FOOD SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

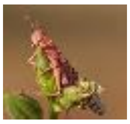
N°54 - March 2014

KEY POINTS

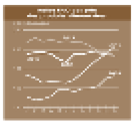
- Seasonal precipitation forecasts indicate possible cumulative rainfall deficits in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone during the rainy season.
- The pastoralist situation is characterized by pasture depletion and the disruption of transhumance routes in conflict areas of the region.
- Market prices are decreasing or stable in most markets, partly due to weak demand from households.
- According to results of the PREGEC, 4,895,000 people are in the food security crisis phase or above in the Gambia, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Chad.

Sections


Agriculture


Locust


Displacement


International markets


Markets in WA


Food Security

To go to...

The meeting of the Regional Consultation on Food and Nutritional Situation in the Sahel and West Africa (PREGEC) confirms the decrease in cereal production in the Sahel during the 2013/2014 agricultural campaign compared to last year. Significant production decreases have been recorded in several areas, notably in Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal. Poor and very poor households living in these areas, which are also affected by the decrease in pasture production, are already facing food insecurity.

The markets will function normally until the lean season, when seasonal increases in cereal prices will be observed, especially for millet, the production of which decreased significantly (20 percent).

According to the Harmonized Framework analysis, 26 zones out of 345 are identified as currently food insecure, with the situation reaching a crisis phase in Chad, Mali, Niger, Senegal and The Gambia. During the lean season (June to August 2014), an increase in the number of zones in crisis phase is expected, reaching 58 zones in total and extending to areas in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mauritania. It is crucial to address the needs of these populations under pressure and to protect their livelihoods.

Recommandations for regional partners

→ Increase food security monitoring activities in countries at risk of an early lean season, particularly in Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.

→ Advocate for the timely funding of priority activities identified in the Strategic Response Plan for the Sahel region, in support of households' preparation for the main agricultural season and early lean period.

→ Monitor the situation of displaced populations from C.A.R and Nigeria.

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, from a humanitarian perspective, WFP and FAO provide the group with highlights on the food security situation of the previous month.

2013-2014 Agro-pastoral campaign and preparation for the 2014-2015 campaign

Rainfall deficit expected in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone

Results of the Regional Consultation on the food and nutritional situation in the Sahel and West Africa (PREGEC) held in Bamako from 25 to 27 March 2014 show that cereal production in the Sahel and West Africa for the 2013-2014 campaign stands at 57,010,000 tons. Cereal production is equal to last year's production levels and is 11 percent higher than the average of the last five years. Maize production ranks first at 19,361,000 tons, followed by rice (15,930,000 tons), sorghum (13,084,000 tons), and millet (8,073,000 tons). Production of all cereal crops has increased between 10 percent and 28 percent compared to five year averages, with the exception of millet, the production of which decreased 20 percent. The average cereal production per capita in West Africa and the Sahel has increased by 3 percent since last year and is equivalent to five-year averages.

Cereal production in the Sahel reached 19,596,000 tons. This production is equivalent to the average of the last five years but is 12 percent lower than last year. Significant decreases in production were recorded in several zones, especially in Niger, Chad, Mali and Senegal. Furthermore, cereal production per capita has decreased by 14 percent compared to 2012/2013.

In the countries of the Gulf of Guinea, cereal production is estimated at 37,414,000 tons, representing an increase of 8 percent compared to last year and 17 percent compared with the average of the last five years.

The pastoralist situation is characterized by a seasonal decrease in the quantity and quality of pasture available in the rangelands, which has led to a general increase in the price of animal feed in the region during the first quarter of 2014. Transhumance circuits are disturbed in the zones close to conflicts areas on the axis South of Chad–Central African Republic, Diffa-North Nigeria and North Mali-South-East of Mauritania. Given the decrease in pasture availability, conflicts between farmers and herders have been reported as animals occupy agricultural areas on the eve of the first rains.

