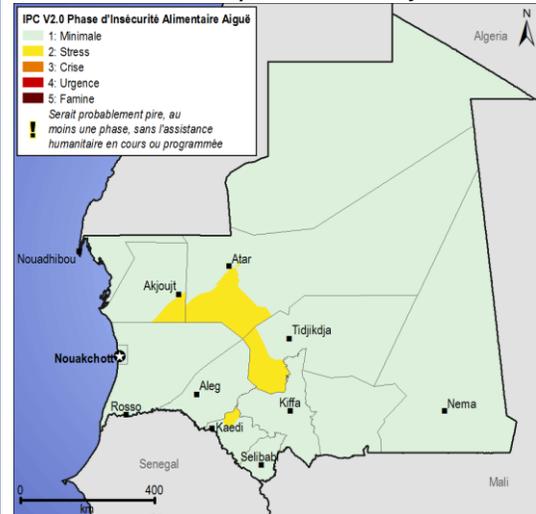


*Food security conditions across the country will likely be average in September*

**KEY MESSAGES**

- The near-average levels of annual crop production, still adequate pastoral conditions, good market supplies with relatively stable prices except for rice, favorable terms of trade driven by steadily rising livestock prices, and functioning government assistance programs will keep food insecurity in most parts of the country at Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels through at least January 2017.
- The combined effects of reduced cross-border trade in coarse grains and rice, the decline in hot off-season crop production, the repayment of debts, and the pressure on livelihoods in certain pockets of the western portion of the agropastoral zone will keep poor households in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity through September. With the shortfall in flood-recession crop production, households in southeastern Inchiri dependent on these crops are expected to remain in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity through September in spite of the gold rush.
- The steady rise in livestock prices, the price stability on retail markets, the average levels of crop production from a normal rainy season, the improvement in pastoral activities (new animal births and milk production) with the growth of new green pasture, and the average levels of income from farm labor should bring food insecurity in all parts of the country down to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels between October and January 2017.

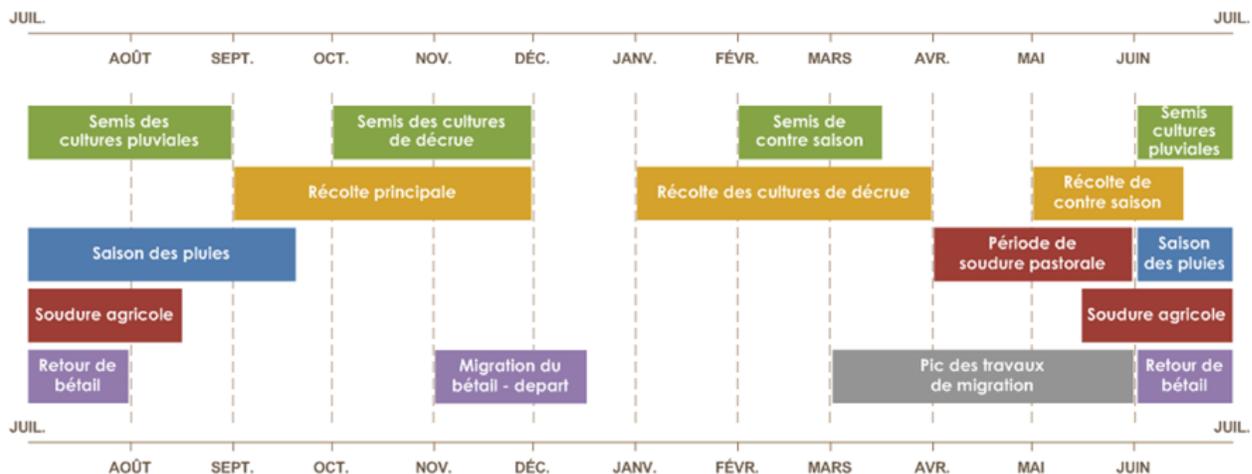
Current food security outcomes for June 2016



Source: FEWS NET

This map shows current relevant acute food insecurity outcomes for emergency decision-making. It does not reflect chronic food insecurity.

**SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR**



Source: FEWS NET

## NATIONAL OVERVIEW

### Current situation

**Farming conditions:** As projected, there were below-average harvests of flood-recession cereal crops in March. Thus, virtually all poor households dependent on these crops have no stocks of home-grown crops and are forced to resort to local markets. Discouraged by the heavy pressure from bird populations, farmers are abandoning village-level irrigation schemes and pilot irrigation projects. This has sharply reduced hot off-season irrigated rice production (between February and June/July) compared to the last two years.

In spite of the water deficit and infestations of crop pests (particularly in Tagant), farmers in oasis areas are expecting only small shortfalls in their date production

As usual, preparations for the 2016/2017 growing season have already started, mainly in irrigated farming-oriented areas where arrangements are being made to provide access to farm credit. The only land preparation work underway for rainfed crops is in the rainfed cultivation zone.

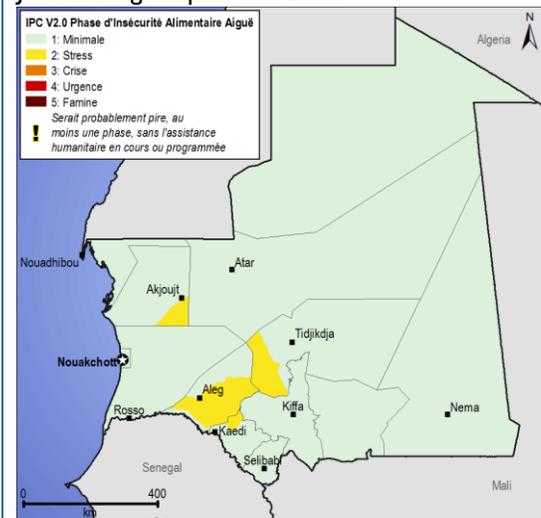
**Pastoral conditions:** Pastures are still able to meet the needs of local livestock, except in a few pockets of the agropastoral zone (Monguel and Moudjéria) and the oasis zone (Aoujeft). Apart from the normal pattern of transhumance in the transhumant pastoral zone and the northern reaches of the agropastoral zone, herd movements are geared solely to meeting animal watering needs. There are no signs of any epizootic outbreak.

**Seasonal income:** In general, there is a sharper than average decline in seasonal income. The mediocre yields of flood-recession and off-season irrigated crops have generated little demand for labor in ancillary activities. Employment opportunities in urban areas (Nouakchott, Zouerate, and Nouadhibou), the usual destinations for short-term seasonal labor migration, are sharply limited by the labor surplus, an already saturated informal sector, and a depressed mining sector (particularly iron mining activities). In fact, [according to the IMF](#), the mining sector has been impacted by falling world market prices since 2015, which have eroded international terms of trade for Mauritania and slowed the average national growth rate to approximately two percent.

**Retail markets:** Retail markets are still well-stocked with imported staple foods (wheat, rice, oil, sugar, flour, etc.), with only small fluctuations in prices since May. The increase of the value added tax (VAT) levied on imported rice has primarily affected Nouakchott, where there is an extremely high demand for rice, and northern areas of the country (Enchéri, Adrar, Tiris Zemmour, and Dakhlet Nouadhibou), which see very few re-exports of Senegalese rice. However, rice prices are reportedly rising in a number of areas. May prices for imported and local rice on the Adel Bagrou market were above the five-year average by 53 percent and 33 percent, respectively. Likewise, May prices for imported and local rice on the Magta Lahjar market were up from May 2015 by 20 and 24 percent, respectively. However, despite these higher prices due to the increase in the VAT and the lower inventories with the fire in the SONIMEX (National Import and Export Company) warehouse, there is still adequate rice availability across the country.

