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

June 2013

## Key points

- ∇ A wet season overall in West Africa, especially in the Western Sahel, is expected in 2013
- ∇ Locust situation : renewed threat in the Sahel
- ∇ Poor cashew marketing campaign threatens food security of rural population in Guinea Bissau

## Agropastoral campaign 2013-2014

The campaign is marked by the end of off-season activities and ongoing preparation of the 2013-2014 planting season. The characteristics of the 2013 rainy season were presented at a meeting of the Regional Forum for seasonal climate forecasts (PRESAO) held in Abuja (Nigeria) on May 30-31, 2013. Anticipated for the rainy season are an above-normal to normal seasonal cumulative rainfall, a normal to slightly late onset, a normal to slightly late cessation, shorter than normal post-planting and post-flowering dry spells, and the prospect of good water supply conditions for crop development throughout West Africa.

The forecast for rainfall is as follows:

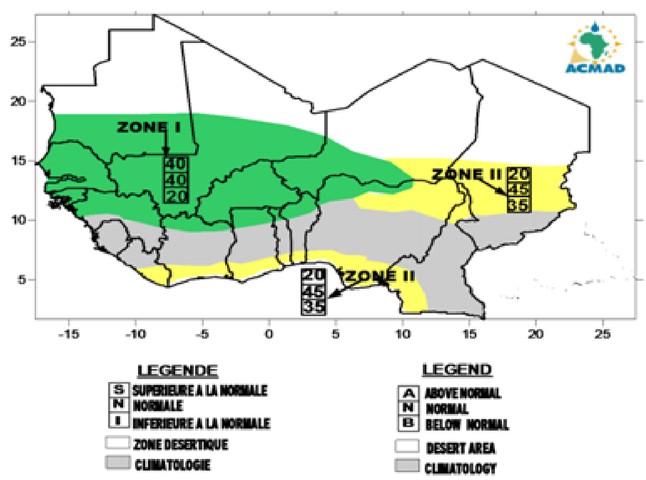
- **normal or slightly above-normal rainfall:** Western Sahel (from Senegal and Mauritania to Western Niger) and Central Niger
- **normal or slightly deficient rainfall:** Eastern Sahel from Lake Chad to Central Chad, along the Gulf of Guinea from Cameroon to Liberia
- **normal rainfall** in the rest of the subregion

The hydrologic forecast is as follows:

- **normal to above-normal flows:** Senegal River, Lake Chad Basin, Ouémé River (Benin) and the lower Niger River basin (Nigeria part)
- **normal flows:** Gambia River and Comoé River (Burkina Faso-Côte d'Ivoire)
- **average to above-normal flows:** Volta River and upper and middle Niger River basin

With these forecasts, there is a risk of heavy rain which can cause flooding and severe damage, including the loss of cultivated areas. These conditions also intensify the breeding of pests, including weeds, grasshoppers and other pests for which monitoring and prevention measures should be strengthened.

**Figure 1 : Rainfall seasonal climate forecast for July through September (as of May 28, 2013)**




*Source : ACMAD/AGRHYMET : PRESAO 16*

<u>How to read the map:</u> Numbers in the small boxes on the top, middle and bottom show the probability that cumulative rainfall will be higher, equivalent or lower, respectively, than the 1981-2010 average.

