MALI Food Security Outlook — February to September 2020

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes expected in the conflict areas of Liptako Gourma and Ménaka

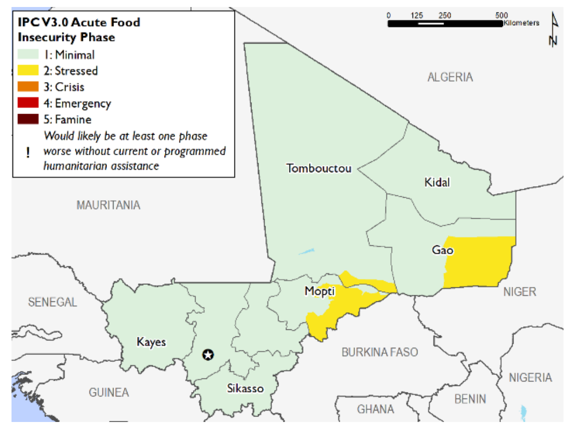
KEY MESSAGES

- Cereal production is 25.5 percent above average, and availability of food on markets is average, despite security incidents affecting flows to central and northern areas. In addition, average to below-average cereal prices are enabling the majority of households to remain in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity.

- In the western Sahel region of Kayes, the pastoral lean season started early in February due to pasture deficits and atypical concentrations of livestock. Elsewhere, the pastoral lean season is expected to be typical overall, supporting average incomes for livestock herders thanks to average production and condition of animals.

- Household access to cereals is generally average, due to average to above-average availability of own production (although low in some places), payments in kind, and average to below-average food prices in the main markets. Average to above-average terms of trade for goats/cereals are supporting average market access for livestock farming households.

Current food security outcomes, February 2020



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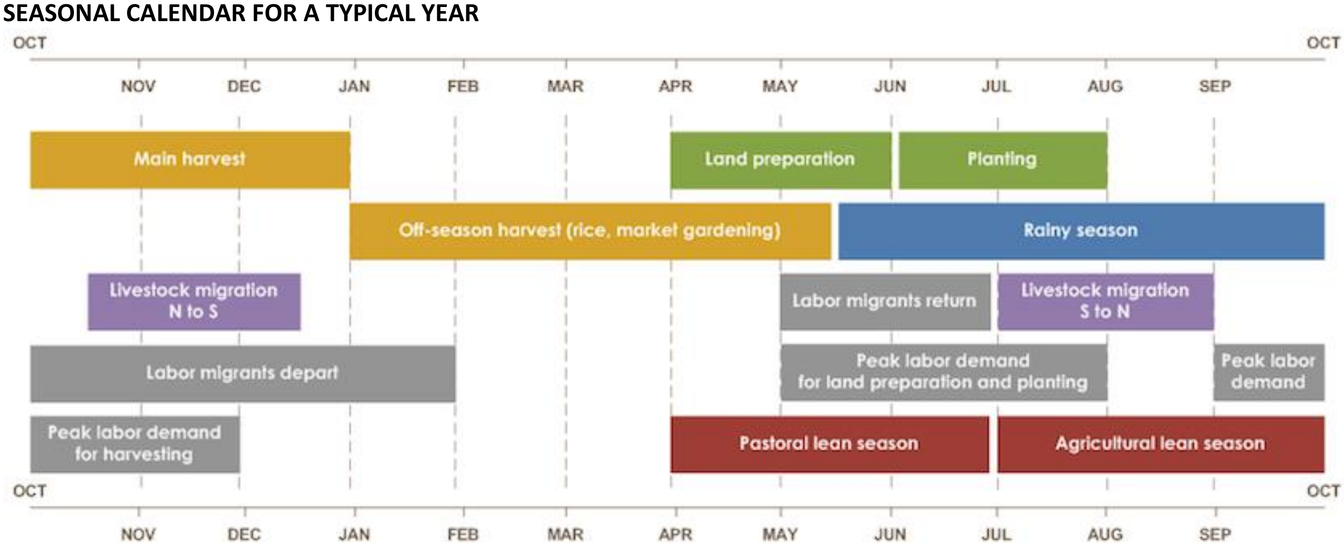
- An early lean season as a result of poor agricultural production in the western Sahel and Liptako Gourma, in addition to deteriorating livelihoods due to increased conflict and flooding, are leading poor households to make atypical use of labor and migration, reduce their non-food expenditure, and rely on humanitarian assistance or relatives to meet their food needs. As a result, they will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from February to April, and in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from May to September 2020.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



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FEWS NET Mali
fewsinquiry.mali@fews.net
https://fews.net/west-africa

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

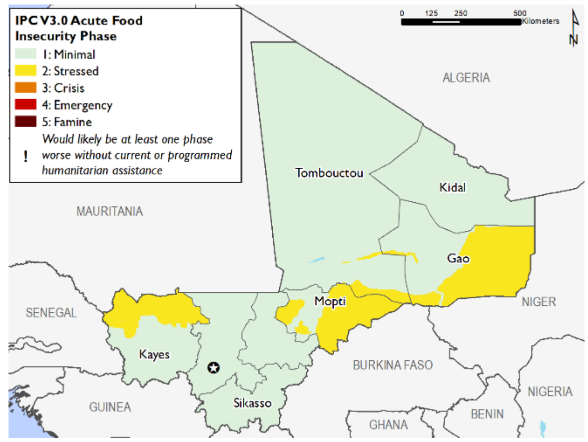
Current Situation

Agropastoral production: Production of off-season crops is considered average to above-average overall. Current harvests, particularly from market gardening, are providing average incomes for farming households and improving their diet. Planting of flood recession crops is continuing around the lakes and the production outlook is average, except in Kayes where the low level of water availability will reduce expected production by around 30 percent. The current harvests and rice planting in irrigated zones are providing income and food opportunities for poor households.

