

BURKINA FASO Monthly Food Security Update

August 2007

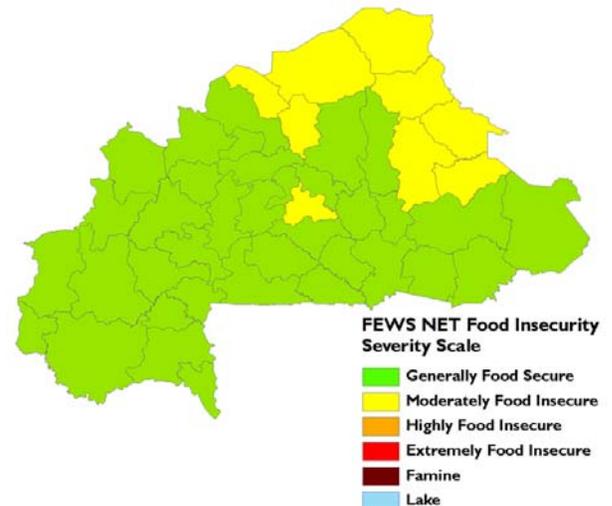
The 2007-2008 agricultural season proceeded normally in all of the country's agricultural regions, with relatively favorable weather conditions and despite some flooding (Figure 1). The main cereal crops, along with pulses and cotton, are growing well and there are no major concerns about plant health conditions. This agricultural season is shaping up well, with the prospect of good cereal harvests (as far as rainfall developments are concerned) and probable price reductions.

Unusually heavy precipitation in some areas of the North-Central, Central-Eastern, Hauts Bassins, Cascades, Sahelian and Northern regions caused flooding and significant damage and loss of human life. It is estimated that more than 18,000 people in all were in some way affected by the floods.

Even though the lean period is well underway, most households are having no difficulty obtaining food, with the exception of the poorest, concentrated in specific areas (Gorom-gorom, Kaya and Zorgho). Households began dipping into their remaining stores once the field work began in June and July, but the agricultural markets are still relatively well-supplied with cereals from merchant stocks.

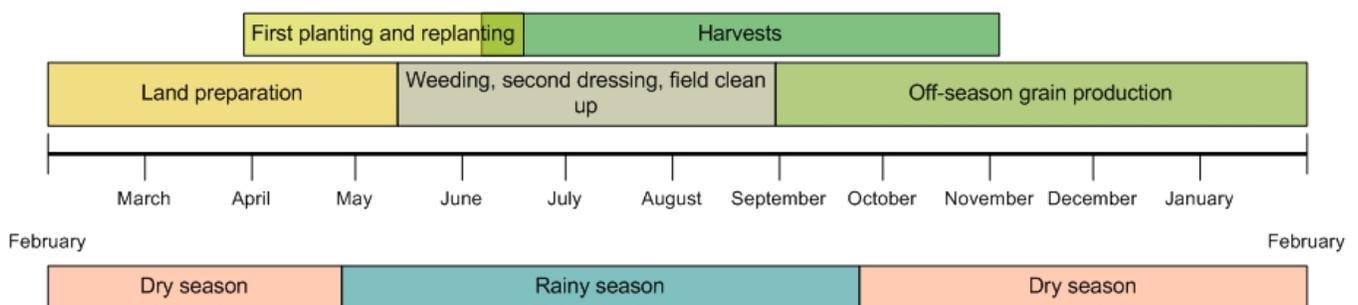
Thanks to regrowth of herbaceous and woody ground cover and the abundance of surface water, livestock are fattening well in all of the country's livestock farming regions and areas.

Figure 1. Estimate of current food security (July to September 2007)



Source: FEWS NET, multidisciplinary working group mission data

Calendar of important events



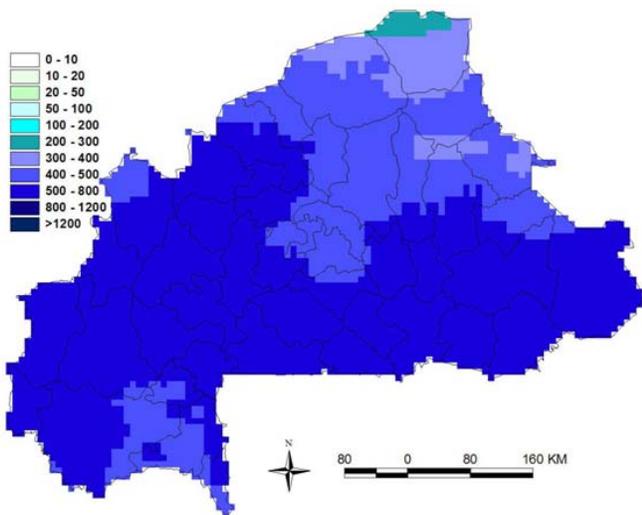
Current food security situation

August is the most difficult month in terms of food access for regions with structural shortages, such as the Northern, Sahelian and Central-Northern regions, where soils are arid and there are often rainfall shortages; and areas with cyclical shortages that are identified as being at risk, including those which were recently flooded. Still, generally speaking, most households are currently managing to provide for their daily meals, since cereals are available and accessible on the markets. The adaptive strategies employed (such as reducing the number of daily meals, buying supplies on the market, and in certain cases consuming foods of last resort), the use of the National Safety Reserve made available by the government, and action by humanitarian interests and development partners is facilitating food access for the poorest people during this period, which is so critical to them because their cereal stocks are at their lowest levels.