The agro-pastoral season is marked by a slowdown in the off-season activities due to the depletion of water reserves, temperature increases and the beginning of preparatory activities for the 2014-2015 rainy season.

As part of the preparation of the 2014-2015 campaign, the first regional forum on climate forecasts in the Gulf of Guinea was held in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) from 10 to 14 March 2014. The forum predicted likely trends in rainfall totals for the development of seasonal and dates of start and end of the growing season forecasts. Results show that for the period from March to June 2014, near to below average precipitation is very likely to occur in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Figure 1). On the contrary, near to above normal rainfall is forecasted from March to May in parts of southeast Nigeria, southern Togo and Benin and south-eastern Ghana (Figure 1). In central Nigeria above normal precipitation is expected from April to June (Figure 2). The starting dates for the main rainy season are expected to be normal to late in the following areas: southwest and south-central Côte d'Ivoire, center-south-eastern Ghana, south-central Benin, Togo and South - western Nigeria. Starting dates could be early to normal in the coastal areas from south-eastern Côte d'Ivoire to the south of Nigeria

End dates of the main rainy season are expected to be normal to late on the coastal areas of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. In east-central Côte d'Ivoire and west-central Ghana, end dates are expected to be normal to early.

Figure 1. Seasonal precipitation forecast from March to May 2014

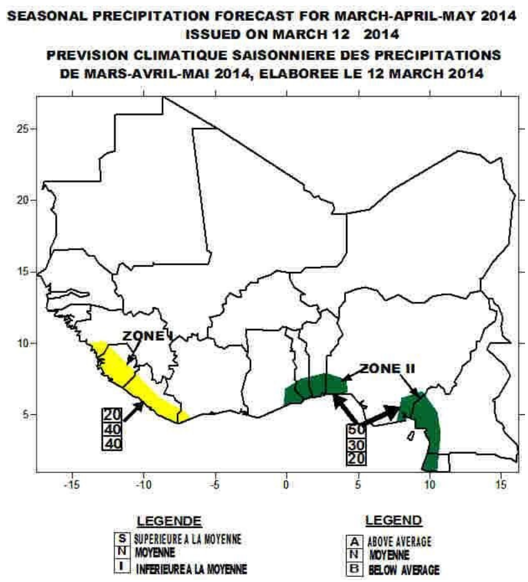
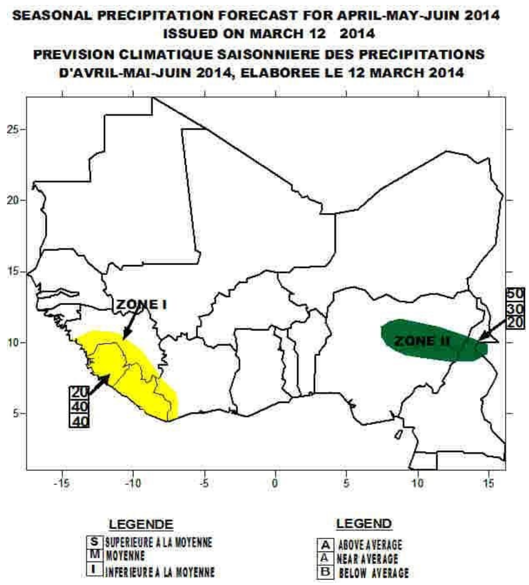
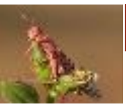