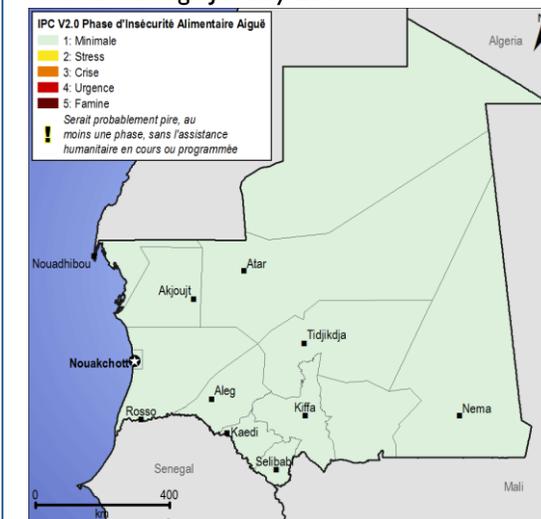
Wheat availability is also adequate. Wheat prices have increased since May only in areas where sorghum prices have been driven upwards by the shortfall in flood-recession crop production. The price of a kilogram of wheat is down from the same time in 2015 in livestock-oriented areas, where good pastoral conditions have sharply reduced demand for animal feed.

### Most likely estimated food security outcomes for June through September 2016



Source: FEWS NET

### Most likely estimated food security outcomes for October through January 2017



Source: FEWS NET

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

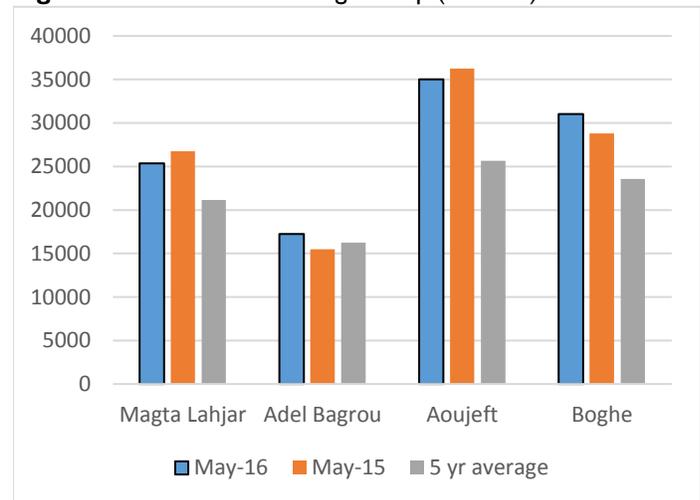
**Cross-border trade:** The increased customs surveillance operations by the Senegalese Customs Service is beginning to bring down the levels of trader inventories compared to May. Thus far, this is only affecting the southwestern part of the agropastoral zone.

Trade flows with Mali remain below-average. The limited mobility of rice vendors due to the security problems in that country has reduced the seasonal availability of Malian rice on markets in border areas of Mauritania. The flow of seasonal coarse grain trade is still well-below-average. This is more than likely due to the atypical decline in Mauritanian demand with poor households turning to wheat consumption, which is more accessible through the food loan system.

**Livestock markets:** There is still a much smaller than usual supply of livestock with pastoralists who, encouraged by the still adequate pastoral conditions, are preferring to limit their volume of sales until the upcoming holiday season, when they expect even higher prices for their animals. As a result, livestock prices are unchanged or up from April in all areas except those with large enough shortfalls in flood-recession crop production to warrant atypical sales of animals (Magta Lahjar, Aoujeft). Prices on all livestock markets are above the five-year average (**Figure 1**).

**Food security and nutritional situation:** In general, the food access of poor households is in line with average seasonal trends during the lean season. Many are resorting to limiting their food intake and modifying their eating habits (consuming wheat rather than sorghum and millet, purchasing local rice instead of imported rice, etc.) Admissions to therapeutic feeding programs for children suffering from acute malnutrition are down from 2014 and 2015 at the same time of year, and the epidemiological situation is relatively stable.

**Figure 1 : Prices for an average sheep (in MRO)**



Source: FEWS NET

There is Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity in most livelihood zones. However, concealed within this good situation are pockets (Monguel in Gorgol, Moudjéria, and western Tidjikja in Tagant) in the southern part of the agropastoral zone in Brakna and southeastern Inchiri in which shortfalls in hot off-season and flood-recession crop production, the repayment of debts accrued over the course of several difficult years, the thinning of livestock herds by large animal sales for food purchases and losses of animals due to pasture shortages, and the lack of sufficient, regular access to a safe water supply are undermining the food access of very poor households and keeping them in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity. The water deficit and shortfall in crop production in oasis areas (Aoujeft and western Tidjikja) have forced households with reduced incomes to resort to purchasing food supplies two to three months earlier than usual, which puts them in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity.

