

*The expectedly average cultivation season will restore Minimal food insecurity*

**KEY MESSAGES**

- Poor households in northern agropastoral areas in and around the Sahel Region will face livelihood protection deficits between July and September due to their weakened purchasing power with the deterioration in terms of trade for livestock to cereals. Thus, food security outcomes for these households will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through September.
- Moreover, the poor spatial-temporal distribution of rainfall in the northern part of the country is prolonging the lean season for pastoral populations and raising concerns among farmers still waiting to plant their fields. Seasonal forecasts for this area for July through September are predicting below-average to average cumulative rainfall.
- The cultivation season is progressing relatively normally in the rest of the country, where cumulative rainfall totals for July through September are expected to be average to below-average. Households are experiencing a typical lean season marked by above-average trader inventories and staple food prices near the five-year average.

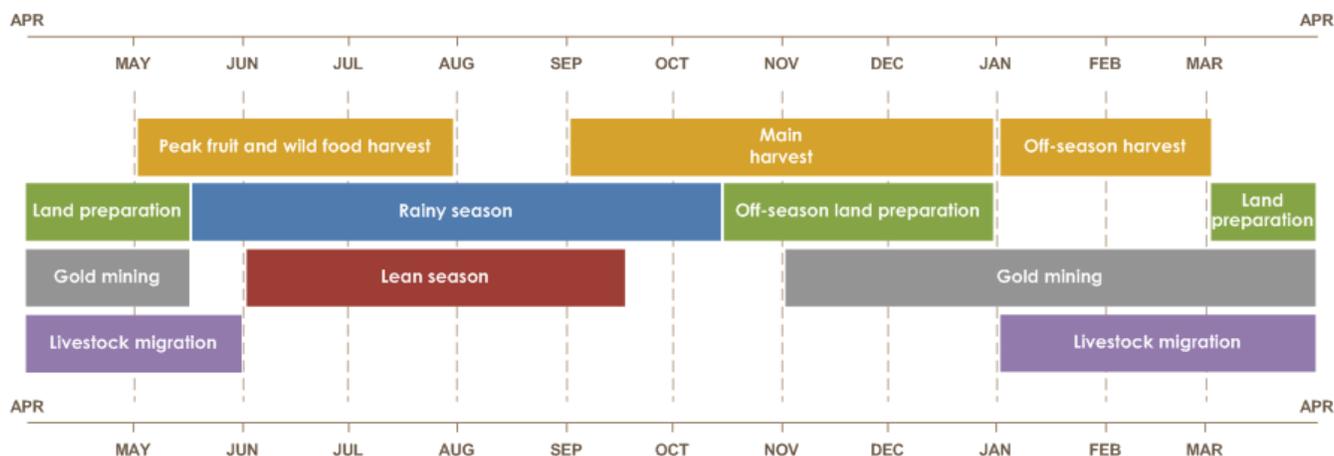
Most likely estimated food security outcomes for July 2014



Source: FEWS NET

This map shows current relevant acute food insecurity outcomes for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity.

**SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR**



Source: FEWS NET

## NATIONAL OVERVIEW

### Current situation

The rainy season began in the middle of May in all parts of the country, spurring the planting of early crops, particularly in the north. However, the ensuing dry spells caused crop failures and required the replanting of crops in that part of the country. It was not until the beginning of July that there were more intensive widespread crop planting activities for cereal crops.

Cumulative seasonal rainfall totals for the period from April 1<sup>st</sup> through July 20<sup>th</sup> ranged from 102.5 mm in Tougouri over 14 days on the edge of the Sahelian zone, to 576.8 mm in Manga over 30 days in the southern part of the country. In general, cumulative rainfall figures are near to above the historical average (1981-2010), except in the far western reaches of the country (the Hauts Bassins, Cascades, and Southwestern Regions) and a few parts of the Sahelian and Eastern regions. On the whole, the rainy season got off to an early start.

The main ongoing farming activities are planting and plowing, particularly in the Sahel Region, and field maintenance work (weeding) in the rest of the country. The government and its partners have furnished farmers with 6,543 metric tons of improved varieties of seeds to bolster the growing season. There are also ongoing sales of approximately 28,000 metric tons of fertilizer at subsidized prices.

