FOOD SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

Photo: WFP/Sylvain Cherkaoui

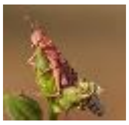
N°56 - May 2014

KEY POINTS

- Population displacements as a result of violence in the Central African Republic, in northern Nigeria and in northern Mali, pose a humanitarian risk in the region. Thousands of refugees continue to arrive in Cameroon in very difficult conditions.
- Heavy rains along the Gulf of Guinea mark the start of the agricultural campaign.
- The prices of coarse grains (millet, sorghum) remain above their five-year averages in the majority of the region's countries.
- The lean season has started for most rural households, who will depend heavily on markets to ensure their food security.

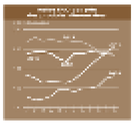
Sections

Agriculture



Locusts

Displacements



International Markets

Markets in WA

Food Security

To go to

The 2014-2015 agricultural campaign has started in the region accompanied by heavy rains in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea and a calm desert locust situation. The precipitation deficit currently observed in Ghana and Nigeria should be monitored in the coming months.

Concerning the Sahel countries, in addition to the zones that were affected by production deficits, the lean season has already started for the majority of rural households. Cereal prices, which are above their five-year average in the majority of the region, will likely create supply issues for poor households who will need assistance.

The situation in the regions of Wadi Fira and Bahr-El-Ghazel in Chad, in the circle of Bandiagara in Mali, in Senegal, in Mauritania that experienced production deficits and in Niger where fodder deficit was registered should be monitored closely. Because of high prices, the poorest households in Ghana also face food access problem.

Violence and insecurity in the Central African Republic and in Nigeria are creating population displacements who are heading to Chad, Cameroon and Niger, amongst others. These population displacements take place in tense humanitarian contexts and trigger pressure on the host populations' already depleted resources. Malnutrition and child mortality rates are high within the fragile populations and thus an impending humanitarian crisis is feared. The living conditions of C.A.R. refugees in Cameroon remain particularly worrisome and should be closely followed to ensure basic services for them.

Recommandations for regional partners

→ Reinforce monitoring of food security in countries which risks experiencing early lean seasons especially in Ghana, Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Senegal.

→ Plead for timely funding of priority action of the Sahel Humanitarian Appeal for the preparation of agricultural season and lean season.

→ Monitor population displacements arriving from C.A.R, Nigeria and northern Mali.

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.*

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

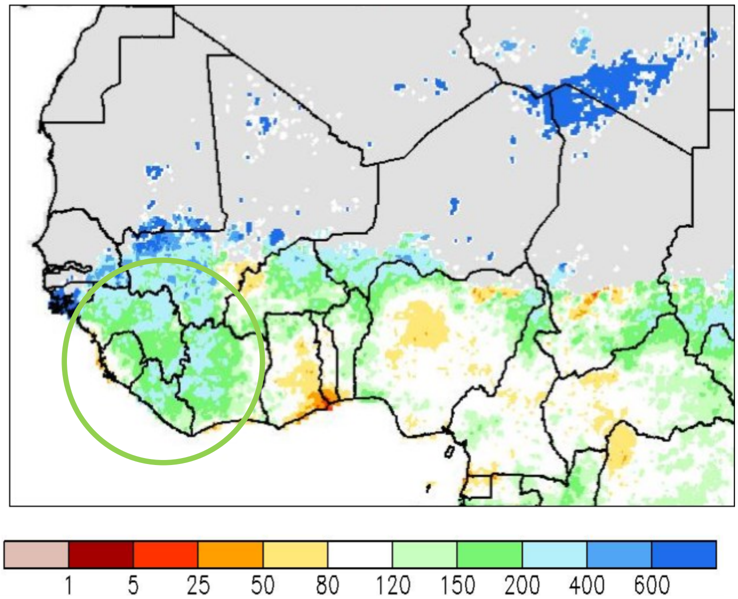
2014-2015 Agricultural campaign starts with heavy rains along the Gulf of Guinea

The 2013-2014 agricultural campaign is nearing its end with the last activities of the off-season market gardening. The 2014-2015 agricultural campaign has started with soil preparation and sowing activities. (Source : Afrique Verte)

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), indicates that the monsoon onset in West Africa has led to above-normal rainfall along the Gulf of Guinea particularly in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and southern Mali (Figure 1).