Weather conditions and activities for the 2007-08 agricultural season

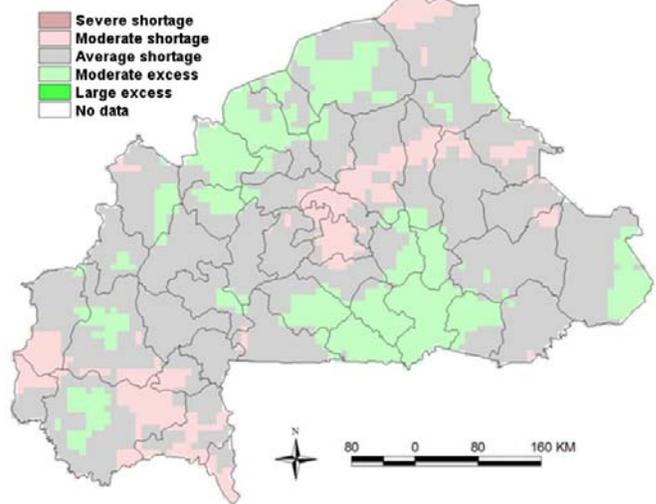
Rainfall in the second dekad of August varied between 351.5 mm at Bogandé in the east to 878 mm at Po in the Central Southern region (Figure 2a). This, along with other favorable weather conditions, was behind good crop growth and flooding throughout the country. Rainfall totals for the second dekad of August were moderately below average (Figure 2b) in certain parts of the Cascades, Southwest, Hauts Bassins, Central Plateau, North-Central and Sahel regions.

Figure 2a. Cumulative rainfall from the first dekad of April to the second dekad of August 2007



Source: FEWS NET, USGS Regional

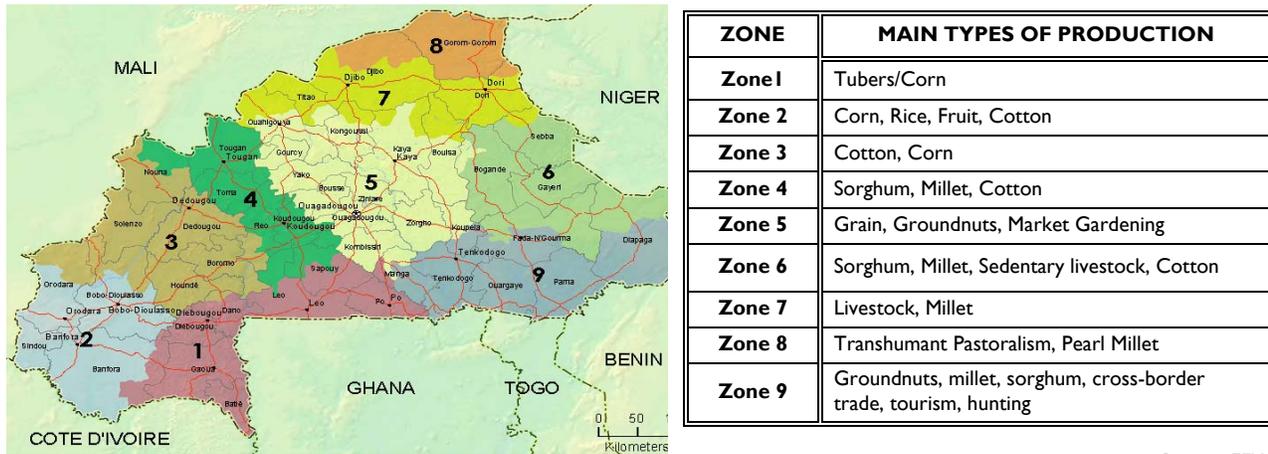
Figure 2b. Cumulative rainfall from the first dekad of April to the second dekad of August compared to the average



