

# FOOD SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



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## KEY POINTS

### Sections



Agriculture



Displacements



International Markets



West African Markets



Food Security

- ◆ Confirmation of satisfactory levels of agro-pastoral production in West Africa and the Sahel: 12 percent increase in cereal production compared with the average over the past five years.
- ◆ Confirmation of a 12 percent decrease in cereal production in Chad.
- ◆ The security situation in the Lake Chad Basin, which continues to have a negative impact on displaced and host populations, deserves particular attention.
- ◆ Increased domestic supply is pushing down cereal prices.

The main 2015-2016 agricultural season is over and cereal production is estimated to be 12 percent higher than the five-year average and 5 percent higher than in 2014-2015 for the West African region and the Sahel. This is positive for the entire region; however, the dry spells and early end to rains in Chad, northern Benin, Togo and Ghana have caused grain production to decline in these countries. The effects of this fall in production could lead to price increases in the markets in affected areas.

Despite good production forecasts, the food and nutrition situation of the most vulnerable people in the region could deteriorate during the next lean season (June to August 2016) owing to the deterioration of their livelihoods, the early depletion of their stocks, localized increases in food prices and deteriorating terms of trade. In addition, a growing number of the poorest households does not always depend on agriculture and livestock for food and access to income and was not able to profit from good agricultural production.

The agricultural off-season has started in the region and could help fill production deficits from the main agricultural season.

## Recommendations for regional partners

- ◆ Continue to monitor the food and nutritional security situation in the Lake Chad basin.
- ◆ Continue to monitor the food and nutritional security situation in the countries with a substantial food deficit in the 2015-2016 crop year, including Chad.
- ◆ Advocate for funding for food and nutrition security projects mentioned in the HRP 2016.
- ◆ Raise awareness among partners to participate in joint assessment missions of markets in West Africa/Sahel: 1-15 February 2016.

To go to



**Objective:** Within the framework of the monthly meetings of the Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group for West Africa, it has been agreed that, in a humanitarian perspective, FAO and WFP provide the group with highlights on the food security situation of the previous month.

### Confirmation of good agro-pastoral production



The 31st meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) in the Sahel and West Africa held in Dakar, Senegal from 14 to 15 December 2015 confirmed satisfactory levels of agro-pastoral production in the region despite the late start of rains, dry spells and early ending rains in Chad and the north of Benin, Togo and Ghana and conflict or insecurity.

Therefore, according to the provisional results of the 2015-2016 crop year, grain production in the Sahel and West Africa (including Niger) is estimated at 63.6 million tons, an increase of 5 percent compared with 2014-2015 and 12 percent compared with the average over the past five years. However, localized declines are observed particularly in Chad where they reach 12 percent. For tubers, production is about 158.6 million tons, an increase of 8 percent and 18 percent respectively compared with last year and the average over the past 5 years. Regarding cash crops, cowpea production is estimated at 5.5 million tons with increases of 13 and 2 percent respectively from 2014 to 2015 and the five-year average (2010-2014). Groundnut production is estimated at 7.6 million tons, an increase of 10 percent and 20 percent respectively compared with 2014-2015 and the average of the past five years. However attention should be paid to countries with a substantial food deficit.

The period between December 2015 and January 2016 saw the start of secondary season activities. In Niger, vegetable cultivation began in all areas where this production mode is possible. In Agadez, high availability of vegetables (vegetables and citrus fruits) was recorded on the market, as well as strong demand and very good sales of all vegetables especially onions, which are the major crop for speculation during this period. (*Afrique Verte*)