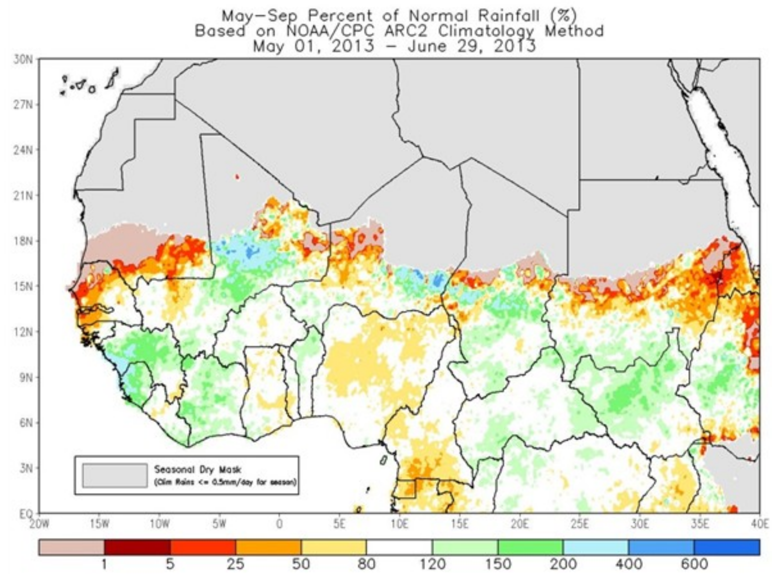
These forecasts are likely to change during the rainy season. Therefore, following the updates that will be made in June and July by AGRHYMET Regional Centre, ACMAD and national meteorological and hydrological services is strongly recommended.

***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.*

# Agropastoral campaign 2013-2014 (continued)

Since the beginning of May, favorable rainfall was observed along the Gulf of Guinea throughout Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Southern Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin (Figure 1). Although the rainfall helped maintain moisture surpluses on the western parts of West Africa, deficits were noticed in some parts of Western Mali and Central Nigeria.

**Figure 2 : Percentage of rainfall received over the normal rainfall in West Africa**




*Source: NOAA-NCEP*

# Population displacements in the region

## CHAD

Cross-community conflicts in Darfur in early 2013 caused massive population movements to the Tissi region (in the extreme southeast of Chad), particularly of Sudanese and Chadians living in Darfur. In early April, clashes between Arabs and Salamat groups displaced an additional 15,000 people into the Tissi region. Thus far, UNHCR has registered 30,000 refugees. 1,700 were relocated to Goz Amer, 3,016 to Abgadam, and more than 20,000 Chadians returned home; this is in addition to the 310,000 Sudanese and Central African refugees already present in the country (OCHA 05-29-2013).

## NIGERIA

The crisis in Northern Nigeria has forced more than 6,000 women, children and elderly people to seek refuge in Niger. Some interviewed by UNHCR said they fled due to fear of being trapped in the response carried out by the government against the insurgents of Boko Haram, particularly in the Baga area in Northern Nigeria, near the border with Niger. Niger has so far received 6,240 people, including 2,692 Nigerians, 3,544 Nigerian returnees and 94 other nationalities (primarily Chadians). The newcomers settle mainly in Bosso, Diffa, Kablewa, Maine, Tam, Tcoukoujani and Garin Amadou in Southern Niger. When families are safe in Niger, men return to work in Nigeria to provide for their families. There are 155 Nigerian asylum-seekers in Chad as well as 716 Chadian nationals. Moreover, 1,200 people returned to Cameroon (UNHCR 06-11-13).

## MALI

The crisis in Mali has caused the displacement of approximately 527,584 people: 353,455 people are internally displaced while 174,129 fled to neighboring countries according to the report of the “Commission Mouvement de Populations” published on June 20, 2013. The total number of IDPs has increased compared to the previous report (298,027 IDPs) due to the military intervention, which allowed for the update of the IDP census in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu regions.

