Regional Highlights

Northern Region

- Food security conditions have been bolstered significantly following the widespread harvest of grains and the consequent decrease in the market prices of staple grains which contributes to improvement in household food access and consumption.
- Most households in all reporting sentinel sites in the region were mainly reliant on own-produced grain, implying a significant increase from the previous month when 79% of sentinel sites relied on their own-produced food stocks. Consequently daily meal consumption has improved drastically, with 95% of sentinel sites now consuming 3 meals per day as compared to 86% in September.

Upper East Region

- Food security conditions have been bolstered by the harvest of grains from August through to September and October, contributing to an increase in the percentage of households relying on own-produced grain from 70% to 100%.
- The improvement in household food access has aided an increase in household food consumption as 86% of reporting sentinel sites consumed three meals per day in October as compared to 71% in September.
- With a 100kg bag of maize currently selling at GH¢ 55, the price of maize is now at its lowest level since the beginning of the current year.

Upper West Region

- There is significant evidence that household access to food has improved tremendously thanks to increased stocks from the on-going harvest as most households in most reporting sentinel sites relied on their own production in October as compared to 78% in September.
- The proportion of sentinel sites which consumed three meals a day was 50% which is comparable to the situation during the previous month. Market availability of cowpea, maize and yam is very high as these crops have been widely harvested. On the other hand, the availability of millet, sorghum and rice remains low as these crops have not yet been harvested.
- In October 2012, a 100kg bag of maize which sold for GH¢ 57 was lower than the previous year by 19% and higher than the five year average by 92%.

Brong Ahafo Region

- The primary source of food in 73% of reporting sentinel sites is households’ own grain reserves whilst a fifth of those communities are reliant on cash purchases to secure their food consumption.
- The current food security trends are characterized by an increase in the proportion of sentinel sites where most households consume three meals a day: sixty-eight percent of sentinel sites consumed 3 meals in October as compared to 38% in September.

Volta Region

- Food security conditions in reporting sentinel sites of the region remain favourable, with 79% of these sites reliant on food from their own production. However, fewer households (43%) than the other four regions are consuming three meals a day, implying that food consumption is relatively constrained in many of the sentinel sites.
- Food crop sale is the main source of income among men in 86% of sentinel sites while 14% are dependent on the sale of cash crops. Among women however, food crop sale is reported in 57% of sentinel sites, followed by a small business and petty trade both at 14%.
1.0 Normal end of season rain

Precipitation conditions in northern Ghana as well as Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions were favourable during the month of October, giving a boost to yields of late maturing crops such as millet, sorghum, rice and soya beans. The exception was the northwestern part of the Karaga District, the northern part of the Gushegu District as well as the southern parts of the East Mamprusi and Bunkprugu-Yunyoo Districts where there were clear signs of moisture stress. Such poor conditions at a critical point in the season may have affected the yield of late maturing crops.

The generally favourable agro-meteorological condition across the five regions are likely to contribute to slight increase in agricultural production over the previous years as yields for rice, millet, sorghum and soya bean could likely increase. The impact of favourable rains in October could vary from region to region as some regions such as the Upper East usually plant early maturing varieties of late millet which do not require so much rainfall during the stage of seed development. Most rice cultivating areas in northern Ghana are expected to record normal yields, along with average yields for soya beans which could have a significant impact on households’ access to income and food.

2.0 Food Security Summary

Food security conditions are showing signs of significant improvement as the widespread harvest of staple grains have aided the recovery of households from constrained access to food which characterized the greater part of the lean season which lasted until August. The increase in the market supply of grains along with improved household level stocks has caused a downward trend in the price of maize. The reduction in market prices is likely to aid more urban households to increase their access to food staples as well as increase the diversity of food types consumed. The proportion of household which are reliant on market purchases to meet their food needs has declined drastically in all reporting sentinel sites with most households currently utilizing stocks from their own production. In all, 91% of sentinel sites in the five regions were utilizing their own-produced grain in October as compared to 86% for September 2012. The proportion of households relying on own-production stocks were 100% for Northern Region, 100% for Upper East, 100% for Upper West, 73% for Brong Ahafo Region and 79% for Volta Region.

The increased reliance on own-produced grain means that households are able to consume a higher number of meals than in the previous month. In all 72% of households consumed 3 meals a day in October as compared to 63% in September. The improving trend in households’ food consumption is also associated with a decrease in the proportion of households relying on market purchases from 10% in September to 7% in October. The proportion of households consuming 1 meal a day went from 2% in September to 0% in October. However, the proportion of households relying on casual labour has remained unchanged over the period.

Over the past 3 months, the market price of staple grains such as maize has been on a decline, leading to an improvement in food access for urban and some rural households. The nominal wholesale price of 100kg bag of maize in Tamale market decreased by 40% between August and September, but remained stable between September and October. In Bolgatanga market, the decline in maize price between September and October was 38%, with a marginal decrease of 7% in Tumu market. The decrease in prices over the past few months is likely to continue as major grains harvest in November and December will further increase market supply and contribute to further reduction in market prices. Although the current prices remain high for poor household, the downward trend in prices will likely improve general access to grains.