### Assumptions

The most likely nationwide food security scenario for the period from June 2016 through January 2017 is based on the following general assumptions:

#### Agro-climatic conditions

- Seasonal rainfall forecasts by NOAA, ECMWS, IRI, and UK MET suggest that there will be average to below-average levels of rainfall starting on schedule, in July, and ending, as usual, in late October, promoting normal crop growth and development and average farming and pastoral activities (**Figure 2**). This will translate into average levels of crop and livestock production between September and November.

#### Sources of food and income

- The timely availability of farm credit will enable rice growers (private commercial farming enterprises and small

farmers) to begin the growing season on schedule (June/July) and obtain yields approaching the five-year average.

- There will be a near-average date production between June and September generating near-average levels of direct (sale revenues) and indirect income (from high-demand ancillary activities for tourists).
- The effects of the slightly below-average volume of national cereal production for 2015/2016 will be felt only in a few pockets of the agropastoral zone, the oasis zone, and the Senegal River Valley during the lean season (June through September). These production shortfalls will be covered by wheat and rice imports and seasonal cross-border trade in coarse grains. This will ensure adequate nationwide food availability through January since, with the likelihood of an average rainy season, there should also be average levels of rainfed crop production.
- There will be an average stream of income from farm labor and the sale of crops.
- Based on the forecast for average levels of rainfall, there should be average pastoral conditions by the month of July. This will provide an adequate supply of pasture for grazing animals and improve seasonal birth rates, resulting in average levels of milk production, even in areas with below-average pastoral conditions during the lean season. There will be average annual pastoral incomes. However, there will not be any visible improvement in livestock herd size of poor households decimated by sales and losses of animals over the past few years until the next birthing season (between December and January), when animal sales for the purchasing of food will be sharply cut back.
- Seasonal patterns of short-term seasonal labor migration will be in line with the average, with a decline in migration income between June and January as migrant workers return home to farm their land.

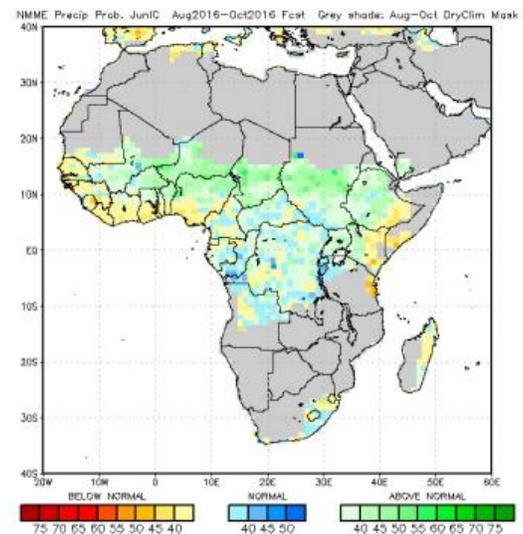
#### Markets and trade

- Though Mauritania relies on imports to meet approximately 70 percent of its food needs, retail markets across the country will continue to be well-stocked with imported foods (rice, oil, sugar, tea, wheat flour, etc.) throughout the outlook period. However, the usual speculation by traders during the month of Ramadan with high-demand foods (sorghum, millet, sugar, oil, rice, milk, tea, potatoes, and onions) could trigger a temporary rise in prices, which should reverse itself to a large extent at the end of the month (by the beginning of July), whereupon market conditions will stabilize through the end of the outlook period.
- There will be a smaller than average flow of coarse grain trade from Mali and Senegal throughout the outlook period. Even with the visible slowdown in coarse cereal trade with Mali (sorghum, maize, and millet) in May (a normal seasonal phenomenon), coarse grain prices, which are even lower than in the last two years, will remain unchanged, at levels close to the average. Adequate market supplies through January 2017 will keep normal seasonal price increases in line with average price trends.
- Rice prices have been stable for the past few months and, based on current trends in world market prices, there should not be any further rises in the price of rice between now and the end of the outlook period, except for those triggered by reductions in imports from Mali or Senegal.
- Supplies on livestock markets are currently tighter than average but should increase as of June, driven by demand for the religious holidays (Korité, Tabaski, and the New Year). There will be sharp rises in the prices of livestock between July and December, which are already above figures for the last two years and the five-year average.

