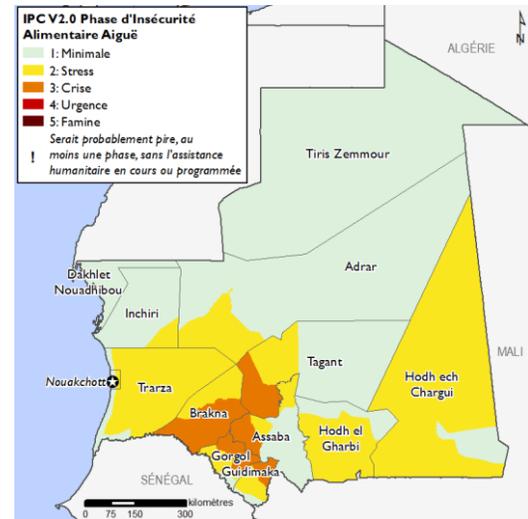


Deteriorating food security in central, southern and southeaster Mauritania

KEY MESSAGES

- Although consumer markets are well stocked with imported food (rice, oil, sugar, tea, pasta), the continuing rise in their prices since the month of Ramadan (May) is limiting poor households’ access to them. The fall in livestock prices and the lack of seasonal rural income-generating activities are reducing poor households’ seasonal incomes.
- Faced with significant deficits in agricultural production and pasture, and difficulties in accessing water and income, poor rural households have been experiencing a longer and more difficult lean season since January (instead of March or April) than they would in an average year. In certain parts of agropastoral zones – the Senegal River Valley and the rainfed crop area – many households are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).
- Assistance programs run by the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Action Against Hunger, Oxfam, Save the Children, Caritas, Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD), the French Red Cross, *Médecins du Monde*, etc.) are under way in parts of certain livelihood zones. They involve free distributions of food and livestock feed as well as cash transfers and nutrition support for malnourished children and breastfeeding or pregnant women. However, they are still inadequate to meet the needs reported by humanitarian workers.

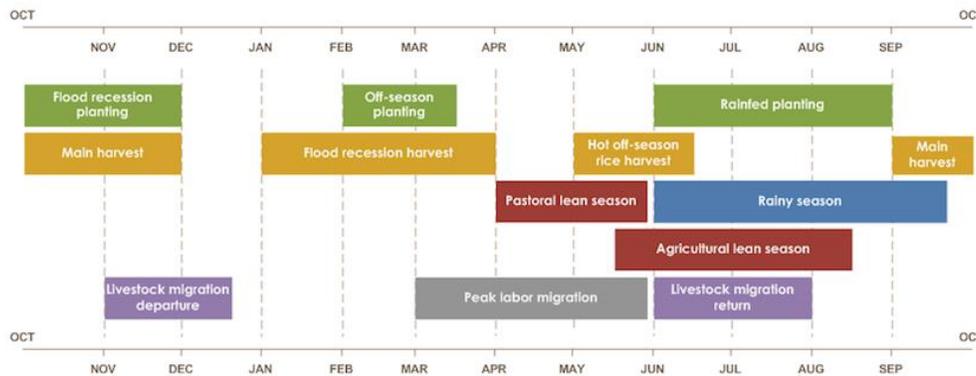
Current food security outcomes, June 2018



Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Current Situation

Agroclimatic situation: While seasonal temperatures of inland areas are markedly higher than those in an average year, temperatures in coastal regions remain well below seasonal averages. Torrential rains have begun to hit the east, center and south of the country, causing flooding.

Agriculture: The demand for seeds has already led to large rise in the prices of sorghum, maize and cowpea in agricultural zones. This rise is more marked in zones that are far from Mauritanian markets (fixed or weekly) in border areas, which are supplied through destocking by Malian farmers. No agricultural activity is currently under way in zones that are entirely dependent on rainfall (agropastoral zone and rainfed crop zone). However, in the Senegal River Valley zone, the hot off-season irrigated crops are maturing, and land is continuing to be prepared for winter crops. The areas to be harvested and those that will be cultivated are smaller than those in 2017, which were already smaller than the five-year average. Due to their failure to repay previous debts, some farmers (collective and private) have not had access to agricultural credit and will therefore not cultivate their land.

In the oasis zones, the date harvest is under way. The harvests in Adrar are considered to be average, but those in Tagant and Assaba, which were affected by low groundwater levels due to the rainfall deficit, are markedly smaller than those of 2017, which were smaller than those in an average year.