Figure 2. Seasonal precipitation forecast from April to June 2014



Source : Agrhymet



Desert locust situation March 4, 2014

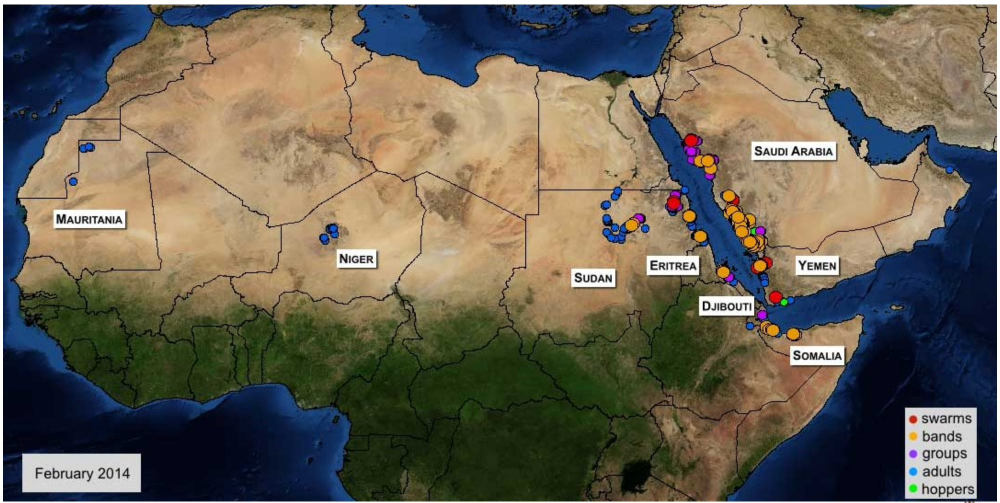
The situation remained calm in February

The locust situation remained calm in West Africa during February. In Mauritania, a few scattered immature and mature solitary adults were present in the north (Tiris Zemmour) between Bir Moghrein and Tamreiket, and to a lesser extent to Zouerate.

A small number of adults persist in parts of Tiris Zemmour, where small-scale breeding could occur in some places, causing locust numbers to increase slightly.

In Niger, during February, isolated mature solitarious adults were present in several places in the Aïr Mountains south of Iferouane as well as on the western edge of the mountains between Agadez and Arlit. Scattered adults are likely to persist in several places in the Aïr Mountains, where small-scale breeding could occur in areas that receive rainfall or runoff. FAO.

Figure 3. Locust situation in March 2014



Source : FAO

More info ...

Displacement situation in the region

Continuous flow of displaced people from Nigeria and C.A.R.

Mali : The decrease in the number of IDPs highlighted in the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) report from October 2013 continues to be observed in all regions in Mali with the exception of Kidal, where data verifications and updates on the ground could not be conducted due to the security situation. According to evaluations carried out by IOM and partners, there are currently 199,575 IDPs in Mali.
The assessments and evaluations conducted in the field confirmed the decrease in the number of IDPs compared to the data from July 2013 (334,550 individuals) and October 2013 (283,726 individuals). In Gao and Timbuktu 196,146 returnees were identified. In the south, a survey revealed that 84.6 percent of the displaced households would like to return to their place of origin. OIM

Niger : Population movements towards Diffa region, in southeastern Niger, continue due to the deterioration of security conditions in the border areas with northern Nigeria. These movements are directly related to aftermath of violence due to clashes between the Nigerian army and the Boko Haram movement. Since the end of February, the NGO International Rescue Committee (IRC) is monitoring the influx and has counted more than 2,000 persons. Today, as nobody has a complete and real-time overview of daily arrivals that affect more than 100 villages, even cautious estimations put the number of displaced as well above 40,000 persons since the beginning of the conflict. UNHCR

Since the beginning of the crisis in Central African Republic, 1,163 Nigerien migrants have been repatriated through a joint operation of the Nigerian government and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Niger, including 391 men, 298 women and 474 children. OCHA

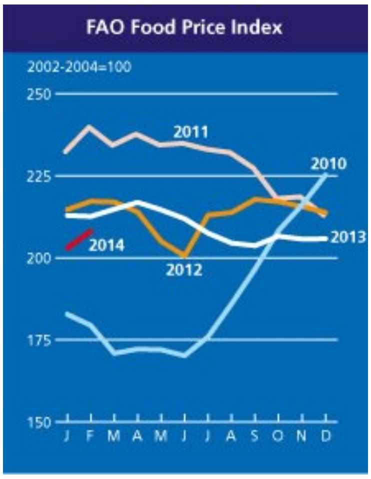
Chad : The beginning of hostilities in Central African Republic (C.A.R.) in December 2013 between former Seleka and anti-Balaka has caused massive population displacements. From December 2013 to 31 March 2014, Chad hosted 92,382 returnees from C.A.R. and 12,000 refugees. OCHA