Livestock farming conditions are generally average in the country, with an expected normal lean season, except for in the western Sahel region of Kayes (Kayes, Nioro, Yélimané, Diéma) and in parts of the Mopti and Tombouctou regions, which are reporting various degrees of pasture deficit. Livestock are in good condition on the whole, thanks to the availability of pasture (although low in some places) and crop residues. Transhumant herds are returning as usual, albeit with some disruption in the conflict zones in central and northern parts of the country, particularly in Liptako Gourma, Ménaka and northern regions of Ségou (Niono, Macina). Dairy production is average to good due to good livestock farming conditions. The animal health situation is stable overall, and the cattle vaccination campaign launched in November is continuing with the support of certain humanitarian partners.

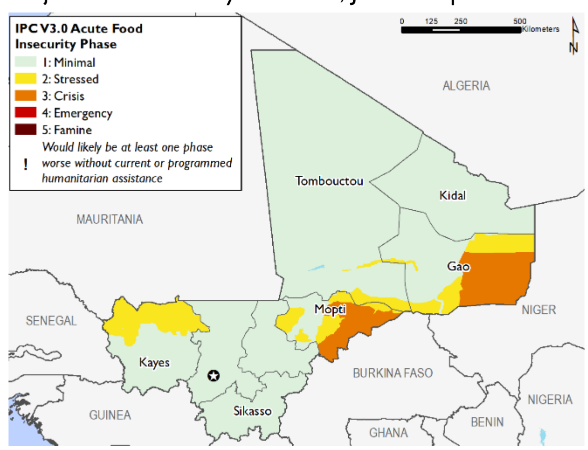
Fish production: The fishing season is developing as normal overall. The decline in river levels and the lifting of protected areas are contributing to an increase in catches. Fishing households are migrating to traditional fishing areas, with some disruption due to insecurity.

Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2020



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2020



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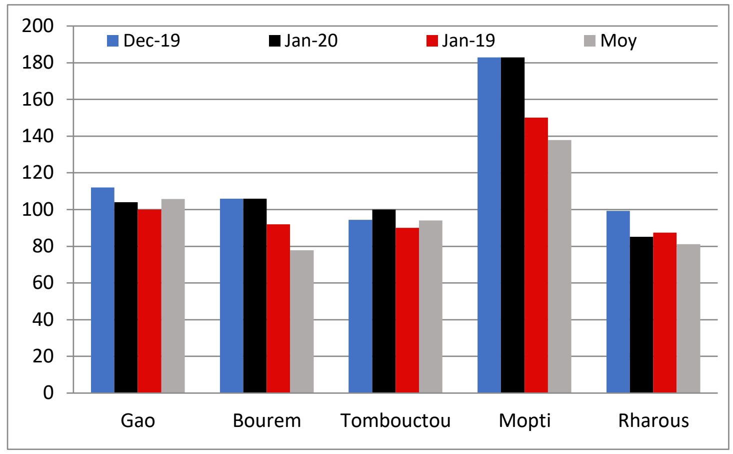
Market operation and prices: The supply of cereals to the markets is generally sufficient. The arrival of new harvests and destocking by large producers and cereal growers are helping increase market supply to average levels, except in some markets in Liptako Gourma where recurring security incidents and population displacements are disrupting markets. As for the Kidal market, which is usually supplied by Algeria, flows are average and continue to be affected by traffic flows, which are linked to political measures in Algeria and the security situation.

In the regional capitals at the end of January, the price of the main cereal consumed was similar to the five-year average in Sikasso, Mopti, Koulikoro (-2 percent), Kidal (+3 percent) and Ségou (-1 percent); down in Mopti (-12 percent); and up in Kayes (+15 percent), Gao (+11 percent) and Tombouctou (+10 percent).

Livestock supply to markets is generally increasing, especially in the western Sahel area and in Liptako Gourma, where the early lean season due to poor livestock farming conditions and market disruption are encouraging more sales in the safer markets of neighboring areas, in order to limit losses through deaths and looting/theft. Restrictions on exports to Nigeria continue to affect the buoyancy of markets in Gao.

Livestock prices are average to above average in the southern agricultural markets, but average or below average in the Mopti, Gao and Tombouctou regions for large ruminants due to lower demand, which is reducing pastoral income for households. At the end of January, the price of goats (the animals most commonly sold by poor households) was 16 percent higher than the five-year average in Mopti, 15 percent higher in Tombouctou, 20 percent higher in Ménaka and 9 percent higher in Gao. This is supporting average to above-average farming income for affluent households who still have stock, unlike poor households who are limited by their very low stock due to high demand since the start of the crisis in 2012.

