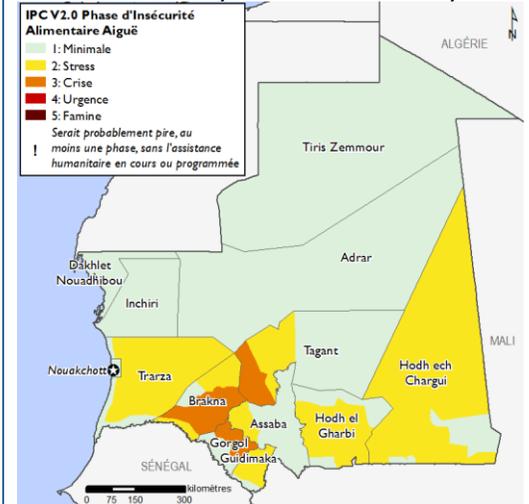


**KEY MESSAGES**

- Despite regular, adequate supplies of imported foods (wheat, rice, sugar, flour, oil, milk, etc.) on retail markets and the pick-up in coarse cereal imports (sorghum, millet, and maize) from Mali, poor households in areas of concern (the western agropastoral zone and central portions of the Senegal River Valley) are already cutting their food intake (by 25 to 50 percent) and some are skipping meals. Approximately 667,345 people in these areas may already be in a Crisis (IPC Phase 3) situation, with very poor households more than likely in an Emergency (IPC Phase 4) situation.
- Poor households in most rural areas have 70 to 80 percent lower than average seasonal incomes due to their lack of income from farm labor and wild plant products, the steady decline in migration income, and the falling prices of livestock due to the poor pastoral conditions.
- The Stressed (IPC Phase 2) conditions in the central and eastern parts of the agropastoral zone and in the rainfed farming zone are steadily spreading, spurred by the combined effects of the below-average levels of crop production and the livelihood protection deficits engendered by the atypical seasonal sales of livestock. In fact, the deterioration in pastoral conditions and saturation of livestock markets with animals from transhumant pastoral households have driven down livestock prices.
- The lack of crops in *walo* areas and the failure of flood recession crops in the agropastoral zone have added to the shortfall in crop production. The lean season, which does not normally begin until May, is already underway in the western part of the agropastoral zone and central reaches of the Senegal River Valley and could start by as early as March in the rainfed farming zone.

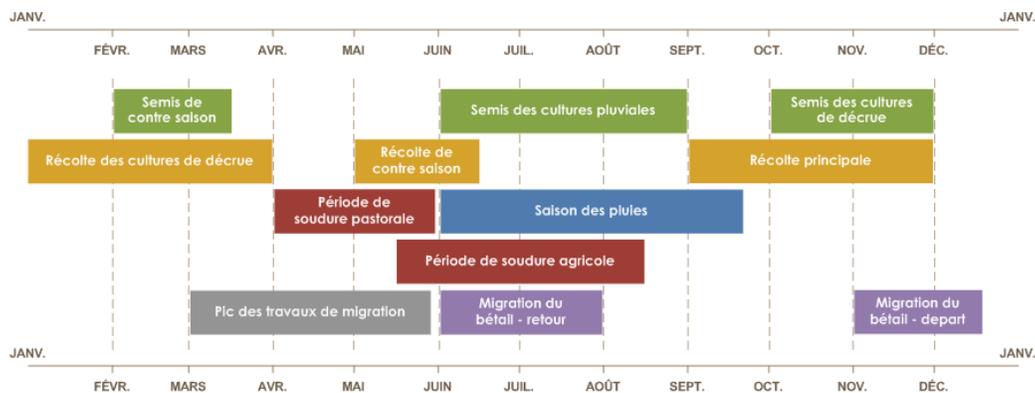
Current food security outcomes for February 2018



Source: FEWS NET

The classification system used by FEWS NET is [IPC-compliant](#). An [IPC-compliant](#) analysis follows major IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus reached by national partners with respect to the food security situation.

**SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR**



Source: FEWS NET

## NATIONAL OVERVIEW

### Current situation

**Pastoral conditions:** Pastoral conditions in the western part of the country are severely degraded. In spite of the earlier than usual mass migration by livestock herds (in November/December), there are virtually no suitable pastures anywhere in Trarza, Brakna, Gorgol, Tagant, Adrar, or Inchiri. Sedentary pastoralists have been resorting to purchasing animal feed for the past several months. There is an ongoing government assistance program for pastoralists selling animal feed at subsidized prices (50 percent below formal market prices). Most of the nation's livestock population is currently concentrated in areas along the Malian border between southern Guidimakha and southern Hodh El Chargui. Many pastoralists having anticipated the pastoral crisis are already in Mali and Senegal. At present, there are no reports of any epizootic diseases.

**Agro-climatic conditions:** Despite the sharp drop in temperatures, there are still no signs of any cold season rains capable of improving pastoral conditions or reviving flood recession crops affected by the mediocre levels of seasonal water balances. All parts of the country have been reporting stronger and cooler than average winds since January

**Farming conditions:** Farmers in flood recession farming areas in the western reaches of the agropastoral zone are in the process of harvesting crops (maize and sorghum) parched by the low level of the groundwater table. The small areas planted in crops are currently being harvested. This crop production should meet consumption needs for 15 to 20 days at most, compared with an average coverage period of two to three months. The only crops liable to fully mature and produce near-average yields are in the northern and central reaches of the rainfed farming zone (late season crops in dam and bottomland areas). Poor households in these areas are expecting yields from these crops to last 30 to 40 days compared with their average duration of 60 to 75 days.

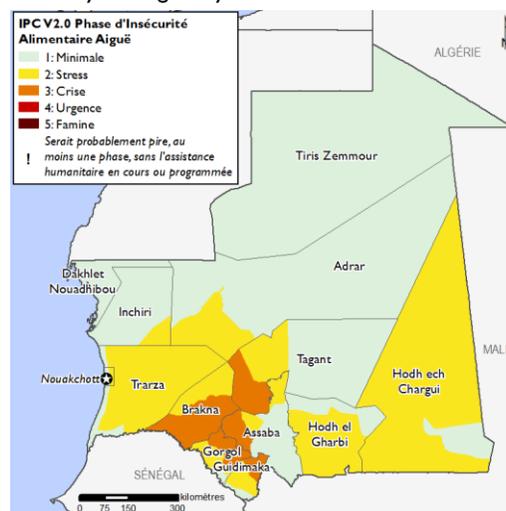
There are no signs of any flood recession crops in *walo* areas in the central part of the river valley. The narrow depressions holding surface runoff draining into various distributaries are already running dry.

Rice farmers in the western part of this area (Trarza) and a few localized areas of Brakna have been busy growing cold off-season crops since January since, given the current low level of the river (at less than three meters, compared with the average of four meters), they do not expect to be able to grow any hot off-season crops. However, with the only large cropped areas concentrated in the western part of the valley, their impact on central areas of the valley will be too limited to have any positive effect on income and food availability during the outlook period.

**Harvests of wild plant products:** With the poor rainfall conditions severely affecting output from trees, poor households have virtually no income from this source (which is generally around 20,000 MRU/year). Sales of straw in the western part of the country are limited to the sale of rice straw. Sales of wood and charcoal are severely limited by the competition from portable gas tanks and the surveillance activities of agents with the Environmental Protection Service.