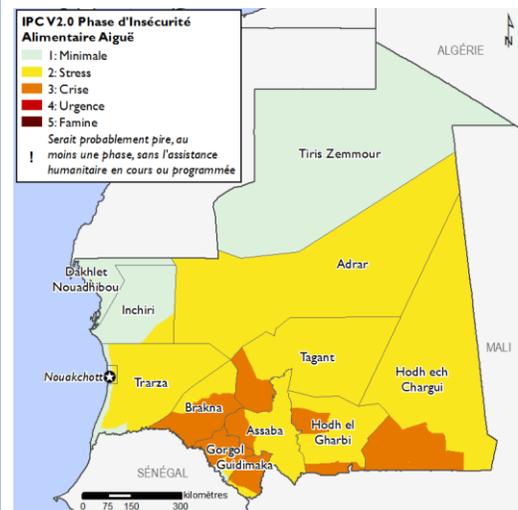
Pastoral situation: Pasture is virtually non-existent in most of the country. The concentrations in the host areas of southern Guidimakha, Assaba, Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh Ech Chargui have reduced with departures for Mali's pasture zones. The use of livestock feed, which has been systematic since April, is becoming increasingly expensive and difficult due to the fall in Malian exports. At Adel Bagrou market, the price of a 50 kg bag of Malian livestock feed, which had been MRU 700 at the beginning of the month, rose to MRU 1,500.

Locusts: The situation is calm according to the National Center for Locust Control (CNLA).

Eco-farming: This sector's activities are limited to the sale of timber, charcoal and straw from rice or wild plants, which are only sold in the south of the country. The sale of charcoal and timber is in fierce competition with butane gas sales, which is brought into rural areas by traveling tankers to be offered for sale. Although the price per unit (MRU 200 per 25 kg bag of charcoal and MRU 600 per cartload of timber) has increased, the decline in the quantities sold has reduced households' income from these sales by about 60 percent over the same period in an average year. No wild products are currently being picked.

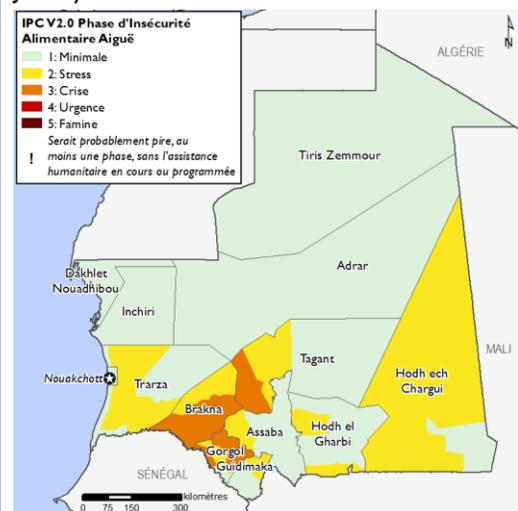
Income: Apart from the work in irrigated farming areas in the valley and oasis palm groves, there is no other agricultural activity likely to require paid agricultural labor. In the first zone, primarily in southern Trarza, labor prices are stable. However, due to the decline in farmed areas, the reduction in working time has led to a fall in poor households' incomes, which are approximately 30 percent lower than in an average year. The wages of permanent employees (between MRU 3,000 and 4,000) remain stable. Incomes from livestock sales are at their lowest levels since 2015, due to the combined effect of the fall in prices and number of animals to be sold. Those originating from migrants are still low and on average are 80 percent below

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2018



Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, October 2018 to January 2019



Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

the level in an average year. In certain communes in agropastoral zones, rainfed crop zones and the Senegal River Valley, humanitarian organizations (United Nation agencies and NGOs) are making cash transfers (MRU 2,400 per household), which will provide households with a regular income over the next four months.

Cross-border flows: Now that seasonal destocking by Malian farmers has resumed, flows of traditional cereals have become markedly larger in comparison with the previous quarter. However, due to high demand from transhumant herders on Malian land, flows remain smaller overall than those of an average year. Flows of rice from Senegal, which are checked by customs officers in both countries, also remain small. Flows of vegetables and fruit from North Africa are steady and provide an adequate and regular supply to the Nouakchott market, which then supplies the country's interior markets.

Consumer markets: The formal market and government shops are being regularly stocked with staple foods. However, since May, there has been a continuous upward trend in the prices of these products which is increasingly worsening the terms of trade for livestock and cereals at the expense of households. Compared with the same period in 2017, the biggest rises are affecting sorghum (up by 53 percent in the agropastoral zone, 18.42 percent in the oasis zone, 81.8 percent in the Senegal River Valley and 50 percent in the rainfed crop zone). These price increases are due to the low level of seasonal supply, which is due to the significant deficit in the production of this cereal and the rationing of Malian transfers between April and May. In addition, the shift in demand from sorghum to wheat, which is already in high demand among livestock farmers (as livestock feed), has increased the price of this imported cereal. In all livelihood zones, the increase in wheat prices, which is a common occurrence during the lean season (April and August), is markedly higher than in an average year. This increase is about 10 percent in the agropastoral and rainfed crop zones and reaches 62 percent in the center of the Senegal River Valley, where the low seasonal production levels of local rice makes it the main substitute cereal for sorghum.

