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March 1988

FEWS Country Reports

BURKINA, ETHIOPIA and MAURITANIA



Famine Early Warning System
Africa Bureau
U.S. Agency for International Development

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BURKINA, ETHIOPIA and MAURITANIA

Report 20, March 1988

Prepared for the
Africa Bureau of the
U.S. Agency for International Development

Prepared by
Price, Williams & Associates, Inc.



Overview

The Government of **Burkina** (GOB) estimates that 200,000 people are destitute in the northern provinces and another 1.5 million people are at risk of food shortages later in the year. The situation, according to the GOB, is "critical" but not "catastrophic". The donor community has tentatively agreed to supply 16,000 metric tons of food aid to Burkina to cover the serious cereal deficits in the north. In **Ethiopia**, inland distribution of emergency food aid, particularly by road to Tigray Region, continues to lag behind needs. A resolution of the problem is not near. The critical *belg* season rains have begun on time in Wello and Shewa Regions. Although there are sufficient cereal stocks in **Mauritania** to meet 1988 food needs, access to food is uneven across the country. At least 89,000 people are at risk of a food emergency, including villagers in southern Trarza Region and *Akjoujt* Town, malnourished children formerly served by now-closed feeding centers, and at least 5,250 Malian refugees. Unseasonal rains will continue favorable Desert locust breeding conditions in northern areas far beyond expectations.

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Burkina



| | |
|--|---|
| | National Capital |
| | Regional Capitals |
| | International Boundaries |
| | National & Regional Boundaries |
| | Immediate food shortages likely due to extremely poor harvest and limited resources |
| | Poor harvests and localized crop failure due to drought |
| | Pasturage poor and water sources drying up |