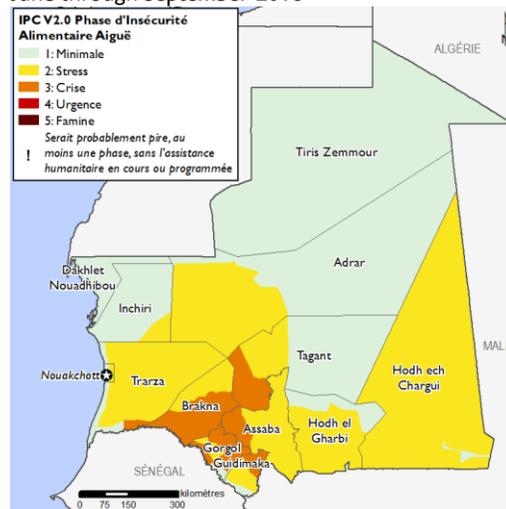
**Locust situation:** According to the latest bulletin by the National Locust Control Center (CNLA) issued in January 2018, the locust situation is stable.

Most likely estimated food security outcomes for February through May 2018



Source: FEWS NET

Most likely estimated food security outcomes for June through September 2018



Source: FEWS NET

The classification system used by FEWS NET is [IPC-compliant](#). An [IPC-compliant](#) analysis follows major IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus reached by national partners with respect to the food security situation.

**Seasonal income:** The focus groups conducted as part of the January mission revealed that poor households have 70 to 85 percent smaller than average incomes. This is attributable to the decline in income from farm labor, as well as to the modest earnings from short-term seasonal labor migration and the sharp drop in livestock prices. The cash transfer programs (providing approximately 2,200 MRU) mounted in certain villages in the western reaches of the agropastoral zone, the Senegal River Valley, and the rainfed farming zone by certain NGOs (OXFAM, Save the Children, ACF) with ECHO and USAID funding ended in December, where there has been a revival of the system of food lending against future income.

**Cross-border trade:** There is a steady, large flow of coarse cereal imports (sorghum, maize, and millet) from Malian to most border markets in Hodh ech Chargui and Hodh el Gharbi, Assaba, and Guidimakha. On the other hand, there are limited shipments of cereals between relay markets in border areas and markets in the interior (in the southern reaches of the agropastoral zone and the Senegal River Valley). As a result, markets in the interior are continuing to report low supplies of coarse cereals. In addition to this food trade, there are also shipments of animal feed to border markets and Nouakchott. Imports of Senegalese rice, though picking up, remain limited. A 50 kg bag of rice from Senegal sales for around 900 MRU compared with the selling price of 1,100 MRU for locally grown rice. There is less and less consumption of imported rice in interior areas of the country.

**Retail markets:** Retail markets and government-subsidized “EMEL” shops (*boutiques de solidarité*) are adequately stocked with regular supplies of imported staple foods (wheat, rice, oil, sugar, flour, etc.) The steady, large flow of imported crops (millet, maize, sorghum, cowpeas, and peanuts) and animal feed from Mali is improving their availability on markets in the rainfed farming zone, the central, southern, and western reaches of the agropastoral zone, and even in Nouakchott.

The large shortfall in production is driving up sorghum prices in all parts of the country. The steepest price increases are reported on markets in high-consumption areas, particularly in the agropastoral zone (on the Magta Lahjar market), the Senegal River Valley (on the Boghé market), and in the rainfed farming zone (on the Adel Bagrou market). Prices on the Magta Lahjar market are up from last year by 100 percent and 117.4 percent above the five-year average. Prices in Boghé are up by 13.3 percent and 34.3 percent above-average. Prices on the third market, which is a weekly market supplied with Malian imports, are up by 8.85 percent from last year and 14.48 percent above the five-year average.

Movements in the price of wheat, the main substitute cereal, are in line with trends in sorghum prices, with the Boghé market in the central part of the Senegal River Valley reporting the largest jump in prices from the same time in 2017 (namely, 26 percent). Naturally, prices for local varieties of rice, the second most important substitute cereal, are following this same trend, with steep rises in prices reported in all areas (ranging from 3.7 percent in Magta Lahjar to 7.59 percent in Adel Bagrou, to 15.5 percent in the central part of the river valley, which is actually a rice-producing area).