Trends on international markets

The FAO Food Price Index registered its strongest rise since July 2012

The **FAO Food Price Index** averaged 208.1 points in February 2014, 5.2 points, or 2.6 percent, above a slightly revised index for January, but still 2.1 percent less than one year ago. Last month's rebound, the sharpest observed since mid-2012, resulted from increased prices of all the commodity groups making up the index, except meat, which fell marginally. The products that have incurred the strongest rises since last month were sugar (+6.2 percent) and oils (+4.9 percent), followed by cereals (+3.6 percent) and dairy (+2.9 percent).

Figure 4. FAO Food Price Index



Source : *FAO*

The **FAO Cereal Price Index** averaged 195.8 points in February, up 6.8 points, or 3.6 percent, from the previous month and the strongest rise registered since July 2012. Last month's price bounce mainly reflects concerns over wheat crops in the United States, a high demand for coarse grains for both feed and biofuel and strong Japonica rice prices. Overall, however, cereal prices remain 18.8 percent below levels recorded in February last year, a clear sign that the world supply/demand situation has eased considerably compared to last year. (Source: FAO)

In February, **world rice prices** increased slightly, except in Vietnam, where prices fell again due to pressure from India and Thailand. In the United States, prices slightly decreased within a slow market. In Thailand, with the end the subsidized pricing programme, protests spread among producers, who are asking the government to pay for 2012/2013 rice. The Thai government started to sell part of its accumulated stocks and is expecting to raise money to pay its debts. Meanwhile, markets have not reacted yet, and there are doubts about the quality of Thai rice. Nevertheless, it is likely that this additional export supply has a downward impact on world prices in the near future. (Source : InterRice)

