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 developed during this meeting.

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

**Key Points**

- After a late start, rains have allowed crops to develop
- Prices remain high in the Sahel particularly in Niger, Nigeria, Benin, Mali and Burkina Faso
- The lean season continues, and the poorest households face difficulties accessing adequate food

**Agro pastoral campaign 2013-2014**

Rainfall deficits observed in June and July in the Sahel, which often correspond to late rains are about to be resolved with good rainfall in August (figure 1), with the exception of Chad where rains are deficient in the Sahelian belt. In many parts of the region, crop development is still lagging behind and crop yields will depend on the proper distribution of rainfall and its extension until the end of September-mid-October. Increased rains in early July helped plowing and sowing in most countries in the region. However erratic rains in the region are the cause of irregular crop development, plants being at different phenological stages even within the same country. For example, in Burkina Faso the plants are at an early whorl stage in the north while in the south plants are at starting the tassel stage. In Mali, crop development is slightly delayed according to major areas. In Senegal, the phenological stages are varied for both groundnut, cowpea and for cereals (millet, sorghum, maize, rice, fonio). In these areas, vigilance and close monitoring are needed.

In the Gulf of Guinea, rainfall deficits were identified in Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria (figure 1). Specifically, Ghana has experienced delayed and erratic rains in the three northern regions. This results in three successive months of water stress for crops, increasing the possibility of an under average harvest and causing a reduction on the area planted of soybeans and rice by farmers.

**Figure 1: West Africa rainfall anomalies from 1st May to 26th August 2013**

Source: www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/fews
Regarding pastures, the state of vegetation development is uneven compared to the average in most of the region. Following the late rains, large areas of vegetation deficit were observed in northern Senegal, central Mali, south of Niger and central Chad where the deficit is particularly important. This will affect livestock body condition that has yet to find a satisfactory nutritional status.

Regarding the outlook for the growing season remainder, the seasonal rainfall and runoff forecasts provided by AGRHYMET were updated in July. In terms of cumulative rainfall, they indicate differences between the eastern, central and western Sahel (Figure 2):

- **seasonal cumulative rainfall greater than or equal to normal** are very likely over the central Sahel, northern coastal and extreme southern Chad;
- **equivalent to normal** rainfall is expected over western Mali, southern Mauritania, most of the Senegal and Gambia;
- **normal rainfall deficits** are provided on central Chad, the extreme southeast of Niger and the extreme north-eastern Nigeria;
- **lower rainfall or equivalent** to the average expected over southern Senegal, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and the northern half of Liberia.

![Figure 2: Update forecast seasonal cumulative rainfall](image)

**Legend:** The figures in the top, middle and bottom small rectangles indicate the probability that cumulative rainfall totals are respectively above, at or below the average for the period 1980-2010.

Source: AGRHYMET

Forecast update on the end of 2013 rainy season indicates a very high probability of having normal end dates of the rainy season in the north-west of the Sahel, a fairly high probability normal to late end of season on the central Sahel and a high probability that the end of the season is equivalent to the average in the extreme eastern Sahel and northern coastal Gulf of Guinea.

In perspective, according to AGRHYMET, despite the late planting observed, if the good water conditions identified to date continue in August, September or early October, the harvest would be at or above the average, for the period 1971-2000, in a largely agricultural area, especially in their Sahelian zone (figure 3).

![Figure 3: Yields expected in case of confirmation of seasonal rainfall forecasts in 2013](image)

Source: AGRHYMET
In West Africa, good rains also fell in parts of the summer breeding areas in the northern Sahel. Heavy rains fell on the Tamesna Plains between Menaka, Mali and Tahoua, Niger. Heavy rains also fell in Mauritania near Aioun El Atrous, Kiffa and Atar, and in northeast Chad between Abeche and Fada. Low numbers of solitarious adults have been reported in Mauritania, Niger and Chad, and are likely to be present in northeast Mali. (figure 4)

Given the likelihood of an increase in locust infestations from summer breeding, national ground surveys should be undertaken in all countries on a regular basis to monitor the situation closely during the next few months. (FAO)

**Figure 4: Desert locust distribution**

![Desert locust distribution map](image)

Source: FAO

### Floods update

**Mali**

In Mali, approximately 11,300 people are affected by floods following heavy rains that lashed the Kidal and Segou regions between 9th and 12th August. Floods have caused the collapse of several houses, latrines and destroyed 76 tons of rice and millet as well as 50 hectares of paddy (OCHA Report No. 39, August 26). In Bamako, the heavy rains during August 28th have caused the death of 24 people local government said.

**Niger**

According to OCHA (snapshot August 27) with the return of rains since mid-July, several regions have experienced significant water levels rise causing floods in several areas. The most affected departments are Maradi, Tahoua, Dosso and Agadez. Across the country, 17 deaths and 47,821 affected people were reported. 3,050 hectares of crops were affected and 3,989 houses destroyed. In Maradi, the department most affected, the updated review reported nine deaths, 19,425 people affected and 1,206 hectares of crops flooded.

**Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the heavy rains of 15 July and 7 August caused flooding that affected 35,026 people across the country according to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The most affected states are Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Benue and Katsina. Three deaths were reported (Bauchi and Kano). The figures on displaced people and agricultural areas loss are not known (OCHA No. 4, August 2013).

**Senegal**

In Senegal, the consecutive floods have made some 10,000 victims of which 8,574 in the region of Dakar and 1,634 within the country, according to the services of the Ministère de la restructuration et de l’aménagement des zones d’inondation (MRAZI). The impact on crops is not known.

**Guinea**

In Guinea, heavy floods affected more than 4,000 people and Siguiri and Macenta with the destruction of homes, schools and agricultural inputs (OCHA, August 2013).
**Displacement situation in the region**

**Mali:** 137,000 people who fled the crisis have returned in the regions of Gao and Timbuktu as estimated by the International Organization for Migration. Given this evolution on displacements, humanitarian country team is currently developing an action plan to support spontaneous returns. According to the Protection Cluster, many displaced persons wishing to return to their region of origin cannot do so due to lack of funds (OCHA).

**Niger:** New waves of arrivals of refugees / returnees estimated to several hundred people were reported in Bosso (Diffa), from Nigeria on August 4th. The new movements follow the attacks attributed to the Nigerian army against the bases of the Boko Haram sect located along the border and would be added to the 6,000 already identified since May 2013.

**Chad:** UNHCR expressed in August 12, its deep concern about the context prevailing in the Central African Republic and indicated that the number of people uprooted internally or forced to flee to neighboring countries continues to grow. Currently, 62,741 refugees, including 13,087 to Chad, fled to neighboring countries since the start of the crisis in December 2012.

**Trends on international markets**

The **FAO Food Price Index** averaged 205.9 points in July 2013, 4 points (nearly 2 percent) below its revised value for June and 7 points (or 3.3 percent) lower than in July 2012. The decline in July, which marked the third consecutive monthly drop, was largely driven by lower international prices for grains, soy and palm oil while sugar, meat and dairy quotations were also down from the previous month.

The **FAO Cereal Price Index** averaged 227.7 points in July, down 8.8 points (3.7 percent) from June and as much as 33 points (or nearly 13 percent) below July last year. The sharp decline mostly reflected falling maize prices as favourable weather boosted hopes of a significant production increase in several leading maize producing countries. Wheat prices also fell but the strong pace of exports limited the decline.

In July, the world prices continued to decline under the influence of Thailand’s plenty stocks and good prospects for Asian crops. The excess of rice in the world market is likely to continue to weigh on international prices. While storehouses in exporting countries get full of rice, the demand of leading world importers tends to decrease. In addition, traditional Asian exporters may face competition from new players such as Myanmar and Cambodia, where exports are growing fast.

**Market trends in West Africa**

In **Benin**, maize prices in July slightly increased by 4 % compared to June figures. This increase, especially in Nikki and Tanguïéta, can be attributed to the increase in the demand of the traders from Nigeria which, this year, participates in these markets. In addition, compared to the five-year average, maize prices remain very high in Glazoué (53 %), Oussè (47 %), Pobè (33 %), Nikki (26 %), and Houndjro (24 %). However, markets like Tanguïéta, Malanville, Dantokpa and Natittingou still remain favourable to local purchase programs. This situation benefits consumers by increasing their purchasing power, as the cost of food baskets decrease by -3%, but is detrimental to local producers who face abnormally low prices.
Market trends in West Africa (continued)

In Niger, compared to the last month, grain prices in August are either stable (for sorghum) or downward (-1 % for millet and rice and -3 % for corn). Compared to the five-year average, however, prices remain very high for millet (27 %), sorghum (18 %), and maize (9 %). The markets for which prices are abnormally high are Agadez and Maradi (39 % for each) and Zinder, 35 % (figure 6). These increases in prices compared to the past five years have caused an increase in food basket prices of 14 %, of which 11 % due to the unique price of millet. In addition, people living on onion production recorded a loss of their purchasing power with the deterioration of the terms of trade onion against mil (Albichir N°. 45).

In Mali, in August, national grain prices increased very slightly compared to July levels for millet (3 %) and the local rice (2 %). These increases are due to a relative decline in supply on the markets combined with an increased demand. Except millet, which increased by 5 %, other cereals remain at low levels compared to the average of the last 5 years: -6 % for local rice, -9 % for sorghum and -15 % for maize. This situation is favourable to the consumer, whose purchasing power increases with the -3% decrease of food basket price, but is detrimental to local producers, who face abnormally low prices. Markets in Gao and Timbuktu, recorded abnormally high prices for millet, increasing 29 % and 25 %, respectively (figure 7).

