

BURKINA FASO Food Security Outlook Update

November 2011

Unseasonable rise in market prices

- According to preliminary estimates by the joint CILSS/FAO/FEWSNET/WFP/Government harvest assessment mission, the 2011/2012 crop year resulted in nationwide grain production 13 percent below last year and close to the five-year average.
- Poor households facing smaller than average harvests, particularly in the northern and eastern parts of the country, should have sufficient access to income for meeting their basic food and nonfood needs at least through March 2012.
- With off-season farming activities beginning earlier than usual, there could be larger than average harvests of off-season crops to offset the grain production shortfalls in certain parts of livelihood zones 7 and 5.¹

Updated food security outlook through March 2012

Because of the late start of the growing season, harvesting activities across the country are still in progress. This has caused a delay in the shipments of white maize and cowpea crops to market which usually occur in October/November. On-farm consumption of harvested crops is helping to improve household food availability, however, and households are rebuilding their food reserves. Small market disruptions are being produced by the delay in shipments of fresh crops and the earlier than usual presence of foreign traders attempting to stock up on white maize crops (beginning in October).

According to price data furnished by the Market Information System, the upward trend in average prices for major grain crops on wholesale markets across the country began to slow in the month of October. There was no change in millet and sorghum prices from the previous month, but maize prices fell by 14 percent with the presence of fresh crops on these markets. In contrast, retail prices were up from the previous month by nine percent in the case of maize, by three percent in the case of millet, and by six percent in the case of sorghum. All prices are much higher than they were at the same time

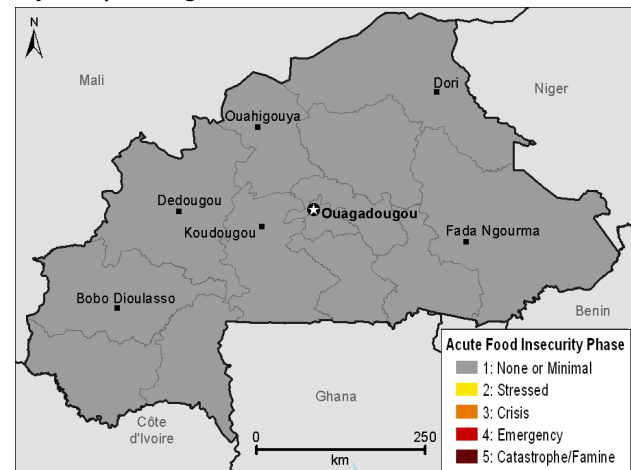
Figure 1. Current and most likely estimated food security outcomes, November 2011



Source: FEWS NET

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

Figure 2. Most likely estimated food security outcomes for January through March 2012



Source: FEWS NET

¹ See the livelihood zone map at http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/BF_Livelihoods.pdf.

This report is an update of the October 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook assessing food security conditions for the period from October 2011 through March 2012.

last year and are well above the five-year average, in some cases by as much as 46 percent. Markets are currently fairly well-stocked due to shipments of freshly harvested crops. The availability of cash crops (sesame, cowpeas, groundnuts, fonio, etc.) is generating household income and providing a more diversified diet.

All household groups (at least 80 percent of the population) in the country's different livelihood zones are in IPC Phase 1 (no or minimal acute food insecurity).

Among other things, preventive measures taken by the government to guard against food insecurity are attempting to ensure a regular flow of supplies to deficit areas through collections and transfers of grain from surplus areas. If effectively implemented, the combination of these measures and normal livelihood patterns (sources of food and income) should prevent all household groups from facing any major problems during the outlook period and, perhaps, even beyond. However, the institutional demand engendered by these measures (over 50,000 metric tons of crops will be collected) and demand from traders will be instrumental in driving up market prices. Moreover, the media coverage of the problems arising during the past growing season is raising concerns about hoarding by crop-producing households in all livelihood zones, which would severely tighten market supplies.

With the shortfall in grain harvests in the Tapoa area of livelihood zone 9 (Southeast cereals, livestock, forestry, and faune), only 66 percent of grain needs are met by production. These crops account for at least 40 percent of household food supplies. Earnings from cotton are also reportedly down due to the smaller than expected harvest. Cotton is the main cash crop grown in this area and normally brings in at least 20 percent of household income. However, income from sales of sesame crops (which crowded out cotton crops), honey, nonwoody forest products, and livestock should enable very poor and poor households to offset shortfalls in grain production through market buying. In fact, there should not be any serious deficits in normal household livelihoods, and at least 80 percent of the population should be in IPC Phase 1 (no or minimal acute food insecurity) for the outlook period.

Livelihood zone 8 (North transhumant pastoralism and millet)

In this livelihood zone, in the far north of the country and with a population of approximately 250,000 local residents, grain harvests will not fully cover household food needs. According to the preliminary Food Security Forecasting Committee (CPSA) production estimates for the 2011/2012 crop year, only 87 percent of grain needs in this livelihood zone will be met by production.