**Livestock markets:** Supplies on livestock markets in the western reaches of the agropastoral zone and the Senegal River Valley fluctuate and are highly contingent on food purchasing needs and the presence of Senegalese traders. Thus, while markets in the interior are virtually empty most of the time, the Boghé and Kaédi markets getting supplies of cattle and sheep from the agropastoral zone can be glutted one week and empty the next, which is keeping livestock prices up, with intermittent very sharp weekly drops in prices. Markets in these cities are getting increasingly large supplies of cattle and sheep, both of which are at high risk from current shortages of pasture and whose current prices are a harbinger of distress sales of growing numbers of animals as the hot season continues to settle in. However, the steadiest decline in prices is in rural areas supplying animals to markets in regional capitals. The focus groups conducted in these areas showed prices down by more than 30 percent from the same time in 2017 in many cases. Prices tend to be more stable farther east, where pastoral conditions are somewhat better and, after the last sales in preparation for the departure of transhumant livestock or to clear herds of any vulnerable animals, sales have slowed and market supplies have stabilized.

**Food security and nutrition:** In the absence of a more recent SMART survey, we are relying on data from the SMART survey published back in August, according to which malnutrition levels in Hodh ech Chargui, Hodh el Gharbi, Assaba, Brakna, Gorgol, and Guidimakha are at the emergency threshold, where GAM rates are over 15 percent, and malnutrition rates in Tagant Trarza are at warning levels, or between 10 and 15 percent. The poor performance of different types of crops, the sharp decline in seasonal income limiting access to commercially sold foodstuffs, and the lack of a good supply of milk due to the poor conditions in pastoral areas suggests that this will continue to be the case, particularly with the different focus groups showing poor households already forced to cut the size of their meals (by 25 to 50 percent, depending on the area) and, in some cases, even skip meals (breakfast and dinner).

### Assumptions

The most likely nationwide food security scenario for the period from February through September 2018 is based on the following general assumptions:

- Climatic conditions:** In spite of the two consecutive poor rainy seasons marked by rainfall deficits, the next rainy season is expected to get off to a normal start compared with the historical average, by the end of June or the beginning of July, and produce average levels of rainfall well distributed in both time and space.
- Agro-climatic conditions:** The logical inference from the previous assumption that there will be suitable physical conditions for growing crops under all types of farming systems. Farming schedules for rainfed crops (in all farming systems), as well as for flood recession and irrigated crops will be in line with average crop calendars. With the river starting to rise by July, there is a high likelihood of the successful planting of crops in irrigated rice-growing areas and the flooding of *walo* areas in the Senegal River Valley.
- Crop production:** There will be an average to above-average volume of production of all types of rainfed crops (cereals and pulses). In the absence of any seed reserves outside of the rainfed farming zone, most farmers will use cereals purchased on local markets as seeds, just as they have done in the past. On the other hand, there will more than likely be a sharp decline in crop production in oasis areas (vegetable production between January and March) and in date production (between June and August) due to this year's large rainfall deficit. The nonpayment of outstanding debts leaving many farmers (individual farmers and village-level rice-growing schemes) without access to farm credit is also expected to put the size of the area planted in rice well below the five-year average.
- Commercial imports:** As usual, there will be a regular, adequate supply of imported rice, wheat, oil, sugar, etc. throughout the outlook period. There will more than likely be a sharp increase in imports of wheat for human consumption and for use as animal feed between February and August. Coarse cereal exports by Mali are expected to slow beginning in March and, as usual, pick up again in June, once Malian farmers are reassured by the progress of the rainy season in that country.
- International and regional market drivers:** With very little likelihood of a malfunction in trade networks for food exports, there should not be a shortage of domestic food supplies during the outlook period.
- Market prices:** The large shortfall in national cereal production and the country's dependence on foreign (Malian and Senegalese) markets will trigger a much sharper than average seasonal rise in coarse cereal prices throughout the outlook period. Likewise, the high demand for wheat will drive up its price, particularly in areas where it is considered the main substitute cereal (the central and eastern reaches of the agropastoral zone, the eastern and central reaches of the rainfed farming zone, and the oasis zone). In the absence of a sharp decline in the usual levels of local rice and food paste production, there should not be an abnormally high demand for wheat in other parts the country.
- Government-subsidized « EMEL » shops:** Both the numbers and the capacity of these shops have been scaled up. In addition to the sale of food for human consumption, they are now also selling animal feed at prices 50 percent below formal market prices. These shops are expected to continue to do business as usual at prices consistently below formal market prices throughout the outlook period.
- Livestock prices:** Reversing the normal seasonal upward trend in livestock prices between October and January, the current downward movement in livestock prices in rural areas is only going to accelerate. The distress sales of animals

