

Although the flooding seen throughout the country in late August and early September was exceptional, it did not significantly compromise crops in the twelve affected regions, except the North region.

A lull in rainfall in the second dekad of September enabled plants to continue developing in the country's major producing regions. This could be a sign of a good harvest outlook, if rainfall continues until mid-October, even in regions of the country with structural shortages. The consequence of an early end to the rains in the third dekad of September would be very low to average production in these regions.

The household food situation is satisfactory in the various food economy zones. Cereals are present on the markets at affordable prices, even in more remote areas, after subsidized sales by the National Intervention Reserve by the Government in August.

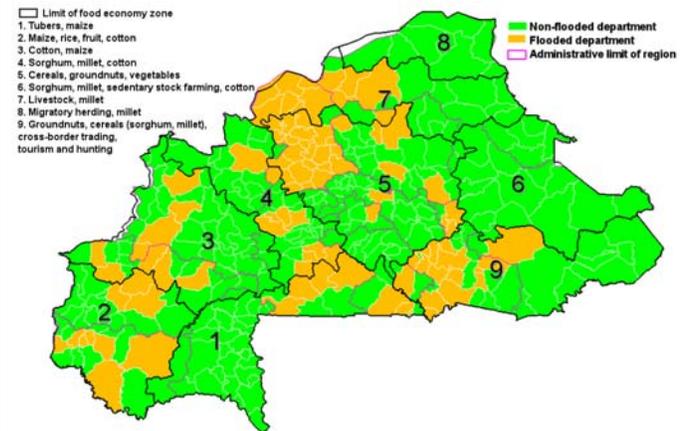
Livestock feed and health conditions are satisfactory, due to adequate the availability of pasturage and water. Livestock/cereals terms of trade continue to favor pastoralists.

Flooding

In twelve of the country's thirteen regions, flooding caused loss of human life, homes, granaries and cultivated areas. As of September 28, 2007, CONASUR (the National Committee for Emergency and Rehabilitation Assistance), which is the national structure responsible for managing natural disasters in Burkina Faso, had counted 51 human deaths and 92,794 people (11,514 households) who suffered damage from the flooding in 89 rural and urban municipalities. At least 17 percent of those affected were children. The South-Central region seems to have had the most victims, with 31,640 people affected, including 28,256 in the province of Nahouri alone. The floods swept away 1,750 granaries. The DGPSA (Crop Forecasting and Statistics Bureau) estimated that more than 17,698 hectares of cultivated land were affected by the floods. The Northern region had the most land affected, with 8,827 hectares flooded, including 29 percent totally lost. A number of factors explain the flooding: frequent and heavy rains, failure of dikes and dams, watercourses above flood stage, and people living and farming on at-risk areas (river beds and banks, unsuitable soils).

The flooding particularly affected human and animal health, increasing the risk of diseases associated with water (malaria, cholera, diarrhea and gastrointestinal viruses). The livelihoods of the households and families sustaining damage have also been affected by the flooding. The flooding has exposed households to short- and medium-term food insecurity (until the next agricultural season in August/September for the poorest households in the North and Hauts Bassins regions), decreased income due to the loss of money (because land grants also function as source of cash reserves), and reduced food reserves. Furthermore, the cost of food products has risen in some cases due to the loss of granaries and supply difficulties resulting from the deterioration of the road network. Given the potential for future crises, vulnerability has increased in all affected regions.

Figure 1. Flooding by livelihood zone as of September 30, 2007



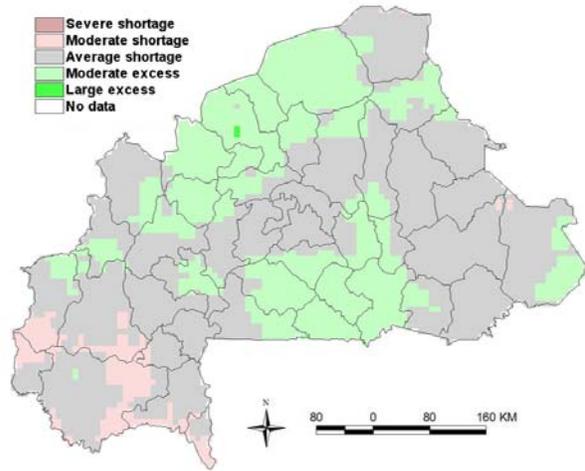
Source: FEWS NET, Data CONASUR, DGPSA

Current food security conditions

Despite the lean period, food security conditions in all of the country’s food economy zones are satisfactory overall. This is due in large part to the availability of cereals on local markets (because the last two agricultural seasons were good) and to the fact that commodity prices have not risen significantly overall compared to last month.

