

CHAD Food Security Outlook Update

November 2011

Crop predators undermine rainfed crop production

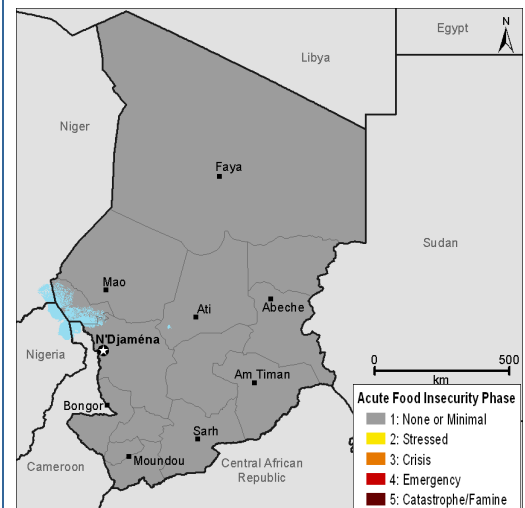
- Crop damage from grain-eating birds and grasshoppers has put the preliminary nationwide grain production estimate by the joint CILSS/FAO/FEWS NET/WFP/Government harvest assessment mission slightly below the five-year average.
- Contrary to previous expectations, the mission's preliminary grain production estimate is 40 percent under the five-year average for the Guéra area in the northern parts of livelihood zone 5 (Central Agropastoral), which were hit hard by the grain-eating birds and grasshoppers.
- Poor pasture availability in the northern part of the country has triggered an earlier than usual seasonal migration by livestock southwards and has created prematurely large concentrations of animals in the northern areas of livelihood zone 5 (Central Agropastoral) and the southern reaches of livelihood zone 6 (Eastern Rainfed Cereals and Market Gardening).

Updated food security outlook through December 2011

In the absence of a farm survey, the preliminary grain production estimate made by the joint CILSS/FAO/FEWS NET/WFP/Government mission is based on an approximation of the size of harvestable areas and crop yields in 1999/2000, the last comparable year. Field missions assessed the magnitude of crop damage from grasshoppers and grain-eating birds with the help of local authorities. The resulting estimate puts grain production between 1.6 and 1.8 million metric tons, equivalent to the five-year average for 2005/06-2009/10 (not including the 2010/11 grain harvest, which was 50 percent larger than average and would skew the five-year average). However, a breakdown of this aggregate average production figure reveals large disparities in crop production within and between the country's different livelihood zones.

Thus, the average to good grain harvest in livelihood zone 5 (Central Agropastoral) as a whole obscures the large losses in the northern portions of this area. In particular, losses were seen in Dagana department in the Hadjer Lamis region and the northern Guéra region, resulting from the cessation of rains at the end of September and simultaneous attacks by grasshoppers and grain-eating birds. Preliminary data for the Guéra region puts crop production approximately 40 percent under the five-year average. September estimates of losses in livelihood zones 7 (Transhumance) and 6 (Eastern Rainfed Cereals and Market Gardening) were adjusted upwards due to attacks by grain-eating birds, which further reduces food availability from on-farm production in these areas. As a result, while the southern part of the country is seeing the usual

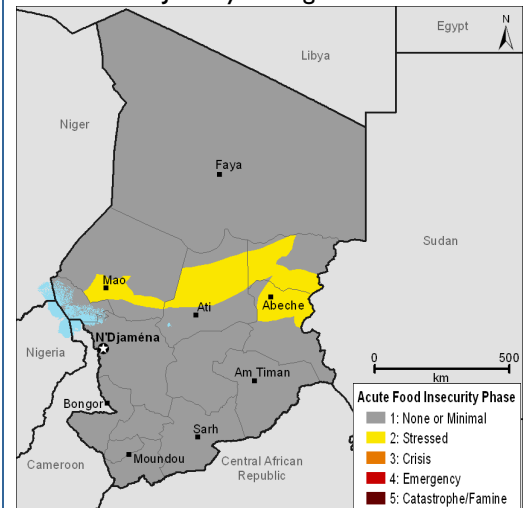
Figure 1. Most likely estimated food security outcomes for November through December 2011



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

Source: FEWS NET

Figure 1. Most likely estimated food security outcomes for January through March 2012



Source: FEWS NET

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.

decline in prices as the main harvest of rainfed crops occurs, prices in the Sahelian zone have actually begun to rise again at the very height of the harvest. This upward trend in prices could persist, given the relatively mediocre harvest outlook and low transplanting rates seen in response to the threat posed by grain-eating birds.