#### International and regional market shocks

- [According to the IMF](#), Mauritania's economy is expected to pick up in 2016 (with a 4.1 percent growth rate) and inflation is expected to decline. However, the country will remain vulnerable to outside shocks such as higher than expected oil prices and/or a drop in the price of iron ore, a deterioration in the regional security situation, and risks associated with government measures (the shutdown or malfunctioning of government-subsidized *boutiques de solidarité*).

**Figure 2:** Rainfall forecast for August through October 2016



Source: NOAA/NMME

- The pressure on rice prices in Senegal and Mali will affect the price of this foodstuff in the Senegal River Valley, the southwestern part of the agropastoral zone, and southern Hodh Ech Chargui.
  - Imports of Senegalese rice could be limited by strengthened customs surveillance, which would limit re-exports to Mauritania, and by domestic measures (restrictions on Senegalese imports heightening Senegalese demand, etc.) This would restrict available domestic supplies in the Senegal River Valley and the southwestern reaches of the agropastoral zone (due to the low levels of flood-recession crop production) and drive up rice prices.
  - The current small volume of imported Malian rice compared to 2015 is not likely to change until the next rice harvests in the Niger River Delta area of Mali (between the end of November and the beginning of January). This will increase rice prices and, most likely, force poor households to turn to wheat, which could increase its price as well.
- The boost in Mauritanian re-exports of wheat (as a source of foreign exchange) to meet the demand in southern Morocco following the shortfall in Moroccan wheat production is likely to put pressure on northern markets and trigger an atypical rise in wheat prices between June and January.

#### *Other important factors*

- Unfortunately, there will continue to be heavy pressure from crop pests (stalk borers, birds, grasshoppers, beetles, etc.) on flood-recession and off-season rice crops in the absence of any effective national or sub-regional pest control program. The surveillance policy and control programs devised by the National Locust Control Center (CNLA) will keep the locust situation in check throughout the outlook period. However, [according to the FAO](#), swarms of desert locusts could migrate to summer breeding areas in southern Mauritania, where they will start laying eggs during the rainy season.
- With harvests of fresh crops improving food availability, there will be fewer admissions of children suffering from acute malnutrition to nutritional treatment programs compared to 2014 and 2015 at the same period. This improvement, combined with the expected normal start of the rainy season in July, bodes well for a normal to good lean season and post-harvest period. Accordingly, acute malnutrition rates are expected to approach nationwide median values for the last eight years between June and September (12.2 percent) and between October 2016 and January 2017 (6 percent).

#### *Most likely food security outcomes*

**Between June and September**, the average start of the rainy season in July will further strengthen what are still considered to be adequate pastoral conditions and boost the average seasonal incomes of poor households from farm labor. The juxtaposition of these positive factors and the stable prices for staple foods and steadily rising prices for livestock will reinforce the current food security situation, keeping food insecurity in most livelihood zones at Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels. Date consumption and income from sales and ancillary activities in oasis areas will improve the food access of poor households, gradually easing food insecurity back down to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels between June and September. The recent slowdown in trade with Senegal along with the shortfall in hot off-season crop production in Mauritania will put pressure on food prices and food availability in the southwestern part of the agropastoral zone (Monguel, Moudjéria, Boghé, Bababé, M'bagne, Aleg, Magta Lahjar, and Barkéol). Poor households in that area and in Inchiri (also affected by shortfalls in their crop production) have been hard hit by the thinning of their livestock herds after several difficult years and are still resorting to selling animals to ensure they have enough to eat. These households will be in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity through September.

