Food security and humanitarian implications in West Africa and the Sahel

September 2011

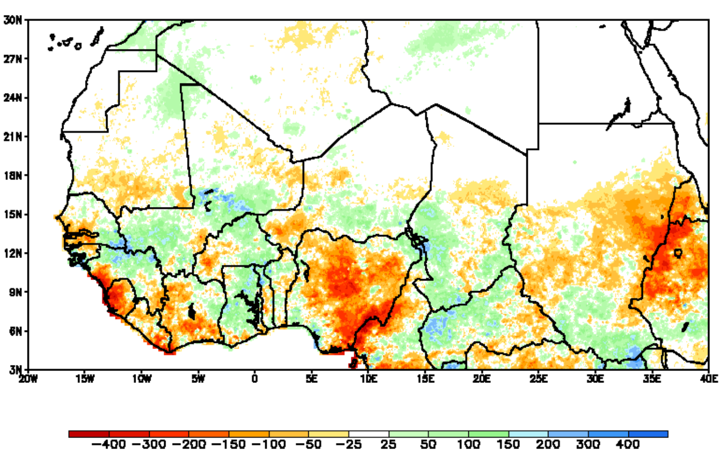
Key points

- Average and uneven harvests are expected in the Sahel; worst case scenario probability and response capacity should be assessed
- Coarse grain market disruption due to erratic rainfall
- The Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan Cote d'Ivoire +4 and Liberia –and especially livelihood recovery projects- are underfunded

Uneven harvest levels forecasted

The regional meeting about agricultural and food security outlook in West Africa and the Sahel (from 14 to 16 September in Banjul) described the 2011 agro-pastoral season as follows: **erratic of rainfall, which came early in some areas and late in some others, followed by localized dry spells**, stretching into the 1st decade of August. The return of normal rainfall as from the 2nd decade of August enabled the definitive start of the growing season.

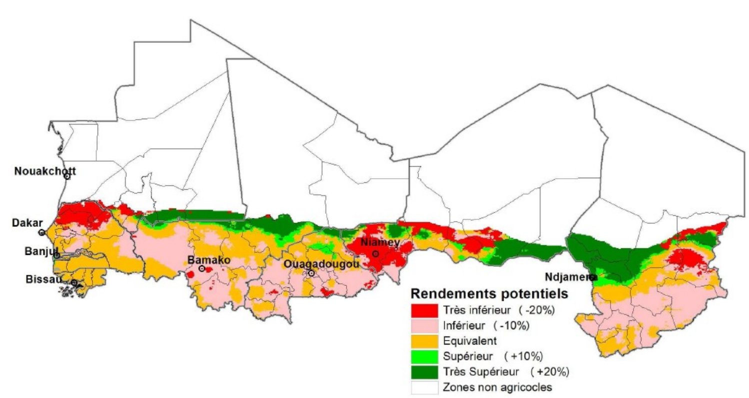
Figure 1 : Precipitation anomaly in West Africa, May 1-September 26, 2011



Source : NOAA

The **zones most affected by irregular rainfall are: Western Mali, Eastern and Northern Senegal, Southern Mauritania, Western Niger, the Sahelian zone of Chad and Northern Nigeria**. In these areas, planting activities were delayed for over one month. Moreover, although the rainfalls restart since mid-August, deficits continued in coastal countries (from Senegal to Cote d'Ivoire). Favorable growing conditions have been observed in other regions and if this trend continues, a good harvest would be expected in these regions. Therefore **average and uneven harvests are expected in the area** (figure 2).

Figure 2 : Grain yield expected , should the 2011 rainfall forecasts be confirmed



Source : Agrhymet

In terms of hydrology, cumulative water flow at the end of August reflect shortfalls for most monitored stations, with the exception of Niamey which showed a surplus in cumulative water flow.

***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, WFP and FAO provide the group with highlights on the food security situation of the previous month. This document describes key elements developped during this meeting.*

Uneven harvest levels forecasted

Should the rains stop early, water levels could be significantly below normal. Such a situation would jeopardize the flood recession agriculture and the water access for off-cycle crop opportunities.

On the whole, most crops are now at the stages ranging from elongation to heading, and in some cases (maize, millet and cowpea), harvesting of green crops has already started.

