

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



N°58 - July/August 2014

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## KEY POINTS

### Sections



Agriculture



Displacement



International Markets



Markets in WA



Food Security

To go to



- ◆ Despite the resumption of rainfall in the region, countries along the Atlantic coast still record rainfall deficits affecting agricultural and pastoralist productions.
- ◆ The extension of the pastoralist lean season, due to delayed onset of rains, caused poor animal body condition and even loss of livestock in some countries in the region (Mali, Niger, Senegal).
- ◆ Stability of monthly cereal prices is still ongoing with localized seasonal increases. Prices increases are still very high in the area affected by conflicts and population displacement.
- ◆ The Ebola outbreak in the region affects the cross-border trade with food prices increases in the affected countries and disturbs the livelihoods of households, mainly agricultural activities.

The areas experiencing a late start of agropastoral campaign, benefitted from a resumption of rainfall since the end of July. However, the Atlantic coast from (i) southern Mauritania to Guinée-Bissau, (ii) northeastern Niger and (iii) northern Ghana, Nigeria and Togo recorded rainfall deficits affecting negatively the agricultural activities.

The late start of the rainy season in certain areas (Chad, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) has extended the agricultural lean season, forcing vulnerable households to adopt irreversible coping mechanisms if they don't have access to food assistance. Pastoralists households are already facing the effects of a prolonged lean season. Livestock presents a poor body condition and in some countries of the region loss of animals have been reported (Mali, Niger and Senegal). During the lean season, localized prices increases for millet and sorghum have been observed in Burkina and in Senegal and for millet in Mali. In the eastern commercial basin, price increases are found in the insecure zones of northern Nigeria as well as in the displaced population sites in southern Chad and in Niger. However, food products availability remains satisfactory and allows a general stability of monthly prices of coarse grains in most of West African markets.

In the three West African commercial basins, the commercial flows of agricultural products are in seasonal decrease between June and July 2014 for all cereals, except for millet. Generally, the level of supply in local markets remains satisfying in the sub-region, except in conflict-affected areas of northern Mali, of northeastern Nigeria, of C.A.R. and in the neighboring areas. The cross-border trade of countries affected by Ebola in the western commercial basin seems to be affected, as well as trade within the affected countries following quarantine measures taken in some districts. These disturbances have negative socio-economic consequences that might affect the food security of households. As for now, markets in Nigeria have yet to seem affected by the Ebola outbreak, but the situation is being closely monitored.

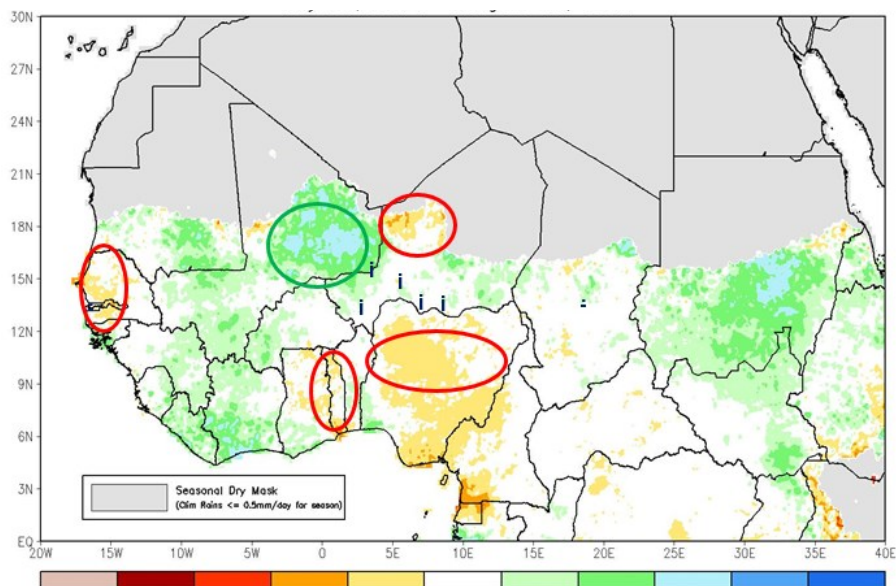
**Objective:** Within the framework of the monthly meetings of the Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group for West Africa, it has been agreed that, in a humanitarian perspective, WFP and FAO provide the group with highlights on the food security situation of the previous month.

