried out in several regions of the country due to erratic rains through late June. However precipitation increased significantly in July over the entire country, particularly in the South. With this improvement, millet and sorghum crops, which are generally emerging/tillering, have recovered and are developing quite satisfactorily. However, reflecting the erratic set-up of the rainy season, stages of development vary greatly in the regions and plantings and replantings are still underway in several localities of the northern, Centre-North, Centre, Plateau central, Sahel and eastern and central plateau regions. Due to the earlier drier conditions, rainfall in August will be decisive for the output of the season. No pest activity is reported.

The overall food supply situation has remained satisfactory since the beginning of the year with relatively stable cereal prices.



CAPE VERDE: The start of the rainy season is delayed. The weather remained mostly dry until early August on all islands. Planting of maize normally starts in July and, if substantial rains are not received soon, this year's cereal production may be compromised. Land preparation and early dry plantings are underway on most producing islands, notably on Santiago Island. Seeds have been distributed by the Government to farmers in the areas that had poor harvests last year.



CHAD: Growing conditions improved in July following irregular rains in May and June, according to satellite imagery analysis. This has reduced moisture deficit, notably in the eastern part of the country where precipitation was far below average at the onset of the cropping season. The desert locust situation is calm. However, scattered adults are likely to be present in parts of the centre and northeast where small-scale breeding is expected to occur in areas of recent rainfall.

The overall food supply situation remains satisfactory, following a record 2006 cereal crop. Nevertheless, access to food continues to be very difficult for large segments of the population, notably in the eastern part of the country where poor security situation continues to disrupt marketing activities, limiting flows of commodities between regions and leading to food price spikes in some areas. The IDPs, whose number was estimated to reach over 140 000 as of late May, are among the most vulnerable populations.



THE GAMBIA: Below average rains in June and July delayed plantings and severely affected recently planted crops. Satellite rainfall estimates indicate significant rainfall deficits across the country. According to reports, germination failures were experienced, crops suffered wilting and fields needed replanting in several areas. A reduction in yield potential is likely but the final outcome of the season will depend on the rainfall pattern through October.



GUINEA-BISSAU: Lack of rainfall delayed plantings. Precipitation has been below average since the beginning of the season, with negative impact on land preparation and plantings of coarse grains and rainfed rice.

In the cashew sector, the main source of cash income for rural households, continued marketing problems are affecting food security among the most vulnerable population. Proceeds from sale of cashews enable farmers to supplement their own food production by buying imported rice. In 2006, high purchase prices for cashews set by the Government inhibited traders from their normal buying, triggering localized severe food insecurity in several areas. Although this year's government-set price is slightly lower than last year, the resulting demand is still too low compared to supply with ultimate depressing effects on prices and producers' purchasing power.



MALI: Following erratic rains in May and June, precipitation increased in most regions in July, reducing rainfall deficits and improving crop prospects. However, due to the earlier drier weather, cumulative rainfall as of late July was still below average in Tombouctou and south-eastern Kayes. As a result of the erratic start of the rainy season, stages of development vary greatly in the regions, from planting of coarse grains and transplanting of rice, to leafing of maize and heading of cotton and pulses. Cereal area is likely to increase at the expense of cotton.

Pastures have started regenerating in some areas but more regular rains are needed for a significant improvement in pasture conditions across the country. The overall pest situation is calm. However, grain eating birds are reported in the Office du Niger zone, in Mopti and Gao, where aerial treatment operations were carried out. Scattered adults of Desert locusts are also likely to be present north of Tombouctou and in parts of the northeast.



MAURITANIA: The start of the cropping season was delayed in most regions. Light rains were received in June in the extreme South but the rainy season which normally occurs in July, has not started yet.

The delayed onset of the season has raised serious concerns for the food security outlook. The country already faces a tight food situation due to several consecutive years of drought and locust invasion and the relatively high prices of coarse grains and wheat. The succession of crop failures that has affected the country in recent years has had severe negative impact on rural households purchasing power and increased their vulnerability to food production shocks. Although Mauritania's domestic production covers less than 40 percent of total food requirement in a normal year, the food security impact of new widespread crop failures would be significant.



NIGER: Widespread rains in July permitted plantings to be completed. Following below average rains across the country through late June, July registered increased rains over most producing areas which benefited crops stressed by earlier drier conditions. Virtually all villages have planted this year's cereal crops as of late July, compared to 96 percent at the same time in 2006. The areas where planting is not complete yet include 116 villages located in the southern part of Maradi and Zinder regions. Millet and sorghum are generally emerging/tillering, but there are reports of maturing millet in some areas of Dosso and Gaya regions.

Pastures are regenerating. Grasshopper infestations have been reported in Diffa, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéri and Zinder departments, while insect attacks are reported in Dosso, Gaya and Keita Tahoua. The Desert Locust situation is reported to be calm, but scattered adults are likely to be present in parts of Tamesna and perhaps in south-eastern Air.

According to some reports, child malnutrition is growing to alarming levels in southern Niger, in spite of the record crop gathered in the country and across the region last year. Given that southern Niger is the country's breadbasket, this trend reveals the structural and complex nature of malnutrition in Niger.



SENEGAL: Early crop prospects are uncertain reflecting late and limited rains in the centre and the north until late July. Following early rains in the extreme south-east in May, precipitation progressed slowly to the centre. As of late July, when the planting period normally ends, estimated cumulative rainfall totalled 50 to 75 percent of normal in much of Senegal's groundnut basin and mostly dry conditions prevailed in the north. The cropping season is yet to start in Saint-Louis, Podor, Louga, Dakar, Thiès and Kaolack, raising serious concerns over the food security outlook in these regions.

*This is the second **GIEWS report on the 2007 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 October.*

*These reports are prepared with data from, and in close collaboration with, FAO Representatives, the Agro-Meteorology Group and the Environmental Monitoring Group (NRCB), the Emergency Centre for Locust Operations (ECLO), the Emergency Operations Service (TCEO) 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 decade of June 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 shown 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 **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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