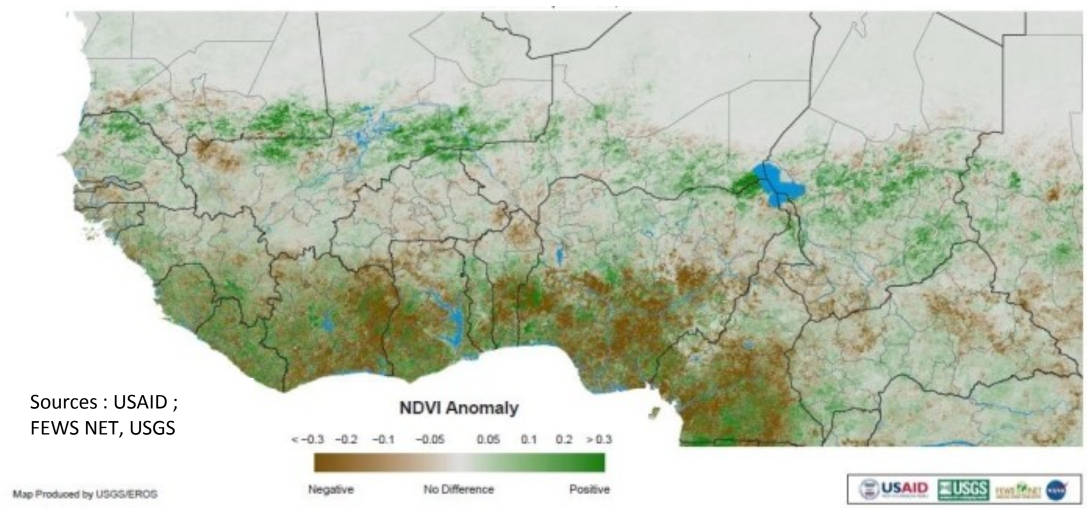
In the light of the progress of the growing season, **cereal production trends for all countries in the Sahel and West Africa region would be between 43 and 52 million tons**. For the CILSS countries, production figures would be in the range of 15 to 17 million tons whilst those for UEMOA would be between 16 and 17 million tons and those for ECOWAS countries between 41 and 50 million tons. These trends give an idea of production prospects, depending on the rainy season's end.

The pastoral situation is good except in areas where the onset of rainfall has been delayed and followed by localized dry spells: the areas of Tahoua (Madaoua, Konni, Keita, Bouza and Tchintabaraden), Tillabery and Dosso (southern part of Dogondoutchi and parts of Dosso, Gaya and Loga) in Niger have been affected. Eastern, central-northern, northern Burkina Faso and Mouhoun also experienced a delay in rainfall as did northern Kayes and Koulikoro in Mali, the Mauritania-Mali and Mauritania-Senegal borders (figure 3), Bakel, Kanel, Ranerou, Linguere and Matam in Senegal and Ouaddai Assongha and the central Chad Sahel as well.

Floods have been reported in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Niger and Nigeria but the extent of damage on crops and livestock needs to be assessed.

Regarding the **desert locust situation**, good rains in breeding areas have maintained breeding ecological conditions. Low numbers of solitarious adults were present in parts of southern, central and western Mauritania, northern Mali and western and northern Niger. Locusts in low numbers were also probably present in eastern Chad. Breeding occurred in southern-west Mauritania and western Niger, was probably underway in other countries and will cause locust numbers to increase.