Source: FEWS NET, USGS Regional

The unusually heavy rainfall received by certain areas since June, exceeding 100 mm within a short period of time, along with certain other unusual phenomena (hail), has caused loss of human life and significant material damage—such as the loss of food, livestock, or money and broken dams—since the beginning of the rainy season. The implications of such damage for the affected populations include, among others: difficulties in gaining access to food after losses of granary contents and monetary savings, difficulties in finding new lodging after houses have been ruined, and the risk of cholera epidemics. Since the beginning of the rainy season, torrential rains have been falling in the following regions: Hauts Bassins (Houet), North (Loroum, Passoré, Yatenga and Zandoma), Central-Eastern (Kourittenga), Boucle du Mouhoun (Banwa), Central Northern (Bam, Namentenga and Sanematenga), Central-Southern (Zoundwéogo), Sahel (Oudalan and Soum), Central Plateau (Oubritenga) and Center (Kadiogo). The total number of people affected is currently estimated at about 18,000, but data on the extent of the damage in some locations remains unavailable as the rains continue to fall. Victims need immediate assistance, which is already getting underway through interventions by the government, humanitarian interests and development partners

Figure 3. Burkina Faso's Food Economy Zones.



Source: FEWS NET

In the food economy zones that produce cereals (Figure 3), crops are predominantly at the height-growth stage. In areas growing pulses or cotton, they are mainly at the flowering and boll formation stage. A comparison of the normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) during the second dekad of August (Figure 4a) to the average (Figure 4b) reveals good development of the vegetation line throughout the country, except in the Cascades region, where limited to severe shortages have been observed. This situation, in combination with the rainfall shortage and the agricultural season's late start in this region, may cause a decrease in production in this maize-growing crop zone. Such a decrease would also cause a drop in the income of producers who have abandoned cotton growing in favor of maize, and a rise in maize prices in this zone, which is along the border with Cote d'Ivoire.

Figure 4a. Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) at the end of the second dekad of August 2007.

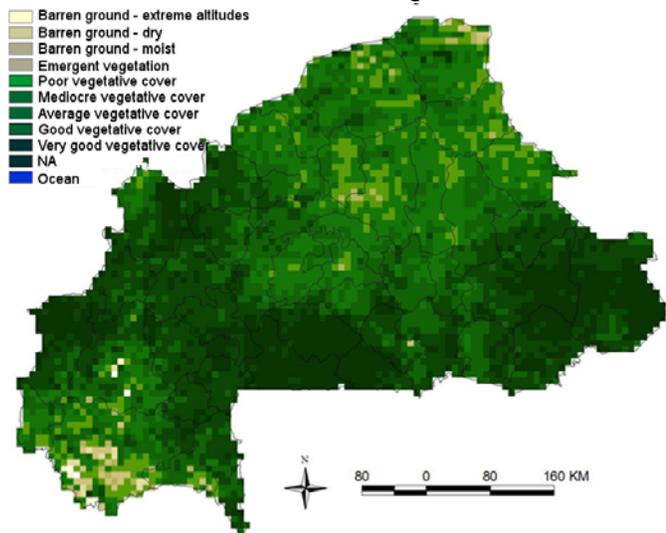
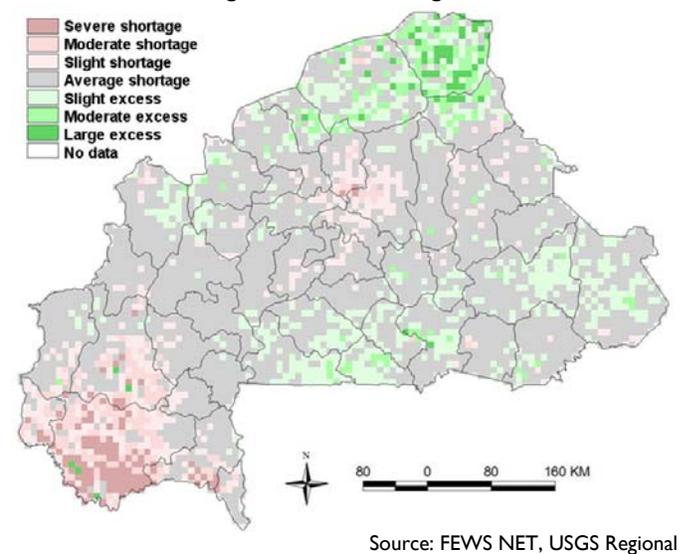


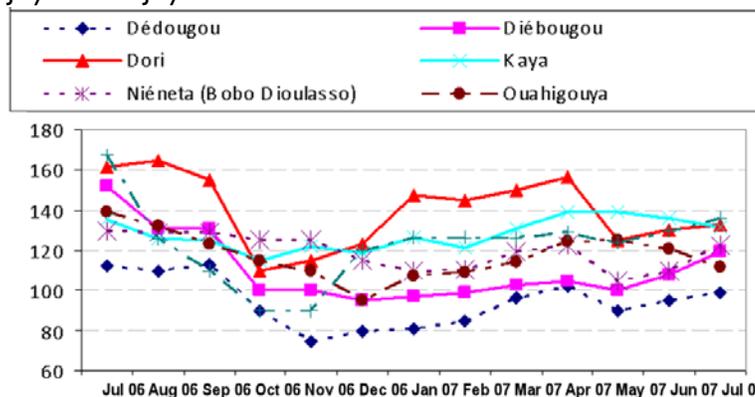
Figure 4b. Comparison of the vegetation indices for the second dekad of August with the average