0 25 50 75 Miles

0 50 100 Kilometers

FEWS/PWA, March 1988

2

BURKINA

Donor Response Begins

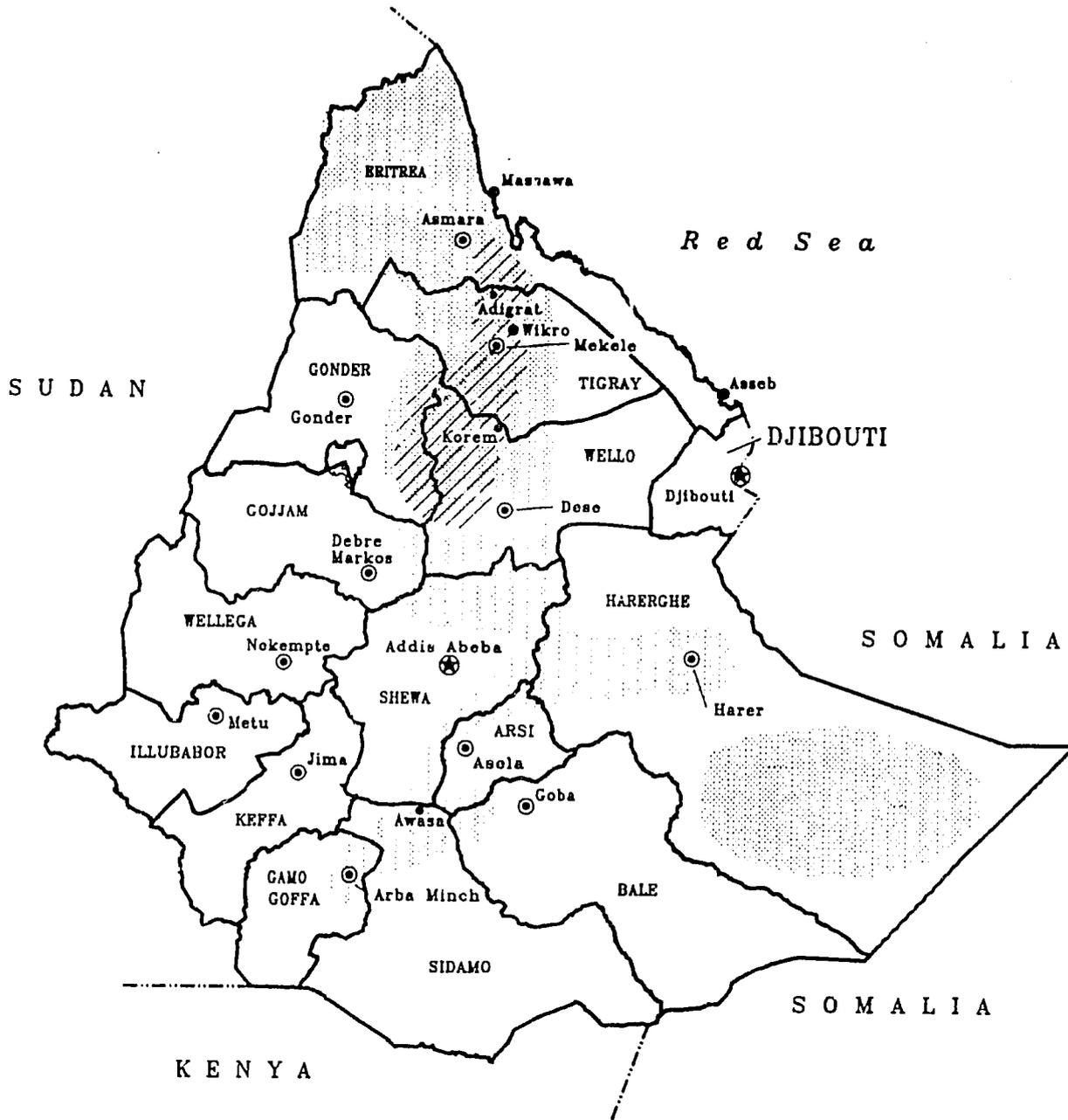


Among the donor community, there is a general consensus that Burkina has a national cereal surplus of close to 190,000 metric tons (MT). The Government of Burkina (GOB), however, reports that there is a 158,000 MT deficit. The GOB cereal balance assumes that on-farm stocks are nil. USAID/Burkina estimates these stocks at 300,000 MT and the World Food Program estimates them at 450,000 MT. Despite the apparent national surplus, donors agree that severe deficits exist in the north (see Summary Map) that are unlikely to be completely met with national resources.

The GOB estimates that 200,000 people are currently destitute (i.e., they have exhausted on-farm stocks and retain little or no purchasing power), and another 1.5 million are at-risk of food shortages later in the year. Field reports from the north suggest that wells are drying up and that cereals, while currently available in the markets, are too expensive for poor people. Interestingly, relief organizations report difficulties in finding people to participate in Food for Work in the north because of the lure of gold-mining.

The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) had stocks of 6,850 MT at the beginning of fiscal year 1988. CRS has requested 3,300 MT for emergency Food for Work programs, and plans to import an additional 15,500 MT during the 1987/88 fiscal year. Total stocks and planned cereal imports for CRS are thus expected to reach 25,650 MT. Other donors have agreed to contribute approximately 16,000 MT of food aid, and to facilitate food distribution to the north. Of this quantity, France has tentatively agreed to support a reduced price sales program for 7,000 MT from the National Cereals Marketing Board security stock, USAID/Burkina will provide 6,000 MT of cereals for sale through local cereal banks as well as free food aid, and the Catholic churches may provide 3,000 MT. This 16,000 MT contribution could meet the cereal requirements of approximately 200,000 people for five months.

Ethiopia



| | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| ⊗ | National Capital |
| ⊙ | Regional Capitals |
| --- | International Boundaries |
| — | National & Regional Boundaries |
| ▨ | Immediate and serious food shortages |
| ▨ | Food shortages late in 1988 |

0 50 100 150 Miles
0 50 100 150 Kilometers

4'

ETHIOPIA

Inland Distribution of Aid Lags



Summary

Although imported emergency food aid has been arriving at an adequate pace, the inland distribution of emergency food aid, especially to Tigray, continues to lag. Road closings, a lack of sufficient trucks, and increased fighting have slowed overland deliveries to a crawl. Some distribution sites in Tigray may have no stocks left. An alleged incident in Korem (Wello Region) in early February has raised fears that the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Ethiopia (GDPRE) voluntary resettlement program may occasionally use force to accomplish its ends. The impact of such a policy would be extremely damaging to current relief activities. The GDPRE reaffirms that its resettlement policy does not embrace forced resettlement and denies reports of recent violence in Korem. The *belg* (Spring) rains, important for a major part of yearly production in Wello and northeastern Shewa Regions, have begun on time. A good *belg* season is critical to lessen this area's dependence on emergency assistance during the rest of 1988.