## Rainfall deficits affect the agricultural activities

During the months of July and August 2014 the installation of the rainy season have been observed in areas affected by late rains or with a deficit of precipitation. Rainfall amounts recorded in July and August contributed to lessen the deficits without bringing them down. Since the beginning of the rainy season, above-average rainfall was recorded in the western part of the Gulf of Guinea and northeastern Mali.

However, rainfall deficits are observed in (i) the Atlantic coast from southern Mauritania to Guinea Bissau, (ii) the northeast of Niger and (iii) northern Ghana, Nigeria and Togo, negatively affecting agricultural activities in many areas.

**Figure n°1 : Percentage of rainfall compared to normal levels between 1st May and 26th August 2014**



Source : [NOAA](#)

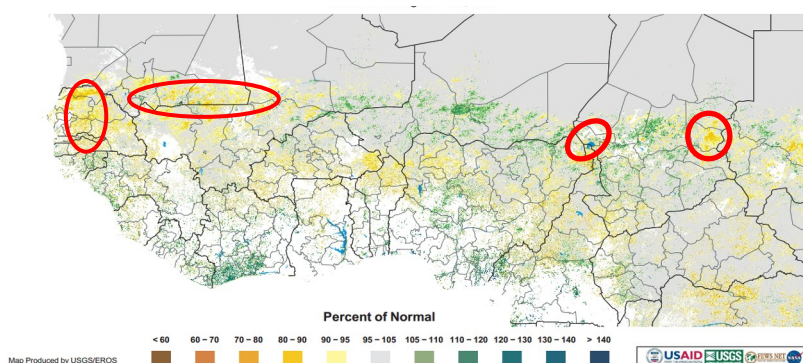
Concerning the agricultural campaign, three areas need to be closely monitored (Figure 1):

- The Atlantic coast is the worst affected due to the late start of the rainy season and rainfall deficit. Some areas have received between 50 and 80 % of the average cumulative rainfall. Delayed rains will affect the development of long-cycle crops such as millet, maize varieties for more than 90 days, groundnuts and sorghum. These crops may only complete their cycle if rains extend beyond their usual date of the end in mid-October. In this area the situation of crops and pastures is worrying.
- In the area including the northern parts of Ghana, Togo, Benin, eastern Burkina Faso and central Nigeria, the rainfall deficit and dry spells may have a negative effect on maize yields.

- In Chad, the Sahel belt has had a difficult start of the agricultural campaign with late rains and dry spells of variable length in late June. In spite of this, a good crop installation is noted. The regularity of rains between August and September will be crucial to obtain average yields.

Heavy rains observed in late July and early August caused floodings in some areas across the region. The most affected country is Niger where to August 21, more than 36,441 people (or 5,511 households) were affected, according to government figures.

**Figure 2 : Vegetation index anomaly in West Africa from 16 to 26 august 2014**



Source : [USGS](#)

## 2013-2014 Agro-pastoral campaign (continued)

### Rainfall deficits affect the agricultural activities

The pastoral situation has improved due to the rainfall registered during the third decade of July and the first two decades of August 2014. However, the situation is still critical in some areas and livestock remains affected by a long lean period especially in areas that have experienced delays on the onset of the rainy season followed by dry spells. These areas are located in northern Senegal, the border between southern Mauritania and Mali, Niger (Tahoua and Zinder regions) and the Sahelian belt of Chad (Figure 2). After a prolonged lean season in these areas, animals are weak and livestock mortalities have been observed in Mali (Timbuktu, Mopti, Gao and Kidal), Niger (Agadez and Arlit) and Senegal.

The neighboring regions of Lake Chad in Niger, Nigeria and Chad, present a rainfall deficit due to late start of rains and dry spells resulting in pasture scarcity. This situation contributes to worsen the already difficult food security situation faced by the host and refugee populations in this area.

The locust situation is calm. Good rains fell in the summer breeding areas in West Africa's Sahel. In August, a small-scale breeding will occur in areas of recent rainfall in the northern Sahel part of Mauritania. [FAO](#)

### Displacement situation in the region

#### Persistent violence in northern Nigeria causes displacement to Niger and Chad

Turmoils that affected northern Mali, northeastern Nigeria and the Central African Republic are the reason of population displacement inside these countries and to Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mauritania, Niger and Chad.

**Niger:** The influx of displaced persons from Nigeria continues. According to IRC (International Rescue Committee) approximately 10,000 people fled north Nigeria to take refuge in the islands of Lake Chad during August. The total number of displaced people from Nigeria, is now estimated at 77 566. [OCHA](#)

Furthermore, 120 Nigerian displaced people have moved from Arikoukouri, an island of Lake Chad, to other islands in search of land to carry out agricultural activities. [OCHA](#)

**Chad:** As of July 31, IOM and its partners have registered 107,500 people evacuated to Chad. This number includes Chadian returnees, Central African refugees and third country nationals. [OCHA](#).

