Regional Highlights

Northern region

- Though majority of households in 88% of sentinel sites accessed food through their own production from last year, up to 35% of the population in the region is likely food insecure of which 13% is highly food insecure. These populations are characterized by low annual productivity, constrained income sources and heavy reliance on meager agricultural crops and occasional wage labour for food and income needs.

- The price of maize is very high in Tamale and most other markets in the region and as a result, it is currently 30% and 37% higher than the previous year and the five-year average respectively. Other markets like Damongo saw a 20% price increase between May and June 2011. The price of maize has also increased by 37% since March 2011. The arrival of new maize grain in August from bimodal rainy season areas of the south will likely drive down market price by 3-7%.

- Flooding is likely to occur in some communities along the banks of the Black Volta in the Northern Region between August and September particularly in Buipe where the level of the river remains very high from last year’s floods. If normal seasonal rainfall events occur, up to 30% of the people in that settlement could be displaced.

Upper East Region

- A recent baseline survey of WFP’s beneficiary communities in the region suggests that 26.7% of sampled households are highly food insecure while 34% are moderately food insecure. As reserves are increasingly depleted, a growing number of households are relying on purchased grains especially among communities which suffered deficit production from the previous harvest. The proportion of households relying on food purchases increased to 19% from 9% in May 2011. The food security situation of poor households will continue to worsen between now and early September when some grains may become available from an early harvest.

- The price of maize increased by 35.7% and 42.5% when compared to the five-year average and the previous year respectively in Bolgatanga. Wholesale maize prices are 42% higher than the five-year average in Bawku market and 20% higher than the previous year. The price of millet is higher by 50%, 4% and 14% when compared to prices for last year in Bolgatanga, Bawku and Navrongo respectively.

- The average price of a medium size goat is ₳38.3 and with the average price of a 2.5kg maize at 66 pesewas, the grain equivalence of a medium size goat is 58kg which is lower than the previous month. In May 2011, livestock-maize terms of trade in the region was 63.4 kg. The unfavourable terms of trade for livestock will strain food access among rural agro-pastoral households for the rest of the lean season.

Upper West

- A recent baseline survey of WFP’s beneficiary communities in the region suggests that 26% of households in the region are highly food insecure while 40.7% are moderately food insecure. As the lean season is already underway and food availability is gradually declining in the western part of the region, very high food prices will constrain poor households’ access. In eighty percent (80%) of reporting sentinel sites, majority of households have access to food from their own production, representing a 20 percentage point decrease from May 2011.

- The prices of maize are 74% and 80% above the five-year average in Tumu and Wa markets respectively. The current prices are also 68% above their level for June 2010 in both Tumu and Wa markets. The high price of maize grain which is uncharacteristic of market trends in Tumu has persisted since the beginning of the year, bringing the year-to-date increase in the price to 67%.
1.0 Seasonal Progress
Agro-meteorological conditions in northern Ghana were characterized by considerable spatial and temporal variability which tempered the smooth start to the growing season, thus increasing the likelihood of a delay in the arrival of new crops in many localities. In most parts of the Upper East and Upper West Regions, rainfall conditions were generally below normal when compared to the long-term average for June. Poor precipitation conditions also hindered normal planting and the germination of field crops such as maize and groundnuts in the western stretch of the Northern Region covering much of Central Gonja, West Gonja, East Gonja and Sawla-Tuna-Kalba (Figure 1).

In the key early millet growing areas of the Upper East Region comprising Talensi-Nabdam, Bongo and Bawku West, farmers were unable to plant the crop due to delay in the start of the rains and are likely to endure a prolonged lean season this year. The broader impact of the delay in the start of the season on the 35% of sentinel sites which reported poor growing conditions will likely be an increased pressure on their purchasing power to sustain food purchase longer than usual.

Most groundnuts planted in May are at the state of pegging and pod formation while maize is at the stage of tusseling. Crop maintenance activities such as weeding and application of fertilizer are currently underway in all parts of northern Ghana. Many farmers suffered the perennial delays of finding tractors to plough their fields which contributed to a delay to planting. Due to the poor rains at the start of the season, the area under cultivation is expected to decrease this year to as many fields could not be planted.

2.0 Food Security Summary
The food security situation in low grain producing areas of northern Ghana has deteriorated since the start of the lean season. A survey of communities benefiting from WFP’s programs in northern Ghana suggests 13% of the population in the Northern Region is highly food insecure while the incidence of high food insecurity is 31.3% and 26.7% in the Upper East and Upper West Regions respectively. The continued upward adjustment in the price of cereal grains, coupled with low purchasing power of households will restrict food purchases to income available through occasional sale of small animals, the gathering and sale of fuel wood and on-farm labour wages which are generally not sufficient to guarantee these households adequate access to food. The recent survey also revealed that 65% of rural households currently purchase a whole or part of their food for their household’s consumption.