Deficits are nevertheless observed in some parts of Ghana and central Nigeria. These forecasts are likely to change during the rainy season. It is therefore strongly recommended to follow the situation and the climate forecasts in the coming months.

Figure 1:. Percentage of rainfall compared to normal between April 26 and May 25, 2014



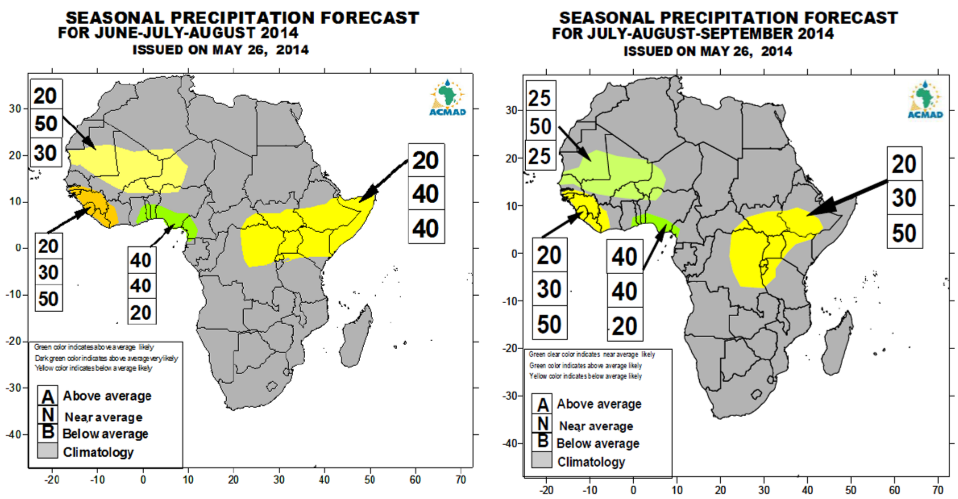
Map reading:
The map compares the rains received during May in the region to the average rainfall of the last 30 years as a percentage. The rainfall deficit is represented with yellow-red colors and the surplus with green-blue color.

Source : NOAA

According to the last seasonal forecast by ACMAD of 26th May 2014, it is highly probable that rainfall will be below normal in Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone and southern Senegal between the months of June to September.

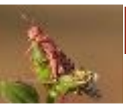
Normal precipitations are expected in most regions of Mali, western Niger, southern Mauritania and northern Senegal. Finally, rainfall above normal is expected in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea (Source: ACMAD).

Figures 2 and 3: Seasonal precipitation forecasts for June-July-August and July-August-September 2014, updated 26th May 2014



Map reading
Numbers in the small boxes on the top, middle and bottom show the probability that cumulative rainfall be respectively higher, equivalent or lower than the 1981-2010 average.

Source : ACMAD



Locust situation as of 4 April l 2014

Situation remains calm in West Africa

The situation remained calm during April. No significant rain fell in the spring breeding areas south of the Atlas mountains in Northwest Africa. Consequently, ecological conditions remained unfavourable for breeding. Dry conditions prevailed in the northern Sahel of West Africa and no significant developments are expected. FAO.