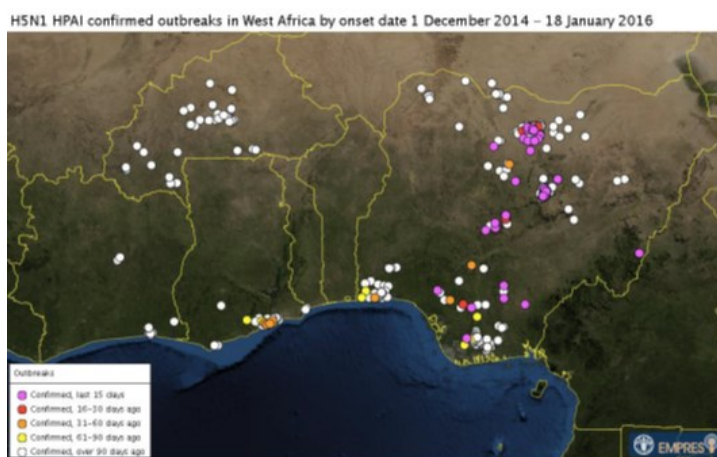
In Mali, vegetable cultivation is at the "plant bed and nursery" stage, which got off to a timid start owing to the ongoing harvest. Sales of rainy-season market gardening produce (lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, okra, pepper) are continuing. Overall, animal husbandry conditions still allow for adequate fodder for livestock. With the

exception of Timbuktu and Gao, pasture conditions are generally relatively good as are watering conditions with various water sources still available. Overall, animals' weight and physical condition and the level of animal production are average. (*Afrique Verte*)

A resurgence of the locust continued in western Mauritania and spread further north to the northern part of the country and Western Sahara where hoppers and adults formed small groups in December. Ground control operations were carried out in these areas. With continuing favorable conditions, reproduction is likely to continue during the forecast period, which will cause a further increase in locust numbers and the formation of groups of hoppers and adults. Small-scale breeding occurred in northern Mali and Niger, where a few small groups formed in January. [FAO](#)

The spread of the avian influenza H5N1 epidemic has increased in intensity in the region. The update of 19 January 2016 indicates that Nigeria has seen 37 new outbreaks (Figure 1) and the total number of outbreaks has increased from 556 to 569; 2.5 million birds have so far been destroyed. No human cases have been recorded to date. (FAO)

Figure 1: Spread of H5N1 avian influenza in poultry from December 2014 to January, 2016



Source : FAO

## Population movement in the region

### Increase in the number of Malian refugees in host countries (Mauritania and Niger)

The total number of IDPs connected to the crises in Mali and Nigeria is 2.3 million, while the number of refugees from these two crises amounted to 254,938 people.

The unstable security situation in northern Mali and more precisely in the Gao region of Mali continues to drive Malians to take refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly in Niger where the number rose from 54,409 people in November to 56,012 people in late December 2015, and in Mauritania, which also received approximately one hundred Malians in the Mbera camp, bringing the number to 50,228 refugees (source: UNHCR). Consequently, the total number of Malian refugees in host countries (Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania) rose from 138,695 to 140,776 people.

Insecurity and displacement in the Lake Chad Basin continue to have a negative impact on the food and nutrition situation of displaced and host populations. The results of the latest Displacement Tracking Matrix Monitoring (DTM) in Nigeria indicate that the number of IDPs decreased slightly from 2,233,506 people in late November 2015 to 2,151,979 in December 2015 and the number of Nigerian refugees in neighbouring countries is 183,217 people. This decrease is due to the return of some IDPs to their places of origin. The number of Nigerians who returned rose by more than 12,000; from 320,636 in October 2015 to 335,333 people in December 2015 because of improved security and economic conditions in their region of origin. [OIM](#)

## Trends on international markets

### The FAO Food Price Index recorded a further decline in December and dropped by nearly 19 percent on the year 2015

Food consumption of the majority of the countries of West Africa and Sahel depends on imports of commodities (especially rice and wheat) which prices are traded on international markets.

