FEWS NET
FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NETWORK

MALI Food Security Outlook Update — April 2018

Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity in some areas, due to limited market access

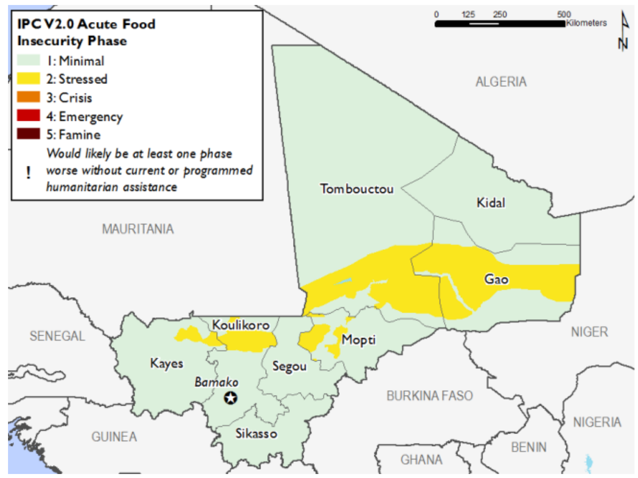
KEY MESSAGES

- Despite adequate supplies on markets across the country, cereal prices are higher than the five-year average, which is impacting households' market access to meet their food needs.

- There was a premature start to the pastoral lean season, due to pasture deficit and drying of watering holes in the Gourma area of Gao and Timbuktu, and in Western Sahelian areas of the Kayes and Koulikoro regions. The decline in production and deterioration in the physical condition of livestock are reducing pastoral income for households in the areas mentioned.

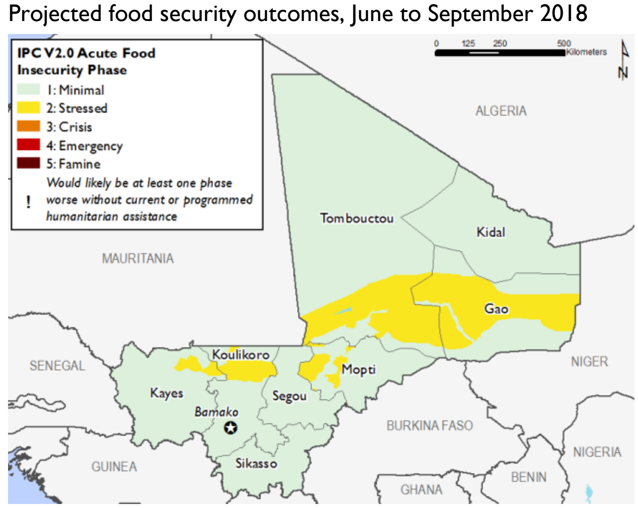
- Poor households with falling pastoral income will struggle to adequately meet their food needs without recourse to atypical coping strategies. These include households in the Goundam lakes area and inland Niger Delta of Tenenkou, where agricultural production has been poor, and in the pastoral zones of the Gourma area of Gao and Timbuktu. As a result, they will be in a Stressed (IPC Phase 2) situation from April to September 2018.

Projected food security outcomes, April to May 2018



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2018



Source: *FEWS NET*

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

CURRENT SITUATION

Availability

There is average availability of cereals on most markets in the country, but transport problems due to the sharp drop in water level are affecting flows on some markets along the Niger River from Timbuktu to Gao. The 31 percent increase in national cereal production in 2017/2018 against the five-year average is ensuring average food availability across the country, despite pockets of deficits. The average to below-average harvests from market garden crops are providing food and income for farming households. Off-season rice continues to be grown in irrigated areas along the Niger River from Koulikoro to Gao, providing food and income-generating opportunities for poor households in the form of wage labor. Rice production prospects for June/July are average to below-average, due to the low water levels in the river. There is a similar situation in the Goundam lake area, where the low water level will significantly reduce production.

Pastoral conditions

The premature lean season, in the pastoral areas of the northern regions and in the northern band of the Kayes and Koulikoro regions, is continuing due to the reduced availability of water and pasture in usual areas of livestock concentration, especially

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in the Gourma area of Timbuktu and Gao. The pasture deficit, premature drying up of certain watering holes, and unusual concentrations of livestock have caused earlier than average deterioration of pastures. This has led to unusual herd movements towards better grazing areas. The deterioration in the physical condition of livestock and the loss of production are having a negative effect on pastoral income and, as a result, food access for pastoral households. Support, in the form of subsidized or free animal feed and veterinary care, is being provided in these areas to mitigate food shortfalls. In the rest of the country, livestock conditions are average.

