

Humanitarian food assistance improves food access in the North

KEY MESSAGES

- The agropastoral season is making average to good progress across the country, with better planting rates than in 2014. This bodes well for an average to above-average harvest provided the good rainfall levels continue through the end of September, as predicted by various seasonal forecasts (ex. NOAA, ECMWF).
- Poor households across the country whose homes and assets were destroyed by floods are having difficulty adequately meeting their food and nonfood needs during the ongoing lean season.
- The large volume of humanitarian food assistance from the government and its partners under the National Response Plan is limiting the use of negative coping strategies by agropastoral households in Gao, Bourem, Niafunké, Rharous, and Youwarou departments. Poor households currently facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) food security outcomes, due in part to food assistance, will experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity between October and December with the availability of crops from the upcoming harvest.

CURRENT SITUATION

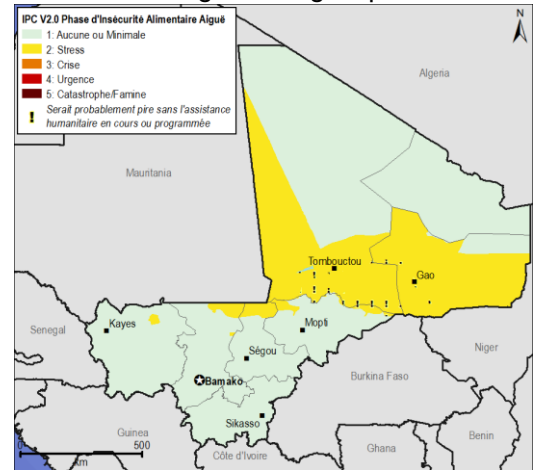
Progress of the season

In general, cumulative rainfall totals for the period from April 1st through August 20th are normal to above-normal in most farming areas of the country with the exception of the Ségou, Sikasso, and northern Koulikoro regions, where there are reports of small rainfall deficits (Figure 3). The heavy rainfall activity all across the country since the beginning of August has helped promote good crop growth and development.

The 2015 agricultural growing season is ongoing. The planting of coarse grain crops in southern farming areas is completed while, as of the middle of August, rice crops were still being planted in the Timbuktu and Gao regions. Planting rates as of the end of July were better than at the same time last season in the case of all crops with the exception of cotton, whose planting was delayed by the late start of the rains. In general, crops are doing well and plant health conditions are relatively stable.

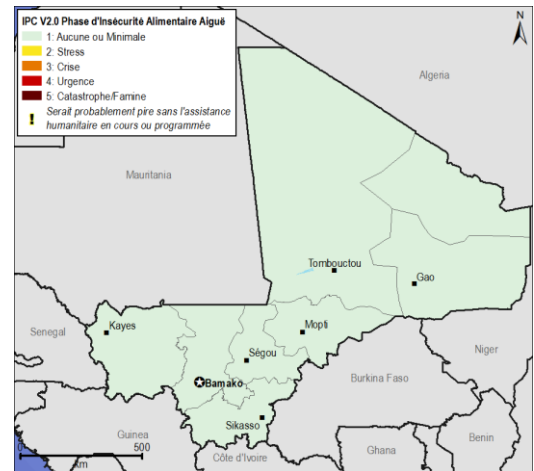
On the whole, pastures are in good condition and there are favorable animal watering conditions with the replenishment of many rainy season surface water sources. In general, livestock are in average physical condition and there are average levels of animal production. Animal health conditions are relatively stable and the vaccination campaign continues.

Figure 1. Most likely estimated food security outcomes for August through September 2015



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Most likely estimated food security outcomes for October through December 2015



Source: FEWS NET

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

Flooding

The heavy rain since the beginning of August has created flooding problems in all regions of the country. The hardest hit areas are in the Kayes (Nioro and Kita departments), Koulikoro (Kolokani department), Ségou (San, Macina, and Bla departments), Mopti (Mopti and Douentza departments), Timbuktu (Timbuktu and Rharous departments), and Gao (Gao and Ménaka departments) regions. There has reportedly been heavy damage, with losses of human lives, the destruction of homes, cereal crops losses, deaths of small ruminants, wells caving in, and the collapsing of latrines. Poor flood-stricken households are having difficulty rebuilding their assets and at the same time, adequately meeting their food needs during the ongoing lean season. In addition, highly localized crop production shortfalls are possible, which could undermine the food security of poor households directly affected by these floods during the upcoming consumption year.

