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FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NETWORK

WEST AFRICA Seasonal Monitor

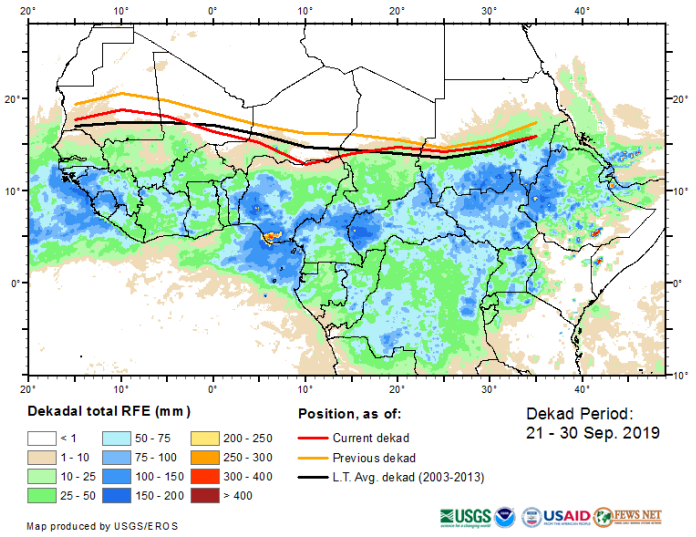
October 16, 2019

Average to above-average and well distributed rainfall over most of the region except for parts of the west

KEY MESSAGES

- The ITF (Intertropical Front) started its southward retreat since the third dekad of August, which means the end of the rainy season in the Sahelian zone is nearing.
- The minor rainy season from August to October in the bi-modal zone has so far been characterized by mostly average to above average and well distributed rainfall.
- The rainy season in the unimodal part of West Africa that has been characterized by mostly adequate and well distributed rains will end in October. Globally average to above average harvest is expected through the end of the season.
- A 4-week delay of the onset of rainfall in an area where the growing season is just 3-month long caused a significant pasture production deficit in the pastoral areas of Senegal for the second consecutive year.

Figure 1. Average ITF position during the 3rd dekad of September

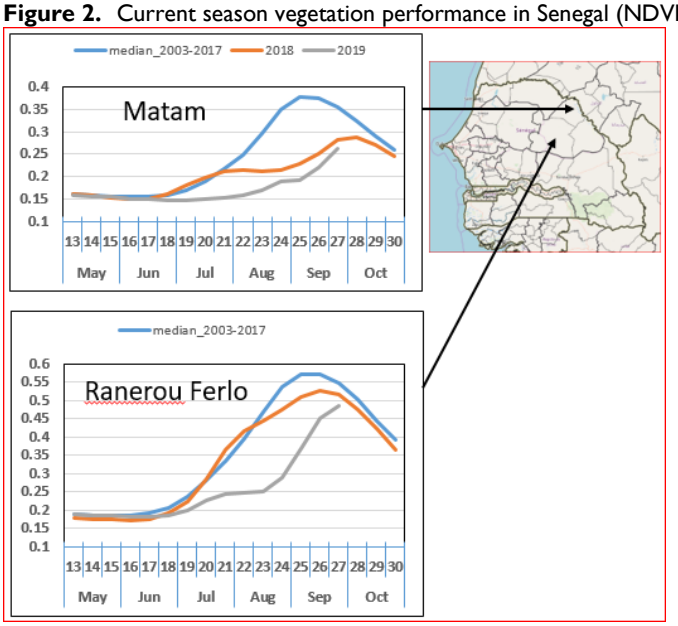


Source: *USGS/FEWS NET*

UPDATE ON SEASONAL PROGRESS

- The ITF's southward migration that started in early September is ongoing and it was positioned between 12.9 in south central Niger and 18.8 degrees of latitude in northwestern Mauritania in late September (Figure 1). It was near its climatological position in Chad, slightly north of it in Mauritania and south of it in eastern Mali and Niger in late September. This is a clear sign that the end of the rainy season is already starting in areas north of the ITF - the agro pastoral part of the Sahel. However, the ITF is expected to fluctuate about its climatological position for a little while before its complete annual retreat. Therefore, there is still a chance for a few rainfall events even in the northern part of the Sahel.
- In general, apart from the extreme western part of the Sahel this season's rainfall has been average to above average in the region. Only a few short-lived dryness pockets of limited size were observed here and there in June and July. However, the season rainfall has also been characterized by good time distribution, which has resulted into favorable moisture conditions for planted crops including crops in the aforementioned June or July deficit pocket areas. River flows have also been normal to above normal. Consequently, pasture and crop production is expected to be average to above average over most of the region expect for the western part of the Sahel that experienced severe dryness during the first part of the growing period.