Voluntary or Forced Resettlement?

On February 8th, in Korem (Wello Region), government troops allegedly rounded up several thousand Tigrayans waiting for food distribution and forced them into trucks destined for southern resettlement sites. Unconfirmed reports suggest that there may have been gunfire, and as many as 20 people may have been shot. The GDPRE denies the incident, but does reaffirm that voluntary resettlement is occurring. The alleged incident raised donor fears that the GDPRE, or local government officials, may still be attempting to rid rebel areas of local populations through a program of forced resettlement, contradicting assurances given previously by the central government.

Although there is no evidence to suggest that the GDPRE policy has changed, even false reports of forced resettlement could have a serious and harmful impact on the orderly distribution of food to those who need it. To this day, rebel groups continue to claim that the GDPRE sometimes uses food distribution as a pretext to gather people for resettlement, particularly in Tigray. The already marginal ability of donors to distribute food to those in need would be adversely affected if people feared distribution centers as potential traps for a forced resettlement program. The local coordinating group for donor agencies and their respective governments requested that the GDPRE investigate the incident and reaffirm its intentions and policies on resettlement.

Food Aid Pledges and Deliveries

Emergency food aid pledges are still 95,000 metric tons (MT) short of the 1,146,719 MT that the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) claims is needed during 1988 (this includes provision for 100,000 of cereal stock to be carried over into 1989). Although questions remain about

cereals pledged by the USSR, latest indications are that the first tranche of 50,000 MT will arrive in the next few months. Internal transport costs will not be borne by the USSR.

Overall, the ports handling imported emergency food aid have performed adequately for current needs. The coming months will be a major test of their capacities, as even larger amounts of emergency and regular food aid and commercial cargoes vie for limited port capabilities. Ethiopia has a bumper crop of critical needs, and sometimes satisfying one impedes the fulfillment of another. This is the case at the port of Asseb, where the discharge of a large quantity of fertilizer has caused a slowdown in moving emergency food aid from the port to key inland distribution points. Asseb is already close to reaching its maximum storage capacity of somewhere around 200,000 MT. On the 19th of February, emergency food stocks alone stood at over 116,000 MT in the port, with an average of less than 700 MT per day leaving for inland distribution points in recent weeks. An additional 70,000 MT of additional emergency aid were expected to arrive in the last two weeks of February. The Massawa port situation has improved recently, with trucks and aircraft carrying over 1,300 MT per day to distribution points, leaving 36,899 MT in port as of February 19th. Because there are few, if any, arrivals of food aid scheduled for Massawa after June, it is possible that some of Asseb's traffic could be re-routed to Massawa during the summer.

Inland Distribution of Food Aid

The GDPRE cannot seem to significantly influence local officials to increase the number of hours that roads around Asmara remain open to transporters of emergency food. The delivery of food from Massawa to Asmara, and then onward to Tigray, has thus slowed to an inadequate level. This situation has worsened because of a rising level of rebel activity in southern Eritrea, and around Adigrat in northern Tigray, leading local officials to be even more reluctant to open roads for transport. Food deliveries by road to Tigray in the first two weeks of February totaled only 675 MT. Secondary food distribution sites (that are supplied by the main centers in Tigray) appear to be the most affected by the slowdown, and there are indications that some of those sites have no remaining stocks. During this same period, 4,000 MT were delivered by the airlift, without which the entire distribution system would experience a major disruption.

The lack of trucking continues, as well, to be a major limitation on delivery of food aid to the people who need it. Currently, donor pledges for truck purchases number 148. While the addition of these trucks to the number already operating in country will be significant, it will not be sufficient. Donors have begun to emphasize the rehabilitation of existing disabled trucks to make an immediate impact on available transport. Plans are already underway to rehabilitate over 300 RRC trucks, and there is discussion on how private trucks might be included in this program. In the face of insufficient trucks and the problems with road closings, agreement is near on continuing the airlift of food through at least the end of 1988. The opening of Wikro airport in the near future will facilitate food deliveries to a critically food-short area.

There appears to be tacit, if yet unofficial, recognition that the number of people requiring emergency food assistance in Ethiopia is closer to 7,200,000 than the 5,200,000 originally specified by the RRC. This increase would raise food aid requirements by more than 200,000 MT.