Figure 1. NMME forecast for June through August 2018

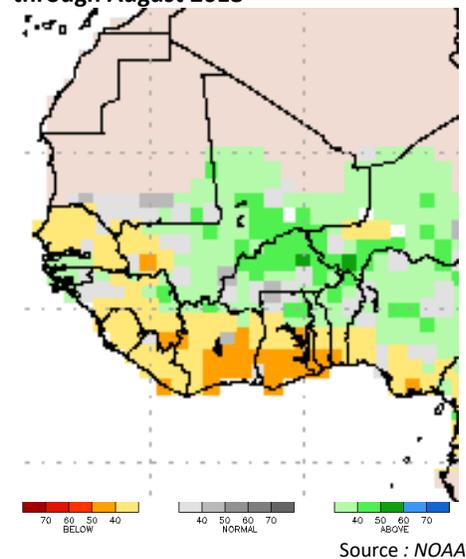
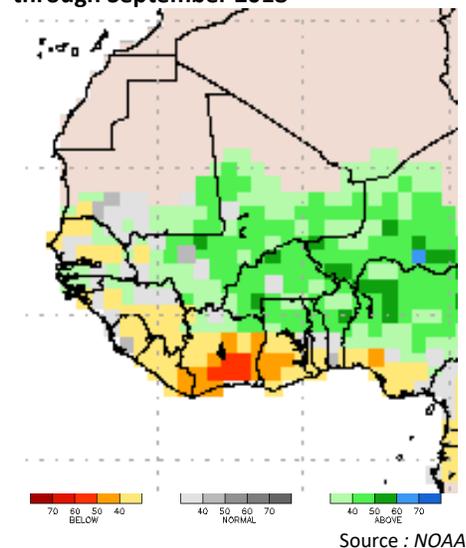


Figure 2. NMME forecast for July through September 2018



already reported in transhumant pastoral, pastoral, and trading areas of Trarza could spread to other pastoral areas severely affected by the shortage and poor condition of pastures.

- **Farm labor:** Based on the forecast for a normal, average rainy season, there should be normal levels of seasonal income from farm labor between June and September.
- **Wild plant products:** There will be average levels of wild plant production in all parts of the country.
- **Pastoral conditions:** The normal, timely start of the rains and average rainy season conditions will produce normal levels of new pasture growth meeting the needs of grazing animals for the entire outlook period.
- **Short-term seasonal labor migration and migration income:** With the earlier than usual start-up of short-term seasonal labor migration, there will be a smaller than average flow of migration between February and June. The already extremely limited flow of migrant remittances will continue to slow throughout the outlook period.

### Most likely food security outcomes

**February through May 2018:** Poor households in the western reaches of the agropastoral zone (in Aleg, Magta Lahjar, Moudjéria, Barkéol, Ould Yengé, M'Bout, Monguel, Kaédi, M'Bagne, Bababé, and Boghé departments) have been dealing with crop production deficits for three if not four consecutive years. The livelihood protection deficits created by their repeated sales of animals as a source of income for the purchasing of food supplies will keep these households in their current state of Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Poor households in the central part of the agropastoral zone and the rainfed farming zone could be facing food consumption gaps (with only the southern part of this area expected to generate average levels of cereal production), which will put them in the Stressed (IPC Phase 2) phase of food insecurity through the month of May.