Figure 3 : Normalized Difference Vegetation Index anomaly, 6-15 September 2011



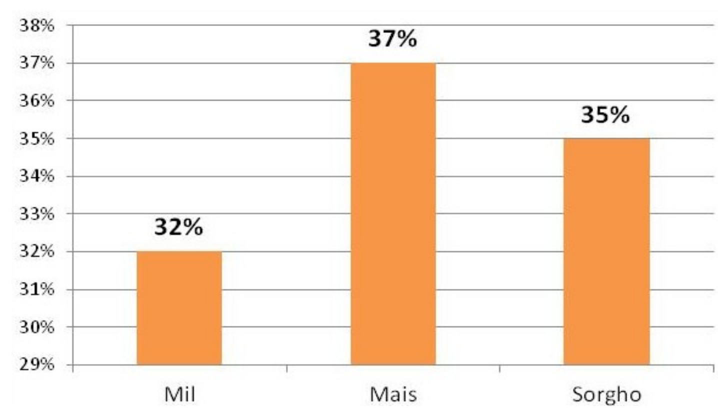
Sources : USAID ; FEWS NET, USGS

Grain market disruption due to erratic rainfall

According to SIMA, anomalies are noted in millet prices are following to in parts of Niger. Due to the rainfall uncertainty in some areas, wholesalers have withheld their stocks in July-August. In August, the millet prices were higher than last year at the same period on markets: Tillabery (+4%), Niamey (+3%) and Dosso (+2%). Also in western Niger, SIMA reports a decrease in maize imports from Burkina Faso, reducing the availabilities in this area. Over the last weeks, the Naira strengthened. In September the Naira appreciated by 6% against the FCFA, strengthening the purchase power of traders based in Nigeria.

The Senegal has been also affected by erratic rainfall and the grain price to producers is higher than last year. In Kaolack, millet producer prices are 32% higher than in August 2010. Producer prices for maize and the sorghum are 37% and 35% higher respectively than last year at the same period. In spite of this rise, the coarse grain prices remain below the record levels reached in 2007 and 2008. Due to a higher demand, the Ramadan may have impacted grain prices in August. Grain prices will be closely monitored in the groundnut producing basin in so far as the area is a great grain supplier for the river valley in Senegal and in Mauritania. In the meantime the local and imported rice price remains stable in Senegal.

Figure 4: Grain producer prices trend in Kaolack (Sénégal)

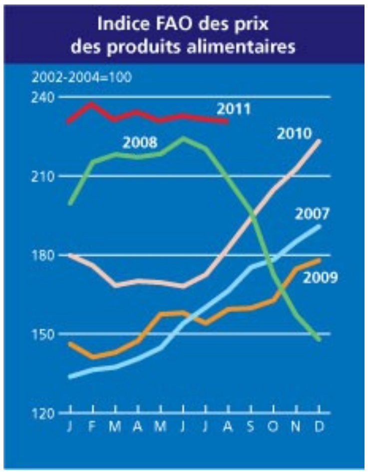


Source : données SIM Sénégal

High food prices but good cash crops prospects

The FAO Food Price Index averaged 231 points in August 2011, nearly unchanged from July and 26% higher than in August 2010 (figure 5). The FFPI hit its all time high of 238 points in February. Firmer cereal prices in August were largely offset by declines in international prices of most other commodities included in the index, oils and dairy in particular. Maize prices –an increasingly imported food item in the area- rose sharply in August, reflecting further deterioration in this year’s crop prospects in the United States.

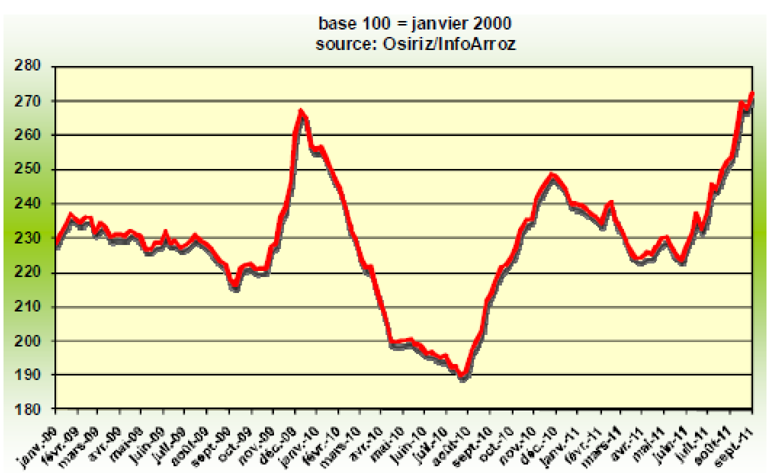
Figure 5 : FAO Food Price Index



Source: FAO

In August, **world prices increased again due to uncertainties about future export supply** (figure 6), especially in India. The new policy to support domestic prices in Thailand also tends to strongly weight on international prices. Moreover, this measure may enter in effect before the expected. According to InterRice, with the perspective of a sharp high in Thai prices, importers have looked for alternative suppliers, leading prices to grow in all markets, including those from the West Hemisphere. India’s return to the non-fragrant export market is gradually happening. India’s export supply may be smaller than the projected.