The October outlook, which predicted a 30 percent shortfall in production of millet, the main type of grain grown and consumed in this area, is proving true. Nationwide, millet production is down by 21 percent from last year and is 18 percent below the five-year average.

Prices for millet are 10 percent lower than at the same time last year and relatively comparable to the nominal five-year average. This trend suggests good grain access on local markets.

Households in municipalities identified by the Food Security Forecasting Committee as especially hard hit by production shortfalls are more dependent than usual on market buying for their food supplies. In fact, very poor and poor households forced to supplement their on-farm production to meet food needs are boosting their income through labor migration and gold washing activities, in order to earn enough to maintain access to grain. This increase in income (estimated at 30 percent for the year), combined with other coping strategies, should prevent household food insecurity during the outlook period. Collections of grain in surplus crop-producing areas for the provisioning of deficit areas should certainly help reduce the severity of food insecurity in at-risk municipalities in this livelihood zone.

Pasturelands and watering holes are in acceptable condition, but biomass pasture production is far less than last year and slightly below that of a normal year, raising fears that livestock could face difficulty by as early as January. The result will be a harsh lean season for the animal population, possibly beginning as soon as January or February. The shortage of fresh pasture triggered earlier than usual seasonal migratory movements all along the Béli River in Niger, beginning in September instead of in November/December, which is normally the case. Surface watering hole levels are slightly lower than last year. Since September, there have been reports of large concentrations of migrating animals from other parts of livelihood zone

8 and from other areas (livelihood zone 7, Mali, and Niger) around the Christine borehole in Oudalan Province in the Sahelian region. The bleak outlook for livestock for the coming months could adversely affect grain-buying by certain groups of households.

Food security outlook through March 2012 for livelihood zone 7 (North and East livestock and cereals)

Very poor and poor households make up 55 percent of the population of livelihood zone 7 (North and East livestock and cereals). These households typically buy more than 50 percent of their food supplies on local markets, mainly between February and August. Thus, very poor and poor households in this area are highly vulnerable to fluctuations in the market prices of different crops. Household harvests of rainfed crops between October and November account for approximately 20 percent of their food supply. The share of other food sources such as gifts, in-kind payments (normally for farmwork), in-kind loans (usually against future harvests), and milk production is extremely small, accounting for five percent or less in each case.

In a normal year, very poor and poor households in this livelihood zone draw most of their annual income from labor migration between December and May (25-30 percent) and sales of wood, charcoal, and straw, mainly between December and June (close to 20 percent), followed by local on-farm employment, mainly between September and November (10-15 percent) and sales of poultry (approximately 10 percent).

The projected food security scenario in this livelihood zone between now and March of 2012 is based on the following assumptions:

- Grain harvests will be slightly (10 percent) smaller than average.
- Given the need to attract more grain than usual to this area, local grain prices will show little change from last year (which was a bumper year with prices generally similar to the five-year average) between October and December, but will rise by approximately 10-15 percent as of January.
- There will be shortages of pasture by November and of water in the northeastern part of this area by as early as February/March (instead of April, as is the case in an average year). This will trigger earlier than usual migration by livestock around the end of December or the beginning of January, compared with the normal start of seasonal migration in March. In turn, this will put pressure on grazing lands and create competition between the human and animal populations for local water resources by March of next year.
- There will be a limited supply of water for market gardening activities. These crops are being planted earlier than usual, beginning in October, and should reach maturity in January/February.
- The steady increase in livestock exports to Côte d'Ivoire will keep prices for cattle, sheep, and goats at or above last year's levels, in spite of a larger supply of animals from poor households pressured by rising grain prices.

Based on the assumption of a near-average harvest this year, the share of household food supplies obtained from on-farm production and through market buying should also be more or less average. However, with prices expected to be as much as 10 to 15 percent above the five-year average, the share of household spending on food would increase proportionately (by approximately 15-18 XOF/kg of millet compared with last year).

The earlier than usual sales of livestock by poor households beginning in late October or early November will generate 25 percent more income than in an average year due to the high price of sheep at this time of year, marked by the celebration of the Muslim Feast of Tabaski. This earlier than usual herd thinning measure is also a coping strategy in response to the reported pasture and fodder deficits in this area, which could lead to a livestock crisis by January.

Revenues from sales of wood, charcoal, and straw will be raised slightly (10-15 percent) compared to an average year in very poor and poor households in municipalities with the greatest deficits (due to flooding and herd depletion). Their heightened dependence on market buying for their food supplies makes these households extremely vulnerable to rises in grain prices.

Increased labor migration by youths (by males and especially in the proportion of females) to gold washing sites will produce a net 15-20 percent rise in income from these activities.