Livestock markets: All livestock markets are poorly stocked. In addition to the effects of long-distance transhumance, there has also been a reduction in livestock numbers, which is limiting supply. Furthermore, the deterioration in their physical condition has led to a large fall in demand for sheep and cattle. Although sheep and cattle prices at all markets have fallen continuously since the beginning of the year, they are relatively stable compared with the same period in 2017 and the five-year average. This situation has been caused by the significant pasture deficit in pastoral areas between May and July over the past five years.

Food and nutrition: The food situation is continuing to worsen for poor households in all zones with significant agricultural and pastoral activities. In addition to the decline in seasonal agricultural production, there has also been a fall in households' incomes (which are used to buy food) and difficulties with regular and adequate access to water. In most livelihood zones, these households have changed their eating habits by consuming wheat and pasta instead of sorghum and rice. They have also reduced the sizes of their meals (from a quarter to half) and even limited themselves to two or one a day (compared with three under normal circumstances).

Although the conditions for global acute malnutrition (irregular and inadequate food intake, difficult access to water, poor dietary diversity, etc.) are present and higher than in an average year in most livelihood zones, Action Against Hunger surveys show that alert threshold levels with rates that are close to or even higher than the critical threshold levels under World Health Organization standards are only present in Guidimakha (17 percent) and Hodh Ech Chargui (13 percent). In the Amourj department, nine deaths caused by malnutrition have just been reported. The information communicated by our price investigator in Adel Bagrou was confirmed by the Food Security Commission (CSA).

Assumptions

The most likely food security scenario from June 2018 to January 2019 is based on the following underlying assumptions with regard to trends in nationwide conditions:

Agroclimatic situation: Given the quantity and frequency of rainfall in the country in the final dekad (10-day period) of June, it is hoped that the season will start as normal, which will restart rainfed agricultural activities and encourage new pasture growth. Average rainfall in Mali and Guinea will ensure optimal flooding of the Mauritanian walo and raise river levels to a satisfactory level for irrigated winter crops (rice, maize and vegetables).

Locusts: Although the locust situation has been calmed over the last few years by significant rainfall and pasture deficits, it may become critical between October and January resulting from a lack of monitoring in certain areas in the Sahel and Sahara due to insecurity. However, the CNLA is carrying out regular

Agriculture: Land in rainfed crop and agropastoral zones could be worked on from the beginning of July. Issues in terms of access to seeds, the fear of similar rainfall to 2017 (with a lengthy cessation in July) and the fear of seeing their fields destroyed by returning transhumant livestock are factors that may lead to a reduction in the areas that will be planted with crops at the beginning of the season. This situation should particularly affect short-cycle crops which are sown at the beginning of the rainy season (during the first two dekads of July). It is therefore likely that the rainfed crop yield will be lower than that in an average year.

Since the irrigated areas cultivated during the rainy season will be smaller than those in an average year, a decrease in irrigated crop yields (rice, maize and vegetables) is also to be expected.

Pastoral conditions: Pastoral conditions will improve from mid-July onwards. However, given the climate forecasts, the likely rainfall deficits in the river valley zone and the southwest of the agropastoral zone should slow down pasture growth in these locations. Transhumant herders from these regions will have to delay their return and livestock farmers will continue purchasing livestock feed in order to sustain their livestock.

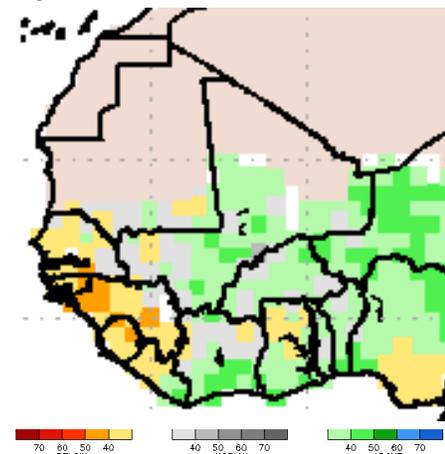
Eco-farming conditions: Wild products will be gathered according to the normal seasonal timetable. Outside the zone likely to experience a rainfall deficit (the southwest of the country), yields will be close to the average.

Income: Only incomes from agricultural work will increase between July and October due to the resumption of work in fields. Many poor people in this zone work as agricultural laborers on collective holdings in the valley. As the amount of land to be worked reduces, the number of laborers integrating in these areas will decrease, as will the income they earn from such work. The decline in incomes from Mauritanian migrants (a seasonal phenomenon) will continue throughout the scenario period as many migrants will return. Incomes from livestock sales will remain low until September but will then show a gradual upward trend until January. Incomes earned from the sale of wild products will rise between September and January 2019 to levels close to those of an average year.