**Between October and January 2017**, the expected average harvests of rainfed (October/November), late-season (December/January), and irrigated (September/October) crops will strengthen cereal availability and supplies on markets already well-stocked with imported foodstuffs. The expected effects of the good pastoral conditions (rise in current prices, improvement in milk production) and the average income levels generated by flood-recession farming activities (October/November) will extend the Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels of food insecurity in most livelihood zones to all parts of the country.

## AREA OF CONCERN

### Southwestern agropastoral zone (central and southern Monguel department in Gorgol) – Livelihood zone MR07

The western part of the agropastoral zone is inhabited both by livestock-oriented and farming-oriented agropastoral households. The former have more livestock than the latter, which are concentrated mainly in the central and southern reaches of Monguel department in Gorgol. The livelihood zone has a population of 29,209 farming-oriented agropastoralists (in the municipalities of Batha Moit, Melzem Teichett, and Azgueilem), of which 60 percent (around 17,525 people) are members of very poor or poor households with difficulty bridging their production deficits with food purchases.

#### *Current situation*

**Farming conditions:** This area has seen erratic rainfall activity and rainfall deficits for the third consecutive year, which have severely affected farming and pastoral activities and income-generation from these activities by poor households. The harvests of flood-recession crops which, on average, take place in February/March were delayed until March/April (by the lag in the recession of floodwaters) and met the food needs of poor households for a mere one to two months instead of the average three-to-four-month coverage period. Thus, these households currently have no food stocks and have been resorting to purchasing food supplies since May/June.

**Pastoral conditions:** Pastoral conditions are clearly degraded in localized areas, but are still satisfactory in neighboring pastoral areas and, thus, able to sustain transhumant herds on the move since March. There are still well below-average levels of seasonal milk production given that birth rates, though improved, are still low compared to the average. In addition, the losses of animals in 2015 and atypical sales have sharply reduced herd size (by 50 to 60 percent compared to livestock numbers for 2013). The distribution of small ruminants (three per households) by the FAO in this area helped to restart certain typical coping strategies (food loans), as a credible source of repayment.

**Seasonal income:** In the absence of an effective bird pest control program and with the large operating expenses associated with off-season farming activities, many farmers decided against growing hot off-season crops (between February and June/July). As a result, income from farm labor in irrigated rice-growing schemes is down sharply, while, on average, poor households in this area earn most of their seasonal income precisely between February and May. Income from short-term seasonal labor migration is negligible due to the surplus of job seekers (mostly in the trade and informal sectors).

**Debt:** Many households are using a portion of their output to pay off part of their debts accrued over the last several years as a result of their repeated production deficits. Many still have outstanding debts equivalent to three to four months' worth of food consumption (between 150,000 and 200,000 MRO), which may be near normal, but could prevent these households from gaining access to new lines of food credit after the poor harvest of flood-recession crops.

**Markets and prices:** Markets are well-stocked with commercial imports (by private traders), government imports (by SONIMEX), and cross-border imports of staple foodstuffs (from Mali, Senegal, and the Western Sahel), but coarse grain supplies are still low in spite of recent harvests (due to the inadequate crop production in other areas to sustain domestic trade flows). Rice prices are rising as a result of government-ordered increases in the VAT and the decline in hot off-season crop production.

**Livestock markets:** Unlike in an average year, livestock markets are well-stocked with animals from atypical sales by middle-income and better-off households looking to stock up on food supplies with the shortfall in flood-recession crop production.

**Food consumption and food security levels:** Poor households are ensuring they have enough to eat by switching from sorghum to wheat, resorting to food loans, and continuing to sell livestock. They are also reducing their food intake. There is very little dietary diversity, with meals limited mostly to cereals (mainly wheat). This has been the case since February, with a short break in March and April with the small harvests of flood-recession crops while, on average, these strategies normally happen only between May and August. Thus, these households are in the Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity.

#### *Assumptions*

The most likely local food security scenario for the period from June 2016 through January 2017 is based on the following general assumptions in addition to the assumptions with respect to trends in nationwide conditions:

- **Crop production:** There will be near-average levels of “winter” crop production in September/October with the rainy

season (July through September) sharply reducing water access problems and pressure from bird populations, providing these pests with a supply of nature-based foods. At the very least, rainfed (*diéri*) crops (between September and January) and market garden crops (between October and January) should be average.