Displacement situation in the region

Displacement of populations poses a humanitarian risk

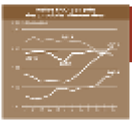
Mali : The return of violence in the north of Mali, in particular in Kidal has generated new population displacements. Humanitarian partners on the field estimate that nearly 4,000 inhabitants have already left Kidal to join the outskirts of town or have headed towards Algeria and Gao. In Gao, 1,086 displaced arriving from Kidal have been registered (Source : ECHO). The observed displacements following the fighting in the north of the country follows a period of several months during which Malian refugees returned spontaneously in their towns or native villages in Mali. Up to 12,000 refugees have returned in the Gao and Tombouctou regions. At the start of May 2014, there were approximately 137,000 Malians refugees in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania, while 137,000 were still internally displaced in Mali due to instability and insecurity in the north of Mali. (Source : UNHCR)

Niger: During the course of the last six weeks, the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) registered the arrival of 10,436 people from 17 villages near Lake Chad and 5,280 persons in the Diffa region, bringing the total to over 50,000 refugees, displaced/returnees having fled fighting between the Nigerian army and Boko Haram and the acts of violence in northern Nigeria. At the current pace, the most pessimistic forecasts project the presence of 100,000 refugees by the end of the 2014.

Burkina Faso and Mauritania: No major displacements in May 2014.

Chad: Chad is the country which has received the highest number of evacuees and refugees from the Central African Republic (C.A.R.), with approximately 111,000 new arrivals since December 2013, comprised of 14,000 C.A.R. refugees and Chadians, and 97,000 repatriated nationals of third countries. While certain persons continued their displacement in Chad, 61,000 remain in transit sites of Sido, Doyaba, Goré, Doba, Mbitoye and Moundou located in the south of the country. In these camps, acute malnutrition rates are above the emergency threshold (15 percent); amongst the highest is in Bitoye (24 percent) and in Doba (20 percent). The nutritional situation could exacerbate with the ongoing rains and the lack of services. Health professionals on the sites are indicating a significant increase in diarrhea and malaria cases which are coinciding with the start of the rainy season. (Source : OCHA)

Cameroon: Following different attacks on the C.A.R. population, more than 100,000 C.A.R. residents have fled to Cameroon. The new arrivals from the past two months arrive in a horrible state of fatigue, dehydration and malnutrition. More than 2,500 persons continue to arrive on a weekly basis. At the end of April 2014, UNHCR registered 77,749 new refugees in the East, Adamaoua and North regions. The recent influx, mainly in the East and Adamaoua regions, puts added strain on the vulnerable host populations' limited resources, who was already hosting over 80,000 refugees.



Trends on international markets

FAO Cereal Price Index continues to rise

The **FAO Food Price Index** averaged 209.3 points in April 2014, down 3.5 points, or 1.6 percent, from March 2014 and 7.6 points, or 3.5 percent, below levels of April 2013. Last month's decline was mostly caused by a sharp drop of dairy prices, although sugar and vegetable oil also fell. By contrast, cereals and meat prices increased slightly.

The **FAO Cereal Price Index** averaged 206.9 points in April, up only 1 point (or 0.5 percent) from March but still 24 points (or 10.3 percent) below its value in April 2013. The monthly increase was less pronounced than those registered in February and March, as weather conditions improved in the United States and tensions in Ukraine had little effect on the country's pace of grain shipments.

