

## NIGER Food Security Outlook Update

September 2011

### *Improvement in the condition of crops with the normalization of rainfall conditions*

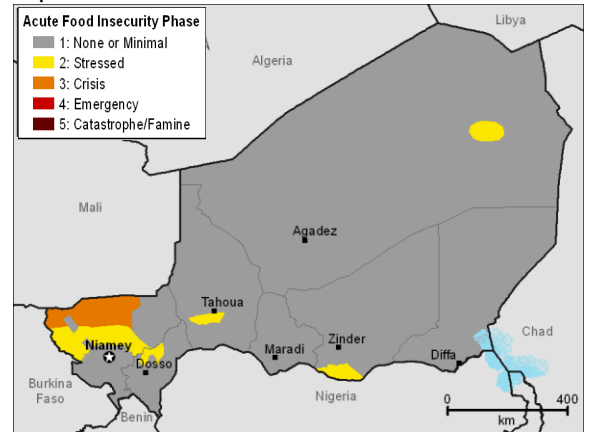
- The pick-up in rainfall activity since late July/early August has helped normalize crop growth and development, with a large percentage of crops already entering the last stages of their growth cycle by September.
- In general, trends in food availability and food access are normal thanks to distributions of food aid in August and fresh crops from September harvests, which are reducing demand and market prices for grain crops.
- With this year's erratic climatic conditions, two out of nine farming villages could be facing large shortfalls in crop production, 56 percent of which are concentrated in the Tillabery and Tahoua regions of the country. This could make them vulnerable to food insecurity in 2011/12.
- Current estimates put the number of people at risk for food insecurity at close to three million, two-thirds of whom are from the Tillabery and Tahoua regions, which is more or less on par with the five-year average.

### Updated food security outlook through December 2011

After a start-of-season generally marked by lags in planting activities and a poor spatial-temporal distribution of rainfall, the crop growth phase has benefited from good rainfall conditions producing average and, in some cases, even above-average cumulative rainfall in the far eastern reaches of the farm belt, as projected in the updated seasonal outlook for July/August/September. Flooding in the wake of the heavy August rains caused localized damage to grain crops in all parts of the country. The improvement in rainfall conditions helped fill seasonal lakes and ponds and raise the level of the water table all across the country. This created good animal watering conditions and good stream flow conditions in *koris* (temporary streams), and a good supply of water for irrigating crops, particularly in the Agadez region. However, there have been several reports of drought conditions in central and northern Tillabery and Tahoua, which could mean large losses of crops in these areas.

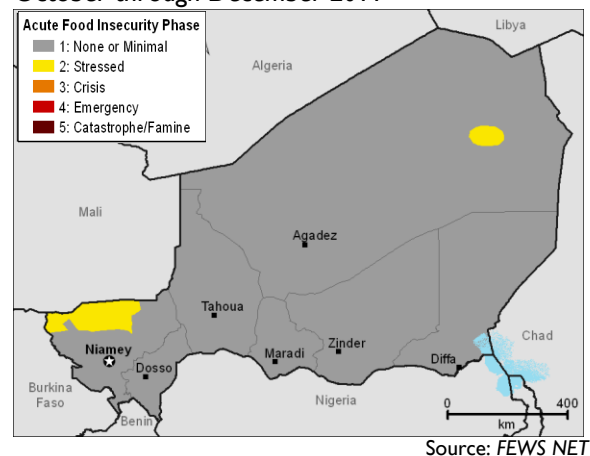
According to ground observations by the mid-term crop assessment mission organized by the Statistics Bureau attached to the Ministry of Agriculture in conjunction with food security partners such as FEWS NET, crops are generally in good

**Figure 1.** Estimated food security outcomes for September 2011



For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, please see: [www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale](http://www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale)

**Figure 2.** Estimated food security outcomes for October through December 2011



*This report is an update of the July 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook assessing food security conditions for the period from July through December 2011. The next Outlook report covering the period from October 2011 through March 2012 will be released in October.*

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condition. In fact, the combined positive effects of 1) increased rainfall activity on the crop water satisfaction index, and 2) favorable temperatures and sunshine conditions, are promoting normal crop growth and development. As of the end of August, the majority of millet and sorghum crops in virtually all farming areas were in the heading stage, with other crops in the Maradi, Zinder, and Dosso areas in the more advanced seed-setting/maturity stage, attesting to the normal progress of the 2011/12 growing season compared with the last five seasons. There are good harvest forecasts for cash crops such as cowpeas, groundnuts, sesame, and chufa nuts, which have been relatively unaffected by this year's erratic climatic conditions and pressure from crop pests.

The sole exceptions are the north-central reaches of the Tillabery region and the central reaches of the Tahoua region, where the mid-term crop assessment mission in August found lags in crop growth and development. Should the rains end on schedule, in late September, as projected, this would prevent grain crops from fully maturing and expose poor households in the Tillabery and Tahoua regions, or some two million people, to likely production shortfalls, which would put them in IPC Phases 2 (stressed) or 3 (crisis) for the 2011/12 consumption year. However, the outcome of the growing season in both of these areas hinges on trends in rainfall conditions in the coming weeks, throughout September and October.