Trends on West African Markets

Cereal prices stable or decreasing in most markets

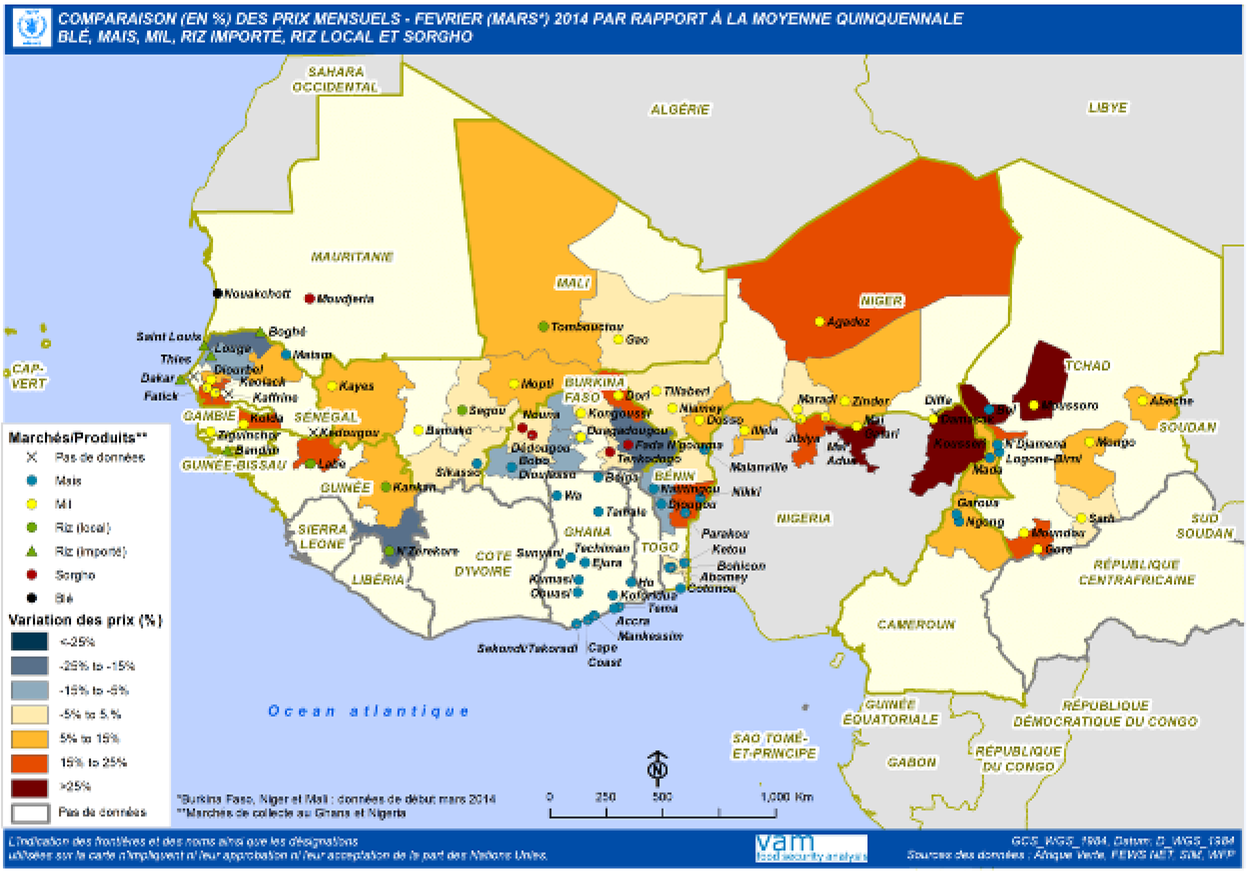
In West Africa, access to food continues to be provided by household food stocks from 2013 harvests. This partly explains the low market demand and lower prices in February 2014 compared to the same period in 2013. However, overall prices are still significantly higher than the five-year averages for most local coarse grains, particularly for millet and sorghum. Due either to price differentials, particularly within and between the Central and Eastern Basins, or to conflict in the Eastern Basin, foreign traders have been relatively absent in the markets. In the Western Basin, grain prices are expected to increase slightly in the coming months but will remain below 2013 levels. In the Eastern Basin, however, localized declines in agricultural production and civil unrest in Nigeria, combined with a depletion of household food stocks from the month of March / April onwards, could lead to higher prices, especially in Niger and the Sahelian belt of Chad. This situation may reduce access to food for low-income households.

(Source: Market joint missions CILSS)

In Guinea-Bissau, the monthly prices of rice (local and imported) and maize remained stable in markets in the capital, Bissau. However, prices are higher than their respective five-year averages for both local rice (+25 percent) and imported rice (+52 percent). The Transitional Government announced that this year's cashew nut commercialization campaign will begin on 22 March, which coincides with the start of the electoral campaign. The price of cashew nuts purchased from producers was set at 250 francs CFA per kilo. The Government also decided to impose a 40 FCFA export tax per kilogram, intending to improve the cashew sector. There are concerns that this tax could encourage traders to export national production illegally. (Source : SIM, WFP).