Source : FAO

Figure 4: FAO Food Price Index

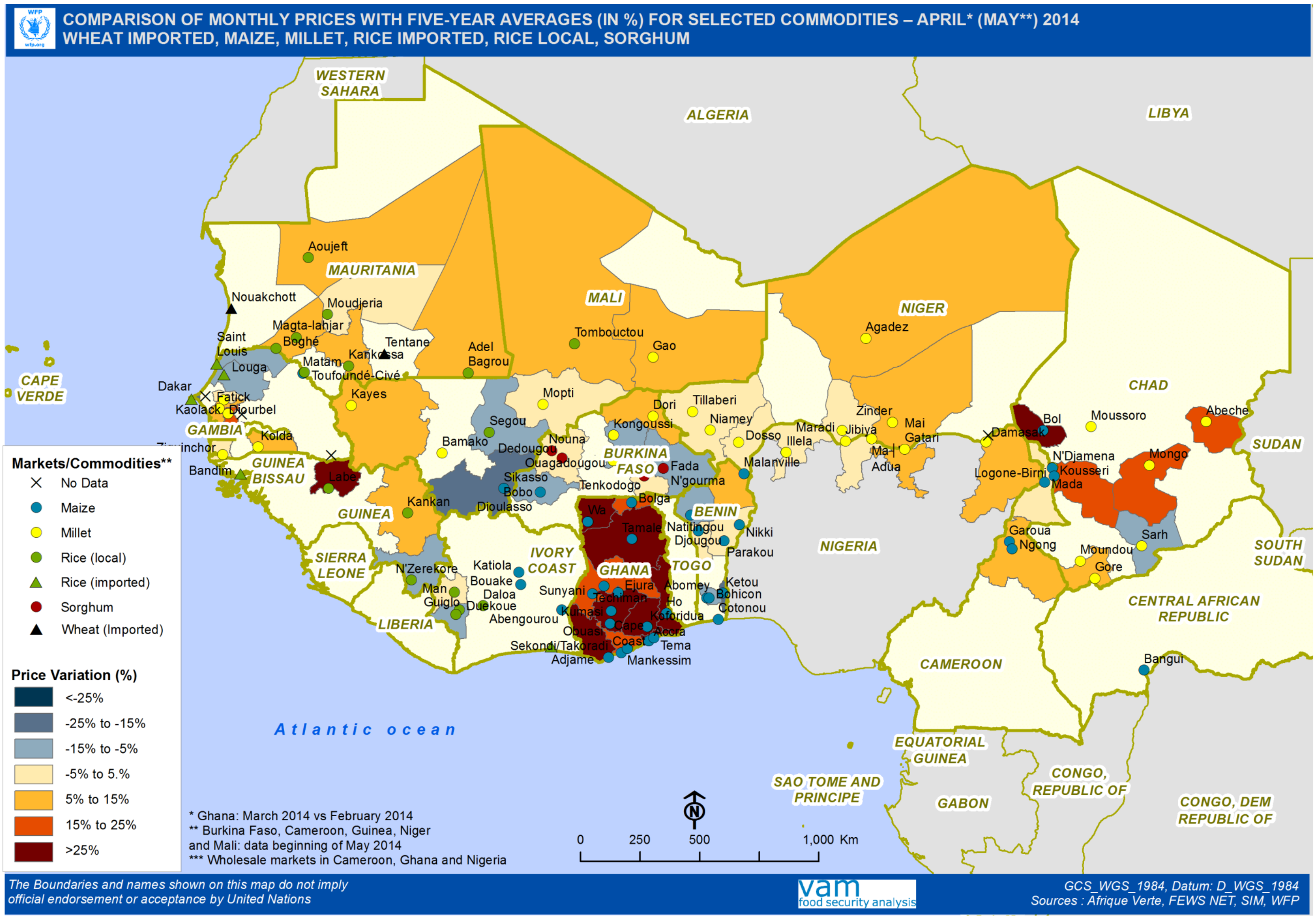
In April, the world rice prices decreased due to the intense activity of Thailand in the export market. Thai exports continue to increase mainly in the Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The world prices downward trend is likely to go on, but it can be limited if the stagnation of Asian production is confirmed this year, as a result of El Niño climate phenomenon. (Source: Interrice)

Trends on West African markets

Coarse grain prices are above the five-year average

In West Africa, millet and sorghum prices remain above the five-year average throughout most of the Sahel region. Monthly coarse grain prices remained relatively stable, due to good availability in markets. Only the grain markets in Chad are volatile during this lean season. In Ghana, the impact of the economic crisis is being strongly felt on the level of prices.

Figure 5 : Comparison of monthly prices with five-year averages (in %) for cereals — April/May 2014



In Mauritania, in April 2014, the average price level of imported wheat was above last year's levels. Monthly prices of local rice exhibited contrasting trends across different markets: It decreased in Magta lahjar (-19 percent) and went up in Adel Bagrou (5 percent), Kankossa (5 percent) and Aoujeft (4 percent). (Source: SIM, WFP)