The persistent violence in northern Nigeria has forced hundreds of people to take refuge in western Chad. Since 2009, with the emergence of Boko Haram in Borno State in Nigeria, nearly 4,000 people have fled Nigeria to Chad. According to authorities, a total of 1,120 people, mostly composed by women and children, arrived in the past weeks to Wourchoua into Lake Chad. [OCHA](#)

### Trends on international markets

#### The FAO food price index to his lowest level since since six months

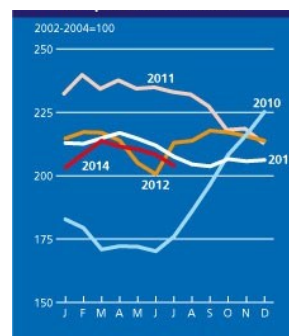
The **FAO Food Price Index** averaged 203.9 points in July 2014, down 4.4 points (2.1 percent) from a revised value in June and 3.5 points (1.7 percent) below July 2013. While meat prices rose for the fifth consecutive month and sugar remained firm, sharp declines in grains, oilseeds and dairy quotations pushed down the FAO Food Price Index to its lowest level since January 2014.

The **FAO Cereal Price Index** averaged 185.4 points in July, down 10.7 points (5.5 percent) from June and down 36.9 points (16.6 percent) compared to the recorded level in July 2013. The recent sharp slide in cereal prices reflected significant falls in international prices of maize (down 9.2 percent) and wheat (down 5.8 percent), a reaction to excellent production prospects in many major producing countries and to the anticipation of abundant exportable supplies in the 2014/15 marketing season.

In July, the world prices of rice were maintained on the Asian markets. However, in the United States and in the Mercosur prices have fallen further. Asian harvests were good and exportable supply will be plentiful this year. There is no risk of shortages and soaring world prices as exportable surpluses are largely sufficient.

[OSIRIZ](#)

Figure 3: FAO food price index



Source : [FAO](#)