Figure 2. Current season vegetation performance in Senegal (NDVI)



Source: *USGS/FEWS NET*

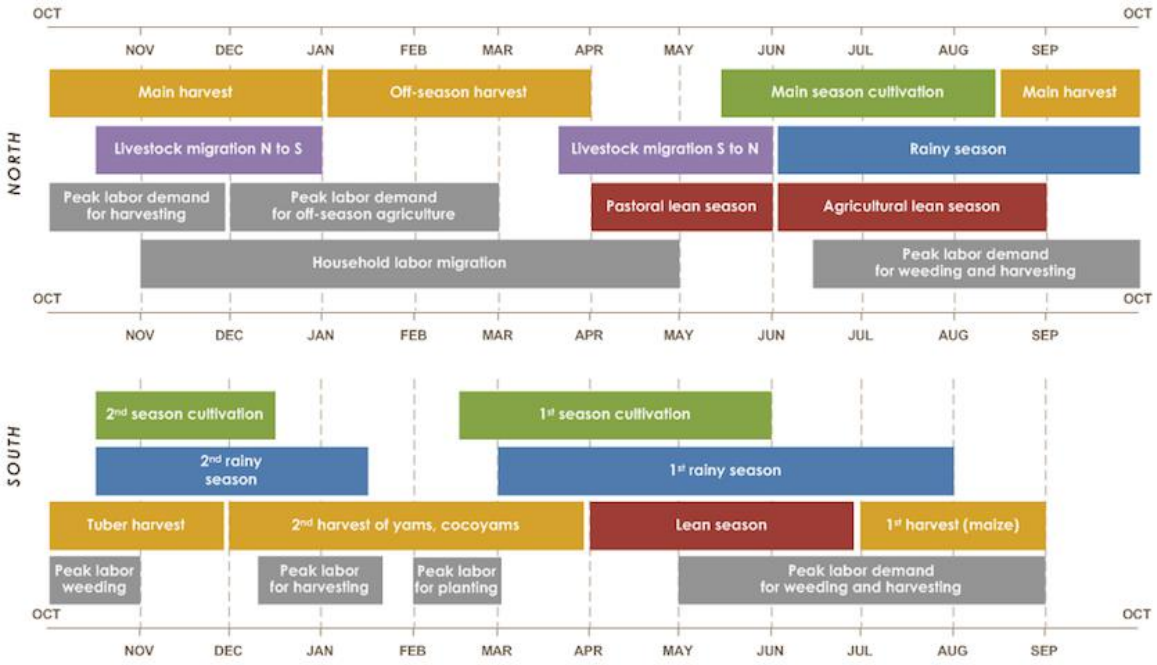
FEWS NET West Africa
fewsinquiry.west@fews.net
www.fews.net/west-africa

- The western part of the Sahel, particularly Senegal and southern Mauritania was affected by severe rainfall deficits coupled with bad time distribution of rainfall until early August, which caused significant planting delays. This area experienced the same problems in June and July of the 2018 rainy season and relief came in early August. There is a strong similarity between the 2018 and 2019 rainfall pattern up to this point (early October). Last year, however, the end of the rainy season was about two week late compared to normal as it extended until late October.
    - In Senegal, the 2018 rainy season extended until late October with average to above average and well distributed rainfall which resulted in above average crop production. Production in the 2019 season could continue if good rains continue until late October. Pasture production was extremely low last year and the same scenario is expected for the current season (Fig. 2).
    - In Mauritania, over 70 percent of the agricultural production system depends on hydrology, and since the hydrological conditions have been good, the agricultural production shortfall is not expected to be significant even in the case of an early cessation of rains.
- According to the short and medium term forecasts from NOAA/CPC, average to above average rainfall is expected over most of the Sudanian and Guinean zones of the region until the end of October.

FORECASTS

- The seasonal forecast from NOAA-NCEP has yet to be updated. However, the one performed in early September indicated mostly above average rainfall conditions for the month of October, which is the last month of the season in many parts of West Africa.

SEASONAL CALENDAR IN A TYPICAL YEAR



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