In Burkina Faso, monthly prices remained relatively stable or declined in most markets compared to last month. This is partially explained by a weak market demand and an average to above average cereal availability on the markets. The most significant price drops were observed for rice in Ouagadougou (-15 percent), millet and maize in Bobo (-14 percent and -4 percent respectively) and sorghum in Dédougou (-4 percent). Monthly prices increased for sorghum on the markets of Dori (14 percent) as well as for maize in Fada (8 percent). Prices are generally equal or below last year's level as well as their five year averages on all markets, except in the market of Dori in the Sahel region, where prices are still above their five-year averages for all cereals. (Source: Afrique Verte)

In Senegal, the level of availability in coarse grain markets has considerably decreased between March and April 2014. This decrease is due to a low presence of farmers on the markets. Monthly average prices of local cereals remained relatively stable, except for the price of sorghum, which on average fell by 9 percent. Compared to the same period last year, the average price level in April 2014 was lower for sorghum (-11 percent) and maize (-6 percent), while that of millet remained nearly unchanged. (Source: CSA, WFP)

In Mali, May monthly prices of local and imported cereals remained stable or declined in most markets compared to April monthly prices. There were small fluctuations in millet prices, which increased in Bamako (6 percent), Segou (7 percent) and Gao (3 percent), while decreasing in Mopti (-5 percent) and Timbuktu (-2 percent). Increases in millet prices are explained in part by a decrease in sales on production markets dry cereals as farmers are cultivating their fields. Compared to the average of the last five years, prices were down except for a few products in the northern and western parts of the country. In Kidal, supply from Algeria does not seem to be affected by the combats in May and stocks appear to be adequate. (Source: Afrique Verte, OMA)

Trends on West African markets (continued)

Coarse grain prices are above the five-year average

In Niger, monthly grain prices remained generally stable or declined slightly between early April and early May 2014. Prices declined in the markets of Maradi (-6 per-cent for sorghum and -5 percent for maize). This trend is explained by low market demand as well as the sale of cereals at subsidized prices by the government. Slowing import-levels from Nigeria caused monthly maize prices to increase by 9 percent in the market of Zinder. Compared to their five-year averages, grain prices were lower than over the past few months. Concerning millet, prices are stable in Dosso, while remaining slightly higher in the other markets (from 2 per-cent to 8 percent). Concerning maize, prices are down between 5 percent (Maradi) and 19 percent (Niamey), except in Zinder where they are up by 10 percent. Concerning sorghum, prices are up between 4 to 20 percent, with the exception of Maradi (-11 percent), Dosso and Tillabéry (both -7 percent). (Source: Afrique Verte)

In Chad, grain markets in the Sudanese zone are volatile at the beginning of the lean period. In April, average prices of millet and sorghum increased compared with the average of the past five years in Moundou (millet: 21 percent; sorghum: 28 percent) and Gore (millet: 9 percent; sorghum: 19 percent). A strong increase in demand stemming from other regions in Chad (Sahel and N'Djamena) was registered in the transit market of Mondou, putting upward pressure on monthly prices of millet (14 percent) and sorghum (15 percent). However in the Sarh market, in April 2014, the price of millet fell by 26.5 percent. This price decrease is partially explained by lower cereal exports from Chad to the C.A.R. due to insecurity induced by the conflict. A potential closure of the borders to C.A.R. could reinforce this trend in the coming months. In the Sahel region, localized production deficits in cereals are causing an early start of the lean season. Prices have particularly increased compared to their five-year average, especially in Abeche (39 percent) and Mongo (28 percent) for sorghum. Millet prices are also higher than their five-year baseline (23 percent in Abeche and 21 percent in Mongo). Moreover, the price of imported rice decreased on average by 35 percent throughout the country, which is explained by improved import mechanisms introduced in the context of the government's efforts to address increased living costs (Source: FEWS Net, WFP).

In Nigeria, monthly coarse grain prices remained stable or declined slightly in northern wholesale markets due to the good production and supply this year. In May, we note a slowdown in maize exports to markets in Niger. The value of the Nigerian Naira to the West African CFA Franc in late May 2014 is 8 percent below the level observed during same period last year, stimulating Nigerian exports towards neighboring ECOWAS countries. However, this downwards trend observed over the past year has reversed since March, with an increase of the NGN/XOF exchange rate of about 3 percent over the last two months. An appreciating naira in combination with an insecure environment in the northeastern parts of the country may further affect trade flows towards Niger and Chad in the coming months (Source: SIM, WFP).