Figure 6 : International Prices Index (source : InterRice)

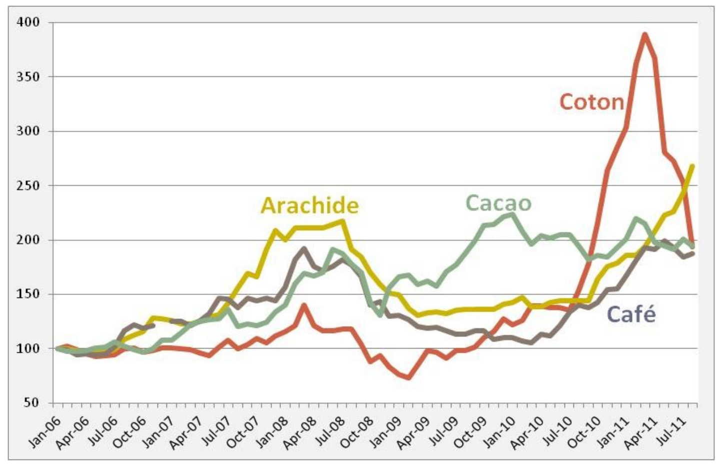


Until September 2011, **the summer’s debt crisis had not significantly affected some of agricultural raw material prices**. Their prices remain high as revealed by the FAO index.

Crude oil prices are around $ 80 in New York, slightly lower than the maximum reached in 2011.

Cash crops –of importance for West Africa such as cotton, groundnut, coffee and cocoa- international prices remain favorable compared to the average. In 2011 to date, cotton has been very volatile. According to a recent WFP report, in the West of Cote d’Ivoire, the farm gate cocoa price ranges from 600 to 650 FCFA/kg. Although this price is lower than 2010 exceptional year, it is still attractive for producers.

Figure 7 : Most cash crops price trend in West Africa (index = 100 in January 2006)



Source : PAM, data indexmundi.org

In Senegal, the government stated that they would not support the groundnut market due to its high international price. Therefore it is expected that farm gate prices are favorable to producers in 2011.

On retail market in **Conakry**, the local and the imported rice are sold at 6 450 FG and 5 100 FG respectively, levels that are 20% higher than last year.
After relying on a non-market supply strategy at the beginning of 2011, the Guinean government has decided to work with a group of private traders since June. The amount of imported rice has stabilized the market, at high prices. In Guinea Bissau, the government is supplying the local market with imported rice.

The imported rice market remains disrupted in **Liberia**. In August, imported rice price increased by 38% in Monrovia and in Saclepea (Nimba County) compared to last year. However, the increase is less important in Pleebo (Maryland, due to cross-border trade with Cote d’Ivoire). According to the Liberian Ministry of Agriculture, the re-export of imported rice to the Guinea continues to impact on the national market.

Food security: concerns in the Sahel and a difficult lean season in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire

In **Niger**, a study has been jointly conducted by the government and the humanitarian partners between November 2010 and April 2011 in 14 agro-pastoral departments (*box 1, p5*). This study shows the impact of fodder deficit on poor households who have had to activate coping mechanisms, compromising their food security. The study recommends emergency plans for rehabilitation and livelihood recovery. Prevention actions are also recommended.

In **Mauritania**, according to the Commission for Food Security and humanitarian partners, 21% of households –that is 428,000 people - are said to be food insecure and 8% among them have poor food consumption in terms of frequency and diversity. Compared to last year at the same period (26.5%), the situation slightly improved. In Hodh, Gorgol, Guidimaka, Assaba and Tagant food insecurity levels remains similar to last year at the same period. However the situation in Tagant heavily improved although this area remains the third most affected area in Mauritania. The food security remains better in urban areas than in rural ones. The food insecurity main reasons are: the lean season (low local production), the market dependency, the high food prices and low households incomes. The food security situation is likely to deteriorate due to the rainfall deficit, the agricultural campaign uncertainty, the pastoral situation development and high food prices.

In **Cote d'Ivoire**, a recent WFP assessment in the west of the country shows that although the population living on the Danane-Zouan Houye-Bin Houye axis returned in time to plant upland rice and access cash crops plantation, return of displaced persons has been slower for population around Toulepleu-Guiglo due to tensions between communities and land tenure disputes. Markets are increasingly functional in the area, which is encouraging. With the start of the cocoa harvest coupled with the demand, increases in prices for cassava and daily labour, families will have access to basic income, easing their recovery.