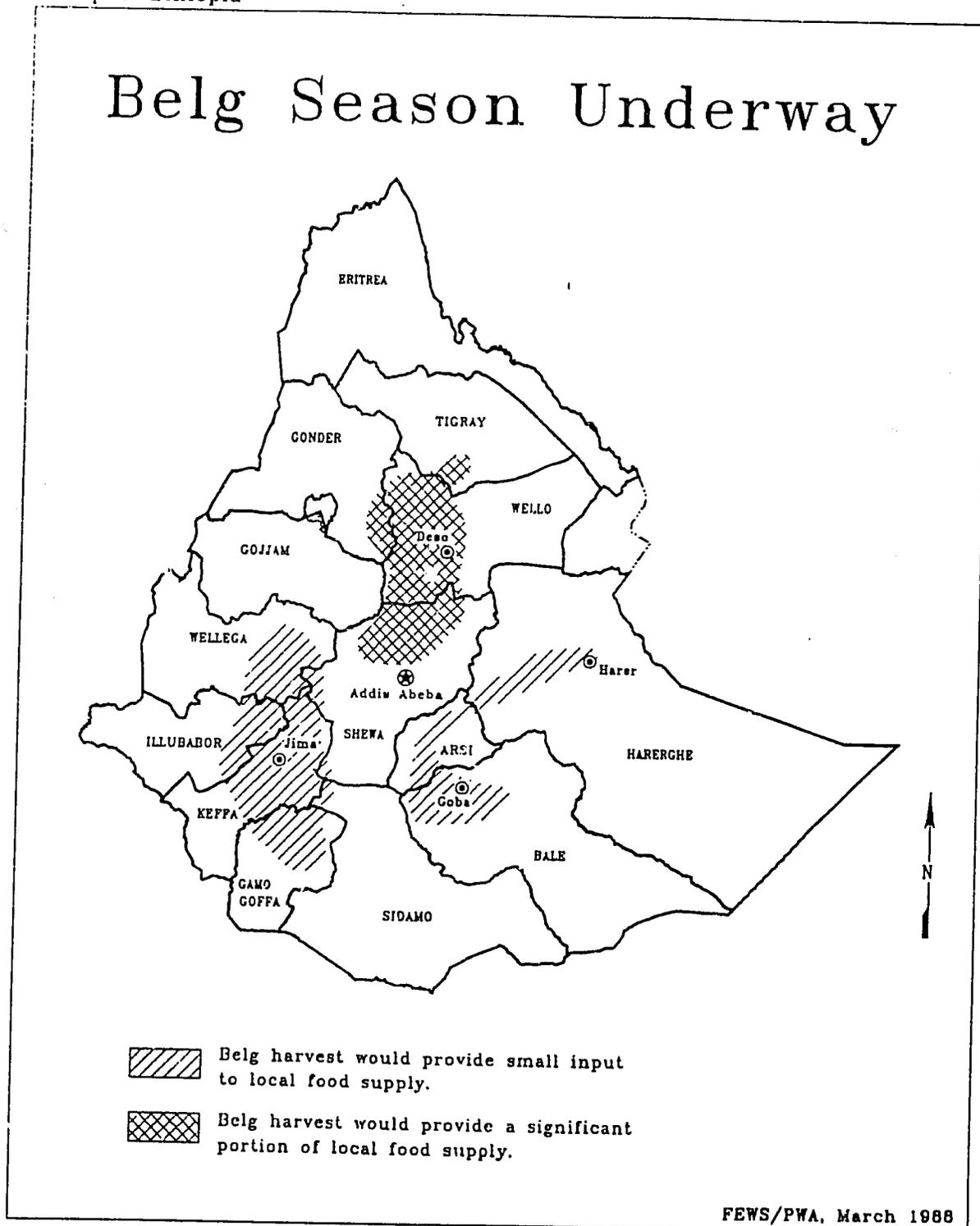
Belg Rains Begin

The *belg* (Spring) rainy season, which affects relatively small areas of the country, particularly Wello, northeastern Shewa, and scattered areas running between Jima and Harer (see Map 2), has begun on time. Although the crops that will be harvested in May and June as a result of these rains may make up only 5 percent of the national harvest, in Wello and northeastern Shewa they account for as much as 50 percent of the local harvests. In both of these areas, particularly Wello, the *belg* harvest is critical this year in

supplementing meager food reserves. A major failure of these rains would have major impact on both areas, and would significantly increase the amount of emergency food aid required in Ethiopia during 1988.