Markets and prices

In general, markets are functioning well despite the occasional reports of market disruptions in northern areas of the country due to the ongoing security incidents in these areas. Market supplies are still average, even with the normal seasonal contraction in supplies during the lean season when household food stocks have been depleted. The subsidized cereal sales program operated by the OPAM (the National Produce Board) and fresh off-season rice crops from the Office du Niger irrigation district and other irrigation schemes are helping to bolster cereal supplies. As of August 20th, prices for all major staple foodstuffs on the country's main retail markets were generally stable or down from the previous month. In addition, staple food prices are at or below the five-year average in Ségou (-11 percent), Sikasso (-9 percent), Mopti (-7 percent), and Kayes (-6 percent). In FEWS NET's areas of concern, the ongoing distributions of free food have brought down the price of millet since last month. Thus, millet prices are more or less stable in Rharous and down by 33 percent in Bourem and 26 percent in Goundam.

Supplies of animals on major livestock markets are tightening with the return of livestock herds to rainy season grazing areas. Prices for female goats are up from last month by more than 22 percent in Bourem, Goundam, Niafunké, and Rharous with the improvement in pastoral conditions and contraction in supplies. These prices are also on par with the five-year average in Bourem and above the average by 33 percent in Goundam, 22 percent in Niafunké, and 21 percent in Rharous. This in turn is improving goat-to-millet terms of trade and pastoral households' market access in northern areas. More specifically, goat-to-millet terms of trade are up by 18 percent in Bourem, 22 percent in Goundam, nine percent in Niafunké, and five percent in Rharous.

Humanitarian programs

The distributions of free food assistance to poor households across the country since June 2015 as part of the National Response Plan implemented by the Food Security Commission in conjunction with the WFP and International Committee of the Red Cross are still ongoing. According to the Food Security Cluster, these operations are expected to assist 650,000 residents of the Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, and northern Mopti regions between June and September.

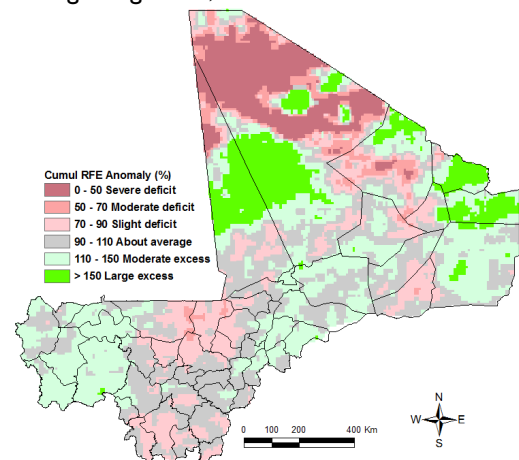
UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The current situation has not significantly affected [the projected most likely food security outlook for July through December 2015](#).

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH DECEMBER 2015

Most agropastoral households in the southern part of the country have average food access from normal sources of income such as farm and off-farm labor and the gathering of wild plant foods. Their food access should further improve with the September harvest of green crops and the main harvest beginning in October. These households are currently experiencing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity and will continue to do so through December 2015. The exception, however, are

Figure 3. Estimated cumulative rainfall anomalies (RFE) for the period April 1, 2015 through August 20, 2015



Source: USGS

flood-stricken households who have extra-large basic needs this year in order to meet their food requirements and rebuild their lost assets.

The restoration of good pastoral conditions and the physical recovery of livestock in northern pastoral areas of the country are improving milk availability and pastoral incomes, particularly with the growing demand for livestock for the celebration of Tabaski. Poor pastoral households currently facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food security conditions due to their lower incomes and livestock losses over the last few months will experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity starting in October with the availability of wild plant foods in September and improving terms of trade.

The ongoing distributions of humanitarian food and farm input assistance under the National Response Plan since June 2015 are limiting the use of negative coping strategies by very poor and poor households in agropastoral areas of Gao, Bourem, Niafunké, Rharous, and Youwarou departments whose poor 2014/15 crop production caused them to be market dependent for a longer period than usual. These assistance programs will maintain household food insecurity at Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) levels between August and September, until the availability of freshly harvested green crops puts an end to the harsh lean season. Between October and December, the main harvest, declining food prices, and in-kind wages and incomes from the harvest will help give households adequate food access, bringing down food insecurity to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR