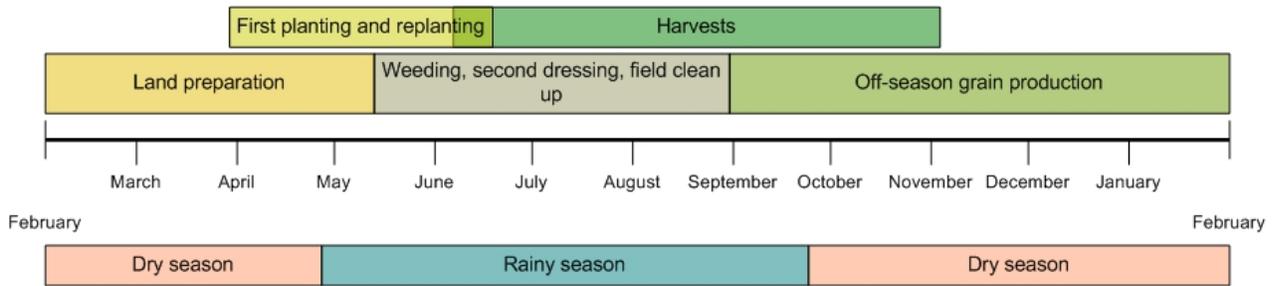
In the food economy zones where tubers predominate, the arrival of newly harvested sweet potatoes and yams on the markets greatly improved the household food situation. Similarly, in the cereal- and cotton-producing regions, the availability of fresh maize improves market availability and facilitates access to food for the poorest households. In food economy zones that produce groundnuts, this crop is now being harvested, and can be sold by the poorest households in order to buy cereals. Generally speaking, the presence of the new harvest (maize, groundnuts, sweet potatoes and yams) is currently enabling some households in regions with structural shortages (North, Sahel, North-Central) to withstand food difficulties.

Figure 2. Anomalies in cumulative rainfall for the second dekad of September 2007, compared to the average for the past five years



Source: FEWS NET/USGS-Regional

Seasonal calendar and significant events

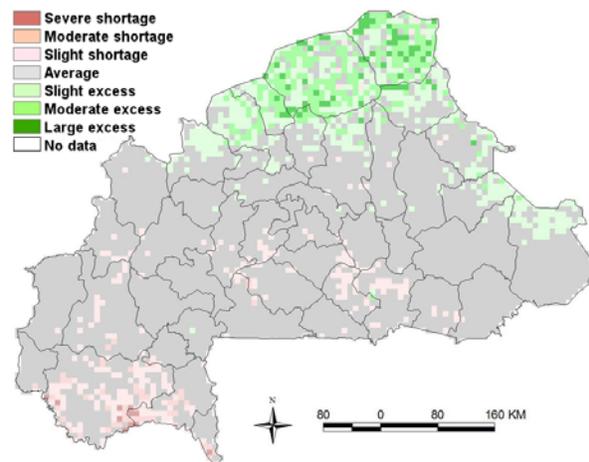


Weather conditions and agricultural activities for the 2007-08 season

Rainfall was scant to moderate throughout the country during the first two dekads of September. Total rainfall (from April 1 to September 20, 2007) ranged from 530.5 mm at Bogandé, in Gnanagna, to 1197.1 mm at Po, in Nahouri, according to the National Weather Office’s full-service weather stations. The cumulative total is below the average for the past five years in some parts of the Cascades and Southwest regions (Figure 2). This situation could negatively affect crop yields if the current rainfall trend continues, especially in certain areas of the Cascades region that are heavy maize producers.