Food access on the agricultural markets

After two successive years of good cereal harvests and a favorable sub-regional environment, the country's markets are currently being supplied from merchant stocks and cereal banks in the country's various food economy zones. Due to the isolation of certain locales, which causes supply difficulties during the rainy season, the national structure in charge of managing the food security reserve, operating on government orders, has pre-positioned 9,860 MT of the safety reserve, consisting mainly of local cereals and cowpeas. This action, taken at Bogandé (1,100 MT), Tenkodogo (1,950 MT), Gorom-gorom (7,689 MT), Sebba (529 MT), Ouaga (765 MT), Koudougou (1,507 MT) and Dédougou (3,240 MT), is helping to alleviate food problems caused by recent price increases. In some places, such as Oudalan and Yagha in the Sahelian region, sales of the pre-positioned safety reserves at subsidized prices (10,000 CFAF for a 100-kg sack of cereals) have begun.

Figure 5. Changes in local millet prices on reference markets from July 2006 to July 2007.



Data source: SIM/SONAGESS, RESIMAO and Regional Departments of Agriculture
Graphic: FEWS NET

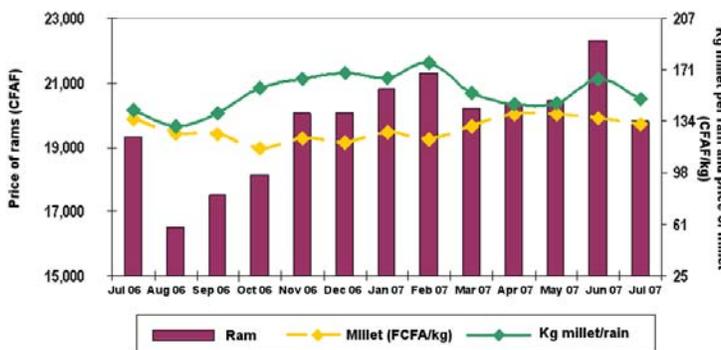
On the reference markets (Figure 5), prices varied from 99 CFAF per kg of millet in Dédougou, which is in the production zone, to 136 CFAF/kg at Sankaryaré, in the consumption zone. In comparison to last month, prices were rising in Dori, Diébougou, Niéneta (in Bobo Dioulasso) and Sankaryaré (in Ouagadougou) and falling in Ouahigouya. The decrease is probably because the merchants of this zone, which supplies certain Sahelian areas, are selling off cereals. In comparison to the same period last year, and to the five-year average, millet prices are decreasing.

Livestock feed and health conditions

The good rains recorded since July have favored the growth of annual grasses and woody plants in nearly all pastoral regions. These conditions are favorable for feeding livestock, and for natural pasturage and herbaceous cover, which are continuing through their growth cycles. The nutritional quality of the available forage is decreasing because the plants are at the lignification stage, but the availability of agricultural industry by-products in some regions increases the available supply of livestock feed. The return of large animals, which out-migrate seasonally at the beginning of the difficult period, is underway in pastoral food economy zones.

Animal health conditions are satisfactory overall. No large-scale source of contagious disease has been reported. Routine animal health activities (vaccination, antiparasitic and trypanosomiasis treatments) are continuing in all agropastoral and pastoral areas.

Figure 6. Changes in price of the number of kg of millet/ram at Kaya from July 2006 to July 2007.



Data sources: Animal Statistics Service - DEP/MRA, SIM-SONAGESS, RESIMAO, Regional Departments of Agriculture, Regional Departments of Animal Resources
Graphic: FEWS NET

From the standpoint of cereal prices and the good condition of the animals, livestock prices remain high. The millet/ram terms of trade are still favorable for the pastoralist. The sale of a Sahelian ram on the Kaya market buys a sack-and-a-half of millet (Figure 6).

Food security outlook and suggestions

The outlook for both human and animal food sources looks promising if observed trends continue until October for areas where the rainy season got off to a slow start. From this standpoint, thought should be given, in particular the CICB (Burkina Faso Interprofessional Cereals Committee) and the Burkina Faso Farmer's Confederation, to the management of any production surpluses.

With regard to the flood damage, an exhaustive evaluation of the damage (number of people affected, number of dwellings destroyed, area of plantings lost, etc.) is urgently needed in order to facilitate future interventions. Consultative evaluation missions could be undertaken in the areas affected by the floods to reach a consensus on the number of victims and the damage caused.