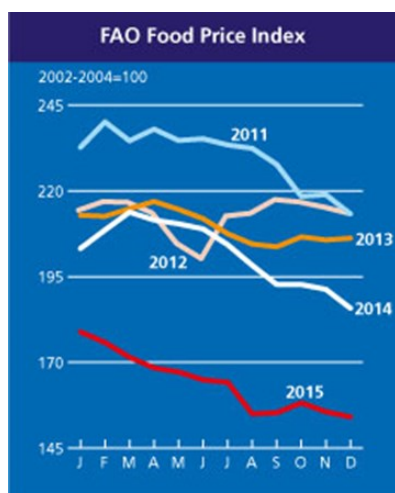
**The FAO Food Price Index** averaged 154.1 points in December 2015, down 1.5 points (1.0 percent) from its revised November value, with international prices of all the food commodities used in the calculation of the Index falling, except for sugar and oils. Over the full year, the index has averaged 164.1 points, nearly 19 percent less than in 2014, marking the fourth consecutive annual decline. Abundant supplies in the face of a timid world demand and an appreciating US dollar are the main reasons for the general weakness that has dominated food prices in 2015.

**The FAO Cereal Price Index** averaged 151.6 points in December, down almost 2 points (1.3 percent) from November. Expectation of larger supplies entering world markets following the removal of export taxes in Argentina weighed on wheat quotations. Maize prices also fell in December amid intensifying export competition and sluggish international demand. Rice quotations were more stable, as a revival of purchases sustained the prices of the lower quality Indica and of aromatic rice. Compared to 2014, the cereal price index shed 29 points, or 15.4 percent, in 2015.

In December, the rice world prices had mixed trends for the third consecutive month. The Thai prices fell again, as well as Vietnamese and US prices. Instead, Indians and Pakistanis prices were firmer due to a strong demand and a contraction of exportable availabilities. The market may recover activities in the coming weeks with the return of major world importers who seek to restore security stocks. On the exporter side, the balance in 2015 will be shaded by decline in turnover, because of low world prices. In 2015, prices decreased by 11 percent in relation to 2014, reaching the lowest level since the 2008 crisis. Perspectives for continuity of unfavourable weather conditions in 2016 and the low level of world prices could negatively impact the global production and reactivate the import demand.

[InterRice](#)

Figure 2 : FAO Food Price Index



Source : [FAO](#)



## Favorable harvests despite a decrease in growth

According to the World Bank, economic activity in sub-Saharan Africa has dropped from 4.6 percent in 2014 to 3.4 percent in 2015, the weakest performance since 2009, on account of a combination of external shocks and internal constraints (WB, January 2016). The slowdown has been more pronounced for oil exporters such as Nigeria. In addition, the fall of the price of the barrel of oil to below 30 US dollars has weakened West Africa's largest economy and exporter. The drop of the Naira vis-à-vis the US dollar as well as inflation close to 10 percent in December 2015 are direct consequences.

