

*The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues periodic warnings when a food crisis is developing, where groups are now, or about to become, highly food insecure and take increasingly irreversible actions that undermine their future food security. Decision makers should urgently address the situations highlighted by this Warning.*

**October 20, 2005**

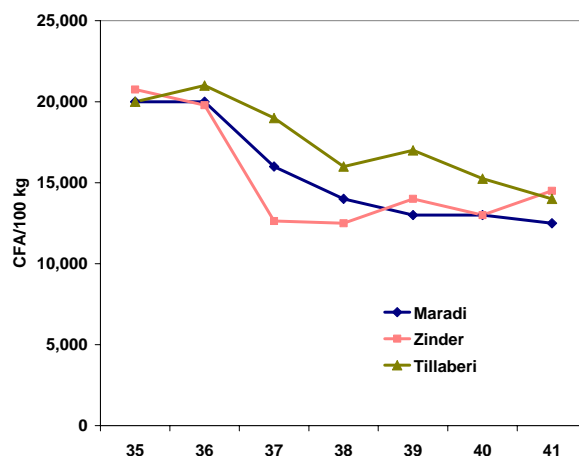
### Food Security Situation Improves

Food security conditions are improving in Niger, but the impact of the 2004/05 crisis will continue to be felt in 2006. Staple cereal prices have decreased substantially and a good, potentially record harvest is coming to markets in many areas. Livestock conditions have vastly improved, increasing pastoralists' ability to buy grain and consume milk.

Overall food access and availability are improving for most households. As a result, the Government of Niger decided to reconstitute their strategic reserves and end free food distribution on October 10.

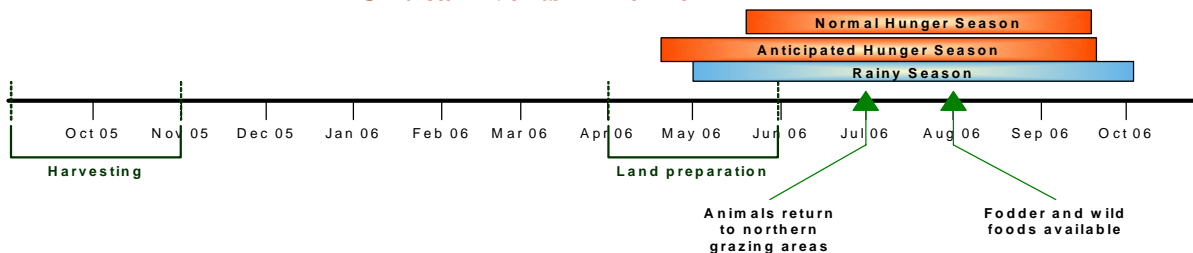
An analysis of prices for weeks 35-41 shows steep decreases over the last five weeks that have brought millet prices close to their five-year average. Though these prices remain above the low levels experienced in 2003 and 2004, there is some concern that if prices fall too far, farmers will be unable to get a reasonable return on their crops and will have difficulties repaying the debt they have acquired to survive this year's crisis. Animal prices have continued to increase over the last several months. Ramadan should provide a stable demand for millet and animals (October – early November), ensuring a reasonable return to farmers and pastoralists.

**2006 Millet Prices: Weeks 35-41**



This year's crisis has severely eroded the livelihoods of many Nigerians who are more vulnerable than ever to food insecurity. Many households have liquidated productive assets, such as livestock, and accrued high levels of debt to survive this year. These households may need to use a significant portion of their income from this year's harvest to repay debt. To reconstitute their assets, households may need immediate, long term assistance in the form of loans, animal feed assistance, or veterinary care. With the hunger season anticipated to begin at least one month early, many households will most likely face early food shortages in 2006. The hunger season could be accompanied by high rates of child malnutrition, high cereal prices, increased cereal needs and low purchasing power. In addition, changes in regional markets dynamics could result in the continuation of high cereal prices in 2006, further restricting household access at this time. Those households that live in areas that were food deficit in 2004/05 will be especially vulnerable in 2006.

### Critical Events Timeline



*For more information see: [www.fews.net/niger](http://www.fews.net/niger)*