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**Summary and implications**

The rainy season got off to a late start in all major agropastoral areas with the exception of the southern reaches of Hodh El Chargui, Hodh El Gharbi and Guidimakha. Even in these southern areas, poor food access is affecting the start-up of farming activities. As usual, many farmers are forced to buy sorghum on local markets to meet their consumption needs at this time of year. There has not been enough rainfall to produce any meaningful new vegetative growth anywhere in the country and herders in many areas have begun to bolster food availability for their livestock by purchasing animal feed, whose price is up sharply (the cost of a 30 kg sack of feed is up 200 UM from June).

The increase in grain imports from Mali has driven the price of flood-recession sorghum down sharply (by 10 UM since June) on rural as well as urban markets. In contrast, prices for rainfed sorghum and millet are rising with the beginning of the planting season. The slowdown in grain trade between agropastoral areas and rainfed farming areas and the southern reaches of the oasis area has caused the price of domestic and imported rice to rebound sharply. Wheat prices are holding steady in areas served by Village-Level Food Security Reserve (SAVS) programs and Food for Work (FFW) programs. Prices for small livestock animals are steadily falling and poor and middle-income households in agropastoral areas are stepping up sales to keep pace with the steady rise in prices for imported foodstuffs. There is no change in the situation of cattle and camel herders, who are still capitalizing on rising prices for large animals. The food situation is still problematic and, in many cases, exacerbated by poor access to a safe water supply (particularly in Aftout and the southeastern part of the country), but households in all areas served by assistance programs are able to implement their coping strategies for dealing with hard times. The chronic food insecurity problems reported in the central and eastern reaches of the Senegal River Valley, central Aftout, the southeastern part of the country and remote areas of Inchiri and Adrar are a product of poor household food access due to poverty rather than of a food availability problem, with local markets and village-level food reserve programs showing ample supplies of grain and other food items. The rains have slowed mass out-migration, but there are still no signs of any large-scale return migration to farming areas.

**Status of crops**

The only existing crops, as of the date of this report, are hot off-season rice crops in the maturation stage of the growing cycle, which are being aggressively attacked by grain-eating birds. The bird problem is so alarming that the government has deployed three land-based treatment crews (2 in Trarza and 1 in Gorgol), backed up by a crop duster.

The “winter” growing season has already begun but, as usual, farmers are concerned by shortages of seeds and farm implements.

The only wet planting activities are confined to a few small pockets in farming areas of Touil district in Hodh El Gharbi and the southern reaches of Bassikounou and Amourj departments and Djiguenni department in Hodh El Chargui.

**Conditions in livestock-raising areas**

With the first rains of the season, migratory animal herds have begun moving into the central and southern parts of the country. Overgrazing problems have caused the condition of grazing lands in these areas to deteriorate rapidly and forced most sedentary herders to resort to the use of animal feed. However, grazing conditions in southern Gorgol, Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh El Chargui are still good (Map 1). Elsewhere (in northern Trarza, central Tagant, Adrar, Inchiri and Tiris Zemmour), poor animal watering conditions are limiting use of the lush pasturelands in these areas.



## Current hazard summary

- Falling prices for small animals are steadily weakening the food access of poor and middle-income farm families and agropastoralists. As is generally the case at this time of year, these households are becoming increasingly reliant on borrowing against future harvests and on income from casual labor.
- Tight seed supplies are forcing farmers to resort to buying grain crops on local markets. This added pressure on market supplies has driven up the price of rainfed sorghum and millet.
- Water access problems are heightening food insecurity levels, both for residents of Aftout and the southeast (the northeastern part of livelihood zone 6 and the eastern part of zone 5) and for herders in the north (zone 2) and west (zone 4).
- Regular food access is posing more and more of a problem for poor households in fringe areas of rural capitals and large cities, whose purchasing power is being eroded by the steady rise in the price of rice crops (up 10 UM since June), which is the staple food crop for this group of households.

## Food security conditions

The current food situation is still extremely difficult in most livelihood zones but has still not yet reached crisis proportions. Even in areas bypassed by assistance programs, traditional community assistance and mutual aid mechanisms continue to operate as redistributive systems with positive spin-off effects in all areas. In most areas, relief programs have helped households to engage in their normal livelihoods and coping strategies for making it through hard times. However, the late start of this year's rainy season and the shutdown of World Food Program (WFP) operations by the end of July could quickly undermine the food situation and heighten food insecurity levels, particularly in Aftout and the southeast.

The pick-up in grain imports from Mali is improving conditions in large urban areas much more so than in border areas due to the terms of sale for these crops. Sales by households in border areas doing business as retail dealers, too poor to buy wholesale, have slowed as farm families in Mali continue to sell most of their inventories to community groups or exporters purchasing their crops locally at more attractive prices.

Thus far, according to cumulative figures for the CSA (Food Security Commission) and WFP, some 730,410 persons have received direct aid (270,000 through the WFP and 460,410 from the CSA). While WFP programs (SAVS and FFW programs) are still being targeted at production zones, CSA activities (distributions of free food aid and FFW operations) reach into all regions of the country.

Herders and pastoralists still have adequate household food access because of the steady rise in prices for large animals, which are able to offset increases in prices for commercially marketed foodstuffs.

## Recommendations

1. Find ways of incorporating livestock sector data into food security assessments. In the context of chronic production deficits (with local grain production meeting barely 20% of consumption needs in a good crop year), it is essential for these assessments to include all aspects of livestock-raising activities (milk and meat production, animal products, livestock markets, cross-border trade, spatial mobility and economic activities associated with patterns of seasonal migration).
2. Strengthen nutrition programs for children less than five years of age in especially high-risk areas. The WFP has opened 264 community feeding centers (CAC) in the country's 8 agropastoral areas. While the sustainability of this program is more or less secure, plans for its expansion through the opening of 360 new centers in areas in need of such services could be in jeopardy if the WFP does not get its hands on the 8,000 MT of provisions (miscellaneous foodstuffs) needed for the support of its annual program.
3. Pursue ongoing assistance programs while, at the same time, improving targeting efforts and synchronizing field operations by all interested stakeholders (CSA, WFP, UNICEF, FAO, Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment and certain NGOs active in the field).