Figure 1. Terms of trade for millet/goats (kg/animal)



Source: FEWS NET

Accessibility: Cereal production 25.5 percent above the five-year average is supporting average availability in the country. Average to above-average availability of own production, produce given as payment in kind, lower cereal prices, and improved terms of trade for goats/millet to average or slightly above average in markets in pastoral areas (Figure 1) due to lower cereal prices, are enabling the majority of households to access food without major difficulties. However, the average to significant reduction in production in more than 30 percent of villages, particularly in the border strip with Burkina Faso due to insecurity, has adversely affected household access in these areas.

Food consumption: Food consumption is improving as usual, through average availability of new harvests of cereals and legumes, market garden products, and animal products (milk, cheese, meat). According to the September 2019 National Food Security and Nutrition Survey (ENSAN), 18.3 percent of the country had poor or borderline food consumption scores; this is expected to see the usual improvement and to be close to the February average for 2015 to 2019, which is around 13.5 percent. As for food diversity, it is highest for most households in this period, thanks to average access to diversified food. The hunger index is at the average level for the period: 8 percent moderate to serious hunger.

Population movement: The usual departures of able workers to the country's urban centers and neighboring countries, in search of additional income, are under way as normal. In the central and northern areas of the country, ongoing security incidents are continuing to increase the departures of able workers and households to more secure areas. By mid-December, the number of displaced persons had been estimated at over 201,000, of whom 35.6 percent were in the Mopti region alone, where arrivals from Burkina Faso are also reported. Arrivals from Niger are reported in the Ménaka region. Returns of refugees continue to be recorded throughout the country. Food and non-food support is provided to displaced persons and returnees by the Government and humanitarian partners, through the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM).

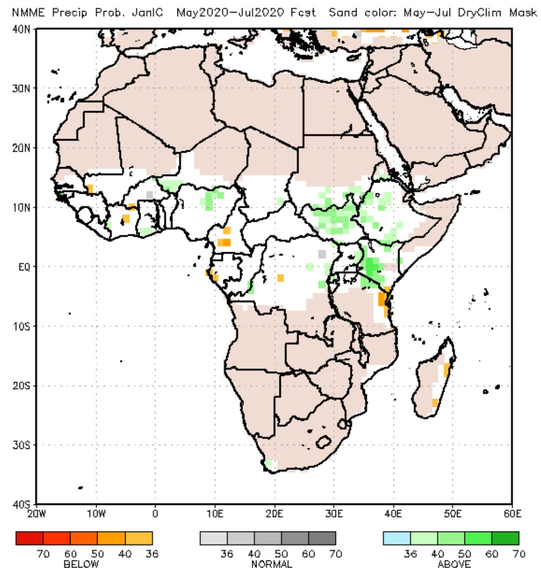
Security situation: The security situation continues to be marked by ongoing security incidents that are negatively affecting the socio-economic environment in the central and northern regions of the country, particularly in Liptako Gourma. This is resulting in below-average employment opportunities and income for households in the area. The loss of property and looting of livestock and current harvests associated with these security incidents are damaging livelihoods for households in the areas concerned. The resulting constraints to movement are making it difficult for humanitarian support to reach poor households in difficulty, thereby increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity and limiting the rebuilding of livelihoods that are vital to meeting their needs.

Assumptions

The most likely food security scenario from February to September 2020 is based on the following underlying assumptions regarding trends in nationwide conditions:

- **Rainfall:** Discrepancies between forecast models for this period prevent any strong assumptions. The NMME model projects a fairly average situation, while the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI)is predicting deficits in the central and northern half of the country. While awaiting evidence over the coming months, we are opting for a timely start to the 2020 rainy season, starting in May in southern areas, June in central areas, and progressively later in more northern areas with the timely seasonal northward movement of the Intertropical Front. Cumulative rainfall is very likely to be close to average. However, good temporal and geographical distribution of rainfall will be essential for good agricultural production for the season starting in June 2020.
- **Water levels:** Water is receding in the various rivers throughout the country. On 27 January 2020, river water levels were lower than last year's levels over the same period, but above the multiannual average at most observation stations. The average cumulative rainfall expected according to weather forecasts will support average flow on the various rivers serving Mali, in both the Niger and Senegal river basins. Water in lakes will recede throughout the country and the start of the rains from June will support the replenishment of watering holes to an average to above-average level.

Figure 2. Precipitation forecast for May to July 2020



Source: *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/North American Multi-Model Ensemble (NOAA/NMME)*

- **Off-season crops:** Off-season crops, both market garden crops and rice – which is currently being replanted – are developing as normal. Production forecasts are generally average thanks to average water availability in ponds, lakes and rivers. The current average harvests for market garden crops, and those expected for off-season wheat in April and rice in June–July, will improve food availability and purchasing power for farming households.
- **Agricultural production:** The normal onset of rains, and ongoing agricultural input support (seed, fertilizer) from the Government and partners, equipment distribution and hydro-agricultural developments, are expected to yield average to above-average harvests in the country from October 2020. However, insecurity will continue to affect agricultural activities in areas of community conflict. This will lead to localized declines in production, particularly in the north and center of the country.
- **Livestock movements and animal production:** Herds are in the usual areas of concentration: in bourgou pastureland along the river and around crop residues and permanent watering holes (wells, ponds). The usual departure of herds toward winter concentration areas will be observed from June onward, owing to the onset of rains for the new season (June to September). Difficulties in accessing certain pastures in insecure areas will have a negative impact on the condition of animals. Improved livestock farming conditions from June will boost animal production.
- **Fishing:** Catches for the current fishing season, which will continue until March/April, are average to above average at the various fishing grounds in the country. The lifting of protected areas and collective fishing activities from March to April will help raise catch levels for fishing households, before water levels rise again in June/July and reduce catches.

Other livelihood activities

- **Migration and population movements:** The departure of able workers to the country's urban centers, neighboring countries and gold-mining sites in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro and Sikasso is under way. The average in-kind and cash resources sent from February to June, and/or brought back by migrant workers who will return from May/June, will help ease the situation of households during the agricultural lean season from June to September. Residual insecurity in central and northern parts of the country continues to cause population displacement. By the end of December, more than 201,000 people had been recorded. These movements will continue in line with security disruptions, particularly in the Liptako Gourma area.
- **Agricultural and non-agricultural labor:** The usual non-agricultural labor and small trade activities between February and May, and those linked to the June to September agricultural season, will continue as normal in the country. The average income from such activities will enable poor households that depend on them to improve their purchasing power. However, in northern regions and central areas, insecurity will continue to negatively affect employment opportunities (construction, small trades, etc.), resulting in below-average incomes.

Markets and prices

• **Cereal prices:** The usual depletion of stocks for small producers and demand for replenishment of community and institutional stocks from February/March will increase market demand. This will generate the seasonal price increase from April to September, but it will be less marked than in a typical year. The price trend for the main cereal (millet), which is above or similar to the average on the main markets, will continue until September.

• **Livestock prices:** Livestock prices should remain average to above average due to good livestock farming conditions. The seasonal fall in prices in April due to the usual deterioration in the condition of livestock in the pastoral lean season will be observed until June. Despite the fall in prices, they will remain average to above average, except in some markets close to the conflict zones where the unusual increase in supply has contributed to lower livestock prices. Improved livestock conditions from July will help improve livestock prices. Despite improving, the terms of trade for livestock/cereal will remain close to the average in pastoral areas.

Other key factors

• **Institutional procurement:** Institutional procurement – through national security stock replenishment by the National Office for Agricultural Products (OPAM) of approximately 50,000 megatons of millet/sorghum, and procurement by the World Food Programme (WFP) and other humanitarian agencies in 2020 under the National Response Plan – will be average to below average. This is due to intervention strategies based on cash transfers/coupons being favored over food distribution.

• **Security situation:** The unstable security situation observed is likely to continue in the usual areas, particularly in the country's border strip with Burkina Faso and Niger (Liptako Gourma), due to the recurrence of community conflict, banditry and military operations. Disruptions to the movement of people and goods, and the resulting unusual displacement of persons, deaths and damage to livelihoods, will continue to be observed. The current negotiations and the strengthening of military patrols will help alleviate the difficulties of movement in the area.

• **Humanitarian action:** Humanitarian food assistance will continue to be provided to displaced populations, under the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), and to food-insecure populations, particularly from June to September. The National Response Plan being prepared includes food assistance and resilience building for over 1 million people. Support in terms of agricultural inputs for the new agricultural year, and support for farmers in the form of animal feed and veterinary care in areas with a pasture deficit, is under way and/or planned. Support for reintegrating returning and repatriated populations will continue throughout the outlook period. These resilience-building programs will limit beneficiary populations' use of negative coping strategies.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Overall average to above-average cereal availability in the country, and below-average to average prices of foodstuffs, are giving the majority of households average access to food, despite local pockets of lower production. Their own production (although low in some places), stock from in-kind and cash remuneration for harvesting, as well as average income from traditional agricultural and off-farm labor, are enabling the majority of poor households to access food without too much difficulty. The rate of 18.5 percent having a poor or borderline food consumption score in September 2019, compared to 20.5 percent in September 2018, is improving compared to the lean season and is close to the average level for February. As a result, most households in the country will be in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity phase between February and September 2020. The national rate of global acute malnutrition (GAM), classed as 'Serious' (10 percent) in the July 2019 Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) survey, will deteriorate as usual from March/April due to food strategies, worsening hygiene conditions and the prevalence of respiratory and parasitic diseases from June to September.

However, the early depletion of stocks for households in the western Sahel area of Kayes and in places along the river in Gao and Tombouctou, due to the average to significant decline in agricultural production because of poor rainfall and pest damage, will make them more reliant on the market than usual for food supplies. The atypical use of migration, increased labor and above-average sales of livestock to raise generally lower incomes, will make poor households Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from March to September 2020. The same will apply to flood victims in other regions, who face difficulties both in meeting their food needs and in rebuilding their deteriorated livelihoods.