Food security conditions during the rest of the year will be shaped by a number of scenarios as follows:
- An intensification of the rains is likely to cause deterioration in the conditions of roads to rural markets which could affect the free flow of goods between markets and may limit access to some essential commodities. Many communities in parts of the West Gonja and West Mamprusi districts living in the “overseas” areas could be cut off from the rest of the Northern Region as the volume of water in the White Volta River and other tributaries rises. Those communities will no longer be able to access basic health care and access markets to purchase or sell their produce;
- Flooding is likely to occur in some communities along the banks of the Black Volta in the Northern Region between August and September particularly in Buipe where the level of the river remains very high from last year’s floods. If normal seasonal rainfall events occur, up to 30% of the people in that settlement could be displaced;
• Households currently facing high food prices will experience a constrained access to food until late August and early September due to the likely delay in the arrival of new crops. Those households are likely to complement their food access through daily wage income, borrowing from wealthy neighbours and sale of small livestock;
• Maize grain harvest from the first season in bimodal south will arrive in August and will likely drive down the market prices of maize grain by 3-7% ;
• The occurrence of long dry spells between July and mid August could jeopardize harvest prospects for some crops as it could affect growth and development as well as the application of fertilizer.

2.1 Northern Region
The supply of food commodities from surplus producing areas of the region is providing major urban markets with competitive prices while bulk food traders continue to increase their inventories for sale to markets in southern Ghana. Though majority of households in 88% of sentinel sites currently have access to food from their own production from last year, up to 35% of the population in the region is currently food insecure of which 13% are highly food insecure. These populations are characterized by low annual productivity, constrained income sources and heavy reliance on meager agricultural crops and occasional wage labour for food and income needs. There could be a significant increase in the rate of stunting in some areas due to normal seasonal deterioration in food security conditions.

In spite of the large surplus production from last year, prices of food commodities continue to increase while the level of market activities remain high, thus signifying high market demand and brisk business for traders. Most poor households are purchasing their food in smaller quantities because of poor access to income at this time of the year. High prices of food stuffs will increase food insecurity in at-risk areas as households enter the peak of the lean season. The irregular spatial distribution of moisture at the start of the season could create localized areas of food production shortfalls particularly in parts of East Mamprusi, Tamale, West Mamprusi, Yendi, Bunkprugu, Nanumba North, Savelugu and Bole where 43% of sentinel sites reported unfavourable growing conditions. Evidence from satellite-based rainfall estimates also suggests that Sawla-Tuna-Kalba and East Gonja had severe moisture deficits.

Harvest of grains and tubers in the eastern part of the northern region should arrive earlier than other parts due to the early start of rains and their more favourable distribution since the start of the season. On the contrary, households in the western and northern parts of the region are at risk of food insecurity due to the sporadic rainfall pattern which characterized the start of the season.

The average price of a goat is ₡45.4 and with the average price of 2.5 kg maize at 66 pessawas, goat-maize grain terms of trade are favourable at 74.kg. This quantity of food will be enough to feed an average family of 5 for up to three weeks. This means that an average family which has run short of food will require an income equivalence of at least 4 medium size goats to guarantee access to food until the next harvest. Currently, labour-maize terms of trade at 6.4kg is comparable to the previous month.

2.2 Upper East Region
Household food stocks are dwindling as the lean season enters a crucial period when many poor households endure food rations and poor quality diet. Most households are expected to retain some food reserves during the peak of the lean season considering that 81% of households currently rely on stocks from the previous harvest. This represents a 7 percentage point decline from the previous month when 88% utilized stocks from their own harvest.

A recent survey in the region suggests that 26.7% of sampled households are highly food insecure while 34% are moderately food insecure. As reserves are increasingly depleted, a growing number of households are relying on purchased grain especially among communities which suffered deficit production from the previous harvest. Thus, the proportion of households relying on food purchases increased to 19% from 9% in May 2011. The main source of income of most rural household in reporting sentinel sites is the sale of livestock (47%) complemented with occasional sale of some agricultural crops. Women derive their income from the sale of artisanal craft, petty trade and scanty stocks of crops. Households that are reliant on the sale of small livestock currently face unfavourable terms of trade for livestock-maize grain. The average price of a medium size goat is ₡38.3 and with the average price of a 2.5kg of maize at 66 pesewas, the grain equivalence of a medium size goat is 58kg which is lower than the previous month. In May 2011, livestock-maize terms of trade in the region was 63.4 kg. The food security situation of poor households...
will continue to worsen between now and early September when some grains may become available from an early
harvest.

2.3 Upper West Region
Many parts of the region are moderately food insecure due to continuing access to stocks available from the previous season combined with inflow of grains from surplus producing areas in the eastern districts of the region. A recent survey of selected communities in the region suggests that 26% of households are highly food insecure while 40.7% are moderately food insecure. As the lean season is already underway and food availability is gradually declining, particularly in the western part of the region, very high food prices will constrain poor households’ access. In eighty percent (80%) of reporting sentinel sites, majority of households have access to food from their own production, representing a 20 percentage point decrease from May 2011. Households’ income sources have also dwindled and reliance on the sale of agricultural crops as a source of income has declined to 60% from 69% in May. The impact of high cereal grain prices coupled with low capacity to generate income is reducing food access for very poor households as they are compelled to reduce the quantity of food consumed while quality suffers. The range of coping strategies used by households including gathering and sale of wood and daily labour wages may not be sufficient for these households’ food requirements and high food insecurity will likely persist among poor households.