All of the country’s water retention structures and water sources are unusually full, water can be used for growing off-season crops and watering livestock. This high water levels have caused some floods that have damaged hydraulic plants, road infrastructure and dwellings.

Figure 3. Anomalies in the NDVI for the second dekad of September 2007, compared to the average for the past five years



Source: FEWS NET/USGS-Regional

In all of the country's mixed farming and pastoral regions, the herbaceous cover that feeds livestock is of good nutritional value and available in sufficient quantity. The normalized difference vegetation index moderately to greatly exceeds the five-year average (Figure 3), especially in the North and Sahel regions, in a pastoral food economy zone.

Crop status was good as of September 20, 2007. Stages of development ranged from heading to maturation. In some regions, however, a slight delay was noted compared to the same time last year, due to the agricultural season's late start. Water stress in some crops, resulting from light rainfall in the third dekad of September, may affect crop yields in some regions of the country. In cotton-producing food economy zones, the predominant stages of development are flowering and boll formation. It is likely that national production of this cash crop, which has been suffering setbacks since the beginning of the season (late planting, decline in prices paid to the producers, etc.), will decrease in comparison to the past two years. Among other things, this reduced production will result in a decrease in monetary income for producers, an increase in areas planted in cereals, and difficulties on the producers' part in repaying their seasonal loans, since the prices of agricultural production factors have increased this year.

Increased vigilance is needed in monitoring attacks by crop pests (grasshoppers and grain-eating birds, etc.), because, given the very good water situation and the various advanced stages of crop development, conditions are favorable for these crop predators to develop.

However, with the optimistic scenario assuming that the rains continue until mid October, the harvest outlook is promising in most of the country, even in the North, North-Central and Sahel regions, which have structural shortages (Figure 4). On the other hand, if the rains stop at the end of September (worst case scenario), production would be very low to average in these same regions (Figure 5). Rainfall trends observed as of September 30, 2007, indicate that the worst case scenario is becoming more likely.

Figure 4. Harvest outlook at the end of August 2007, optimistic forecast



Source: Multidisc. Working Group mission, Sept. 07, Map developed by the DGRE [Bureau of Water Resource Management]

Figure 5. Harvest outlook at the end of August 2007, worst case forecast



Source: Multidisciplinary Working Group mission, Sept. 07, Map developed by the DGRE

Markets, trade and access to agricultural production and animals

The availability of cereals on the markets in the various zones indicates a good supply. In the mixed farming and pastoral areas of the North, North-Central and Sahel regions, the presence of the new harvest (maize for eating, fresh groundnuts, sweet potatoes) is reducing food difficulties experienced in some localities. Subsidized sales by the government from the National Intervention Reserve in the provinces of Oudalan (Gorom-Gorom) and Yagha (Sebba) in the Sahel region, as well as in Namatenga (Boulsa) in the North-Central region and in Gnagna (Bogandé) in the East region, have helped provide relief for the poorest households in these zones where access is especially difficult due to the deterioration of the roads after the torrential rains.

On the reference markets (Figure 6), the usual price increase observed since May continued, but did not reach the five-year average. On some terminal consumer markets, such as Sankaryare in Ouagadougou, the prices, which had begun to increase in July, are currently stable (Figure 7). They, too, are below the five-year average but above last year's values.

Supply did not meet demand on the livestock markets, so livestock and even poultry prices increased. The approach of Ramadan will also help keep these prices relatively high.

In all food economy zones, the livestock/cereals terms of trade favor pastoralists. For example, on the Djibo market in the Sahel region, a whole Sahelian ram in good condition brought 268 kg of millet (Figure 8).

