

Good harvests and favorable pastoral conditions ease food insecurity

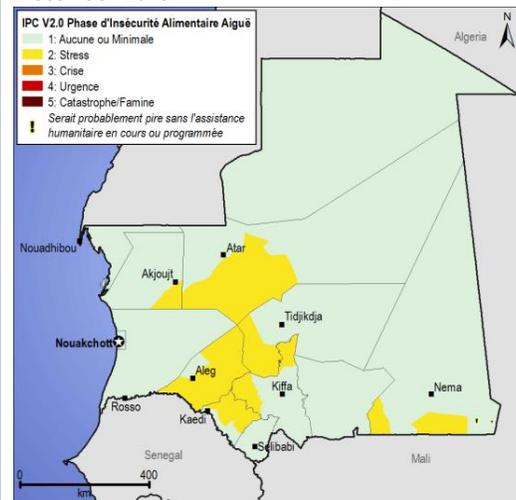
KEY MESSAGES

- Good pastures and a regular supply of surface water for livestock are improving the physical conditions of livestock and encouraging most pastoralists and agropastoralists to stay in their livelihood zones. The result is a normal seasonal pattern of internal migration. The rebound in animal birth rates is building up livestock herds and improving milk production, which remains below-average.
- The strong levels of rainfed crop production are diversifying employment opportunities and boosting household income. The combined effects of these harvests and markets supplied with large stocks of imported foodstuffs have lowered prices for locally grown cereal crops and given poor households better access to a more regular food supply. Based on these conditions, most parts of the country should continue to experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity through at least the month of March.
- In spite of the good pastoral conditions, the food security situation in the agropastoral areas of Gorgol, Inchiri, Brakna, Assaba, Tangant, and Adrar (Ouadane and Aoujeft) will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through the end of March. The gradual improvement in herd size and increase in milk production will not be sufficient for poor households already indebted from previous harsh lean seasons to cope with this year's extended lean season, which was prolonged by delays in crop maturation and whose yields have been severely affected by a major pest infestation of grain-eating birds throughout the country.
- In the center of the rainfed farming zone (Amourj and Djigueni departments), the delayed arrival of the favorable main harvest and the expected good February harvest in dam areas will improve the food security situation but will not cover repayments of debts incurred in previous poor crop years. Thus, households in these areas will continue to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) conditions through at least the month of March.

CURRENT SITUATION

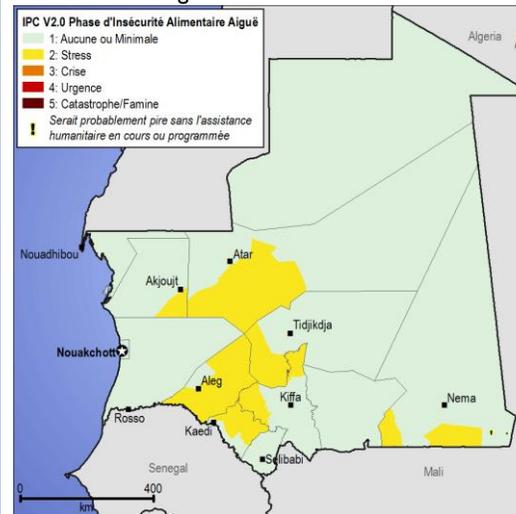
Agricultural conditions: In spite of the growing season's late start, the good rainfall levels, well-distributed over time and space, spurred the growth of rainfed crops and pasturelands as well as filling dams in *walo* (flood recession farming) areas of the Senegal River Valley. As a result, rainfed cereal production (sorghum and millet) is estimated at 9 percent above the five-year average and 64 percent above the 2014 production. Based on the favorable growing conditions for flood recession crops, production levels are expected to be well above figures for both of the above-

Most likely estimated food security outcomes for December 2015



Source: FEWS NET

Most likely estimated food security outcomes for December through March 2016



Source: FEWS NET

These maps show relevant acute food insecurity outcomes for emergency decision-making. They do not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity. Learn more [here](#).

mentioned reference periods. Although limited access to government farm loans has caused yields of irrigated “winter” rice crops to decline 26 percent below the five-year average, these areas also produce other crops helping to maintain household food security.

In general, national cereal production is expected to be 14 percent above the five-year average but 8 percent below the 2014 production levels (due to the rice production shortfall), which should maintain an adequate household cereal availability through the month of March. However, these estimates could change as a result of the severe grain-eating bird infestation. Poor households had at least average incomes from farm labor between October and December.

Pastures: Pastures in all livelihood zones are in good condition, enabling pastoralists and agropastoralists to follow normal seasonal migration patterns. Firewalls have been restored in many areas, and livestock will have sufficient pastureland through July. However, following a series of difficult years, animal birth rates and milk production levels will be below-average. The establishment of new dairy farms in certain parts of the Senegal River Valley (Brakna and Trarza) and the agropastoral zone (Hodh El Gharbi, Hodh Echarghi, and Assaba) is contributing to overgrazing problems in these areas, which are already affecting pasture conditions. However, arrangements with milk promoters for exchanges of animal feed in return for milk is alleviating the situation.

Markets and prices: Imports from cross-border markets in Mali and Senegal are bolstering the availability of locally grown cereal crops (sorghum, millet, and maize). Harvests of these crops have contributed to declines in grain prices throughout the country since November and in comparison to 2014 price levels at the same period. Thus, sorghum prices have decreased (by around 16 percent) from October, except in markets in areas highly dependent on flood recession crop production (such as the Boghé market in the Senegal River Valley, for example, which experienced a 25 percent increase). Food outlets known as “*boutiques de solidarité*” are well-stocked with imported staple foodstuffs selling at low, government-subsidized prices. All these factors contribute to poor households’ ready access to low-cost food supplies.

Livestock markets in urban areas are still well-stocked with animals. Prices, which are below 2014 figures at the same period, have been stable (the Adel Bagrou market in the rainfed farming zone) or have declined since October 2015 (most markets in other livelihood zones). Livestock sales have slowed considerably since poor households have very few animals to sell while middle-income and wealthy households, which had previously been selling livestock to buy food supplies now possess their own supply of home-grown crops.

Pest control situation: The desert locust situation is under control currently, but a threat still exists of a resurgence of locust breeding rates. According to the [FAO Desert Locust Bulletin for November](#), in spite of ongoing treatment efforts, the unusual rainfall activity in October in northern areas created ecosystems conducive to locust breeding activities. The delay in crop growth and development this year means an increased pressure from grain-eating bird pests and stalk borer infestations on late-maturing crops, crops in dam areas, and flood recession crops in all farming areas of the country, with negative effects on crop yields.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

FEWS NET’s assumptions for establishing the most likely scenario [for October 2015 through March 2016](#) have not changed.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MARCH 2016

Given the good pastoral conditions, average to above-average harvests of rainfed crops, and an average income stream (from wage labor), the food security situation of poor households has visibly improved and should steadily improve with upcoming harvests of flood recession crops, reducing the reliance of poor households on purchased food supplies and providing access to additional income from post-harvest activities. As a result, these households will continue to experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity through at least the month of March. The exceptions are poor households in a few localized areas of the agropastoral zone (in southern Tagant, northern Gorgol, Inchiri, Brakna, Assaba, and Adrar (Ouadane)) that are still having difficulty recovering from the negative impacts of previous food loans and their sharply reduced livestock herd sizes, which will keep them Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through at least the end of March. Despite improved food security conditions with the good cereal harvest, certain households in the rainfed farming zone (in Amourj and Djiguéni departments) who incurred debts over the past few difficult years will continue to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels of food insecurity.