**June through September 2018:** The end of the lean season in pastoral areas in July will improve milk production, though it is expected to stay below-average due to the low breeding rates of livestock herds. By July, poor households will also have a supply of wild leaves to bolster their food consumption. The combined effects of these food supplies and of sufficient income from farm labor to improve their access to commercially marketed foodstuffs will, at the very least, stabilize their situation. However, any de-escalation of the current Crisis (IPC Phase 3) will likely be a slow process, since the weight of its lasting effects (excessively high levels of indebtedness, losses of livelihoods, changes in eating habits) is apparently such that it would require a string of several years of good pastoral conditions and average levels of crop production.

## AREAS OF CONCERN

### WESTERN REACHES OF THE AGROPASTORAL ZONE (Livelihood zone 7)

This area encompasses a large portion of the western reaches of the agropastoral zone (MR 5), including Moudjéria department in Tagant, Monguel and M'Bout departments in Gorgol, all of Magta Lahjar department, southern Aleg, the northern part of Boghé, Bababé, and M'Bagne departments in Brakna, Barkéol department in western Assaba, and Ould Yengé department in northern Guidimakha. Poor households in Moudjéria, Monguel, and Magta Lahjar departments and the western portion of M'Bout department are facing shortfalls in crop and pasture production and their household income for the fifth consecutive year.

#### Current situation

Since 2012, most of this area has been affected by severe shortfalls in crop and pasture production requiring permanent recourse to commercially marketed food supplies. Nevertheless, retail markets as well as government-subsidized "EMEL" shops (*boutiques de solidarité*) are well-stocked with food products. To help compensate for the sharp reduction in their income from wage labor and short-term seasonal labor migration, households in this area have been repeatedly selling livestock, which has ended up creating livelihood protection deficits, straining this livelihood to its limit. Despite their growing recourse to much cheaper substitute foods readily available on local

Figure 3. Map of livelihood zone 7



Source: FEWS NET

markets (wheat, local varieties of rice, and food pastes), many poor households are also dealing with food consumption gaps, which they are attempting to contain by cutting the size of their meals (by 25 to 50 percent) and, in some cases, by skipping certain meals (breakfast and dinner). Livestock markets in rural areas are virtually empty with the departure of transhumant herds and the limited sales capacity of poor households (many of which are left with a mere two or three animals, compared with their herds of twenty or so animals prior to 2014). In the absence of a more recent SMART survey, we are relying on data from the notional survey conducted in August 2017, whose findings published in September put GAM rates at between 13.9 percent (in Magta Lahjar) and 21.5 percent (in Ould Yengé). Based on the outcome of the growing season, the current situation in pastoral areas, and the sharp decline in the incomes of poor households, these rates have more than likely not come down that much.

### *Assumptions*

The most likely food security scenario for the period from February through September 2018 in livelihood zone 7 is based on the following general assumptions:

- **Temperatures:** Though very low right now, as usual, temperatures will begin to rise by the end of February and continue to climb throughout the entire outlook period, heightening the demand for water.
- **Crop production:** Based on the expected normal start of the rainy season, producing average to above-average levels of well-distributed rainfall, there should be favorable farming conditions for average levels of rainfed crop production, as well as good water levels in dam and bottomland areas, and optimal flooding levels in *walo* (flood recession farming) areas. However, the ineligibility of farmers for farm loans due to their failure to repay previous debts is expected to put the size of the area planted in irrigated rainy season crops below the five-year average.
- **Hot off-season crops:** The success of these crops will be seriously threatened by the low level of the Senegal River.
- **Retail markets:** Retail markets will be well-stocked with supplies throughout the entire outlook period. There will be a steady climb in cereal prices (prices for rice, wheat, and sorghum) between February and September.
- **Livestock prices:** Sales of livestock will steadily drive down prices through the month of March. However, prices should stabilize between April and June with the rapid tightening of supplies. As usual, they will rebound between July and September with the improvement in pastoral conditions.
- **GAM levels:** The small food supplies from crop and animal production brought the already high levels of global acute malnutrition during the last lean season down only slightly between October and January. GAM rates will bounce back up between February and July, fueled by the food consumption gaps already reported in this area and which are not likely to be filled anytime during the outlook period in the absence of a humanitarian assistance program capable of reversing this trend.