Cereal markets and prices

Cereal supplies remain adequate on markets throughout the country, apart from the seasonal reduction in supply. The reduction is more pronounced on markets in the Mopti river valley, Timbuktu and Gao, due to the decrease in local production and the sharp drop in water level, which is reducing flows by river.

The seasonal increase in cereal prices, which occurred earlier than usual this year (in February instead of March), can be seen on both the production and consumer markets. Prices for the main cereals are generally stable or higher than the previous month on all markets monitored. Compared to the five-year average, prices for millet and sorghum are generally higher: for millet in Koulikoro (+18 percent), Ségou (+34 percent), Timbuktu (+32 percent), Gao (+29 percent) and Mopti (+25 percent), for sorghum in Kayes (+19 percent) and for maize in Sikasso (+14 percent). The above-average rise in cereal prices means lower than average food access for poor households. In the areas of concern, the increase in the price of staple cereals (millet/sorghum) is: 22 percent in Gourma Rharous, 45 percent in Goundam and 35 percent in Tenenkou. This is having a negative effect on food access for poor households, who are experiencing premature market dependence (from January, compared to March in a normal year) due to poor agricultural production.

Livestock markets

Livestock markets remain adequately stocked during this pastoral lean season, when herds are being thinned as a strategy to limit the negative effect on livestock of the pasture deficit. Livestock prices are in line with the seasonal drop and are virtually stable or falling compared to the previous month. Compared to the five-year average, they are 20 percent lower in Ansongo, 10 percent lower in Gao, 9 percent lower in Bourem and very similar in Rharous and Goundam. Rising cereal prices and falling livestock prices mean that the terms of trade for goats/millet are 17 percent below average in Rharous, 30 percent in Goundam and Bourem, and 37 percent in Ansongo. This is driving the sale of more livestock and recourse to coping strategies to access food.

Security situation

The security situation remains marred by incidents in the Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal regions and the northern reaches of the Mopti and Ségou regions. This is having a negative impact on the free circulation of people and goods, and on economic recovery in these areas. Community conflicts continue to fuel household displacements within the Mopti, Gao and Ménaka regions. At the end of March, around 50,311 people (an increase of 540 since February 2018) had moved to safer areas.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The current situation has not affected the development of the FEWS NET most likely scenario for February to September 2018.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2018

Despite average overall cereal availability in the country, the above-average to well above-average food prices are negatively impacting poor households' access to food in markets. Average income from the usual agricultural and non-farm labor activities and migration will enable most households to access food. As a result, most households in the country will experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity between April and September 2018.

However, due to the premature depletion of food stocks and well above-average cereal prices, poor agropastoral households are resorting to atypical coping strategies involving borrowing and cutbacks in food and nonfood spending. The poor food consumption levels of 14 percent in the lakes area and 16 percent in the River Niger Delta will deteriorate more than usual, due to the early lean season and the shortage or absence flood-recession harvests and off-season crops in June/July. As a result, poor households in these two areas will remain in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity until the first harvests in September 2018.

Poor farming households in the Gourma area of Gao, Timbuktu, and the Sahel region, who are experiencing a deterioration in the terms of trade for livestock/cereals due to the difficult pastoral situation, will have limited access to markets. They will resort to atypical activities such as the sale of livestock, migration, borrowing and wage labor to meet their food and nonfood needs. As a result, their current food insecurity level of Stressed (IPC Phase 2) will continue until September 2018. Subsidized sales and distributions of free food, and support for developing livelihoods, from the government and partners will mitigate problems in the areas of concern. However, in the anomalous zones mentioned above, there will be households, whose numbers do not meet the 20 percent threshold requirement for reclassifying an entire area, who will resort to atypical strategies of reducing food and nonfood spending and will not be able to meet their needs without external assistance. As a result, they will find themselves in a Crisis (IPC Phase 3) situation from May to September, after which the first harvests and availability of animal products will improve food consumption and reduce recourse to negative coping strategies.

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates FEWS NET's Food Security Outlook, which is published three times per year. Learn more about our work here.