In insecure areas, particularly in the Liptako Gourma region, poor households with declining incomes (especially those in Bankass, Koro, Bandiagara, Douentza and Ménaka) will experience a marked deterioration in their livelihoods. This will limit their ability to adequately meet their food and non-food needs. The poor or borderline food consumption score will be above the average for the period, and the lack of livelihood protection will worsen. During this period of availability of own crops, below-average prices, local solidarity and support from the Government and humanitarian agencies, households will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from February to April. They will experience a more marked seasonal deterioration than usual from April onward. The use of negative coping strategies, already high in September 2019, and the longer than usual dependency on markets, especially for displaced households, will place them in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from May to September 2020.

Events that Might Change the Outlook

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National	Delayed and/or inadequate onset of rains in July–August	A delay in the onset of the rains would prolong the pastoral lean season more than usual, which could increase the risk of higher mortality due to deterioration in animal condition and, as a result, income. The delay in planting crops may negatively affect expected cereal production in September.
	Pest damage to crops from April to September	Significant damage by grain-eating birds and caterpillars (armyworm and others) to off-season crops from February to June, and to rainfed crops from June to September, may reduce cereal availability in agricultural areas and lead to higher cereal prices.
	Flooding due to heavy rains or high water level in rivers	Damage to crops and capital equipment in affected areas from July to September may negatively affect household livelihoods and reduce households' ability to adequately meet their food needs.
Northern and central Mali	Intensification of market disruption due to insecurity	Heightened insecurity would further impact the economy in the affected areas, negatively affecting income, household livelihoods and market supply in the area.
Northern Mali (zone 2, 3, 4), Niger Delta (zone 6) and Sahel band (zone 13)	Significant bush fire damage to pastures from April to May	Bush fires habitually cause huge damage to pastures from February to May, resulting in early degradation of pasture land and difficulties in feeding livestock. The deterioration in the physical condition of livestock and in animal production would negatively affect the livelihoods of agropastoral households.

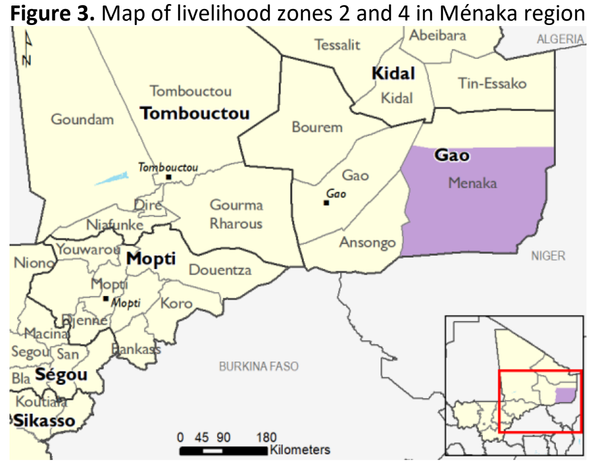
AREAS OF CONCERN

Livelihood zones 2 and 4: Northern livestock farming area, Ménaka region

Current Situation

Pastoral situation: Pastures and watering holes are considered average overall. Livestock are also in average condition, supporting average milk production in the area. However, reduced farming incomes due to the poor condition of livestock in areas where insecurity is hampering access to pasture are limiting household purchasing power. The current vaccination of livestock with the support of partners (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), FAO) is being impacted by insecurity, which is limiting the level of vaccination coverage in the area.

Figure 3. Map of livelihood zones 2 and 4 in Ménaka region



Source: *FEWS NET*

Markets: Cereal supply from the usual markets in Gao, Niger and Algeria is average, although for Niger there has been a decline due to the upsurge in attacks in recent months. The price of millet in the area's main markets is stable compared with last month. Compared to the five-year average, it is up 11 percent in Gao, 20 percent in Ménaka and 9 percent in Ansongo. The terms of trade for goats/millet have remained stable compared to the previous month in Ansongo and Ménaka, and are down 7 percent in Gao. Compared to the five-year average, they are fairly average in the three markets of Gao, Ansongo and Ménaka, supporting average market access for pastoral households.

Livelihood trends: The main sources of income in the area are remittances from large numbers of migrants due to the socio-economic environment that no longer provides employment opportunities, and labor, transportation, trading and sales of straw. This is generating an overall income more than 50 percent below average due to the unstable security situation. There is a significant reduction in the size of herds, and households are even selling off their livestock, due to high demand and/or reported theft/looting. The ongoing displacement of households, with resulting loss of goods and interruption to economic activities, is significantly deteriorating their livelihoods. The use of crisis and emergency strategies by 46.7 percent of households in the area, according to ENSAN in September 2019, is indicative of the difficulties households are facing in meeting their food and non-food needs. Low numbers of saleable livestock, due to their depletion in poor households, are generating below-average income, despite average to above-average livestock prices.

Humanitarian assistance: Various partners are continuing to provide humanitarian assistance in the form of food and non-food items to people from displaced households and host populations alike. However, there has been a significant decrease in operations due to multiple robberies and looting of humanitarian stores, limiting humanitarian access in the area.