### *Most likely food security outcomes*

**February through May 2018:** Households in this area are generally resorting to eating wheat, locally varieties of rice, and food pastes in place of sorghum, which has gotten too expensive (sorghum prices currently range from 30 to 40 MRU/kg, compared with 20 to 30 MRU/kg in 2017). However, even with this change in eating habits, poor households are still skipping breakfast and cutting the size of their meals (by 33 to 50 percent of their average food intake).

The livelihood protection deficit created by the repeated sales of animals as a source of income for the purchasing of food supplies will steadily widen. In fact, with the sharp reduction in their income from farm labor and short-term seasonal labor migration, the only recourse for poor households is to continue to sell animals and borrow food supplies. The size of their debts (around 18,000 MRU representing at least three months' worth of food loans) is increasingly limiting their recourse to these types of loans, which are no longer secured since the closedown of cash transfer programs

The juxtaposition of these two factors will put poor households in a Crisis (IPC Phase 3) situation.

**June through September 2018:** Income from farm labor, the improvement in milk production (which will still be limited due to the low rates of breeding by animals weakened by malnutrition), and the consumption of leaves and green crops (between August and September) are all factors liable to help stabilize conditions. Poor households will not have normal levels of food intake until after the harvest in October/November, which will keep them in a state of Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

**[For more information on this analysis, consult the Scenario Summary Table for this area of concern.](#)**

### Central reaches of the Senegal River Valley (livelihood zone 8)

The central part of the Senegal River Valley (livelihood zone 8) encompasses Tékane district (in the southeastern reaches of R'Kiz department in Trarza and the southern part of Boghé, Bababé, M'Bagne, and Kaédi departments).

The main activity for local households is the growing of crops in *walo* areas (following the flooding of these areas by the river beginning in July and the recession of the floodwaters (in October/November) and in irrigated rice-farming schemes also using water from the river. Poor households account for approximately 60 percent of the population of this area.

#### Assumptions

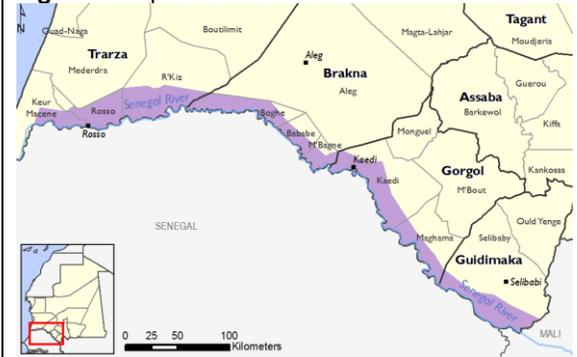
The most likely food security scenario for the period from February through September 2018 in livelihood zone 8 is based on the following general assumptions:

