

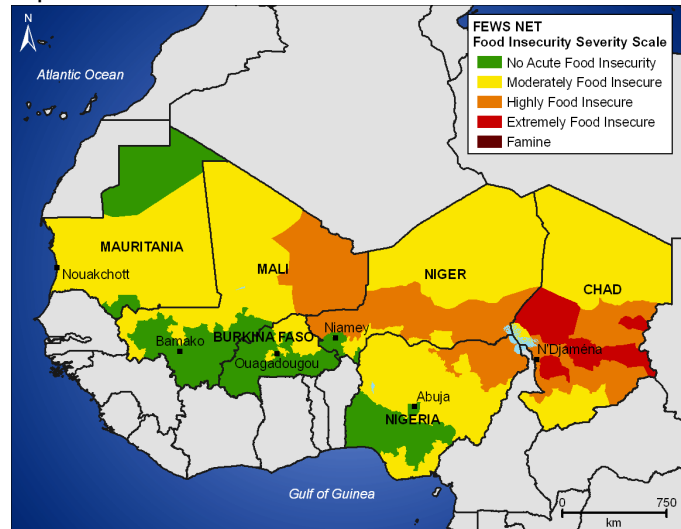
WEST AFRICA Food Security Alert

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Crisis response generally good; significant needs remain in Chad

Poor distribution of rains during the 2009 season resulted in poor millet and pasture production in northeastern Mali, Niger, northeastern Burkina Faso, far northern Nigeria, and central Chad. In most of the region, strong market flows and assistance from national governments and international partners has successfully improved food availability and access, and malnutrition levels remain relatively close to average for this time of year. This is especially true in Niger where assistance and market flows have been particularly large. In Chad, however, food assistance and coping strategies have been less successful, and approximately one million people continue to face food deficits of 20 percent. Surveys have reported above-average, emergency levels of acute malnutrition and mortality, indicating that additional food assistance is needed immediately in Chad. Across the region, increased livelihoods support is also needed over the coming months to rebuild livelihoods, and above-normal food assistance needs are likely in Niger and Chad next year, despite expectations of an average to above-average 2010 harvest.

Figure 1. Estimated food security outcomes for July-September 2010.



Source: FEWS NET

In response to cereal and forage production deficits of at least fifty percent as of October 2009, most households in affected pastoral and agropastoral zones aggressively pursued alternative sources of food, income, and pastoral resources, including intensification of labor migration, intensification of transhumance (more animals moving earlier, further than normal), and increased livestock sales. In Burkina and to a lesser extent in Mali, these strategies, combined with an intensification of government and partner support (e.g., subsidized cereal/feed sales, nutritional support, and targeted food/cash distributions) are effectively mitigating most household food deficits. In Nigeria, current government assistance plans are considered insufficient to fully mitigate food deficits, though these deficits are smaller than in other countries.

Households in Niger and Chad have pursued more severe coping strategies than in other parts of the region, including atypical migration of entire households in search of labor (agropastoralists) and to accompany livestock migration (pastoralists). Digging in ant hills for wild grains, a severe coping strategy common to most of the northern Sahel, was widespread in Chad as early as January. Widespread cash and food assistance began in Niger and Chad between April and June, contributing to improved household access and stabilization of cereal prices. Millet price levels in June, however, though largely below real price levels of the recent 2005 crisis, were above the nominal average by approximately 30 percent in Niger and 40-90 percent in Chad. Though market supplies in Niger are near normal due to good integration with, and imports from, surplus-area markets in Nigeria, market supplies in Chad are approximately 30 percent below normal due to poor integration of deficit-area retail markets and national surplus markets. The relatively successful donor and market responses leave only minor deficits in Niger remaining. Deficits in Chad, though half their pre-assistance levels, are expected to remain significant through at least September, requiring additional food and nutritional assistance.

Food security in the region will improve significantly between October and December in view of the favorable outlook for 2010 agropastoral season that is likely to generate normal demand for agricultural labor and normal food availability on markets. However, in Niger and Chad, low labor availability for own-production, high debt levels, and depleted assets, particularly small ruminants, will lead to above-normal and early food insecurity in 2011. Assistance, particularly for income-generation and livelihood support will be needed as early as December in order to prevent severe food security outcomes during the 2011 lean season.

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