Commercial imports: Commercial imports and cross-border flows will be active in order to ensure that the country is regularly and adequately supplied throughout the scenario period.

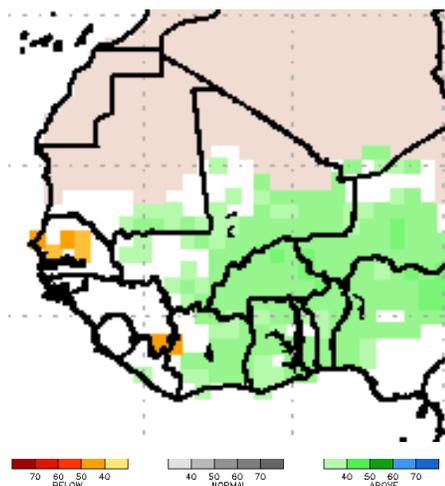
Markets and prices: Consumer markets will be well stocked with staple foods (rice, wheat, oil, sugar, etc.). Traditional cereal supplies, which are currently low, will improve gradually between September (when short-cycle crops are harvested) and January (when late rainfed crops begin to be harvested). The pressure on wheat will continue until September as will the

Figure 1. North American Multi-Model Ensemble (NMME) June to August 2018



Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)/NMME

Figure 2. NMME July to September 2018



Source: NOAA/NMME

upward trend in its price. This will only reverse from September with the harvest of short-cycle crops and pasture growth. Between June and September, any pressure on the demand for wheat will lead to a shift in demand for local rice, as this cereal is in short supply on the market (with a large fall in production during the hot off-season). A sharp increase in the price of this cereal is all the more likely, as customs checks on both sides of the Senegal River are limiting illegal rice exports.

The government's Emel shops, which sell food (local rice, wheat, sugar, oil, milk, etc.) at prices which are 30 to 40 percent lower than those on the formal market, will continue to operate normally throughout the scenario period.

Livestock markets: These markets will be less stocked than in an average year throughout the scenario period. Sheep and cattle prices, which are currently very low, will follow a continuous upward trend from September, when harvests will limit livestock sales, and from August due to demand for Eid al-Adha. This trend could lead to seasonal levels that are markedly higher than those in an average year. Sheep and cattle numbers will be low, as the current food shortage will weaken animals, meaning they will only be able to reproduce after January.

Food assistance: This is currently inadequate and will remain this way until January. Food assistance will be needed in the west of the agropastoral zone and in the center of the Senegal River Valley until January 2019, as the main agricultural harvests (lowlands, dams and walo) in these zones, which are currently in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), will only happen between February and March 2019.

Most likely food security outcomes

From July to September, the current food insecurity levels will follow a continuous downward trend. However, this trend will be slower than in an average year, due to the scale of the livelihood deficits. The Stressed (IPC Phase 2) situation over this period will be stabilized.

From October to January 2019, in the center and east of the agropastoral zone, in the rainfed crop zone and in the pastoral and commercial zones, the Stressed situation will diminish thanks to pastoral supplies (though these will be smaller than in an average year due to the pastoral situation) and the rainfed crop harvests. For the same reasons, the areas that are in Crisis in the rainfed crop zone will move toward a Stressed situation. However, this could only improve and lead to minimal food insecurity if yields of late crops harvested between December and January are good enough to strengthen the positive impacts of the improved pastoral conditions and if seasonal Malian cereal flows are typical, thus lowering the prices of cereals and legumes. Only poor households in the west of the agropastoral zone (the departments of Moudjéria, Monguel, Magta Lahjar, northwestern M'Bout and southern Aleg) and center of the Senegal River Valley (Boghé, Bababé, M'Bagne, western Kaédi), which are facing significant livelihood protection deficits and excessive debts (3 to 4 months' consumption), are likely to remain in Crisis until January.

AREAS OF CONCERN

Center of the Senegal River Valley (MR 08)

Current situation

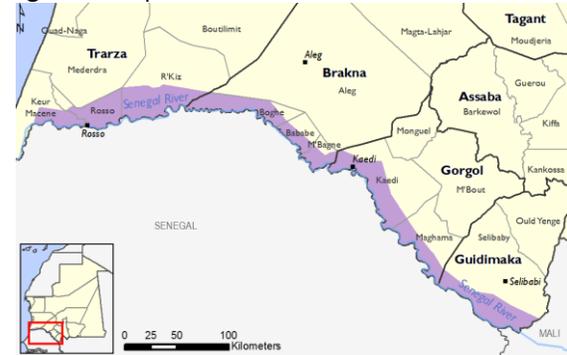
Agroclimatology:

- Seasonal temperatures and wind activity, which are markedly higher than in an average year, are limiting agricultural activities (especially vegetable crops) in most of the sub-zone.