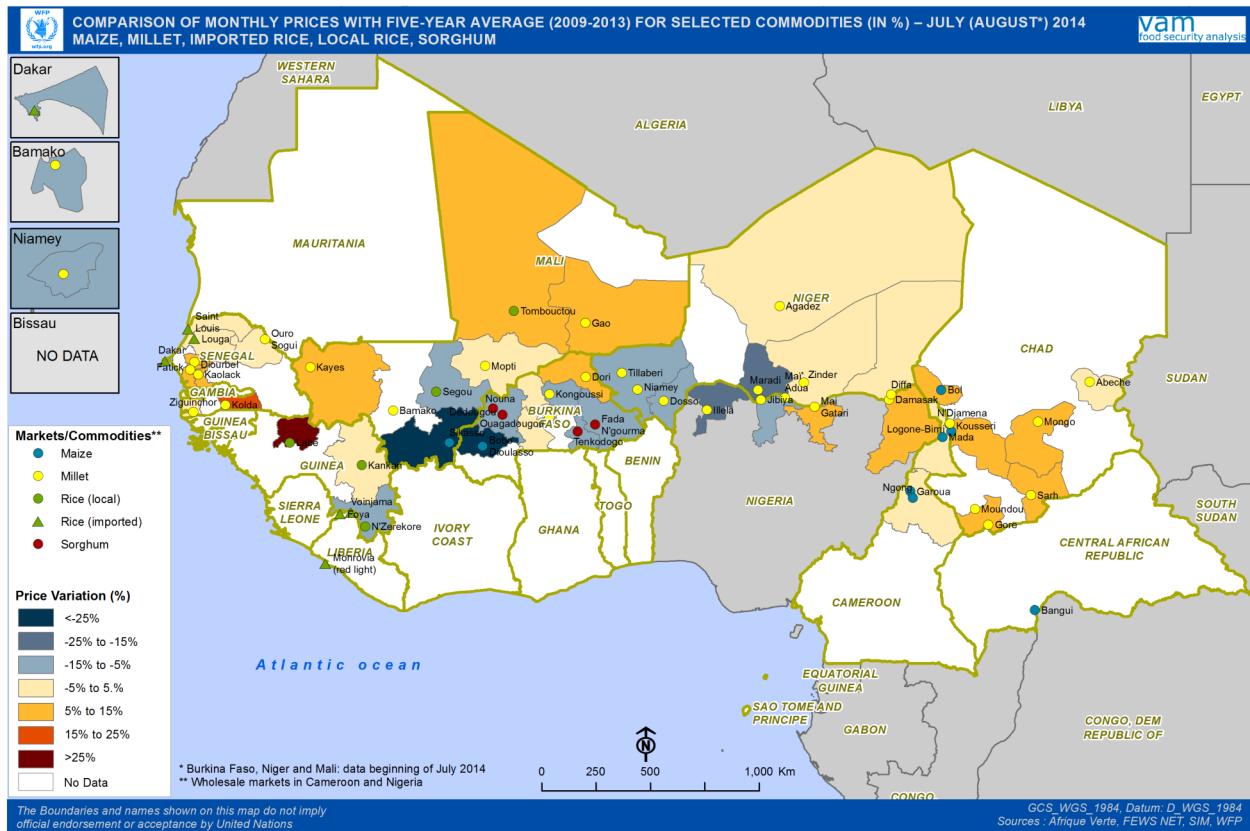




## Trends on West African markets

Monthly prices of coarse grains remain generally stable

Figure 4 : Comparison of monthly prices with five-year average (2009-2013) for selected commodities (in %) - July (August\*) 2014 for maize, millet, imported rice, local rice, sorghum



Source : PAM

In the three trade basins of West Africa, trade flows of agricultural products declined seasonally between June and July 2014 for all cereals except for millet. According to CILSS, the volume of maize flow fell by about 25 percent, which shows that stocks of maize from the 2013/14 harvests are nearly exhausted. However, the cross-border flow of millet increased by 16 percent and 14 percent respectively in June and July compared to the previous months (Source: CILSS). In Mali and Chad, domestic supply of local grain markets is seasonally declining, which is also explained by the low level of commercial stocks of producers and their stock retention to ensure their own food security. The markets in central and eastern basin were supplied through destocking activities by retail traders as well as through grain reserves sales by local producers.

In northern Nigeria, the exchange rate between the naira and the CFA on the black market remains favorable for importing traders from Niger compared to last year (1000 FCFA / 366 naira in August 2014 against 1000 FCFA / 330 naira August 2013). However, the gradual appreciation of the naira at the national level risks becoming disadvantageous for traders from Niger. Moreover, in Niger the black market fuel price originating from northern Nigeria doubled due to the increase in security incidents. Should prices continue increasing, the people in the Diffa region will suffer the consequences of higher prices, especially for transportation and food items.

Overall, local market supply remains satisfactory across the region, except in areas affected by conflict in northern Mali, northeastern Nigeria, Central African Republic and border areas. (Sources: Afrique Verte, FAO GIEWS, SIM, WFP).

During this lean period, local retail prices increased in some markets, such as for millet and sorghum in Burkina Faso (Bobo Dioulasso) and Senegal (Fatick) and for millet in Mali (Timbuktu, Kayes). In the eastern trade basin, price increases were observed in regions affected by civil insecurity, such as northeastern Nigeria as well as regions that experience refugee influx, such as southern Chad and southeast Niger.

However, overall cereal availability was satisfactory, which allowed monthly coarse grain prices to remain generally stable in most markets in the region. Maize prices remained stable or even declined in most consumer markets of the region, but also on important wholesale markets in northern Nigeria. In the western basin, the consumer prices for local coarse grains remained slightly above the five-year average, particularly in Senegal and western Mali. In the central basin, the consumer prices of millet and sorghum are below their five-year averages, with the exception of northern Mali and the Sahel region of Burkina Faso. In the eastern basin, high prices were observed particularly in northeastern Nigeria and Chad. These high prices may limit food access for poor and very poor households. (Sources: Afrique Verte, FAO GIEWS, SIM, WFP)



## Impact on food security

The pastoralist lean season still ongoing due to rainfall deficit recorded in certain areas

**In Senegal**, due to disturbances affecting the agro-pastoralist campaign, the households depending on groundnut selling might suffer a strong income decrease. A decreased production of millet, a widely consumed cereal in Senegal, might cause price increases and therefore reduce the ability of poor households to meet their food needs. The weak body condition and loss of livestock might decrease the availability of small ruminants particularly for the Tabaski. Reinforcing the monitoring of the ongoing agricultural campaign is highly needed to better assess the consequences of the late start of the rainy season.