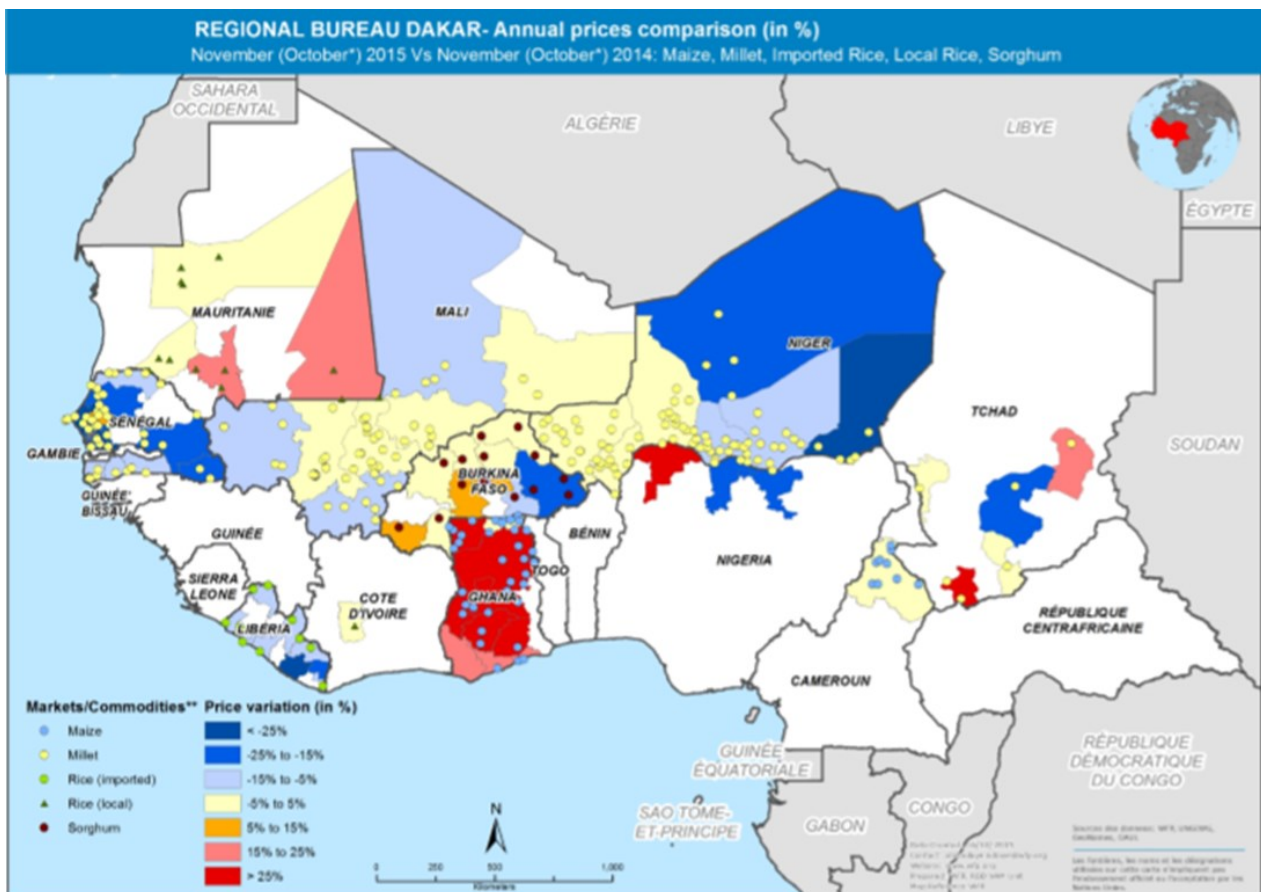
Additionally, the drop in the market price of raw materials such as minerals and metals also affected the economic growth of Mauritania, for example. The decrease in Chinese growth and demand for raw materials represent direct causes. Moreover, the Chinese customs bureau reports a 40 percent decrease in African imports in 2015 compared with 2014.

According to the Food Price Monitoring and Analysis Tool (FPMA) FAO bulletin, on account of increased country-level supplies, the price of millet and sorghum fell in November in most markets in Burkina Faso and Mali and remained stable

in Niger. Overall, the price of millet and sorghum was lower than the previous year in most markets in Burkina Faso and Mali, and remain stable in Niger (Figure 3). In Chad, coarse grain prices have continued to show contrasting trends in view of concerns over the 2015 harvest in several of the country's regions, especially the Sahelian belt. Millet prices increased by 56 percent in October, while those of sorghum progressed by 11 percent (FAO, GIEWS 2016).

In the coastal countries along the Gulf of Guinea, increased supply from good harvests in 2015 in the majority of production zones has pushed down coarse grain prices in most markets over the past months. In Kano, the biggest town in the north of Nigeria, coarse grain prices continued to fall in October. The price of millet and sorghum fell by 19 and 15 percent respectively between July and October. However, in Togo, despite the price of maize having decreased significantly in October, prices increased overall compared with a year ago after major increases recorded in the past months. In Togo, the high prices can be explained by the uncertain forecast for grain cultivation in 2015 on account of irregular rainfall, which could have a negative impact on crop growth (FAO, GIEWS 2016).

Figure 3 : Comparison (in %) of cereal prices from November 2015 compared to October 2014 – Maize, Millet, Rice and Sorghum



Source : WFP



## Food Security Impact

Despite good cereal availability in the region, cereal deficits were observed in the south of Guinea Bissau and Diffa in Niger

In **Cameroon**, because of growing insecurity on account of the Boko Haram insurgency, WFP began collecting food security data by mobile telephony (mVAM) in the three departments of the Extreme-North border with Nigeria in November 2015. A total of 546 households were surveyed for this first round, mainly internally displaced persons (IDPs), beneficiaries of WFP food distributions.