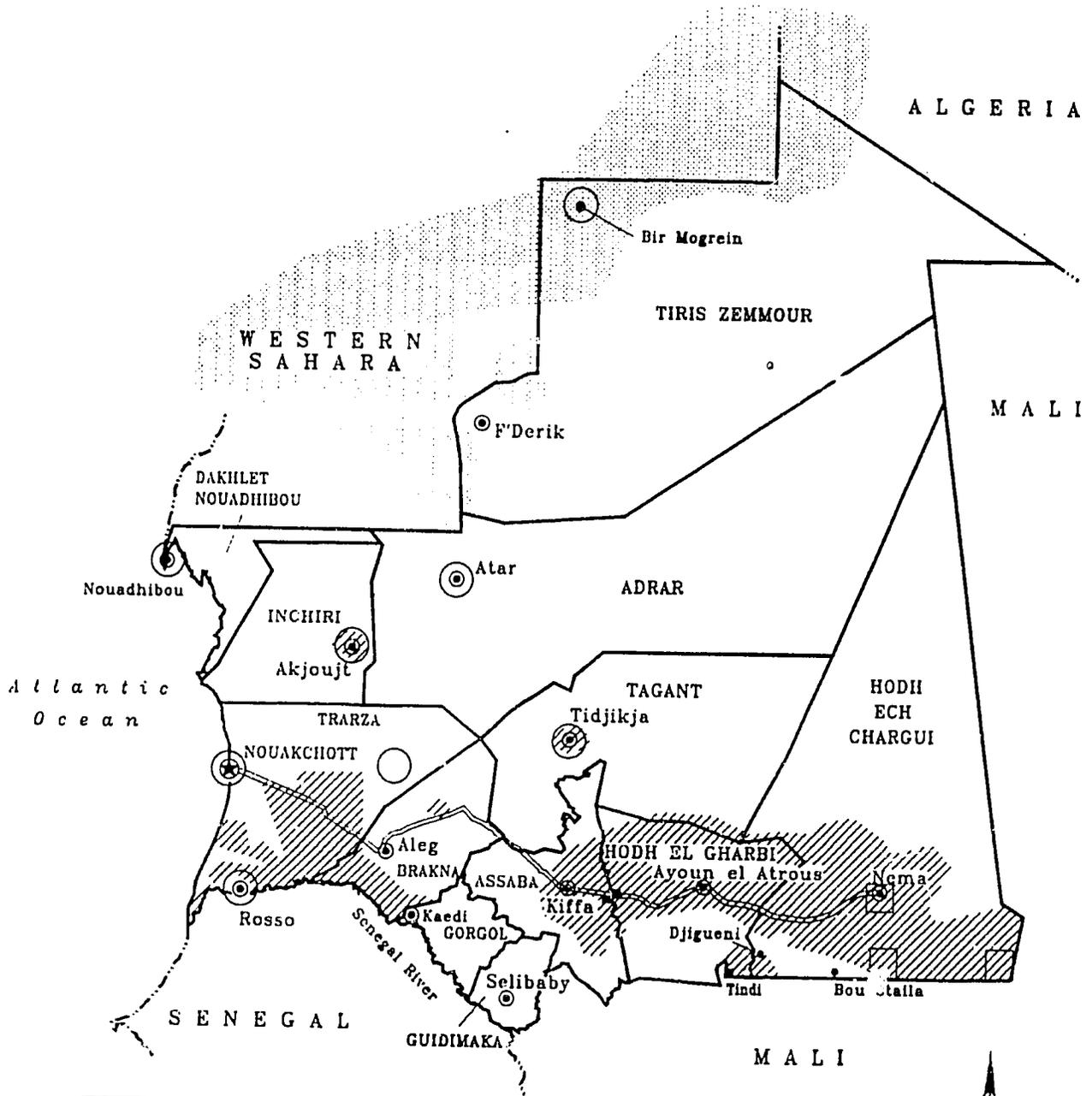
Long-cycle crops like maize and sorghum are also planted in many other areas using the moisture provided by the *belg* rains. If *belg* rains are insufficient or late, the impact would be felt all over Ethiopia, and would compound the effects of last year's poor harvests (see FEWS Ethiopia Report Number 18, December 1987, for a full description of the *belg* season).

Map 2: Ethiopia



Map 1: Summary

Mauritania



| | | |
|--|----------------------------------|------|
| | National Capital | |
| | Regional Capital | |
| | Department Seat | |
| | International Boundaries | |
| | National & Provincial Boundaries | |
| | Road | |
| | Areas of highest vulnerability | |
| | Malian Touaregs seeking aid | |
| | Potential pasture-land | |
| | Areas reporting rain | |



20

MAURITANIA



Rain

Summary

Although Mauritania's net 1987 harvest of 107,000 MT meets less than 35% of the country's food needs, commercial and food aid stock and expected commercial and food aid imports should make up the deficit. Over 89,000 people, including some 5,250 Malians who have migrated to southeastern Mauritania in search of aid, have so far been identified as at risk. Highly unusual, late February rainfall in areas as far east as Tidjikja will continue the favorable Desert locust breeding conditions in northern Mauritania and perhaps expand the area amenable to Desert locust development southward into Nouadhibou, Inchiri and Adrar Regions. Modest Desert locust control measures have been underway since November, but new larval (hopper) bands are being sighted in previously treated areas.

Food Security

High or increasing rates of malnutrition, failure of the flood recession agriculture¹ along the Senegal River, low or non-existent on-farm stocks, crop destruction by grasshoppers, and the unusual influx of Touareg families from Mali into southern Hodh ech Chargui Region are all considered in the identification of at-risk populations in Mauritania. The identified areas of severe child malnutrition remain the same as reported in FEWS Country Report 19 and include: villagers in southern Trarza Region, the 11,290 inhabitants of Akjoujt Town, Inchiri Region, and approximately 10,000 malnourished children formerly fed at now-closed Catholic Relief Services feeding centers.

The areas with populations affected by the 1987 failure of the Senegal River flood lie within 40 kilometers of the river, between Rosso and Kaedi. Most affected are the approximately 60,000 villagers living within 10 kilometers of the river, for whom flood recession agriculture is the primary source of cereals. Because many of these people have on-farm stocks left from previous years' reasonably good harvests, the most severe effects are probably felt only in localized areas.

The area of Hodh el Gharbi previously reported to have severe grasshopper-caused crop damage² apparently has had a decent harvest. Since then, however, another small area around the town of Tindi in Kobenni Department, Hodh el Gharbi Region, is reported to have experienced 100% crop loss from