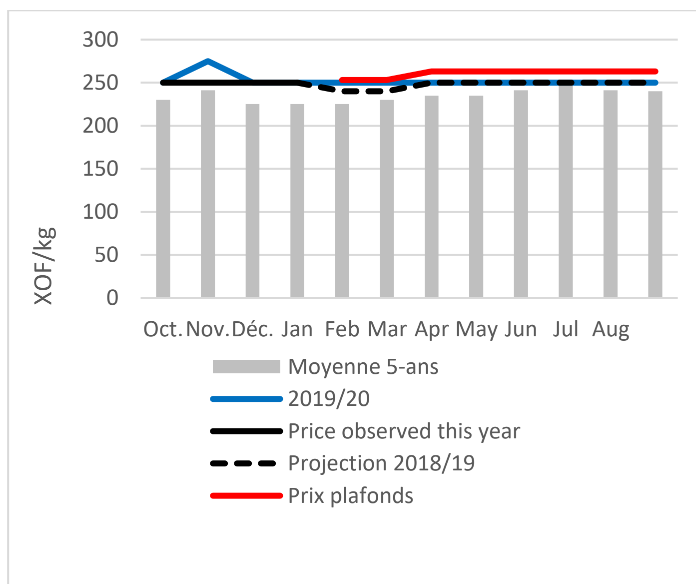
Security situation/population movement: The security situation continues to be marked by persistent security incidents, which have recently seen an upsurge in the border strip. The situation is characterized by an increase in robberies on main highways, conflicts between armed groups, and military operations, which are seriously disrupting the movement of people and goods and the functioning of markets. The resulting unusual movements of people, especially in the border strip with Niger, are increasing the vulnerability of households that are already facing hardship. At the end of December 2019, 17,758 displaced persons were recorded according to the Commission on Population Movements. These displaced persons require assistance with food, money, shelter and non-food items. In addition, the latest terrorist attacks in Niger have resulted in an influx of more than 1,000 refugees (nationals or non-nationals) into the region, fleeing conflict zones.

Assumptions:

The most likely food security scenario in the northern farming area from February to September 2020 is based on the following specific assumptions.

- **Market supply and cereal prices:** The supply of cereals from the usual supply markets in Gao, millet and legumes from Niger, and rice, pasta and other foodstuffs (oils and milk) from Algeria, will continue but will be dependent on security developments along the main routes. The price of millet (20 percent above average in January) is expected to follow its seasonal trend at a slower rate than usual, with virtual stability throughout the scenario period. The same will apply in supply markets, which will be slightly (5–10 percent) above the five-year average.
- **Pastoral farming income/animal production:** Animal production, mainly milk and dairy products, will experience a seasonal decline due to the usual deterioration in livestock farming conditions from March to June. The improvement in livestock farming conditions from June/July due to the onset of rains will boost milk production, which will improve household food consumption. The typical lean season expected will enable livestock to be maintained in average physical condition, which will keep animal prices average to above average. However, overall income from the sale of animals and animal produce will remain below average due to the reduction in animal numbers, especially for very poor households.
- **Livelihood trends**: The decrease in income opportunities, including the interruption to some economic activities, due to insecurity in the area is significantly reducing household income to below average. Degradation of property, loss of property and livestock, and unusual movements are leading households to resort to the negative coping strategies of selling livestock,

Figure 4. Projected prices for millet in Gao



Source: FEWS NET

abandoning villages, migrating en masse and reducing food and non-food expenditure. Self-employment activities, in particular the sale of handicrafts, are well below average due to the reduction in opportunities related to tourism, which has shut down due to the Jihadist threat. Livelihood pressures will increase, leading to a livelihood protection deficit for 10 percent of the population and a subsistence deficit for 5 percent of households in agricultural areas between June and September, according to the FEWS NET Outcome Analysis of September 2019. The humanitarian food and non-food support that is expected from the Government and humanitarian partners during the lean season (June to September) will limit the use of crisis and emergency coping strategies.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Average to slightly above-average cereal prices, terms of trade for livestock/cereals that are favorable to farmers, and average availability of own crops, milk, dairy products and wild foods will support average household access to food, with no major problems between February and March. Households that use increased laboring and reduced non-food spending to meet their food needs will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from February to April 2020.

From May to September, the overall decline in income due to the economic aftermath of the security crisis, and the below-average terms of trade for livestock/cereals, will limit poor households' access to food, particularly during the lean season which will start early during this period. Food consumption will deteriorate more than usual due to the early lean season and increased use of strategies to reduce food expenditure. The poor or borderline food consumption score for 33.6 percent of households in the area, reported by ENSAN in September 2019, will be matched or even exceeded due to increased security disruption since 2019. Households who are unable to adequately meet their food needs will use strategies including borrowing, dependence on aid, relatives and humanitarian assistance, and unusual displacement to more favorable areas. A reduction in the size and even the number of meals for poor households will contribute to a deterioration in the nutritional situation, which at 15.5 percent GAM is already critical according to the World Health Organization (WHO) threshold (< 15 percent). The use of crisis and emergency coping strategies by 73.9 percent of households, reported by ENSAN in September 2019, is not expected to improve due to ongoing insecurity. As a result, Stressed households will find themselves in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from May to September 2020.