2.1 Northern Region

Food security conditions have been bolstered by the ongoing harvest and improving market supply of grains leading to a decrease in the market prices which further contributes to household food access and consumption. Most households in all sentinel sites were mainly reliant on own-produced grain reserves in October as compared to 79% of sentinel sites in September, suggesting complete recovery from the lean season and significant restocking of reserves. Fifty-two (52%) percent of sentinel sites had about 50% to 100% of their required household stocks for the year. This represent a significant increase from September when only 26% had 50% to 100% of their normal post-harvest stocks. The onset of crop harvest has provided agricultural households with income generating avenues through crop sale which makes 81% of income source for men. Women on the other hand are less reliant on crop sale (48%), but tend to have a more diverse range of income earning activities which include casual labour, charcoal production and petty trade. As a result, daily meal consumption has improved drastically, with 95% of sentinel sites now eating 3 meals per day as compared to 86% in September. Market availability of major food crops such as cowpea, maize and yam is good in October 2012 FSNMS Bulletin
reporting sentinel sites while the availability of millet and sorghum is generally low as the major harvest of these crops has not yet taken place.

Like the month of September, up 95% of sentinel sites across the Northern Region experienced favourable precipitation conditions that favoured flowering and seed development of late maturing millet, sorghum and other crops. With no reports of dry spells, pest and diseases, the favourable seasonal moisture conditions are generally expected to contribute to improved yields of millet, sorghum, cowpea, soya bean and rice over the previous year.

2.2 Upper East Region
Food security conditions have improved significantly in the region since August when household stocks started to increase. As grain harvest continued from September through October, the percentage of households relying on their own-produced grain increased from 70% to 100%. The favourable trend in household food availability has helped to improve household food consumption as 86% of reporting sentinel sites consumed three meals per day in October as compared to 71% in September. Food security conditions are generally expected to remain favourable through the harvest period of November and December as well as in January and February of 2013.

Unlike the other regions, the sale of agricultural production is not one of the main sources of income for both men and women. In fact, the sale of livestock and artisan craft are the main sources of income among men and women respectively. Seasonal conditions towards the end of the agricultural season were satisfactory in the region with all reporting sentinel sites observing a normal crop development and are expecting better than average crop harvest.

The favourable seasonal growing conditions and harvest of staple crops has restored the food consumption pattern of households, enabling access to 3 meals per day in 86% of sentinel sites and general reliance on own-produced food stocks in all sentinel sites. Harvest conditions have also gradually helped to increase the market availability of cowpea, maize, sorghum, millet and rice. The availability of millet is expected to improve further with the harvest of late crops in November and December.

2.3 Upper West Region
There is significant evidence that household access to food has improved tremendously thanks to increased stocks from the on-going harvest. In general, 100% of reporting sentinel sites relied on their own production as the primary sources of food. The on-going harvest has also given a boost to the reliance on food crop sale as the major source of income among men in 80% of sentinel sites in the region. While women also rely on food crop sale as their main source of income, the magnitude of their dependence is much lower, with other activities such as cash crops, livestock stock sale and small business contributing to the sources of income of women.

The proportion of sentinel sites which consumed three meals a day was 50% with another 50% consuming 2 meals per day. Market availability of cowpea, maize and yam is very high as these crops have been widely harvested. On the other hand, the availability of millet, sorghum and rice remains low as these crops have not yet been harvested. Agricultural labour to maize terms of trade was 8.5kg in October which is comparable to the previous month.

The terms of for a medium size goat and maize terms of trade is 78kg while sheep to maize terms of trade is 118kg providing favourable terms of trade for agro-pastoral households. Following the completion of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha, the price of sheep has declined and as more harvest of new grains bring down prices leading to a decline in both the sheep to maize terms of trade and goat to maize terms of trade could decrease temporarily.

2.4 Brong Ahafo Region
The primary source of food in 73% of reporting sentinel sites is their own grain reserves whiles a fifth of those sites are reliant on cash purchases to secure their food consumption. The current stocks in some parts of the region are likely to be complemented further by additional harvest from the minor season, giving further boost to food access and household food security. The current food security trends are characterized by an increased proportion of sentinel sites where most households consume three meals a day: Sixty-eight (68%) percent of sentinel sites consumed 3 meals in October as compared to 38% in September. As the harvest of roots and tubers is currently on-going in most parts of the Savannah agro-ecological zone, cassava is one of the most widely available food items in markets with 93.4% of
sentinel sites mentioning good market ability of this commodity. The market supply of other staples such as maize, yam and rice is generally normal to above normal in over 80% of sentinel sites.