- **Livestock production:** The smaller size of livestock herds will translate into below-average levels of milk production throughout the outlook period. The improvement in milk production between July and September with the restoration of average pastoral conditions (and the accompanying new animal births) could help stabilize current conditions in pastoral areas.
- **Income:** With the limited income from farm labor in flood-recession farming activities, poor households have already depleted their food supplies from food loans and will be forced to repeat the same strategy (food loans against farm labor between October and November). In line with normal seasonal trends, there will be little income from work in livestock-raising activities with the availability of pasture limiting the need for pastoral labor.
- **Markets and prices:** Coarse grain supplies (sorghum and maize) will continue to tighten through the month of September. Resulting rises in prices will be in line with the average. A smaller than average flow of cross-border rice trade with Senegal will continue, with customs surveillance measures limiting trafficking activities. There will be good supplies on livestock markets through October with the demand for animals for the religious holidays.
- **Debt:** A large part of expected rainfed crop yields and scheduled assistance will be used to pay off debts ranging from 100,000 to 150,000 MRO (two to three months' worth of debt). The expected average levels of production should reduce the level of debt between September and January 2017.

### ***Most likely food security outcomes***

**Between June and September**, poor households will face a less severe lean season than in the last two years, though still harsher than average. They will be contending with food consumption gaps, accentuated by poor dietary diversity and more limited than usual water access. As a result, they will continue to sell animals in order to purchase food supplies. The continued long-term pressure on livestock since 2014 has contributed to current livelihood protection deficits, which will not be bridged by the current or upcoming new animal births (in August/September) and which are putting poor households in the Stressed (IPC Phase 2) phase of food insecurity.

**Between October and January 2017**, poor households will benefit from average harvests of rainfed crops (between October and November) and a stream of income from farm labor in harvesting and ancillary activities for *diéri* crops and land preparation work for flood-recession crops (in lowland, dam, and walo areas). This will keep their food consumption in line with the average. By the beginning of September, they will be able to consume green crops (maize, sorghum, cowpeas, sorrel leaves, okra, etc.), which will bring their food security situation in line with the norm. Thus, the entire area will experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity. Households will require several more years to build their livestock herds back up to pre-2014 levels. In the interim, they will scale up their farming activities (crops, wild plant products) and look for sources of income to ensure the recovery of their livestock herds.

## EVENTS THAT COULD CHANGE THE OUTLOOK

**Table 1:** Possible events in the next eight months that could change the outlook

Area	Event	Impacts on food security conditions
International	Sharp rises in the price of rice and wheat	Insufficient, erratic imports of staple foodstuffs; surges in prices, primarily affecting poor households
National	Long-term disruption in cross-border trade and food imports	Higher prices for coarse grains and imported foodstuffs; erosion in the food access of poor households
National	Sharp depreciation in the value of the local currency	Slowdown in cross-border trade and tightening of market supplies; government assistance programs for poor households
National	Joint bird control program with neighboring countries (Senegal and Mali)	Appreciable reduction in bird infestations of crops (and production losses) and pastures; visible improvement in household cereal availability
National	Poor temporal distribution of rainfall	Limited farming and pastoral activities and reduction in income from these activities; less production by poor households
Monguel	New assistance programs in this area	Improvement in the food security of poor households; solidification of livelihood recovery efforts
Hodh Ech Chargui (rainfed cultivation zone)	Continued slowdown in cereal imports from Mali	Rises in food prices; steady rise in the price of rice; limited food access for poor households with already lower than average seasonal incomes (from migration); escalation in the food insecurity of poor households to the Stressed (IPC Phase 2) phase between July and September
Inchiri	New form of savings with the lifting of restrictions on small-scale gold mining activities	Emergence of new types of sources of income; change in livelihoods; improvement in the food security of poor households, which could experience Minimal food insecurity before September 2016

### ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

To project food security outcomes over an eight-month period, FEWS NET develops a set of basic 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 develop scenarios predicting food security outcomes. Typically, FEWS NET bases its projections on the most likely scenario. Learn more [here](#).