Very poor and poor households will not face a livelihood deficit between October and December and should not experience acute food insecurity. Their regular sources of food and income should help sustain their normal livelihoods. However, beginning as of April, price increases in crop-producing areas will be passed on to livelihood zone 7, which will put very poor and poor households, which are highly dependent on market buying for their grain supplies, into IPC Phase 2 (stressed).

Food security outlook through March 2012 for livelihood zone 5 (Central Plateau cereals and market gardening)

Livelihood zone 5 (Central Plateau cereals and market gardening) has a structural production deficit. It is the country's most densely populated livelihood zone, housing 25 percent of its total population, with very poor and poor households accounting for over sixty percent of local residents. The usual main sources of food for very poor households are divided equally, at 35% each, between market buying and harvests (harvests of rainfed crops between October and December and harvests of off-season crops between January and March/April). Poor households acquire 50 percent of their food supply through harvests and 30 percent through market buying. These two main sources of household food supplies are followed by in-kind payments, gifts, and in-kind loans, with shares of approximately 10 percent each.

Very poor and poor households normally have highly diversified sources of income. Most household income comes from sales of wood, charcoal, and straw (20-30 percent of annual income) and local on-farm employment, particularly in off-season market gardening activities between October and March/April (15-20 percent). These are followed by sales of grain (10-15 percent), sales of poultry and gold washing activities (10 percent each), and sales of cash crops or wild plant products (5-10 percent each). Non-directly-labor-related sales of agropastoral products (livestock, poultry, grain, cash crops, or wild plant products) generate close to half the income of poor households, compared with only a quarter of the income of very poor households.

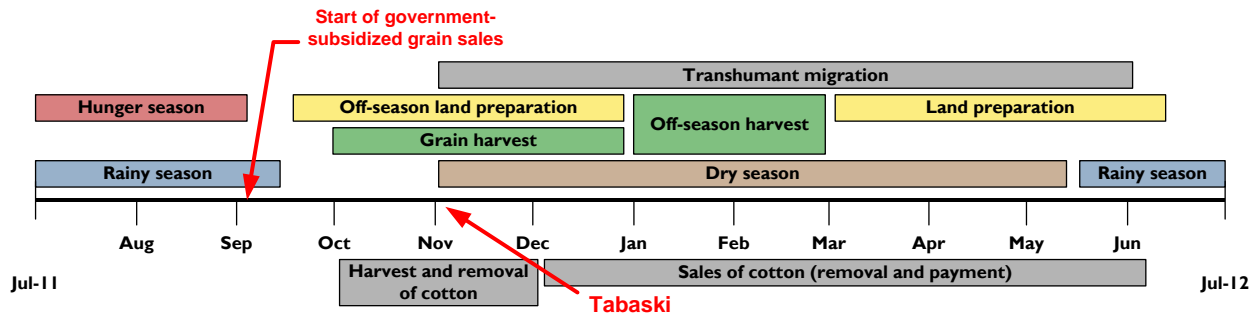
The most likely scenario in this livelihood zone between now and March of 2012 is based on the following assumptions:

- Grain production will fall short of the five-year average, creating unmet grain needs in this area as a result of its growing population.
- The growing season for market garden and off-season crops will be shortened by at least one to two months by low levels of surface water sources in this area.
- Grain prices will rise by at least 15 percent during the outlook period.

For very poor and poor households, ongoing harvests should cover the normal proportion of food supplies drawn from this source without difficulty. The share of household spending on food is expected to increase by approximately 10 percent to cover gaps created by cutbacks in gift-giving and in-kind payments. To cope with localized production shortfalls, very poor and poor households will double their sales of wood, charcoal, and straw. This could make up for part of their loss of income from sales of grain crops. Likewise, increased labor migration by area residents to small-scale gold mining operation sites could provide at least 30 percent of income for this group of households, with large numbers of working family members expected to engage in these activities. There will be a larger flow of labor migration to Côte d'Ivoire, where there is a strong demand for labor to rebuild the country. Sales of nonwoody forest products are also expected to increase by at least 30 percent.

The shorter than usual growing season for off-season crops will reduce income from local on-farm employment by members of very poor and poor households by at least 25 percent. With the limited new vegetative growth in the northern and western portions of this livelihood zone, poor households will probably be facing a 10-15 percent reduction in income from livestock sales after the end of the current outlook period. However, even with these cuts, other highly diversified sources of income should help offset the shortfall in grain production between now and March 2012, which will keep very poor and poor households from experiencing acute food insecurity. All parts of this livelihood zone except for the southern and eastern parts of the area are reporting unmet human grain consumption needs (with less than 90 percent of needs met by production). The combination of this grain gap, a possible rise in prices by more than 15 percent, and the depletion of certain sources of income in time could put very poor and poor households in IPC Phase 2 (stressed) after the end of March of next year.

Seasonal calendar and timeline of critical events



Source: FEWS NET