There are better than usual market cereal supplies for this time of year, which coincides with the normal lean season. Wholesale traders and farmer organizations have close to an estimated 40,000 metric tons of inventories, which is 33 percent above-average. These supplies are bolstered by cereal sales (sales of maize and rice) at affordable prices in the 181 shops set up by the government in provincial capitals. There is also a normal flow of maize imports from Ghana via the Léo market and from Côte d'Ivoire via the Niangoloko and Kadarbougou markets.

As a result, in general, cereal prices have been stable for the last three months, contrary to the usual seasonal rise in prices. Maize prices are generally 10 percent below the five-year average, while millet and sorghum prices are on par with the average. While farmgate prices for maize in high-production areas are approximately 20 percent below the five-year average, price levels in and around the Sahel Region are average to slightly above-average (by two to nine percent).

There are normal lean season conditions for poor households in most parts of the country, with normal access to forest and wild plant products. Poor households in and around the Sahel Region are more dependent on local markets for their food supplies and there is still insufficient new pasture growth for an improvement in grazing conditions for livestock, which would help lead to a normal supply of milk for area households.

The main sources of income generation for poor households are sales of forest products (nuts, shea butter, and carob beans) at prices close to the five-year average and sales of livestock in general and small animals in particular at prices slightly below the five-year average due to their poor physical condition. There is a normal demand for farm labor for this time of year devoted to field maintenance, and wage rates are on par with the three-year average. The erratic rainfall in the Sahel Region is forcing certain residents to pursue gold panning activities. The average selling price of a gram of gold (21,500 CFAF) is up eight percent from the first quarter of this year but approximately 15 percent below the three-year average.

Most likely estimated food security outcomes for August through September 2014



Source: FEWS NET

Most likely estimated food security outcomes for October through December 2014



Source: FEWS NET

These maps show relevant acute food insecurity outcomes for emergency decision-making. They do not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity.

### Assumptions

The most likely food security scenario for July through December 2014 is based on the following general assumptions:

- **An average growing season:** Based on seasonal forecasts, cumulative seasonal rainfall totals for the period from July through September are expected to be average to below-average, with the distribution of rainfall marred by episodic dry spells, though still in line with the climatological average. This should allow farming activities to proceed normally over the course of this period. Moreover, national weather forecasts are predicting a late end-of-season tending towards normal, which should allow crops to fully mature and is good cause to expect average levels of crop production throughout the country.
- **Below-average pasture production:** The erratic rainfall activity and poor distribution of rainfall in agropastoral areas (in and around the Sahel Region) prevented the normal growth of natural pasture. The reported dry spells, particularly in June, caused any new vegetative growth to wither, which is detrimental to normal new pasture growth between July and September, even with continued normal rainfall activity.
- **Good market cereal supplies:** The rebuilding of institutional inventories to their target levels and the approximately 30 percent above-normal levels of current trader inventories will ensure the satisfaction of household demand until upcoming harvests of green maize, fonio and short-cycle millet in August-September.
- **Average cereal prices:** Prices for maize, the main cereal for sale on markets at this time, will stay below the five-year average, in line with trends since the beginning of the year. Millet and sorghum prices will be near-average through the end of the lean season in September, at which point there should be a seasonal decline in prices for all staple cereals through the end of December in expectation of an average volume of cereal production.
- **Average livestock prices:** The long dry spells without any rain whatsoever in the month of June in northern pastoral areas prevented adequate new pasture growth. As a result, animals are still in unusually poor physical condition for this time of year. Nonetheless, livestock markets will continue to do a brisk business, fueled by demand for the celebration of the end of Ramadan in late July and the celebration of Tabaski in early October. This demand will keep prices hovering around the five-year average, at least through December.
- **Average to above-average farm incomes:** There will be average levels of crop production for the current growing season. Moreover, very poor and poor households growing cowpeas and peanuts as their main cash crops could generate average to above-average levels of income from the sale of these crops at average or slightly above-average prices. There will also be average levels of income generation from farm labor with the normal progress of farming activities and a stable demand for labor.
- **Stable health and nutritional conditions:** Based on the generally stable household food security and health situation over the last twelve months, barring a major shock to human health and household livelihoods, there should be normal health and nutrition outcomes for children under the age of five, with global acute malnutrition rates similar to figures for last year.