Agriculture:

- Low yield of seasonal irrigated crops, especially vegetables and maize. With the exception of a few private holdings in the western part of the Boghé department, whose areas are not even 20 percent of those cultivated in an average year, there are almost no areas being farmed. Some local communities in the Bababé and Boghé departments have begun the preparatory work for the growing season, which is highly dependent on agricultural credit.

Figure 3. Map of livelihood zone 7



Source: FEWS NET

- According to the Ministry of Agriculture, agricultural credit will be available within appropriate timescales but will only be granted to those who have repaid their debts. Unfortunately, due to failures and poor productivity levels in previous years, many farmers of collective holdings owe large amounts, which they are unable to pay back.

Pastoral situation:

- There is almost no herbaceous pasture in the zone. Pastures are being overgrazed by camels, whose presence is worrying farmers who are unable to protect their crops.
- The majority of local livestock, over 70 percent of which is cattle, has migrated to Senegal.
- The sale of products, such as wheat and rakkell, as part of the government's pastoral support program is currently under way, yet despite the large reduction in local livestock, the approved quotas remain inadequate. Many livestock farmers who relied on this program to keep their animals nearby are finding themselves trapped by the situation and are resorting to purchases in the formal market, where the prices of 50 kg bags of wheat and rakkell have already risen from MRU 600 in March to MRU 800 in May. In the same period in 2017, the average price per bag at the Boghé market was MRU 460, which indicates that there has been a price increase of 57.5 percent. The only factor restricting sales is availability.
- Herds continue to be thinned with increasing sales of cows and ewes with their young. The Boghé and Kaédi livestock markets are still less stocked than in an average year.

Markets:

- The markets in the zone are all well stocked with imported food (rice, wheat, sugar, oil, tea, etc.), as was also the case in January. At Boghé market, the prices of these products have risen significantly compared with the same period in 2017 (20 percent for wheat, 29 percent for sorghum, 14 percent for imported rice and 20 percent for local rice). In addition to the effects of the increase in demand caused by the lack of household food stocks, are those resulting from trader speculation during the month of Ramadan. The impact of such speculations usually takes one to two months to disappear. Traditional cereal supplies are still low and prices are continuing to follow the upward trend that began in January. At Kaédi market, the price per kilogram of sorghum, which is becoming less and less available, rose from MRU 25 in January to MRU 37.5 in May.
- Government shops (Emel or Solidarity) are generally well stocked with wheat, local rice, sugar, oil and milk, which are still being sold at prices that are 30 to 40 percent lower than those on the formal market. However, the way in which these shops operate, with payments being made in cash and limits on the number of buyers, favors wealthier households more than poor households.
- Compared with January, the Boghé and Kaédi livestock markets are poorly stocked with animals. However, it is likely that the rapid expansion of the Bouhadida market (which is closer to the agropastoral zone and well situated on a tarmacked road) and the creation of three new weekly markets at the border between the Boghé and R'kiz departments, very close to the Senegal River banks, have contributed to decrease in supplies at the Boghé market. For Kaédi market, the sizable presence of Mauritanian livestock farmers in the Senegalese border area from the northeast of Ouro Sogui to Ranérou is the root cause of the issue. Since the latter are forced to sell their animals for food and to strengthen their livestock herds, many Senegalese traders no longer feel the need to cross the river to acquire livestock. On both sides of the river, livestock prices are falling significantly (by between 13 and 22 percent for sheep and 25 and 40 percent for cattle). The increase in distress sales in Mauritania has caused these wide price variations, as traders and some heads of households are opting to sell their animals in Senegal, where prices are declining less sharply.

Income:

- The lack of agricultural activities between February and May is depriving poor households of their main source of income during this period of the year.
- Incomes from other local activities, including the sale of charcoal and firewood, are also significantly reduced. This situation is due to the increased supply of these products, as more traders are engaging in these activities (this is not the only zone where there are still forests). In addition, the rapid growth of alternative sources, such as itinerant sales of butane gas and the government restrictions placed on the use of this natural resource are contributing to the declining demand for these products.
- The local urban informal sector (in the towns of Kaédi and Boghé) is already so saturated that women are no longer able to participate, which is increasingly causing them to move to other towns in the country (Zouerate, Nouadhibou and Nouakchott). Despite this rising number of people leaving, incomes are still low. However, domestic labor prices have remained steady compared with January.