Cereal prices stable or decreasing in most markets

Figure 5 : Comparison (in %) of February 2014 cereal prices to five-year average



In Senegal, the region of Matam recorded price increases for millet (+6 percent), sorghum (+6 percent) and imported maize (+25 percent) in February. The commercialization of local groundnuts in rural producer markets is still less dynamic than last year, as demand remains relatively weak due to the absence of foreign buyers on markets this year and the fixed government price of 200 FCFA/kg, which certified industrial operators consider to be high. Average monthly groundnut prices in rural producer markets only increased slightly (+6 percent) from January to February 2014, reaching 174 FCFA/kg for unshelled groundnuts, which represents a 29 percent drop compared to February 2013 levels (Source: SIM, WFP)

In Burkina Faso, monthly local cereal prices are generally stable or decreasing in most markets. Only markets in Pouytenga and Dori recorded increases of millet prices of 21 percent and 11 percent, respectively. Compared to March 2013 levels, cereal prices decreased or remained stable in most markets, except for sorghum and maize in the markets of Dori (both +14 percent). Millet prices remain significantly above their five-year averages in Bobo (+14 percent), Dori (+24 percent) and Fada N'Gourma (+8 percent). For maize, however, good local harvests this season allowed maize prices to ease and drop below their five years averages in most markets, except in the northern regions of Bam (+6 percent) and Sahel (+21 percent) (Source: Afrique Verte, WFP)
In Mali, monthly prices for coarse grains remained generally stable or declined in all markets in early march. Prices for imported and local rice are stable in all markets except for Timbuktu, where they increased by 20 percent for imported rice and 9 percent for local rice. Rice prices, however, were higher than last year for local rice in Gao (+ 7 percent) and Timbuktu (+ 17 percent) as well as for imported rice in Mopti (+10 percent) and Sikasso (+3 percent). (Source: Afrique Verte, WFP).

In Niger, prices remained stable or were declining in most markets in early March. Although prices of all local cereals are below last year's levels, they remain well above their five-year averages , especially in Zinder for millet (+13 percent) and sorghum (+32 percent) as well as in Agadez for millet (+16 percent) and sorghum (+27 percent). Following good maize harvests in neighboring countries, prices for imported maize are below their five-year averages.

In Chad, although flood recession crops have reinforced the existing supply of staples in markets, cereals prices are still relatively high and above their five-year averages. In February, prices fluctuated erratically, particularly for millet and sorghum. Monthly millet prices decreased in Ndjamena (-7 percent), Sarh (-9 percent) and Moussoro (-6 percent), while they increased in Abeche (+10 percent) and Mongo (+4 percent). Monthly prices of sorghum are up in Ndjamena (+24 percent), down in Sarh and stable on other markets. For maize, monthly prices dropped significantly in Moussoro (-27 percent) and the Lac region (-13 percent)
(Source: FEWS NET, WFP).

Impact on food security

Better food security situation in Northern Mali compared to July 2013

In Mali, in preparation for the March 2014 Harmonized Framework workshop, an assessment was conducted in February 2014 by SAP, WFP and their partners in the regions of Gao, Kayes, Kidal, Koulikoro, Mopti and Tombouctou in order to update food security indicators.
In the northern parts of the country, the districts most affected by moderate and severe food insecurity are Gao (84 percent), Goundam (69 percent), Ansongo (59 percent), Kidal (58 percent), Menaka (55 percent) and Gourma-Rharous (53 percent).

Compared to results of the July 2013 Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA), the food security situation has improved considerably, particularly in the districts of Ansongo, Menaka, Gourma Rharous, Tin-Essako and Tombouctou. This improvement can be explained by ongoing food assistance as well as the improved security situation in these areas, which allows economic activities to slowly resume. However, these rates are higher than the national averages (38 percent). It should be noted that the food security situation in the districts of Gao and Goundam has not improved.

In the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro and Mopti, the most affected districts are Bandiagara (46 percent), Kolokani (29 percent) and Yelimane (23 percent). In comparison to results of the July/August 2013 EFSA, a seasonal decrease in food insecurity is occurring, coinciding with harvests and decreased food prices.

In Bandiagara, however, the percentage of food insecure households is close to levels observed in the July/August 2013 EFSA. This district was affected by drought, which caused low agricultural production for the rainy season and a decrease in water reserves, threatening off-season harvests. This district was also widely affected the collapse of tourism. An early lean season is expected for farming households.