### Most likely food security outcome

Very poor and poor households should face normal lean season conditions, except in areas in and around the Sahel Region, where the deterioration in terms of trade for livestock to cereals will make it difficult for them to continue to protect their livelihoods. Thus, these households will be facing **Stressed levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 2) through September**. Between October and December, with access to fresh crops, improved incomes from the sale of cash crops, and the seasonal decline in staple cereal prices, households across the country will experience **Minimal acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 1)**.

## AREAS OF CONCERN

### Livelihood zone 8 (North transhumant pastoralism and millet)

Livelihoods in this area where poor households normally account for 60 percent of the population are based mainly on millet production, typically meeting household food needs for six to eight months, and primarily on transhumant livestock-raising as a source of income.

### *Current situation*

The first rains in the middle of May in this area helped ensure adequate water availability for livestock. Some early millet crops were planted during this time but failed shortly afterwards due to the ensuing erratic rainfall in June. This also caused emerging new grass cover to dry out, particularly in highland areas, prolonging grazing problems for livestock. As a result, animals are in unusually poor physical condition and there is atypically limited milk availability for household consumption. Departments in the northernmost reaches of this livelihood zone (Déou and Tin-Akoff) have been especially hard hit by this situation.

The continually poorly distributed rainfall the first week of July allowed for the continued replanting of crops. Cumulative seasonal rainfall totals as of July 10<sup>th</sup> ranged from 86 mm over 13 days in Gorom-Gorom to 137 mm over 14 days in Markoye, which is 30 to 50 percent below the 2009-2013 average. The improved seeds furnished by the government and its partners were distributed to farmers in timely fashion, with the main focus on providing seeds for cowpea crops. While households were forced to replant their crops, the timing of these replanting activities is still within the normal crop planting schedule.

Poor households are completely dependent on local markets, which are still atypically well-stocked with cereals owing to the growing numbers of wholesale and retail traders and the accessibility of departmental capitals with the repair and rebuilding of area roads. The shops set up by the government for the sale of maize at affordable prices (12,000 CFA per 50 kg sack compared with 17,000 CFA in the marketplace) are heavily frequented by local households. However, due to their inability to put together enough cash to buy a 50 kg sack of maize at these government-subsidized shops, the poor are forced to pay regular retail prices for their cereal supplies from traders. The most popular cereals for household consumption in this area are millet and sorghum, whose prices are at and, in some cases, slightly below the five-year average for this time of year by approximately eight percent.

Most of the livestock for sale on area markets are in poor physical condition and prices are down from last year (by 20 percent in the case of male sheep and 16 percent in the case of male goats) and below the five-year average (by 10 percent for male sheep and two percent for male goats). This decline in prices has driven down terms of trade to approximately 30 percent below-average. The main sources of household income after livestock sales are wage labor in livestock-raising activities, which is generating normal levels of income, regular migrant remittances, mainly from Côte d'Ivoire, and gold panning, engaged in mainly by households without enough livestock. These latter activities have slowed due to ongoing farming activities and the price of a gram of gold down to approximately 15 percent below the four-year average.

This livelihood zone has close to 8,000 Malian refugees, who are being supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and its partners. Children under five years of age diagnosed with moderate to severe acute malnutrition by screening programs are being treated at local health facilities.

### *Assumptions*

The most likely food security scenario for July through December 2014 in this livelihood zone is based on the following assumptions:

- **Below-average agropastoral production:** Cumulative seasonal rainfall levels in this area are expected to be below-normal, tending towards normal, with a late (end of September) to normal end-of-season. This will translate into average or below-average millet production, which is the main cereal crop grown in this livelihood zone. With the failure of the emerging grass cover in June, there will be insufficient new pasture growth to ensure a normal supply of forage, even with a good distribution of rainfall through the end of September.
- **Good market cereal supplies:** The good progress of the growing season in western crop-producing areas will help encourage the unloading of trader inventories, whose current levels are higher than usual. Thus, there will be a continuing flow of cereals into the area, maintaining good market supplies through at least the month of December.
- **Average cereal prices:** Based on current trends in market prices and supplies, millet and sorghum prices should be stable through October, at which point there will be a seasonal decline in prices through December with the presence of fresh crops on area markets.
- **Average livestock prices:** The gradual improvement in the physical condition of animals and growing demand for livestock for the celebration of Tabaski in early October and for the year-end holidays (in December) will help steadily drive up the price of livestock to levels close to the five-year average as of September.