The month long delay in the start of normal season planting in most areas is likely to contribute to further upward adjustment in price as depleted household grains are complemented by erratic market supplies due to poor road conditions. The combined effects of these factors could potentially cause supply shortages in some places. While 32% of sentinel sites are concerned about the poor progress of the season, 39% are equally concerned about rains having been generally poor this year. Labour-grain terms of the trade are the region 8.7kg, representing a slight increase from May 2011. The terms of trade for goat-maize grain in June remained comparable to May 2011. This is likely the result of an adjustment in the price of small livestock and a similar increase in the price of maize grain.

3.0 Price trends and marketing activities
3.1 Northern Region
Large inflows of maize grain, millet and groundnuts continue to arrive from Gusheigu, Damongo, Yendi and as far as Zabzugu and Saboba which remain key supply markets to Tamale. As rains increase in intensity, the road network to rural markets is likely deteriorate. This will constrain the smooth flow of grains between markets, thereby driving up the prices. Large quantities of grains were off-loaded into the market in June by farmers to meet the expenditure on inputs, cost of farm labour for planting, initial land preparation and weeding. Majority of tradable stocks are now in the hands of market traders and grain vendors who have stored these with the hope of making higher profit in future.

The price of maize is very high in Tamale and most other markets in the region and as a result, it is 30% and 37% higher than the previous year and the five-year average respectively (Figure 2). Other markets like Damongo saw a 20% increase between May and June. The price of maize has also increased by 37% since March 2011. The prices of cereal grains are likely to peak in June and begin to trend downwards in July if the seasonal outlook remains promising.

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3.2 Upper East Region
The price of various grains have been on a rising trend since April 2011 raising concerns about market accessibility for poor households whose income sources are currently constrained. The price of maize has increased by 35.7% and 42.5% when compared to the five-year average and the previous year in Bolgatanga (Figure 3). Wholesale maize prices are 42% higher than the five-year average in Bawku market and 20% higher than the previous year.

Maize grains are continuing to arrive from Nalerigu, Langbinsi, Walewale and Gusheigu in the Northern Region where prices are relatively lower. The start of the muslim fasting month in August is likely to drive up the price of millet due to increased utilization of the grain for pouridge during fasting. On account of the current downward trend in the supply of cereals and drawing down of household food reserves, prices are unlikely to decline significantly until newly harvested grains become available.

The price of millet is higher by 50%, 4% and 14% when compared to prices for last year in Bolgatanga, Bawku and Navrongo. Similarly, sorghum prices compared to the five-year average in Bolgatanga, Bawku and Navrongo. These price are generally expected to remain high until new stocks arrive from the next harvest in October.

3.3 Upper West Region
The prices of maize are 74% and 80% above the five-year average in Tumu and Wa markets respectively. The current prices are also 68% above their level for June 2010 in both Tumu and Wa markets. The high prices of maize grain which is uncharacteristic of market activities in Tumu has persisted since the beginning of the year, bringing the year-to-date increase in the price of maize to 67% (Figure 4).

Market reports suggest that the bulk of the market purchase of maize grains is exported to Cote d’Ivoire to meet the food needs of displaced persons in the Ivorian conflict. It is expected that the purchase of maize grain from these regional markets will ease considerably by mid August when new grains becomes available from the first season harvest in bimodal rainy season areas of Brong Ahafo and the Ashanti Regions.

Figure 3. Price of maize in Bolgatanga market
Source: MoFA/SRID

Figure 4. Price of maize in Tumu market
Source: MoFA/SRID
4.0 Health and Nutrition
The nutritional status of selected children less than two (2) years of age in the Northern, Upper West and Upper East Regions were assessed using the Weight-For-Age (WFA) indicator. Data was gathered from thirteen (13) selected health institutions in eight (8) districts close to the respective Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) sentinel sites in the three northern regions.

The information was gathered during growth monitoring sessions carried out by the Ghana Health Service (GHS) at outreach points of these health centres. The data is therefore from individuals who are patronizing children health services so there is an element of self-targeting. The percentages of these underweight children examined (95% CI) shows the combined effects of acute and chronic malnutrition as in Figure 5. The graph compares the nutritional status of children between peak of the lean (June) and harvest (November) season of northern Ghana from 2008 to 2011.

4.1 Observation
Generally, the levels of underweight are lower during the harvest season months as compared to the levels in the lean season. Between November 2010 and June 2011, the levels of underweight of children in the Upper West and Northern regions shows a decrease, whilst an increase is observed for the Upper East Region. This needs close monitoring as we move towards the peak of the lean season months of July and August.

Figure 5. Level of underweight during the lean and harvest seasons
Source: GHS/MOH