Sentinel sites in the region, which are mostly located in the northern borders reported normal rainfall conditions for the month of October which was the start of the minor season in some of the bimodal rainfall areas. These normal conditions very likely generated sufficient moisture conditions which favoured the planting and cultivation of second season crops. This is in sharp contrast to the previous month when 80%, 40% and 53% of sentinels reported dry spells, pest and diseases and shortage of labour as major constraints to agricultural activities. Income from the sale of agricultural crops constitutes a major source of cash earnings for men. Similarly, income from food crops is also a common source of income among women, but to a lesser extent, as women have more diversified range of income generating activities that include small businesses, and vegetable production.

2.5 Volta Region
Sentinel sites reporting on access to food in the region are generally favourable, with 79% of these sites reliant on food from their own production. However, fewer households (43%) than the other four regions consume three meals a day, implying that food consumption is relatively constrained in many of the sentinel sites.

Food crop sale is the main source of income among men in 86% of sentinel sites while 14% are dependent on the sale of cash crops such as cocoa. Among women however, food crop sale is reported in 57% of sentinel sites, followed by small business and petty trade in 14% for both. About 50% of sentinel sites observed that only 20% of the post-harvest stocks are currently available, up from 43% in September, implying that stock levels are generally low across the southern Savannah agro-ecological zone of that region. Consequently, in 43% of sentinel sites, most households consumed 2 meals a day as compared to 67% for September.

The market availability of cassava improved drastically in October with 100% of sentinel sites reporting normal to above normal market availability, up by 19% from September. The market availability of maize and yam remained similar to the previous month.

3.0 Price trends and marketing activities

3.1 Northern Region
The commencement of seasonal harvest of maize and other grains has improved the market supply of major food staples and caused prices to decrease. The price of maize has been on a downward trend since June 2012, thanks to the favourable agro-meteorological conditions and the average to above average harvest is contributing to the current downward price trend. With the price of maize its level 2011 level, it is 30% higher than the five-year average price. Apart from maize, the market price of other staple such as yam has been on a decline over the past three months. With better yields for most crops than the previous year, prices of cereals are expected to follow a normal trend during the harvest period of November and December when further price decreases are highly likely. These conditions will favour improved access to food by poor rural and urban households who have endured high food prices for the greater part of the current year. The prices of other cereals such as millet and sorghum have not witnessed any decrease as the major harvest not commenced and market supply has not improved.
3.2 Upper East Region
The high price trend which characterizes the market of cereal grains in Bolgatanga market is beginning to ease as the harvest of new grains increases market supply, causing prices to decrease. The price of maize is now at its lowest level since the beginning of the current year after a 38 percentage point decrease from September. A 100kg bag of maize is currently selling at GH¢ 55 which reflects seasonal improvement in the market supply of maize. The price of maize is however higher than the five year average by 49%. As further harvest of late maturing cereals and tubers is expected in November and December, decreases in the prices of major staples is mostly likely as market supply is expected to increase.

The decrease in the price of cereals will help poor urban households to increase their access and consumption of basic staples. Daily labour employment opportunities are also likely to increase as a result of the on-going harvest and preparation of grains, potentially improving the purchasing power of some households.

3.3 Upper West Region
The market supply for major stables such as maize in Tumu market has been generally stable since June 2012 than in the other markets of the three northern regions. As the main supply hub for many staples to markets in the Upper East Region and parts of the Upper West Region, maize prices have been consistently lower than the previous year since June 2012. In October 2012, a 100kg bag of maize which sold for GH¢ 57 was lower than the previous year by 19% and higher than the five year average by 92%. The favourable market supply situation of maize in particular has been aided by the better yields as compared to the previous year reduced market demark from markets in the southern part of Ghana.

As compared to the previous month, the price of maize went up by 7% in Wa market, but decreased by 7%, 5% and 10% in Tumu, Lawra and Bugubelle respectively. The price of other cereals such as millet on the other hand continue to increase in other major markets in the region as supply of this grain remains relatively low across all markets. The wholesale price of 93kg bag of millet increased by 20%, 21% and 40% in Wa, Tumu and Lawra markets from the previous month. Thanks to improved market supply, the price of other important food crops such as cowpea has decreased by 3%, 15% and 12% in Wa, Tumu and Lawra markets respectively.
4.0 Health and Nutrition

The nutritional status of selected children under five (5) 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 sixteen (16) selected health institutions in twelve (12) districts close to the respective Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) sentinel sites in the three regions of northern Ghana. In the Upper East and Northern Regions, data were obtained from 60% of the sentinel sites and 40% in the Upper West Region.

The Information was gathered during growth monitoring sessions carried out by personnel of the Ghana Health Service (GHS) at outreach points of these health centres. The data is therefore from individuals who are patronizing child 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 shown by figure 4 -which compares the nutritional status of children in the month of November for the past 5 years in northern Ghana from 2008 to 2012 to the peak period of June of the respective years.

Observation:

Generally, the levels of underweight are lower as compared to figures recorded at the same time in 2010 and 2011. All the regions recorded drastic decreases in underweight as compared to the peak rates in June, 2012. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that most households have harvested their farm produce and there is some level of food sufficiency at the household level.