In Côte d'Ivoire, monthly prices of local coarse grains remained stable between March and April 2014, except for maize in the market in Katiola in the Vallee du Bandam (18 percent). Compared with last year's price levels, maize prices increased in Katiola (18 percent) and dropped in the market of Duekoue (-14 percent) (Source: SIM, WFP).

In Ghana, the average annual inflation rate of the food and non-alcoholic beverages group was 7 percent in April 2014. The 'cereals and cereal products' sub-group recorded an inflation rate of 8.1 percent. Since February, the Ghana cedi has lost more than 10 percent of its value against the CFA franc and more than 30 percent in the past 12 months, making imports of agricultural products more expensive. (Source: Ghana Statistical Service)

Impact on Food Security

The majority of rural households are affected by the lean season.

In Niger, a joint mission with UN agencies, NGO and local authorities took place in May 2014 to review the humanitarian situation in the Diffa region. The mission found increasing food and nutrition insecurity affecting all socio-economic groups. The presence of refugees and returnees is making more difficult the already precarious living conditions of the host populations. This year's high pasture deficit constitutes a threat to the survival of livestock, which substantially increased with the arrival of pastoralist refugees. In addition, the upsurge of violence in northern Nigeria is negatively impacting the local economy by decreasing food imports from Nigeria resulting in rapid depletion of stocks on markets and lack of markets for some Nigerien products. The humanitarian actors covering this area fear a major humanitarian crisis if mitigation measures are not taken.

In Ghana, the slowdown of the economy, the fiscal deficit and the currency depreciation is resulting in an unfavorable economic situation. The consequences are high inflation rates on food and non-food products. Urban poor households and smallholder farmers are the most affected. With the start of the lean season in June, households, especially rural, will resort increasingly more on markets for their food needs. The increasing cereal prices will weaken household purchasing power and exacerbate their food security. In addition, there is concern that an increase in costs of agricultural inputs could decrease agricultural productivity. The consequences of rainfall deficit on agricultural production as well as the food security situation of households should be monitored.

Impact on Food Security (continued)

The majority of rural households are affected by the lean season.

In Mali, according to the SAP Bulletin n° 328 of April 2014, the communes located on the Plateau Dogon, the communes of Lere, Dianke (Timbuktu) and the communes of Gabero, Gounzouree, Sony Aliber (Gao) are likely to encounter difficulties following the acknowledged decrease of their agro-pastoral productions income and sources of revenue. The SAP recommends, in part, to the Government and its partners to continue resilience activities giving the priority to food insecure and socioeconomic-affected districts. The return of displaced populations in the northern regions necessitates continued humanitarian and livelihood-recovery assistance.

In Mauritania, the lean season is ongoing with the associated hardships for households (income decrease, food prices increase, etc.). The Government's food distributions for affected populations are still ongoing, but the overall food situation remains precarious.

In Senegal, the HEA working group (SE/CNSA, Save the Children, WFP, Senegal Red Cross) conducted in February 2014 the HEA baselines profile in two livelihood zones (LZ) covering Kolda, Sedhiou and Ziguinchor regions. These regions have been identified as being part of the most vulnerable regions in Senegal, through the different food security and malnutrition surveys conducted these past years. The results of these baseline profiles in the two LZ #11 (agroforest/tourism and fishery) and #12 (agro-forestry-pastoral/ Groundnut-Cotton) will soon be shared.

Mark your calendars !

→ PREGEC : 18-19 June in NDjaména (Chad)

→ Technical Committee Cadre Harmonisé : 20-21 June in NDjaména (Chad)

→ World Humanitarian Sumit : Regional Consultations for West and Central Africa 19 - 20 Juin 2014 in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)

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