- **Below-normal milk availability:** The limited new pasture growth is delaying return migration by transhumant herds. The expected below-average levels of pasture production will also mean a smaller than usual supply of milk for household consumption and sale.
- **Average incomes:** Based on current payment terms and practices, which have not changed, there will be near-average levels of wage income from farm labor and livestock-raising activities. There will be similar levels of income from the sale of cowpeas (the main cash crop) between November and December.
- **Earlier than usual transhumance:** Faced with the prospect of below-normal levels of pasture production, transhumant pastoralists will begin leaving the area earlier than usual, or by December.
- **Stable health and nutritional conditions:** The global acute malnutrition rate should be similar to the figure for August-September of last year (11.4 percent). Based on the outlook for below-normal to normal levels of rainfall, there should be no unusual escalation in drivers of malnutrition such as malaria and water-borne diseases. Moreover, though limited, food access will not require the implementation of survival strategies by area households.

#### *Most likely food security outcome*

Very poor and poor households will have difficulty maintaining a proper diet with the poorer than usual availability of milk, which is one of their main sources of food, and their continued market-dependence and limited incomes between July and September. Thus, these households will continue to face **Stressed levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 2)** until the first harvests of cowpeas and wild fonio in October and ensuing harvests of cereal crops for the replenishment of household food stocks beginning in November.

As usual, area households will be exposed to malaria and water-borne diseases, which run rampant during the rainy season. However, with no major shocks expected to affect household food consumption, the general state of nutrition and, in particular, the nutritional status of children under five years of age and pregnant or breast-feeding women should remain stable. Thus, there will be **Minimal food insecurity (IPC Phase 1) in this area between October and December.**

#### **Livelihood zone 7 (North and East livestock and cereals)**

This is a high-potential livestock-raising and millet and cowpea-producing area in which poor households account for 60 percent of the population. Crops from their October harvests normally suffice to meet household needs for six to seven months or, in other words, are depleted sometime between April and May. The main sources of household income are the sale of livestock (small animals and poultry) and milk and gold panning. Transhumant herds normally head east or to the coastal states beginning in February.

#### *Current situation*

There were some early crops planted in this area with the first rains in the second dekad of May. However, the long dry spells in June precluded an effective start-of-season throughout the area. Crop planting activities in its easternmost departments were scaled up as of the third dekad of June, but did not get underway until the first dekad of July in central and western departments, one to two dekads later than usual. Cumulative seasonal rainfall totals as of July 10<sup>th</sup> ranged from 97 mm over 11 days in Seytenga to 244 mm over 11 days in Sebba, which is 10 to 30 percent below the 2009-2013 average.

New pasture growth is still limited and extremely uneven. Livestock are concentrated in lowland areas. They are still in poorer than usual physical condition for this time of year, which precludes a normal supply of milk.

In general, there is better than usual staple cereal availability on area markets and prices are six to nine percent below the five-year average. However, low household incomes continue to limit food access. More specifically, income levels from the sale of livestock, the main source of revenue for the purchasing of cereals for household consumption and animal feed for the survival of sedentary livestock, are below the five-year average. Households are forced to cut back on both the quality and size of their meals. The area's main cereal and livestock markets are the Djibo (in Soum province) and Dori (in Séno province) markets. Prices for small animals (male sheep and goats) are down from last year by approximately 15 to 20 percent and roughly five to 10 percent below the five-year average due to their poor physical condition. This has driven down terms of trade for livestock/cereals to nearly 25 percent below the five-year average. Prices for small animals would be even lower without the demand from Ghana.