Results of the March 2014 Harmonized Framework

An analysis of the food and nutritional situation by the Harmonized Framework identified 26 of the 345 zones analyzed currently in food insecurity, reaching a crisis phase in Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Niger and Senegal. The forecast for the lean season, which will take place from June to August 2014, suggests an increase in the number of zones in crisis phase, reaching 58 zones in total and extending to Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mauritania. This is due to the localized poor agro-pastoral campaign, the erosion of livelihoods, high levels of global acute malnutrition and the deterioration of food access, particularly for very poor and poor households.

Currently, 4,895,000 persons, in crisis phase and above, have an immediate need of assistance. These numbers could reach 8 million during the lean season if no adequate interventions are implemented appropriately. (Source : Avis PREGEC)

Figure 6. Ongoing food and nutritional situation in the Sahel and in West Africa—March to May 2014

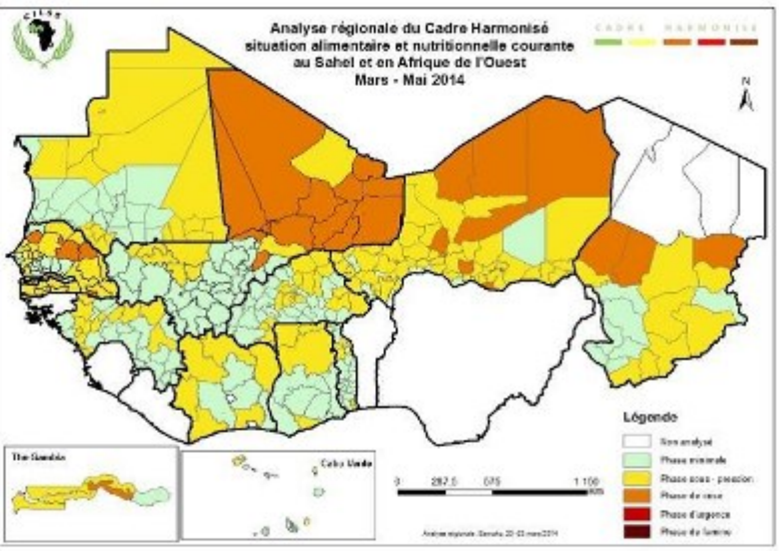
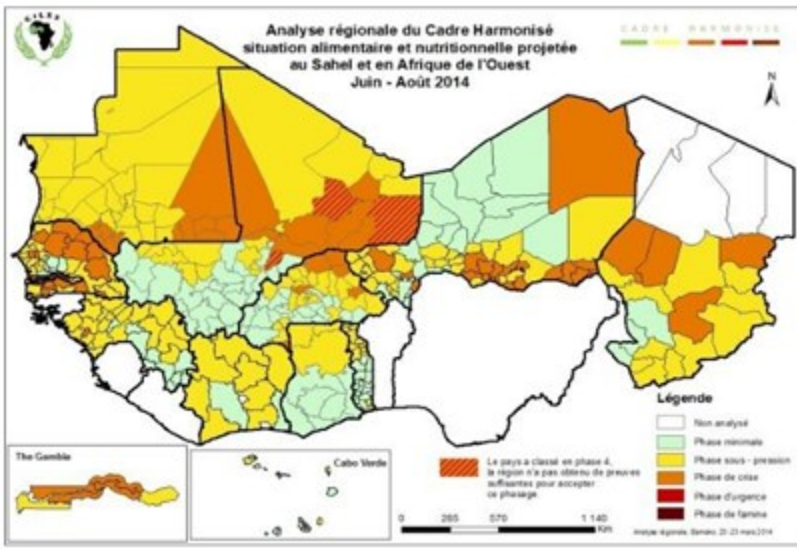


Figure 7. Projected food and nutritional situation in the Sahel and in West Africa—June to August 2014



Mark your calendars!

→ RCPA : 14—16 April 2014 in Paris

@ Information on food security in West Africa

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