In Liberia, the rise of imported rice prices, combined with Ivorian refugees' presence undermined food access for daily laborers. Terms of trade deteriorated for laborers in Monrovia by 23% compared to last year. This deterioration is attributed to rising rice prices. In Saclepea (Nimba County), the deterioration reached 35% in August. The deterioration is also due to the Ivorian refugees' participation in the labor market. Nevertheless, in Zwedru (Grand Gedeh County) the terms of trade deteriorated to a lesser extent (7% compared to August 2010).

Table1 : Terms of trade , rice-daily wage, kg of rice. August 2010 and August 2011.

Marchés	Août 2010	Août 2011	Activité
Bo waterside	4.5	4.7	Agriculture
Buchanan	6.0	4.3	Construction
Gbarnga	2.9	2.4	Agriculture
Red Light	6.0	4.6	Construction
Saclepea	3.4	2.2	Agriculture
Voinjama	3.1	2.8	Agriculture
Zwedru	5.3	4.9	Agriculture

Source : Liberia Market Price Monitor

Underfunded Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia

As of September 22, **178 035 people** have been registered by HCR in Liberia (the breakdown is as follows: 53,174 in Nimba, 76,331 in Grand Gedeh, 36,103 in Maryland, 11,560 in River Gee and 352 in Montserrado), showing a slight increase of refugees registration probably due to security incidents which still occur in Cote d'Ivoire. As of September 21, 32 056 refugees have been resettled in official camps.

By contrast, humanitarian partners in Cote d'Ivoire report that people have started to return in more secure areas. The most recent figures indicate there are a total of 29 219 total IDPs registered nationally in official sites. In addition to IPDs in sites, WFP is presently assisting approximately 185 000 returned IDPs and 300 000 returned refugees in the West. As of September 23, the EHAP Liberia is funded at 48% (OCHA).

On September 6, a joint mission (UNHCR, NRC, IOM and CARE) visited villages close to Guiglo and Blolequin to assess the return conditions. The mission reports that the returnees' number increased after the Tripartite Agreement signature. 300 families returned to their villages of origin (Gama and Guere). The mission also reported a lack of shelter item, food and non food items and drinking water. As of September 23, the EHAP Cote d'Ivoire is funded at 28% (OCHA).

Box 1 : Assessment of the 2009/2010 patoral crisis impact

In Niger, an assessment on the 2009/2010 pastoral crisis impact has been conducted by the government between November 2010 and April 2011 in 14 agro-pastoral departments. 2,492 households divided on 180 sites have been surveyed.

This joint assessment –FAO, FEWS NET, INS Niger, Oxfam, UNDP, WFP and EWS- shows that all the households have been affected by hardship sales, with small herders have been the most affected (90% loss of cattle for that group). The 2009/2010 agro-pastoral crisis resulted in the loss of 4,851,041 animals of all species that is 26% of the livestock in the study area. Among this overall loss, sheep account for 38.6%, goat 31.3%, cattle 25.5%, camels 2.6%, donkeys 1.8% and horses 0.2%.

Conclusions

- Regardless of the agro-pastoral season outcome, **uneven harvests are expected** in some Chad and Niger areas on the one hand and in Mauritania and Senegal on the other hand. Some disrupted markets will be closely monitored.
- Due to the **underfunded Cote d'Ivoire Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan**, agencies are facing difficulties in meeting vulnerable population's needs especially for livelihoods recovery plans in affected conflict areas at a crucial period.

Recommendations for the regional food security and nutrition working group

Measures	Advantages
Support the harvest assessment process in Niger, Nigeria, Chad, in the western basin countries and in Libéria	Agricultural production are known and early warnings are flagged on time
Assessment of worst case scenario probability and response capacity in the Sahel	Prevention actions are taken on time
Fund the Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan (EHAP) Côte d'Ivoire + 4, the Liberia EHAP and the 2011 CAP	The needs of vulnerable households and people affected by post-election crisis are better covered
Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia: monitor the cross-border food and nutrition situation and the refugees' intentions to return	The food and nutrition situation is updated and the assistance needs as well

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