The results of this survey show that 67.8 percent of households have acceptable food consumption, higher than that of the EFSA (Emergency Food Security Assessment) in June 2015 (62 percent). Despite this slight increase in their food consumption score, 6 out of 10 households had difficulty feeding themselves because of the inaccessibility of food in quantity and quality. These households were therefore forced to adopt coping strategies such as relying on less preferred or less expensive food (86 percent of households), reducing the number of daily meals (72.5 percent), limiting portion sizes (68.3 percent) or restricting adults' consumption so that children can eat (65.9 percent) (mVAM, WFP Cameroon, November 2015).

Despite the availability of grain in the region, the 2015-2016 grain balance in **Guinea Bissau** shows almost no production of mangrove rice, the dominant culture of the country's southern regions and the coastal front on account of the floods in August and September 2015. In the region of Tombali, this disaster caused the flooding of 14,837 hectares

and the displacement of 40,000 people. However, given the results of the FSNMS (Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System), forecasts seem optimistic compared with the actual situation of households in 2015, especially in flooded areas (Gabu and Tombali), which have received no resilience building (WFP Guinea Bissau, January 2016).

**In Niger**, food availability and accessibility remain generally high during the post-harvest period. However, in the Diffa region, plagued by civil insecurity, of the 606 agricultural villages that make up the area, 394 recorded a grain deficit, i.e. 65 percent of agricultural villages. Estimates of fodder resources in Diffa are considered inferior to the needs of livestock whose market value and corpulence could negatively affect the incomes of pastoralist households from February/March 2016 (WFP Niger, January 2016).

In **Mali**, the increase in agricultural production will enable high grain availability in households and markets. Moreover, poor households affected by floods in the Circles of Kita, Kolokani, Macina, Nara, Tominian, San, Mopti, Nioro, Gao, Ménaka and Douentza will experience an early depletion of stocks because of crop failures. Poor pastoral households of Timbuktu and Gao who are experiencing a reduction in their livestock on account of high mortality rates during the last lean season and excessive sales in the recent years of recession will see their income decreasing during this year's lean season (FEWS NET).

## Calendars!



## Food Security Information in West Africa

[www.wfp.org/food-security](http://www.wfp.org/food-security)  
WFP Regional Bureau Dakar  
VAM Unit  
[rbd.vam@wfp.org](mailto:rbd.vam@wfp.org)

[www.fao.org/emergencies/crisis/sahel/en/](http://www.fao.org/emergencies/crisis/sahel/en/)

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- *Cadre Harmonisé* Technical Committee (CT-CH): 26-29 January 2016 in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)
- Market assessment missions Lake Chad basin: January 18 - February 12, 2016 (Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad)
- Market joint Assessment missions in West Africa / Sahel: January 31-February 18, 2016
- National workshops of *Cadre Harmonisé* Analysis (CH):
  - Coastal countries: 15 to 20 February 2016
  - Côte d'Ivoire: 14 - 20 March 2016
  - Nigeria: February 25 to March 1st, 2016 - consolidation at the federal level: March 3 to 4, 2016
  - Sahel countries: March 7 to 12, 2016
  - Cabo Verde: 15 - 20 February 2016
  - Burkina Faso: 22 - 26 February 2016
- Regional synthesis of CH in Accra (Ghana): March 21 to 26, 2016
- PREGEC meeting, Accra (Ghana): March 29 to 31, 2016
- RPCA meeting, Paris (France): April 13 to 15, 2016
- Regional Learning Workshop on Preparedness cash in Dakar, Senegal: November 30 to December 2 organized by the CaLP
- Training on market analysis tools in Niger: March 28 to April 1st, 2016 organized by the CaLP
- Training on level 2 in Burkina Faso : April 11 to 15, 2016 organized by the CaLP