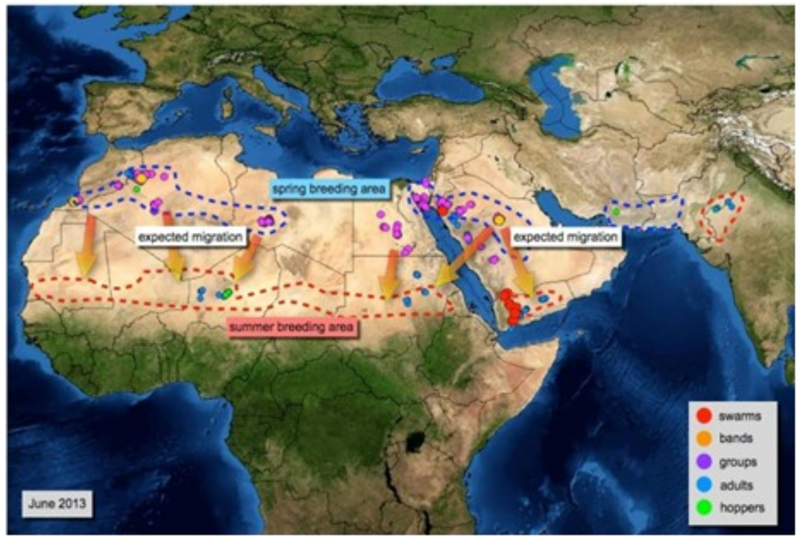
According to the OIM report of June 2013, 198 972 people traveling from south to north, and declaring themselves IDPs, were recorded at the tracking points in May 2013. The report states that the improvement of the security situation in the north is the main reason for 77% of returnees registered in May. With regard to the displacements from north to south, 3,779 IDPs were registered in May. “Economic reasons” are the cause of displacement for 45% of people while “lack of basic social services” accounts for 20% of replies.

Humanitarians are operating in all localities in the north and the south of the country in order to assist people in need. Access is nonetheless limited in some rural areas in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal because of continued insecurity.

# Locust situation as of July 3, 2013 : Sahel threatened by migration from spring breeding areas in Northwest Africa

As vegetation continues to dry out, adult groups and perhaps a few small swarms are likely to form in the spring breeding areas south of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco and Algeria as well as in parts of Southern Libya, and move to the summer breeding areas of Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad in the Northern Sahel (Figure 3). In Niger, small-scale breeding occurred during May in the Air Mountains, where fledging is expected after mid-June. There is a slight risk that a few adult groups may also appear in Chad or Niger from Northern Sudan. Breeding will commence in the Northern Sahel with the onset of the summer rains, but access to some areas will be restricted due to prevailing insecurity. Therefore, a strict and permanent vigilance will be maintained in all countries of the Sahel from mid-June onwards.

**Figure 3 : Locust situation as of July 3, 2013**




*Source: FAO*

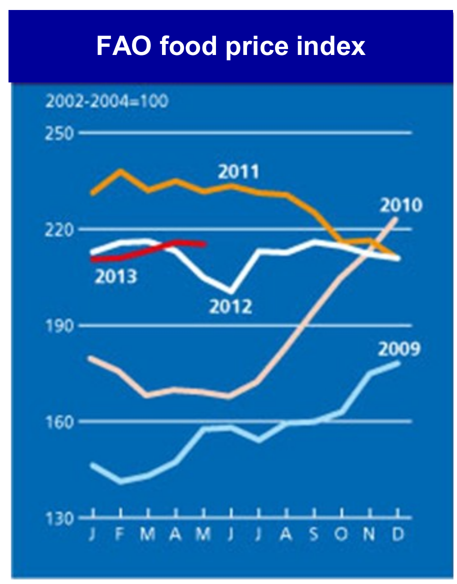
# Trends on international markets

**The FAO Food Price Index** (figure 4) averaged 215.2 points in May 2013, very close to its April value of 215.8 points but 10 points (5%) higher than in May last year. At that level, the index is nearly 10 percent below the peak reached in February 2011. The small decline in May is the result of falling dairy and sugar prices, which offset an increase in cereals. Oils and meat prices remained unchanged.

**The FAO Cereal Price Index** averaged 238.9 points in May, up 4 points (1.9%) from April and nearly 17 points (7.8%) above May last year. Last month's increase was mostly associated with a strong increase in maize prices, mostly a reaction to tightening export supplies and planting delays in the United States. By contrast, wheat and rice quotations remained largely unchanged from the previous month.