Poor pasture availability in the northern part of the country has triggered an earlier than usual seasonal migration by livestock southwards and has prematurely created large concentrations of animals in the northern areas of livelihood zone 5 (Central Agropastoral) and the southern areas of livelihood zone 6 (Eastern Rainfed Cereals and Market Gardening). There have also been sightings of sedentary herds moving towards the southern areas of livelihood zone 6, creating even larger concentrations of animals in this area and accelerating the degradation of local rangelands. For those sedentary animals remaining behind, the rise in the price of animal feed is limiting accessibility and undermining the animals' physical condition, while putting a strain on the budgets of poor households.

Markets remain fairly well-stocked with carry-over inventories and shipments of freshly harvested crops, but prices for pearl millet (the staple grain in Sahelian areas) remain well above the five-year average. With household crop production and the usual coping strategies, at least 80 percent of the population should be able to meet their food needs between now and December and should not experience acute food insecurity. However, the current upturn in food and animal feed prices could seriously impact food access and the feeding of livestock by January of this coming year, particularly in the south of livelihood zone 7 (Transhumance), the north of livelihood zone 5 (Central Agropastoral), and the north of livelihood zone 6 (Eastern Rainfed Cereals and Market Gardening). The prospect of an earlier than usual start to the lean season in these areas is a source of great concern and likely to further aggravate global acute malnutrition rates, which are already structurally high in these areas.

Southern reaches of livelihood zone 7 (Transhumance)

The earlier than usual departure of migratory animal herds from this area has limited local bartering opportunities. In Bahr El Gazel, the impact of crop withering and attacks by crop predators in October is worse than expected, and has resulted in a 35 percent smaller than average harvest of rainfed crops. On-farm production by very poor households, which make up 17 percent of the local population, will cover only a week's worth of household food needs, and there are almost no supplies of wild plant foods due to the poor distribution of rainfall. The condition of local pasturelands is not any better. Vegetation is sparse and, in some parts of the area, was destroyed by brush fires very early in the season. Local livestock herds began migrating southwards earlier than usual, by the middle of October.

Strong demand associated with the celebration of the Feast of Tabaski kept terms of trade for sheep to millet in favor of pastoralists selling sheep through the month of October. The grain equivalent for an average sheep sold in October of this year was approximately 10 kg higher than at the same time last year and compared to the five-year average for the same time of year. However, this type of improvement will be short-lived, as it will be sustained by demand for the year-end holiday season only through the end of December. The deterioration in these terms of trade beginning in January will occur more quickly than usual, accelerated by the combined effects of the atypical rise in grain prices and the worsening of physical condition of livestock, which will depreciate their market value.

While SMART survey data for August/September 2011 shows a decline in the global acute malnutrition rate between August 2010 and March 2011, the nutritional situation in this area will most likely begin to worsen as of January, given the foreseeable complications to food access. The high market value of wild plant products such as hay will encourage more households to become involved in the gathering of these products, possibly marginalizing very poor households, whose lack of transportation limits traditional collection channels. The resulting reduction in earnings from this major source of income will curtail food access on local markets for this group of households. Poor households should be able to meet their basic food needs during the harvesting period, through the month of December, but could face new food gaps as of January, with a steady rise in grain prices expected between now and the beginning of pastoral areas' lean season in March/April 2012.