Events that Might Change the Outlook

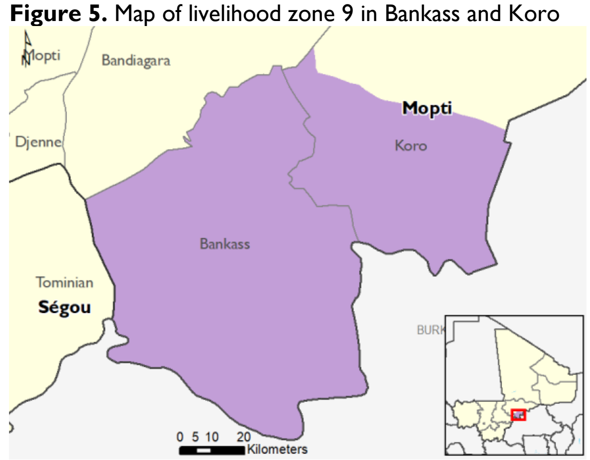
Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Whole region	Significant bush fire damage to pastures from March to May	Bush fires habitually cause huge damage to pasture from February to June; this would result in unusual degradation of pasture land and difficulties in feeding livestock. The resulting deterioration in the physical condition of livestock and in animal production, and even mortality, would negatively affect the livelihoods of agropastoral households.
	Delay in onset of rains	A delay in the timely onset of rains in June/July would prolong the pastoral lean season more than usual. This would adversely affect livestock feeding and therefore animal production, and lead to above-average livestock mortality.
	Animal health from December to May	Insecurity is limiting the activities of the veterinary service. This could lead to an upsurge in animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, anthrax and blackleg in areas with concentrations of cattle. The loss of resources, through mortality and decline in animal production, would negatively affect the capital and income of livestock farmers.
Border areas with Niger	Substantial humanitarian food and non-food aid for poor households in the area	Increased support, covering at least 20 percent of needs for most poor households affected by the security crisis and unusual displacement, would improve the food situation in the area.

Livelihood zone 9: Sorghum/millet hub in Bankass and Koro

These are communes in Bankass and Koro and the neighboring communes in Douentza and Bandiagara that are affected by insecurity and experiencing significant disruption of economic activities and difficulty in growing crops as a result of these conflicts.

Figure 5. Map of livelihood zone 9 in Bankass and Koro



Source: *FEWS NET*

Current Situation

Agropastoral production: In areas where security and water availability have allowed market gardening to take place, the currently average harvests of off-season market gardening crops are providing average incomes for farming households. Population movements in the border strip with Burkina Faso have reduced levels of production in these areas, including of off-season crops. Cereal harvests are generally average in the area but poor to very poor in the communes in Liptako Gourma and neighboring communes in Douentza (Mondoro, Boni) and Bandiagara (Sangha and Barapireli). In these communes, over 30 percent of villages have lost 30–50 percent of land area compared to the last season (2018/19), according to a study by the WFP. Looting and crop degradation are observed in the area as a result of the conflicts, reducing cereal availability in the area.

Average pasture overall and the availability of crop residues are supporting adequate feeding of herds. The usual descent of herds to dry season pastures (bourgou fields in the delta) is under way, although severely disrupted by insecurity in the border strip. This is resulting in unusual descents to the area of Ségou. Milk is scarce, because of the early departure of herds due to displaced livestock farmers.

Markets: Markets supplies are below average due to lower attendance at the main markets because of robberies, improvised explosive devices, and killings. Compared to the previous month, there has been a slight increase in demand as a result of military operations in the area, but demand remains low in small markets in the border area, where significant disruption is observed. At the end of January 2020, the price of millet (the main cereal) was 21 percent lower than average in Bankass, 12 percent lower in Bandiagara and 11 percent lower in Koro. This is supporting average household access to food. Meanwhile, the price of goats is similar to or slightly above the five-year average in Bankass, Douentza, Koro and Bandiagara (+5 percent). Difficult physical access to markets due to insecurity is preventing the usual opportunities for selling animals, which in the communes heavily affected by insecurity are being sold locally at prices significantly below the usual prices for the period. In addition, the unusual drive to sell off stock to limit losses through theft/looting is lowering animal prices by more than 30 percent compared to the average, thus reducing income from livestock sales, especially for displaced households.

Security situation/population movement: The security situation remains volatile, despite active military operations in the area. Persistent robberies on major roads, explosive devices and clashes between armed groups are limiting the movement of people and goods in the area. Decreased or interrupted economic activities, looting and theft of livestock and crops, as well as unusual displacement of people and loss of life are negatively affecting household livelihoods in the area and increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity. At the end of December, 71,700 displaced persons were recorded – an increase of 18 percent compared with October 2019. Over 45,600 of these people were displaced within Bankass, Koro, Bandiagara and Douentza. The loss of goods and economic activities is limiting the ability of households to adequately meet their food and non-food needs and to access to basic social services, thereby increasing the prevalence of disease and malnutrition.