Global rice prices remained stable in May. This stability, effective since the end of 2011, is the result of opposing trade policies that tend to neutralize each other. On the one hand, Thailand is raising export prices to finance its domestic price policy, while India and Vietnam, in turn, keep low prices in order to consolidate their position in world markets and prevent an excessive appreciation of the domestic prices. The variability of world prices has not exceeded 2% since the beginning of 2012, against 8% in 2010-11 and 25% in 2008 during the price and food crisis. In the forthcoming months, global prices may register a downward trend as supplies continue to abound, due to good harvests (especially in major producing countries in Asia) and the world reserves' highest historical levels. (Osiriz May 2013 N°111).

**Figure 4 : FAO food price index**

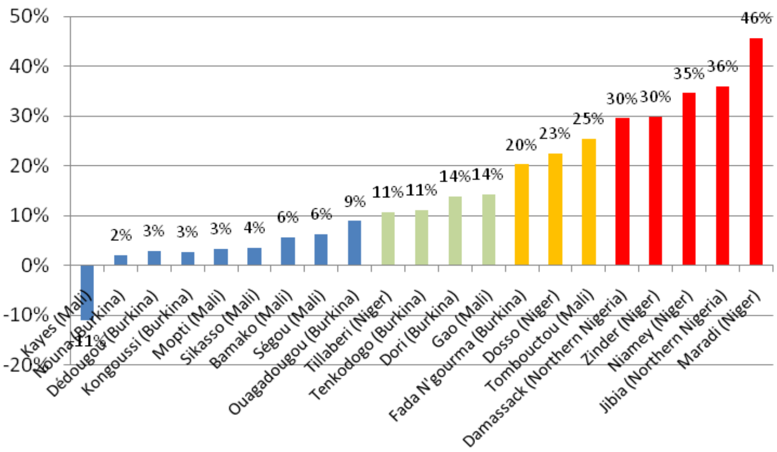



*Source: FAO*

# Market trends in West Africa

In early June, coarse grain prices followed a steady (Mali, Niger) to declining trend (Burkina Faso) in West African countries.

**Figure 5 : Comparison of millet prices (June 2013) to the five-year average in some Sahelian markets**




*Source: Data : GIEWS ; Graphic : WFP*

**In Burkina Faso**, food markets continue to be well supplied. Coarse grain prices decreased in most markets, due to low demand combined with good availability of products (Source: NGO Afrique Verte). However, millet prices increased compared to the five-year average in Dori (14%), Fada N'gourma (20%), Ouagadougou (9%) and Tenkodogo (11%).

**In Niger,** price trends remain stable in the surveyed markets. According to the NGO Afrique Verte, increases of 2 to 13% have nonetheless been registered for the following commodities: rice (+8% in Niamey), millet (+4 to 8%), sorghum (+7 to 14%) and maize (+5 to 20%). Food markets are well supplied in Agadez and Maradi while supply is low to medium in Zinder, Dosso and Tillabéry. With the lean season, the supply market is largely provided by imported cereals from Mali (millet), Burkina Faso (millet and maize), Benin (maize) and Nigeria (millet, sorghum). Unusually high prices in markets in Nigeria, where most commodities are sourced due to civil unrest and subsequent reduced supply, have caused atypical market flows in Niger. For the first time, flows of maize (imported from Burkina Faso and Benin) were observed from Niger to Nigeria. In addition, millet imported from Mali, which usually supplies only the Tillabéry region, can now be found in markets in the central region of Niger.