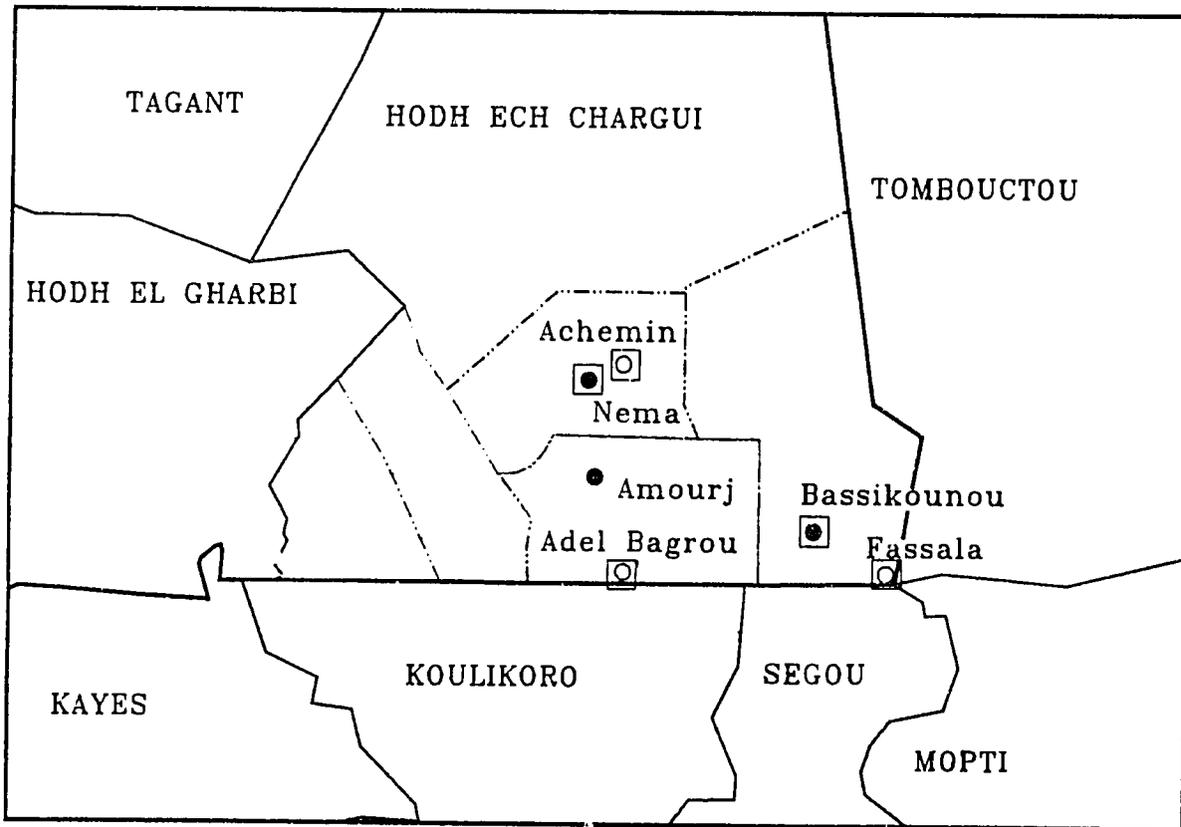
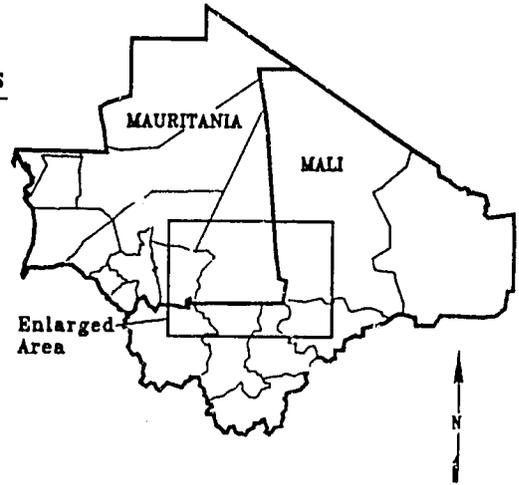
¹In flood recession agriculture, crops are planted in soil left moist by receding river levels. Such crops are generally planted toward the end of the rainy season and harvested from January through March.

²This area is near Djigueni and Bou Ctala, as cited in FEWS Country Report 19.

Displaced Malians in Mauritania

Estimated Number of Refugee Families

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| Nema | 150 |
| Adel Bagrou | 200-245 |
| *Bassikounou & Fassala | 650 |



- Department seat
- Towns
- Areas with Malian Touaregs seeking aid

*A second estimate put the total families at Bassikounou and Fassala at 2,436

Source: Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania Food Security Commission (CSA) and CSA trip report from the chief of the medical service at Mauritania's National Hospital, January 1988