Gold panning is another source of income generation for area households, particularly for those without any livestock, though gold prices are below the four-year average. Migrant remittances are an important source of income in this

livelihood zone. Some migrant workers are returning to the area to begin farming the land. Their remaining earnings are being used to purchase more cereal and animal feed than in an average year in which these funds are normally used to rebuild their livestock herds.

There are approximately 22,273 Malian refugees in this area, mostly in the Goudebou (Séno province) and Mentao (Soum province) camps, supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners.

The government has set up shops in provincial capitals for the sale of cereals (rice and maize) at affordable prices. Households have reportedly been flocking to these shops since March, though the maize sold in these shops is not normally part of their regular diet. The weekly volume of sales per shop has risen from an average of 10 MT in March to 15 MT at present. In addition to provincial capitals, this program is also operating in Baani, Seytenga, and Arbinda departments.

### *Assumptions*

The most likely food security scenario for July through December 2014 in this livelihood zone is based on the following assumptions:

- **Average agropastoral production:** Cumulative seasonal rainfall levels are expected to be below-normal, tending towards normal, in the northern and western reaches of this area and normal, tending towards below-normal, in the eastern and southern part of the area. This could translate into near-average levels of cereal (millet and sorghum) and pasture production. As usual, the first harvests will get underway in September-October.
- **Good market supplies:** Current above-average trader inventories should meet household cereal demand. There will be a normal flow of cereal supplies from assembly markets (Ouagadougou and Pouytenga) and crop-producing areas in the western part of the country.
- **Average cereal prices:** With relatively large supplies keeping current prices for staple foods at levels close to the five-year average and the normal progress of the ongoing growing season, traders will be encouraged to unload their inventories.
- **Average livestock prices:** The still poorer than usual physical condition of livestock will keep prices below the five-year average through September. Heightened demand for the celebration of Tabaski in early October and the year-end holidays will single-handedly put prices close to the five-year average between October and December.
- **Average wage incomes:** There will be average levels of wage income from farm labor (weeding) and the tending of livestock throughout the outlook period, with middle-income and better-off households already spending more than usual on purchases of cereals and animal feed disinclined to raise wages.
- **Average farm incomes:** The substitution effect in areas experiencing delays in the planting of cereal crops could translate into above-average levels of cowpea production, which is the main cash crop grown in this area. However, with selling prices below the five-year average since last November, driven down by the sluggish foreign demand, it is uncertain whether price levels at harvest time and during the post-harvest period (between October and December) will allow for above-average final incomes.
- **Below-normal milk availability:** After the long dry spells without any rain whatsoever, there will be insufficient new pasture growth to ensure normal livestock grazing conditions, which will limit the supply of milk through December.
- **Earlier than usual transhumance:** With the prospect of below-normal levels of pasture production, anticipating grazing problems for their animals, transhumant pastoralists will begin their seasonal migration earlier than usual, or by December.

### *Most likely food security outcome*

The deterioration in terms of trade for livestock/cereals, driven by above-average cereal prices and below-average livestock prices, and the poorer than usual availability of milk for household consumption and sale will be contributing factors in keeping poor households market-dependent, which will face **Stressed levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 2)** through September. The food security situation of very poor and poor households will improve between October and December, first, with the improvement in income from livestock sales and their access to fresh cowpea crops and, later, with the replenishment of their food stocks and access to income from crop sales. Thus, they should experience **Minimal acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 1)** during this period.

## EVENTS THAT CAN CHANGE THE OUTLOOK

**Table I.** Possible events in the next six months that could change the outlook

Area	Event	Impact on food security conditions
National	Poor distribution of rainfall	This could negatively affect crop yields and pasture production and motivate traders to deliberately hold onto their inventories, triggering an atypical rise in staple cereal prices.
Livelihood zones 7 & 8	Earlier than usual end of the rains	Should the rains end before the third dekad of September, it could negatively affect crop yields and pasture production, hasten the departure of transhumant herds, and trigger an atypical rise in cereal prices.
Livelihood zone 8	More severe infestations of crops by grain-eating birds	More severe infestations of crops by grain-eating birds regularly invading the area could mean below-average levels of crop production.
Livelihood zone 7	Flooding	Local flooding problems could heighten food insecurity and malnutrition risks and cause losses of household assets.

### 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 six months. Learn more [here](#).