- Seasonal incomes earned from the sale of small ruminants are at their lowest level since May 2016. The prices of sheep and cattle, which had begun to increase in April, are once again falling due to their deteriorating physical conditions. As a result, the terms of trade for sheep and local rice have fallen by 6.45 percent, 11.5 percent and 9.4 percent compared with the previous month, same period in 2017 and five-year average respectively. Due to the thinness of sheep, traders have turned their attention to goats, which is growing in demand among urban consumers. At Boghé market, an average sheep bought in April for around MRU 3,100 was worth no more than MRU 2,700 in May. In Kaédi, the average price of a cow (MRU 13,000 in an average year) fell from MRU 6,000 to 4,500, but the average price of a two-year-old bull calf was 36 percent higher compared with the same period. There is high demand for bull calves from traders on both sides of the river, which mainly use these animals for slaughter and urban consumption.
- Sales of small ruminants have been reduced by the sharp drop in numbers, following sales made since the 2017 lean season (May and June). The prices of small ruminants sold at Boghé market are 27 to 35 percent lower than they were in the same period in 2017.
- Slowdown and reduction in food loans. The accumulation of food debts since 2017 is making traders mistrustful and increasingly less inclined to grant food loans.

Humanitarian assistance

- This is being provided and includes both free food distributions and cash transfers. At present, 271 households in the Kaédi department have benefited from free food distributions. These monthly distributions, which have already taken place in March and April, will continue until September at a rate in accordance with United Nations standards (400 g per capita per day). From June to August 2018, approximately 39,416 people in the Kaédi, M'Bagne and Bababé departments will receive monthly cash transfers of MRU 2,400 distributed by the WFP and NGOs.

Assumptions

The most likely food security scenario from June 2018 to January 2019 is based on the following underlying assumptions with regard to trends in nationwide conditions:

Agroclimatology:

- The rainy season will begin in July, as in an average year. However, the overall rainfall is expected to be lower than that in an average year during the crucial growth period of rainfed crops (July to September).

Agriculture:

- Although short-cycle crops could be affected by lengthy interruptions in rainfall, the small yields that they provide will give poor households seasonal food sources between October and December.
- The areas where irrigated crops are grown will once again be below average, due to the limited access to agricultural credit. While collective holdings cover more than 90 percent of the irrigated areas within the zone, many will remain unfarmed or will only be partially farmed.

Pastoral situation:

- Although average pastoral conditions are expected at the beginning of the season (between July and August), due to the climate forecasts of a climatic deficit across the zone concerned, it is likely that livestock farmers will not return in large numbers. This situation could affect the seasonal availability of milk and stock levels at livestock markets.

Income:

- Sources of income for agricultural laborers in relation to land preparation and crop maintenance should rise to the levels seen in an average year, from July to August, since the rainy season is expected to start as normal. However, the incomes of agricultural laborers during the harvests could be below average.
- Seasonal income sources which are unrelated to land preparation work (migration, livestock sales, eco-farming, etc.) will remain markedly below those seen in an average year.

- Incomes from harvesting (which are strongly related to rainfall levels) will also be below those seen in an average year, between June and September. However, these could be average between October and January 2019 if the total annual rainfall is average.

Markets:

- The likely decrease in the production of local rice (which is harvested in October and November) will prolong the demand for wheat. This should lead to a price increase from June to September compared with the current situation. From October 2018 to January 2019, prices are likely to be stable, which are already greater than in an average year due to the decrease in pastoral demand.
- Consumer markets (formal markets and government shops) will be well stocked throughout the scenario period, in particular thanks to regular and adequate imports.
- There will be a continuous fall in the price of animals, solely in rural areas (since demand for festivals will cause rises in urban areas), until August, with a recovery in prices from September to January.
- Solidarity shops will continue to operate throughout the scenario period.

Humanitarian assistance

- Assistance programs aimed at approximately 39,416 people in the Kaédi, M'Bagne and Bababé departments will continue to receive monthly cash transfers of MRU 2,400 from June to August or September 2018.
- For the second scenario period, October 2018 to January 2019, no food assistance is currently scheduled for the zone. However, new contributions could change this situation.

To see more information about these analyses, please read the Scenario Summary Tables for this area of concern.

Most likely food security outcomes

June to September 2018:

The lack of household cereal stocks, livestock transhumance (which deprives households of milk), and the zone's agrarian characteristics mean that improvements in poor households' access to food will only be likely from November or December, with the possibility of consuming green agricultural products and milk. Households will therefore continue to skip meals, reduce their quantity and quality, and consume food that is less expensive than sorghum (the preferred cereal in the zone), such as wheat, maize, local rice and pasta.

The large fall in poor households' agricultural labor income, due to most collective irrigated holdings remaining unfarmed, will force these households to adopt various coping strategies that will significantly erode their livelihood assets. Poor and very poor households will be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

October 2018 to January 2019:

New pastoral supplies (milk and butter), small-scale agricultural production and better availability of water will help to improve poor households' access to food. The burden of debts and the impact of their repayment could slow down the regression from Crisis (IPC Phase 3) to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) for some households.

Residual livelihood assets (especially small ruminants) will remain under pressure, as poor households will have to continue using the trading system to obtain food. It is almost impossible to sell land during a crisis situation. Before households can reduce the current rate of erosion to their livelihoods, local production systems will need to experience several shock-free years.