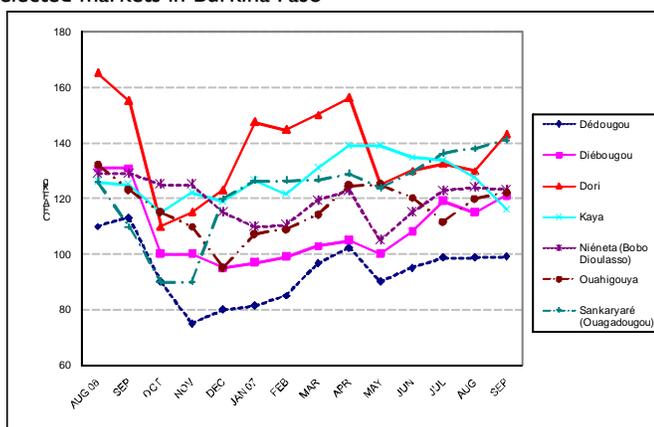
Conclusions and outlook

Current developments in the 2007-08 agricultural season, including the cessation of the rains in September, make the harvest outlook difficult to forecast. However, despite the floods, average production can be expected for the country.

The exceptional amounts of rain that fell filled the various water retention structures (dams, small retention structures, ponds and lakes) to record levels, even to overflowing, which will help with off-season crops for flood victims. Currently, however, few households possess the seeds and production factors required to undertake this activity. Therefore it is necessary to plan to make these production factors available to the households.

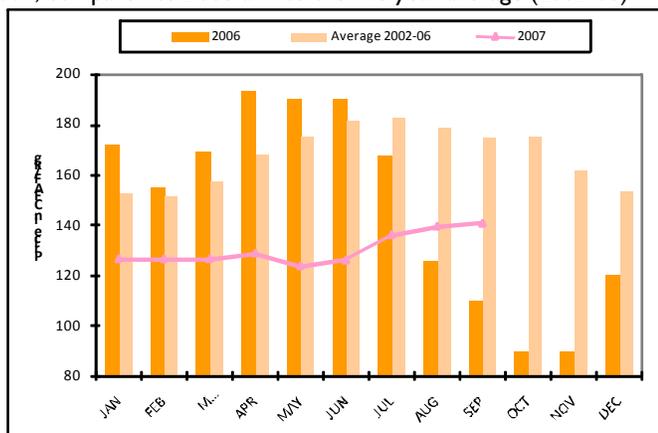
The populations affected by the flooding need basic assistance in the short term. This assistance should consist of: survival equipment (tents, kerosene lamps, flashlights, etc.), food and sanitation aid (daily meals, potable water, emergency medications and bare essentials for both humans and animals), awareness of how to prevent epidemics, and support for access to seed and other production factors for off-season crops and facilities for this activity, as well as the creation of income-generating activities. These activities are currently underway, but help is still needed. For the medium term, the government and its partners (the NGOs, humanitarian agencies and community-based organizations) need to coordinate to develop a quota and rehabilitation plan for the affected people.

Figure 6. Millet prices from August 2006 to September 2007 on selected markets in Burkina Faso



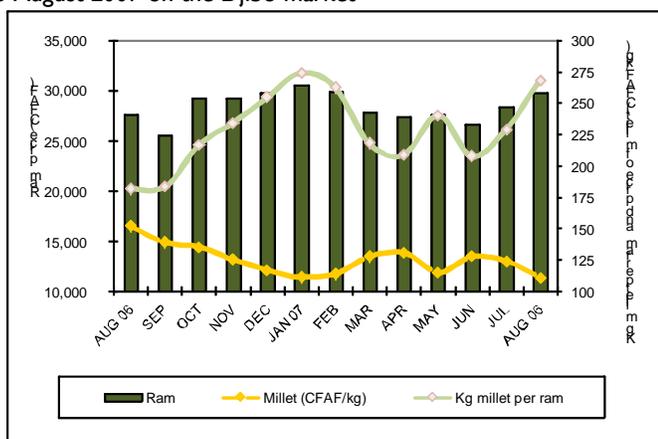
Source: Data SIM/SONAGESS, RESIMAO, DRAHRH-Graphic FEWS NET. Data for September is as of the third week.

Figure 7. Changes in millet prices on the Sankaryare market in 2007, compared to 2006 and to the five-year average (2002-06)



Source: Data SIM/SONAGESS, RESIMAO, DRAHRH, Graphic FEWS NET

Figure 8. Changes in ram/millet terms of trade from August 2006 to August 2007 on the Djibo market



Source: Data DGPSE, DRRA-CN, SIM/SONAGESS, DRAHRH, Graphic FEWS NET