In Burkina Faso, in August, cereal prices increased very slightly for millet (4 %), sorghum (1 %) and maize compared to July. These increases are due to a slow start to the agricultural campaign that does not cause the destocking of cereals, to an increase in demand during Ramadan and to the needs of the agricultural campaign in the regions of the country where the season has started normally. Millet and rice have increased by by 8 % and 2 %, respectively, over the five-year average while sorghum (-2 %) and maize (-4 %) have decreased. Overall, the country will continue to supply Nigerian traders and will maintain economic (market) access for local populations.
In **Mauritania**, the results of the food security monitoring survey of July 2013 organized by WFP and the Government, show that 23.7% of households are food insecure, a decrease compared to the rate of 32.3% observed in July 2012, but a slight increase compared to July 2011 (21.1%). More than 60% of food insecure households are located in areas with rainfed and agro-pastoral crops. In urban areas, primarily in Nouakchott, the rate of food insecurity increased from 10.9% in July 2012 to 16.9% in July 2013. These high rates are partially explained by the rural migration of the poorest households and the increase in food prices. In rural areas, causes include the depletion of farmer stocks during the lean season, the seasonal increase of local product prices and the decline in purchasing power of households (rising prices, repayment of debts and 2012 loss of livestock).

According to the results of July 2013 SMART nutritional survey (Ministry of health/UNICEF); emergency thresholds of 15% for the global acute malnutrition (MAG) have been exceeded in six regions of the country. In addition, two other regions in a worrying nutrition situation (MAG greater than 10%) have food insecurity rates above 30%. This situation is explained by the worsening food and economic situation of households, seasonal diseases and the lack of nutrition prevention programs. Sustainable multi-sectoral action must be taken to enhance population resilience.

![Figure 9: Households’ food insecurity rates comparison between July 2012 and July 2013](image)

**In Burkina Faso**, the results of the joint mission to monitor the agro-pastoral campaign and assessment of the food and nutrition situation of households organized by the Ministry of agriculture and food security in July 2013 indicate that the food situation of households is assumed to be satisfactory. Grain products are available and households are able to consume their usual daily meals. The farmers’ stock level appears to be adequate for most households in the different regions. This situation is reinforced by the availability of dairy products, particularly in the Sahel region. However, disparities exist. In the Centre-West regions, North, Centre and Central Plateau, peasant stocks are generally low. The market is the main source for poor and very poor households, as stocks are depleted. It should also be noted that in March 2013, at the beginning of the lean season, an analysis of the food and nutrition situation in Burkina Faso using the Cadre Harmonisé approach indicated that the food situation in some areas was categorized as “under stress” (Phase 2 out of 5 of food insecurity scale) and it is likely that the food situation of the poorest households will get worse during the lean season, especially during July and August.

**In Liberia**, UNICEF mid-year humanitarian situation report indicates that, despite a decrease in the number of Ivorian refugees and the voluntary repatriation efforts, a significant number of Ivorian refugees still remain in Liberia in 2013. 50% of them live in refugee camps while others continue to stay with their Liberian hosts, where access to basic services is very low. Refugees and host communities, especially vulnerable children, need sustainable access to health and nutrition services (screening and treatment). More than 40% of children suffer from chronic malnutrition and 60% are anemic. Acute malnutrition, however, is lower than among the host population.

**In Ghana**, food security is influenced by the price of the basic cereals, access to income-generating activities and the increase in transportation costs. Normal depletion of grain reserves and reduced food access is expected in Northern Ghana in September.
Recommendations for the regional food security and nutrition working group

- Continue the monitoring of food and nutrition security in Mali and neighbouring countries affected by the Malian crisis
- Continue the monitoring of food price behavior specially in Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Niger and Chad
- Monitor the floods situation and their impact on food and nutrition security

Conclusions

- Despite relatively good rains since the end of July in most of the Sahel region, the rains were late and the cycle of crop development has often been delayed. Crop yields will depend on the steady rains extending to the end of September or October in some places. In the Gulf of Guinea countries, rainfall deficits have been identified in Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria; close monitoring must be implemented.
- Heavy rains that caused flooding have been reported in Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. In addition to the destruction of houses and health risks, in rural areas these floods have affected the livelihoods of households (destruction of crops, loss of livestock, disruption of food products commercialization, etc.).
- The month of August is the peak of the agricultural lean season and the most difficult for the poorest households. (Mauritania).

Information on food security in West Africa

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Mark your calendars!
- PREGEC – Niamey 17-19 September
- Joint Mission CILSS-FAO-PAM-FEWS NET on preliminary assessment of crops in Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo – 23 September to 4 October
- Cycles of training and analysis of Cadre Harmonisé (Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Togo) – 7 to 12 October
- Cycles of training and analysis of Cadre Harmonisé in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Cap Vert, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad) – 4 to 8 November
- Regional analysis cycle of the Cadre Harmonisé – Lomé 11-15 November
- PREGEC - Lomé 18-20 November
- RPCA - Abidjan 24-26 November