Poor and very poor households will still be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

West of the agropastoral zone (MR 07)**Current situation****Agroclimatology:**

- Hot and dry winds increase the demand for water and make it difficult to access for both humans and animals. As such, there is a large rise in spending to access water, especially among transhumant herders and inhabitants of host areas.

Agriculture:

- No significant agricultural activity is currently under way in the zone.

Pastoral situation:

- There is a lack of herbaceous pasture throughout the zone.
- Until July, ponds will continue to dry out and there will be low water levels in tributaries, such as the Gorgol Noir, which provided water for livestock farmers in Gorgol and transhumant herders.

Eco-farming:

- No harvesting activities are currently under way in the zone.
- The only form of straw that is being sold is rice straw (this straw has been harvested since October and November 2017).
- Monitoring and competition from gas tankers is limiting the sale of timber and charcoal.

Markets and prices:

- The markets in the zone are all well stocked with imported food (rice, wheat, sugar, oil, tea, etc.). The prices of these foods have risen significantly, especially since May due to Ramadan, when the demand for these products increases. However, there has been a revival of rural markets in all zones where cash transfer programs have resumed or are planned. Systems enabling food to be borrowed from traders are more active than they were in January.
- Government shops (Emel or Solidarity) are generally well stocked with wheat, local rice, sugar, oil and milk, which are still being sold at prices that are 30 to 40 percent lower than those on the formal market. In addition to human food, they now also sell livestock feed. A ton of wheat, such as wheat bran meal, commonly known as “rakkel”, is sold for MRU 6,000 (or MRO 60,000) as compared with double this amount in the formal market.
- Supplies of traditional cereals remain low. In addition to the failed flood recession crops, the quantities that are destocked by Malian farmers are being taken by Mauritanian cereal farmers, who go to weekly markets and households in border villages. Transfers of rice from Senegal are still on a small scale and can only supply a few markets in the south of the zone.
- Compared with January, when the prices of sorghum and cowpea rose significantly with respect to the same period in an average year, the price per kilogram of sorghum is up by 75 percent (having risen from MRU 20 to 35 at the Magta Lahjar, Barkéol and Aleg markets). This increase is very close to 70 percent when compared with the same period in 2017. The supply of wheat is less consistent over time and throughout the areas. Further west the animals become fewer and there are smaller increases in wheat prices. Compared with January 2018, the increase is only 7 percent, as it is being tempered by the large decrease in demand from livestock farmers (many of whom have left for transhumance purposes).
- Despite the Ramadan festival drawing to an end, livestock markets everywhere are poorly stocked. In addition to the impact of transhumance, many poor households are overwhelmed or simply exhausted in their sales capacity.
- The price of a local average sheep is continuing to decline, while the price of an imported average sheep from the Hodh regions is rising. Due to local livestock farmers’ inability to supply tradable and profitable livestock, local traders are increasingly importing sheep from the Hodh regions, as they are in better physical condition than local

Figure 4. Map of livelihood zone 8

Source: FEWS NET

animals. The increases that can thus be seen at the Magta Lahjar markets on the *Route de l'espoir* (Road of Hope) are therefore only beneficial to traders and not to households.

Income

- Internal seasonal incomes are continuing to follow a downward trend, which is considerably affecting poor households' access food. In an average year, between April and June, incomes are mainly earned from pastoral work. With the absence of livestock (more than 80 percent of the livestock in the zone is in transhumance), the demand for pastoral labor in the zone is significantly reduced. The only local activities that can provide incomes are the sale of timber and charcoal. However, these activities are being limited due to monitoring by environmental officers (who impose large penalties) and competition from itinerant gas tankers that sell in rural areas.
- Incomes from Mauritanian migrants are still low, despite the rise in the number of migrants.
- Certain communes in the zone are benefiting from food distribution and cash transfer programs developed by humanitarian organizations (WFP, FAO, Action Against Hunger, Oxfam and Save the Children) which give MRU 2,400 per month. It is expected that some of these programs will continue until 2019.

Assumptions

The most likely food security scenario from June 2018 to January 2019 is based on the following underlying assumptions with regard to trends in nationwide conditions:

Agroclimatology:

- Although the rainy season will begin in July, as in an average year, the overall rainfall is expected to be lower. Breaks in rainfall could affect pasture growth between July and September.

Agriculture:

- Long-cycle crops, which thus far have been predominant in the parts of the zone where only rainfed crops are grown, could be partly replaced by short-cycle crops which are usually harvested in September. An early end to the rainy season would endanger both long-cycle crops (which are harvested in November) and crops in rainy lowlands, which are sown in August and harvested in December and January. A fall in rainfed agricultural production is therefore highly likely.
- However, areas where flood recession crops are grown could develop normally, as despite the likelihood of a relatively large rainfall deficit, these low zones are flooded by either run-off water or tributaries of the Senegal River, the level of which will be boosted by an average rise.
- The level of farming on areas irrigated by tributaries in the Gorgol agropastoral zone will be average, since they depend very little on agricultural credit.