**In Mali,** the crisis in the North did not disrupt the mechanics and supply of the markets in Mopti region. However, the flow of products to the North has been reduced. The cattle market of Fatoma, in the Mopti region previously disrupted, is quickly resuming its activities with good supply levels. Higher security in the Northern region has also allowed cereal and livestock trade to improve. According to the NGO AMRAD, market supply increased for all staple cereals compared to the situation at the beginning of the year. The same trend was observed in the cattle market as the improvement in security allowed greater physical access to markets. In May 2013, food prices decreased in all markets compared to the previous month but remained above the five-year average. Local rice increased by 15% in Gao due to a temporary lack of stock. Imported rice has recorded increases of 8% in Tenenkou and 3% in Gao. For millet, prices increased by 20% and 6% in Niafounké (Tombouctou) and Youwarou (Mopti), respectively. Unfortunately, livestock markets have not regained the same high level of activity as cereal markets because traders are still wary of travelling with large herds due to security considerations.

**In Senegal**, at the beginning of the lean period, millet prices – the rural population's staple food–increased by 8% compared to 2012, which was unusual considering the good level of production. The increase is even more pronounced compared to the five-year average (13% for millet, 4% for sorghum and 12% for maize). The most affected households are those in the regions of Ziguinchor, Matam and Tambacounda, which are among the most food insecure regions of the country. The terms of trade (TOT) peanut / imported retail rice remained favorable to peanut producers: a kilo of peanuts buys a kilo of rice. The rising price of shelled peanut since November, coupled with the stable price of imported rice, continues to improve the purchasing power of farmers in the groundnut basin, resulting in an improvement of the terms of trade by 30% in twelve months. The government has also fixed official prices for some commodities (oil, sugar, milk and rice) in order to increase the purchasing power of the most vulnerable populations.

**In Chad,** in the Guera region, good production and good market supply have kept food prices stable. In North Guera, the price of red sorghum is slightly below the average of the last eight years. Even though the price of a kettle is higher than the average of recent years, it is decreasing on most markets. The terms of trade between livestock and grain are favorable to farmers. Seasonal movements are less important this year compared to normal. The market supplies for staple foods are low compared to last year.

# Impact on food security

**In the Sahel,** the PREGEC highlighted that the nutrition situation remains worrying in the region during the restricted meeting that was held June 17-19, 2013. Persistent high prevalence of acute malnutrition and upward trends in admissions were noted, sometimes higher than forecasted and close to the levels seen in 2012, especially in Niger, Mali, Chad and Nigeria. This situation reflects the increasing vulnerability of the poorest households, which continue to face difficulties in accessing food and basic services and the erosion of their livelihoods.

The conclusions of the regional HEA workshop held in Dakar from May 12-14, 2013, indicate deficits for 23 baselines out of a total of 47 on the analysis carried out in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad. The deficits affect only the very poor and poor households. Half of the areas analyzed will therefore deal with emergency humanitarian needs, especially during the lean season, when it is known that the categories of households affected by these deficits (poor and very poor) account for nearly half of the rural population. Even in the absence of deficits, the livelihoods of poor and very poor households are eroded and interventions to strengthen their resilience are required.

**In Mali,** in Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao region, one out of five households faces food shortages. The lean season has already begun in some areas and household food stocks are expected to decline. Food assistance, as well as activities to prevent and treat malnutrition, will be required. Local and imported products are available in the markets but demand remains weak due to the limited purchasing power of the population. Although prices are steady, they remain high compared to the five-year average, so any increase will strongly impact households. The situation remains therefore critical and comparable to the early 2013 level. In the Timbuktu region and Mopti districts (Douentza Tenenkou and Youwarou) more than 60% of households are unable to reach an acceptable food consumption score despite a drop in grain prices observed during the month and an improvement in needs coverage by humanitarian interventions. The situation seems to be more dire in the Gao region with more than 80% of households not having an acceptable consumption score.