**In Niger**, in Agadez and Maradi, a deteriorated pastoralist situation characterized by lack of pasture caused loss of livestock. According to Afrique Verte, the destocking of livestock at low prices is accentuated by the scarcity and the high price of fodder in these localities. The terms of trade livestock/cereals is unfavorable to pastoralists. Despite ongoing humanitarian assistance, the food situation is currently affected by seasonal disruption of farmers stocks and food commodities prices increase in markets.

**In Chad**, the first maize harvest in the south is reducing the effects of lean season and pressure on coarse grains. Access to food remains difficult for poor households due to high price levels. From 11 to 13 June 2014, a validation results workshop for ten out of 14 HEA profiles done in Chad took place in Ndjamena under the coordination of SISAAP. The results showed that on 10 profiles, in two zones (area of transhumance in Moudjoura and camel breeding area in Salal), poor households will face survival and livelihood protection deficits and in three zones (agropastoralist zones in Biltine, in Mangalme and in Ngouri), poor households will face livelihoods protection deficits. The unfavorable terms of trade for pastoralists combined with the decrease in agro-pastoralist production and remittances is the core reason for these deficits. The situation is more favorable in the other assessed areas.

**In Mauritania**, the food and nutrition situation remains difficult. According to preliminary results of the food security monitoring system (FSMS) done by CSA and WFP for the lean season, the food insecurity rates are generally increasing, particularly in the southern and eastern parts of the country. The situation is also deteriorating in Nouakchott.

**In Mali**, due to ongoing food distributions, to satisfactory levels of supply in cereal markets, to relatively stable prices, the food situation, as in a typical lean season, remains normal in the south and is improving in the north. The continuation of different actions (DGV, resilience programme, nutrition activities) in the region of Kayes, Mopti, Timbuktu, Koulikoro and Kidal is helping to ease food access and to reinforce vulnerable populations' resilience.

### The Ebola outbreak, in addition to serious sanitary consequences, risks affecting the food security in the affected zones

The Ebola outbreak started in Guinea in December 2013 and has spread to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. As of 31 August, the number of declared cases in the four countries comes to 3,685, which includes 1,841 deaths (Source: WHO). The outbreak disturbed the cross-border and national trade of manufactured, agricultural and food goods as well as agricultural and mining activities, the main sources of income in the affected areas. A rapid assessment of the agricultural situation by FAO was conducted in one of the areas affected by the outbreak, the district of Kailahun in Sierra Leone. The results show that, at least, 40 % of farmers abandoned their land and moved to safer areas. The outbreak started at the beginning of the rice and cacao harvests when traders go in farms to buy cash crops. The reduced movement decreased trade and household income.

The cross-border trade is a major factor of household food security in the region (source: CILSS, WFP, FAO, FEWS NET). The disruption of commercial flows, due to the border closures of affected countries, might have an effect on demand and supply of food commodities. The results of rapid market assessments in Monrovia (Liberia) and Freetown (Sierra Leone) in August 2014 by WFP have showed substantial increases of food prices during the last months. During the lean season (April – September), the households of affected countries strongly depend on markets to purchase staple foods. These price increases make households more vulnerable to food insecurity.

Food access and availability need to be closely monitored following the contingency measures taken by countries of closing their borders with neighboring countries.

## Recommandations for regional partners

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- Reinforce the monitoring of the food security situation in the countries which have experienced early lean seasons, particularly in Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Senegal.
- Reinforce the monitoring of the 2014 2015 agricultural campaign in the zones which have experienced late starts to the rainy season or dry spells after the sowing process.
- Advocate for timely funding of priority actions of the Sahel Humanitarian Appeal for the rest of the lean season.
- Monitor the displacement of populations from CAR, Nigeria and Northern Mali
- Monitor the socio- economic impact of the Ebola outbreak in the affected countries and the neighboring countries



### Mark your calendars!

- PREGEC, 8 10 September in Banjul (Gambia)
- Assessment of the agricultural campaign in the coastal countries: 22 26 September 2014
- Cadre Harmonisé analysis workshop in the coastal countries: 29 September – 3 October 2014
- Assessment of the agricultural campaign in the Sahelian countries: 27 31 October 2014
- Cadre Harmonisé analysis workshop in the Sahelian countries: 3 7 November 2014
- Cadre Harmonise regional consolidation workshop: 13 15 November 2014 in Dakar (Senegal)
- PREGEC, 18 20 November in Dakar (Senegal)



Information on food security  
in West Africa

[www.wfp.org/food-security](http://www.wfp.org/food-security)

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