Northern reaches of livelihood zone 5 (Central Agropastoral) (Northern Bitkine and Mangalmé)

Very poor and poor households make up approximately 52 percent of the population of this area, and household food production (from harvests, in-kind payments, and the gathering of wild plant foods) accounts for 50 to 75 percent of their food supply. Food purchases on local markets, which account for 20 to 35 percent of their food supply, are made with

income generated mainly by on-farm employment (35 to 50 percent) and sales of wood and straw (20 percent). Markets are still fairly well-stocked with crops from the previous growing season, but there have been reports of speculative market behavior. Prices for pearl millet, a staple grain crop in this area, began rising again at the very height of the harvest season and as of October were 15 percent above the five-year average. The forty percent or larger shortfall in grain production, which occurred as a consequence of grasshopper and grain-eating bird attacks, will make this group of households more dependent on the market for their food supplies. However, because of the small harvest of rainfed crops, expected off-season crop production, and the highly diversified sources of food and income related to the wide variety of activities engaged in by these households should enable them to meet their food needs between now and January 2012. However, as the drying of seasonal lakes and ponds limits the main source of household income, brick-making, they may not be able to meet their food needs or protect their livelihoods between February and March 2012.

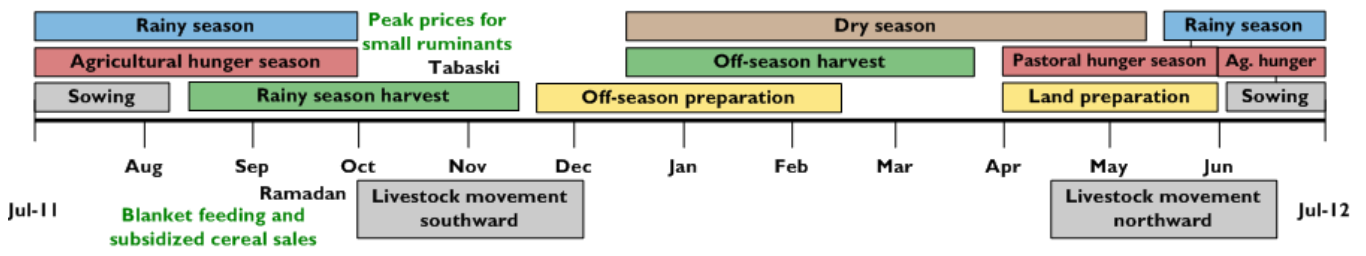
Northern reaches of livelihood zone 6 (Eastern Rainfed Cereals and Market Gardening)

Carry-over inventories from the 2010/11 bumper harvest should ensure adequate food availability to offset crop losses for the current growing season. Even with reported hazards, preliminary data for most of this livelihood zone (formerly the Ouaddaï region) puts grain production at least 30 percent above the five-year average for 2005/06-2009/10. However, the preharvest assessment mission reported heavy losses of rainfed and off-season crops due to attacks by grain-eating birds and grasshoppers in the northern areas of this zone. Moreover, the pasture deficit in this area has already triggered unusual north-south migration by sedentary herds which normally engage only in short-distance migration between March and April. The migration of these animals is currently a source of conflict between immigrating sedentary pastoralists and local farmers, and is limiting the employment of the local workforce, whose labor migration to other areas could generate household income.

Supplies on the main market in the Abéché area are limited. It is still not certain whether the seven percent rise in millet prices between September and October was due to the late start of the harvest season (following the delayed start of the growing season) or whether it was the result of speculation about the smaller than usual local harvest. However, at nine percent above the nominal five-year average, millet prices are not yet a cause for concern. The relatively mediocre harvest outlook for off-season grain crops in the south of this area could cause a panic and prompt certain traders and large farmers to engage in hoarding. This would drive up grain prices between January and March of 2012, as predicted in the October outlook. However, the magnitude of any such rise in prices would be tempered by the combined effects of what should be an average grain harvest, bolstered by carry-over inventories from the 2010/11 season.

Eighty percent of the population should thus be able to meet their food needs without resorting to livelihood-depleting strategies between now and the end of December 2011. By January 2012, very poor and poor households in problem areas will have depleted their small food reserves from on-farm production. The thirty percent cutbacks in market gardening and groundnut processing operations compared with the average scale of these activities will reduce household income at a time when prices are expected to increase slightly more than usual. An increase in migration is foreseeable, which would involve larger numbers of workers than usual. However, this time of year is also marked by irreducible household spending on ceremonial social events, forcing these households to draw down their productive assets by selling one or two of their small animals. They will thus be unable to meet their food needs without endangering their livelihoods, which will put them in IPC Phase 2 (stressed).

Seasonal calendar and timeline of critical events



Source: FEWS NET