**In Guinea Bissau,** the untransformed cashew nut accounts for 90% of national exports. Cashew nut production and marketing activities employ most of the rural population. WFP and its partners (Ministry of Agriculture, the National Institute of Statistics and FAO) conducted an assessment in seven regions from June 14-17, 2013. The findings show that the commercialization of cashew nuts was disastrous in 2013 compared to previous years. The average purchasing price of one kilo of cashew nuts in 2013 is 112 FCFA, against 300 FCFA in 2012, marking a decrease of 62.6% in the year. The terms of trade also deteriorated: In 2012, a kilo of cashew nuts allowed the purchase of a kilo of rice; in 2013, 3 kilos of cashew nuts are necessary to purchase one kilo of rice. Traders have stopped purchasing cashew nuts since late May and it is estimated that 38% of the crop has not yet been sold. This situation can be explained by the coup of April 2012, the non-repayment of loans owed to banks and the decline in demand in the international market. Trends on the cashew market impact household income and household cereal stocks. More than 90% of the communities interviewed stated that their current stocks barely cover one month's consumption. The combination of bad harvest, the use of negative coping strategies such as mortgaging for the next peanut crop or livestock sales, as well as low price and inexistent cashew trade, will deteriorate the food security situation of rural households in the next 3 months.

**In Guinea Conakry,** a joint assessment was conducted by WFP, UNHCR, SENAH and NGO partners (ACCORD, ODIC, CIDR) of the situation of Ivoirian refugees in Kouankan camp (located in Macenta prefecture in the forest region) from May 31 to June 6, 2013. The results show that more than half (57%) of the households surveyed have low or borderline food consumption. Refugees face different constraints, such as limited access to land, lack of agricultural inputs and scant technical support. Only those who have the ability to rent land (sharecropping or purchases) can access it. Yields are poor and harvest products covering one month of household food needs are totally consumed. The lack of employment opportunities and income-generating activities limit refugees' food self-sufficiency. All these facts weaken the most vulnerable among them. Refugees' food and nutrition situations become increasingly precarious given the increasing incidence of poverty and food insecurity rates in the region, far superior to the national average.

**In Liberia,** the results of an in-depth food security and vulnerability assessment by WFP in 2012 show that 4 % of Liberians have poor food consumption and an undiversified diet (generally consisting of rice), 30% of Liberians have borderline food consumption and 65.5% of Liberians have a diversified and balanced diet. 55% of rural households are likely to have poor food consumption, compared to 19% of urban households. Poverty is often the main cause of food insecurity, with 84% of the population living below the poverty line of $1.25 a day. Poor households lack the resources to access safe and adequate food. Similarly, very bad road conditions since the conflict hinder access to remote areas, resulting in weak integration between urban and rural markets. Prices remain high and very volatile. Although agricultural production increased in recent years, it remains below the regional average and post-harvest losses are still high. Weather conditions in Liberia should allow the development of the rice crop but because of the civil crisis, agricultural production covers only one-third of Liberians' needs. Low production puts the country in a situation of vulnerability to high prices and global market fluctuations, which combined with other factors such as the lack of education, poor dietary habits and lack of access to adequate sanitation renders Liberia's population highly vulnerable to food insecurity.

# Recommendations for the regional food security and nutrition working group

| | |
|---|---|
| Continue to monitor food security and nutrition in the Sahel, including Mali and neighboring countries affected by the Malian crisis and also in Guinea Bissau | Humanitarian and development decision-makers are informed in time to help decision-making |
| Continue to monitor the evolution of prices, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Chad | Monitor access to food for the poorest households |
| Support advocacy for an adequate response to the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), launched in 2013 (including in Mali) | Humanitarian needs resulting from the 2012 Sahel crisis are reported in the CAPs and covered in time |

## Conclusions

**Vulnerable communities in the Sahel, which have not yet recovered from the 2012 crisis, are still threatened by:**

- **risk of heavy rain that can cause flooding and damage, as well as the desert locust threat that requires strict vigilance;**
- **the current crises (Nigeria, Mali, Darfur) leading to displacements of populations whose status is precarious and requires humanitarian support;**
- **poor cashew marketing in Guinea Bissau which greatly threatens the food security of the rural population.**

## @ Informations on food security in West Africa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**Mark your calendar !**

> July 3, 2013: Launch of the mid-term review of 2013 Sahel Strategy - Dakar