- **Temperatures:** Though very low right now, as usual, temperatures will begin to rise by the end of February and continue to climb throughout the entire outlook period.
- **Crop production:** The ineligibility of farmers for farm loans due their failure to repay previous debts is expected to put the size of the area planted in irrigated rainy season crops below the five-year average. The average to optimal flooding levels in *walo* areas could revive the system of food loans secured by future harvests (with more and more of these transactions secured by cowpea production, which is less vulnerable to crop predators), but their real impact (on farm income and food consumption) will not be felt until after the end of the outlook period (between October and March).
- **Hot off-season crops:** The success of these crops will be seriously threatened by the low level of the Senegal River.
- **Retail markets:** Retail markets will be well-stocked with supplies throughout the entire outlook period. There will be a steady climb in cereal prices (prices for rice, wheat, and sorghum) between February and September. Markets close to the river will continue to be supplied with clandestine shipments of rice.
- **Livestock prices:** The already low prices of livestock will continue to fall between now and September since, unlike the case in the agropastoral zone, farm labor opportunities in this area are basically dictated by the demand for labor in irrigated rice-farming schemes. Rainfed farming activities are increasingly geared to growing watermelons using mainly family labor. Rises in livestock prices are highly correlated with the timing and type of crop production, with no harvests scheduled in this area until after the end of the current outlook period.
- **GAM levels:** The small food supplies from crop and animal production brought the already high levels of global acute malnutrition during the last lean season down only slightly between October and January. GAM rates will bounce back up between February and July, fueled by the food consumption gaps already reported in this area and which are not likely to be filled anytime during the outlook period with poor households unlikely to produce any hot off-season crops and with the outlook for the growing season for rainfed crops still marred by the increasingly dubious access of farmers to farm credit. There are also no signs of any humanitarian assistance programs for this area.

#### Most likely food security outcomes

**February through May 2018:** The lack of flood recession crops, which generally account for 40 to 60 percent of cereal consumption by poor households (depending on the area), will force these households to continue to resort to purchasing and borrowing food supplies. In spite of their recourse to wheat, which is less expensive than sorghum, they are already being forced to cut their food intake by 30 to 50 percent and even to skip meals (households in most of the locations visited are eating only two meals a day and certain households are reportedly cooking only a single evening meal and keeping part of it for the children to eat the next day). Livelihood protection deficits will continue to widen. The sale of livelihood assets (the selling of donkeys after depleting their livestock herds) is a rather telling indicator of the depletion of the small animal herds of certain very poor and poor households. These factors will put very poor and poor households in a Crisis (IPC Phase 3) situation

Figure 4. Map of livelihood zone 8



Source: FEWS NET

**June through September 2018:** The few collective irrigation schemes which have recently started up (accounting for barely a fifth of existing irrigation schemes) will not have a large enough impact to reverse trends in food security in this area. The food consumption gaps created by the lack of a harvest in *walo* areas (in February/March) and of cold off-season crops (in January/February) will not be filled. Thus, these gaps will continue to widen over the course of the outlook period.

Many poor households with no animals left to sell and unable to engage in farming activities will turn to short-term seasonal labor migration, which practice is generally limited to the period between August and October. These livelihood protection deficits and ongoing shifts in occupational status (with many farmers in *walo* areas discouraged by the repeated failure of these crops increasingly abandoning these farming activities and choosing to permanently settle in peri-urban areas) are depopulating farming areas. Very poor and poor households will remain in a Crisis (IPC Phase 3) situation.

[For more information on this analysis, consult the Scenario Summary Table for this area of concern.](#)

## 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	Deregulation of international wheat markets	The rising price of wheat will mainly affect poor households unable to compete with pastoralists buying wheat supplies as feed for their livestock.
National	Suspension or sharp reduction in cross-border trade with Mali	There will be low market supplies in rainfed farming areas and the southern part of the agropastoral zone, prompting poor households in these areas to consume more wheat. This added pressure on the wheat market could drive the price of this cereal crop up even higher.
National	Large releases of water by the Manantalli Dam between October and March	This should allow for the growing of hot and cold off-season irrigated crops.
National	A later than usual and erratic rainy season	No sizeable improvement in pastoral conditions, limited farming activities, and reduction in seasonal income from these activities
Areas of concern	Custom-tailored assistance programs	This will improve household food access during the outlook period.

### ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

To project food security outcomes over the upcoming 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](#).