Pastoral situation:

- The zone will have enough pasture to meet the current level of demand throughout the scenario period. The likely return of some transhumant herders would only call this balance into question after January.
- The production of milk, which is very important in the diet of households in the zone, will be lower than in an average year. Since animals only reproduce after they have regained some of their energy (between August and September), birthing will take place outside the scenario period.

Income:

- The normal start to the rainy season will cause agricultural work to resume between July and August. The incomes that poor households earn from this will be close to those in an average year. In October and November, the cultivation of flood recession zones should also lead to average incomes.
- Incomes from migrants and pastoral work will follow the same trends as those of an average year and will remain low. To the same extent that the availability of pasture and water curbs the demand for pastoral labor, the return of migrants will eliminate the chances of money and food transfers throughout the scenario period.

- Incomes from the sale of animals will remain low throughout the scenario period even though a very pronounced increase in their prices is expected between August 2018 and January 2019.
- Incomes from harvesting (which are strongly related to rainfall levels) will also be below those seen in an average year.

Markets:

- Consumer markets (formal markets and government shops) will be well stocked throughout the scenario period, in particular thanks to imports.
- Until the sorghum harvest takes place between September and December, the demand for wheat will continue, maintaining the upward trend in its price.
- Livestock prices will continue to decline from July to September, solely in rural areas (since in urban areas, holiday demand and improvements in pastoral conditions will cause rises until January 2019).
- Solidarity shops will continue to operate throughout the scenario period.

Humanitarian assistance:

Some parts of the zone are already covered by assistance programs based on monthly cash transfers of MRU 2,400 per month per household and nutrition support for children under five years and pregnant and breastfeeding women. Approximately 201,783 people will benefit from assistance programs during the scenario period, including cash transfers for 169,979 people and nutrition support for 22,952 children aged between 6 and 23 months and 8,852 breastfeeding or pregnant women.

Most likely food security outcomes

June to September 2018: The large decline in poor households' livestock numbers due to multiple and prolonged sales (three to four years for some) in order to buy food and the low level of their seasonal incomes means that during this period, households already in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) will continue to experience difficulties in accessing sufficient and regular food, which is the same quality as what they eat in an average year.

October 2018 to January 2019: New pastoral supplies (milk and butter), small-scale agricultural production and better availability of water will help to improve poor households' access to food. The burden of debts and the impact of their repayment could slow down the regression from Crisis (IPC Phase 3) to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) for some households. Residual livelihood assets (especially small ruminants) will remain under pressure, as poor households will have to continue using the trading system to obtain food. It is almost impossible to sell land during a crisis situation. Before households can reduce the current rate of erosion to their livelihoods, local production systems will need to experience several shock-free years. Poor and very poor households are still in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

To see more information about these analyses, please read the Scenario Summary Tables for these two areas of concern.

EVENTS THAT MIGHT CHANGE THE OUTLOOK

Table I. Possible events over the next eight months that could change the most-likely scenario.

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National	Cessation of food imports	Large rise in prices affecting the poor households' access to food.
	Repeated and prolonged breaks in rainfall	Rural production systems will be allocated and food purchases will continue. Pasture resources will be mediocre, resulting in poor milk production and rebuilding of livestock herds.
	Pests	Destruction of crops, pasture, wild fruit.
West of the agropastoral zone	A normal start to the season and normal behavior	A resumption of agricultural and pastoral activities would lead to a clear improvement in the current situation.
	Another year of deficient rainfall	The current situation may worsen, leading to a more pronounced Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and even an Emergency (IPC Phase 4) in areas that have been in Crisis for several years.
	Blocked flows of cereal and livestock feed from Mali and Senegal	Markets would have poor supplies of traditional cereals, leading to an increase in demand for wheat.
	Adequate and timely assistance (between June and December)	Access to commercialized food will increase and malnutrition levels will decrease, with residual livelihoods becoming secure.
Center of the Senegal River Valley	Adequate and timely assistance (between July 2018 and January 2019)	Food will be increasingly available to households, which will also have increased access to commercialized food. The pressure on existing livelihoods will therefore decrease.
	At least an average rise in river levels	Flooding will occur and there is likely to be farming of the walo, which produces approximately 60 percent of the zone's cereal supplies.
	Implementation of an agricultural credit debt management system	There will be an Increase in areas farmed by irrigated cultivation methods. Indebted village farming cooperatives will be able to farm their rice plots and improve their cereal availability.
	A good recovery in cross-border flows with Senegal	Markets throughout the zone will be better stocked.

ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

To project food security outcomes, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes these assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to arrive at a most likely scenario for the coming eight months. Learn more [here](#).