Humanitarian assistance: The Government and humanitarian agencies are continuing to supply humanitarian food and non-food assistance in the area, especially for displaced households under the Rapid Response Mechanism and for host populations. It is the main source of food for some households that had to leave everything behind when they were displaced. The state and humanitarian partners (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), WFP) are continuing their program for screening and treating malnutrition cases. However, there are insecurity-related difficulties in places which, in addition to limiting access to food, are contributing to further deterioration in the nutritional situation in the area.

Assumptions

The most likely food security scenario in the conflict zone in Bankass and Koro from February to September 2020 is based on the following specific assumptions.

- **Security situation:** The security situation in Liptako Gourma, which is experiencing an upsurge in attacks in the border strip, will continue to see incidents related to attacks by armed groups and robberies in the area, despite the efforts of the Government, its partners and community leaders. The situation will remain disrupted throughout the scenario period, although there may be a decline in intensity as a result of current negotiations and operational reorganization in the countries affected.
- **Economic activities:** The insecurity-related disruption to the movement of people and goods is not supporting adequate economic recovery in the area. The unusual population movements, and subsequent disruption of economic activities, are resulting in fewer income opportunities for households. This will reduce household incomes to below average from February to September 2020. The destruction and looting of property (livestock, crops, etc.) will negatively affect the livelihoods of households, 20 percent of which are already experiencing a protection deficit according to the FEWSNET Outcome Analysis in September 2019.
- **Cereal prices:** The downward trend in cereal prices relative to the average in the main markets of the area will continue, despite security disruptions. From April, the seasonal increase will be observed and this will continue until September at a slow rate. The below-average price trend is expected to continue throughout the scenario period, due to below-average demand, especially as the main route to and from Burkina Faso is still seriously disrupted by terrorist attacks and military operations.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

The availability of cereal production, although low, and the below-average prices are supporting average household access and food diversification for households that will rely on markets during this period. However, early stock depletion (especially in areas heavily affected by reduced production) will lead poor households to rely on markets and coping strategies for longer than usual. This will negatively affect their food consumption. The poor food consumption score, despite its improvement compared to September, is expected to be above the February average, which is around 20 percent according to ENSAN surveys over the past five years. Poor households unable to meet their food and non-food needs are turning early to borrowing, unusual migration and the sale of goods, thereby increasing the livelihood protection deficit. As a result, poor households in the area are Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from February to April 2020. However, displaced persons in need of assistance, but who are below the 20 percent required to recategorize the whole area, will be Stressed with need for assistance (IPC Phase 2!).

The early stock depletion due to the significant decline in agricultural production, and the longer-term dependence of poor and very poor households on the market, necessitates resources beyond their means in an environment where incomes are declining overall. Reducing food expenditure by choosing cheaper foods and reducing the size or even number of meals in the poorest households will worsen food consumption. The food consumption score will be higher than the average for September of 25 percent in Koro and 10 percent in Bankass. The early lean season, starting in April instead of June, will mean an above-average increase in the sale of goods/equipment, unconventional sales of livestock, and dependency on borrowing and migrant remittances, and on assistance for displaced persons. Malnutrition will worsen as usual, but will be more marked than in an average year due to the early lean season. It will be above the prevalence rate measured in the December 2018 SMART survey, which was 10.8 percent with 2.6 percent of severe cases. Poor households in need of livelihood protection, especially displaced households who are unable to meet their food needs without using negative coping strategies, will be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from May to September 2020.

Events that Might Change the Outlook

Table 1. Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Liptako Gourma area	Worsening security situation	Increasing security incidents would further impact the economic environment in affected areas. This would negatively affect household livelihoods and humanitarian access in the area, and increase poor and displaced households' vulnerability to food insecurity.
	Rainfall deficits from June to September	Poor rainfall in the area would result in stock retention, impacting market supply and raising market prices. Increasing cereal prices, and the consequent decline in agricultural employment opportunities, would increase food shortages for poor households.

Other areas of concern in the country

An estimated 80,000 people in poor households affected by the floods from July to September 2019, particularly in the districts of Tombouctou, Ménaka, Ségou, Koulikoro, Gao and Bamako, will face difficulties in adequately meeting their food needs and restoring their damaged livelihoods. These flooded households, who are below the 20 percent required to recategorize the whole area, will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from March, requiring external support to prevent a deterioration in their livelihoods.

The lean season starting one to two months earlier than average – linked to the significant decline in agricultural production in Nioro, Yélimané, Kayes and northern Diéma, as well as in places along the river in Tombouctou and Gao – will result in poor households being dependent on markets for food supplies for longer than usual. Households in these areas will be in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity from February to April, thanks to their own harvests (although low), in-kind remuneration, local solidarity and below-average cereal prices. From May onward, rising cereal prices and long-term market dependency will necessitate resources beyond the means of poor households. Thus, they will resort to unconventional increases in labor activities, migration, borrowing, sale of goods, and reduction in non-food and food expenditure (opting for cheaper foods). Average to above-average migrant remittances, and income from agricultural laboring during the lean season, will limit livelihood degradation and improve household access to markets. As a result, they will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from May to September.

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.