An examination of the condition of pasturelands in all parts of the country shows good plant cover and advanced stages of plant growth and development, with grasses in the heading stage and legumes in the branching/flowering stage, except in grazing belts in northern Gouré (in the municipalities of Tesker and Tenhya), Tillabery (in the municipalities of Anzourou and Dessa), Ouallam (in the municipality of Dingazi), Fillingué, Téra (in the municipalities of Kokorou and Méhanna), Tchirozérine (in the municipalities of Aderbisnat and InGal), Nguigmi, Tchintabaraden, Abalak (Tamaya), and Tahoua (in Takanamat and Tébaran). The availability of pasture and nearby watering holes is gradually improving grazing and watering conditions for livestock.

The current stabilization of livestock prices at good-to-average levels is largely attributable to supply-side factors, such as a supply of animals still in satisfactory physical condition, a longer period of good pasture availability, and the lower-than-usual sales of animals for this time of year. The large, steady improvement in the physical condition of livestock with new pasture growth and good water availability could strengthen the market value of livestock and help maintain favorable terms of trade for pastoral households over the next few weeks with the high demand for live animals for the celebration of Tabaski.

In general, the current food security situation (in all parts of the country with the exception of Tillabery and Tahoua) is marked by good grain availability thanks to the smooth operation of markets. There are increasingly large supplies of corn crops from the Lake Chad area available for sale on markets in the Diffa region and of cowpea crops on markets in the Maradi and Zinder regions. Prices are steadily falling thanks to a combination of positive factors. Thus, the normal progress of the growing season, the availability of locally-grown crops, and relatively low market demand are stabilizing the already low prices for all types of grain crops. Retail prices are well below the five-year average and last year's figures for the same time of year, particularly for locally grown grain crops (such as millet and sorghum). This drop in prices is having a significant and extremely positive effect on household spending and food consumption. In fact, there have been no household grain access problems whatsoever this year, even during the lean season. There could be a further improvement in conditions if the positive trends in the condition of crops in the center and east of the country spread to other parts, and current rainfall conditions continue through the end of September or into the early part of October, which would allow late-planted crops or crops affected by water stress to mature normally.

#### **Rainfed grain-farming areas, including departments in the Tillabery and Tahoua regions**

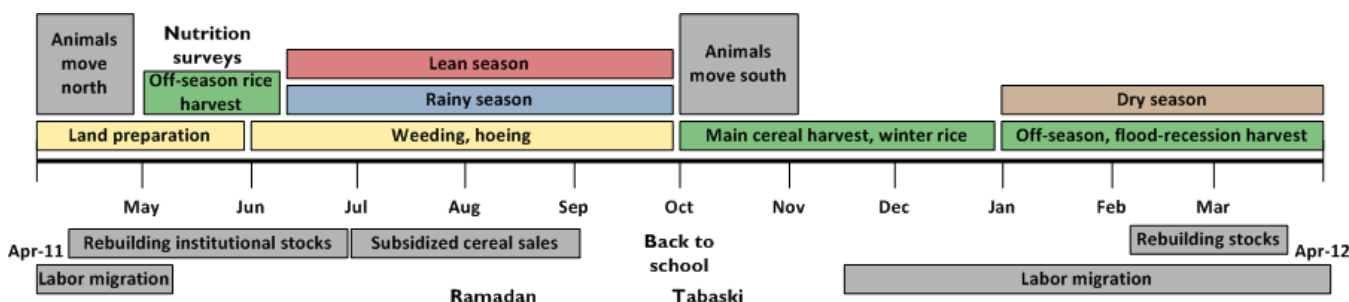
Though conditions in southern departments of Tillabery and Tahoua regions (in the country's farm belt) are better than in agropastoral and pastoral areas, they are almost as badly affected by rainfall deficits, which have sharply curtailed the normal growth and development of grain crops and natural pasture. Drought conditions in these areas extended into the second dekad of September, creating severe water stress and, in some cases, halting crop growth altogether.

Current trends in rainfall conditions in both of these regions suggest that rainfall activity will continue through the end of September or into early October, in which case the Tillabery region can expect mediocre-to-average harvests of millet and sorghum crops, and the Tahoua region can expect average to good harvests.

Studies based on the general condition of crops helped identify 897 villages in Tillabery and 495 villages in Tahoua at risk of bringing in a below-average harvest, which is 46 and 32 percent of all farming and agropastoral villages in Tillabery and Tahoua, respectively (or 47 percent and 27 percent, respectively, of the total population of these regions). This puts close to two million people in both regions at risk of food insecurity for the 2011/12 consumption year, which is equivalent to two-thirds of the current food-insecure population.

This does not currently translate into a household food consumption deficit. Even over the next two to three months, any deterioration in the food security situation could be limited to level 2 on the IPC scale (stressed) thanks to wage income from on-farm employment in high-production crop-growing areas. Even with the decline in demand for local labor once the harvesting season is over, food security conditions could stabilize at level 2 (stressed) for the next three to four months with a normalization of the sociopolitical situation in Côte d'Ivoire, which could then serve as a new destination for the rapidly growing numbers of migrants seeking an alternative to their usual pattern of migration to Libya.

### Seasonal calendar and timeline of critical events



Source: FEWS NET