FEWS/PWA, March 1988

10-

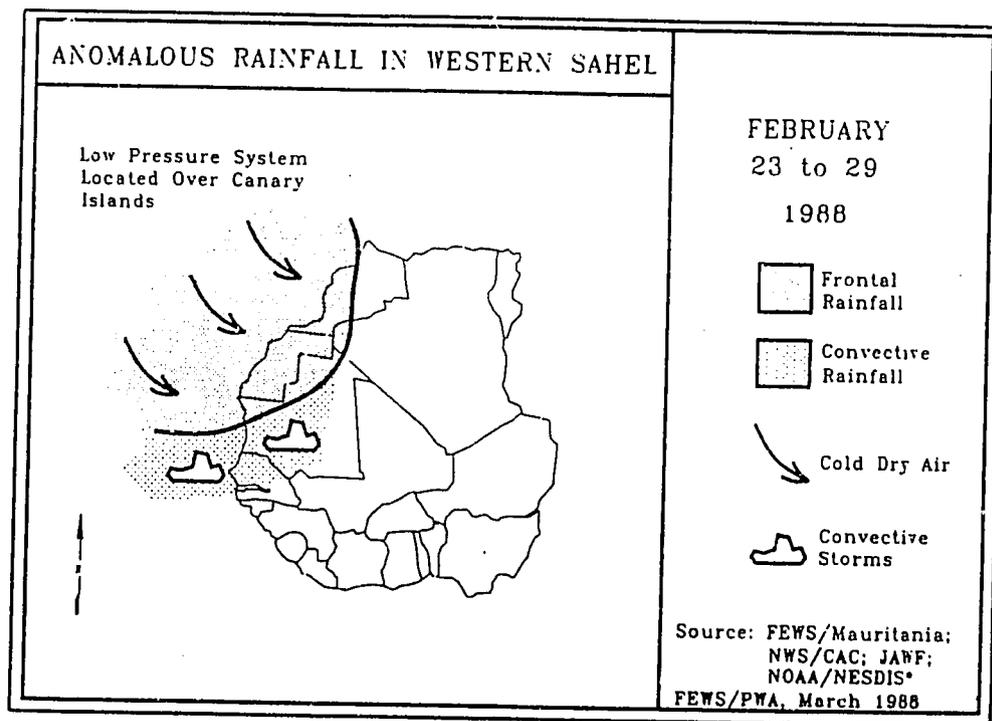
grasshoppers. As many as 2,346 people may be affected by this crop loss. Unlike farmers in the Senegal River valley, farmers here and further east have little or no on-farm stock -- all of the southeast of Mauritania has been far slower to recover from the 1983 through 1984 drought, and farmers there are reported to be heavily in debt to merchants who lent them grain to tide them over during the lean periods.

Touareg populations have moved into southeast Mauritania from Mali and are living in encampments outside the administrative centers of southeastern Hodh ech Chargui Region, with the largest concentration in the area of Fassala (Map 2). It is not unusual for young Touareg men to migrate to southeastern Mauritania for work, but this is the first year that whole families have moved into the area. Tents and some food aid were provided to them by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania's (GIRM) Food Security Commission (CSA), with assistance from France.

Recent Rain and Desert Locusts

There have been reports of rainfall in late February (Map 3), ranging from two millimeters (mm) in Bir Mogrein (in the north of Tiris Zemmour Region) to 40 mm in Nouadhibou (see Map 1 for town locations). The reported rainfall is part of a larger weather system, and has extended south of the Senegal border and as far west as Tidjikja, in Tagant Region. Rainfall in February is highly unusual -- over the past thirty years, such rains have been noted only in 1958 and 1968.

Map 3



* NWS/CAC is the U.S. National Weather Service/Climate Analysis Center; JAWF is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA)/U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Joint Agricultural and Weather Facility; NOAA/NESDIS is the NOAA National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service.

Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) Country Reports

FEWS publishes monthly reports on Burkina, Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, and Sudan. These reports are designed to provide decisionmakers with current information and analysis on existing and potential nutrition emergency situations. Each situation identified is described in terms of geographical extent and the number of people involved, and the proximate causes insofar as they have been discerned.

It is necessary to identify or "target" populations in-need or "at risk" in order to determine appropriate forms and levels of intervention. FEWS reports will employ the term "at risk" to mean...

...those persons lacking sufficient food, or resources to acquire sufficient food, to avert a nutritional crisis (i.e., a progressive deterioration in their health or nutritional condition below the status quo), and who, as a result, require specific intervention to avoid a life-threatening situation.

Perhaps of greatest importance to decisionmakers, the process underlying the deteriorating situation is highlighted by the FEWS effort, hopefully with enough specificity and forewarning to permit alternative intervention strategies to be examined and implemented. Food assistance strategies are key to famine avoidance. However, other types of intervention can be of major importance both in the short term and in the long run, including medical, transport, storage, changes in economic development policy, etc.

Where possible, food needs estimates are included in the FEWS reports. It is important to understand, however, that no direct relation exists between numbers of persons at risk and the quantity of food assistance needed. This is because famines are the culmination of slow-onset disaster processes which can be complex in the extreme. The food needs of individual populations at risk depend upon when in the disaster process identification is made and the extent of its cumulative impact on the individuals concerned. Further, the amount of food assistance required, whether from internal or external sources, depends upon a host of considerations. Thus the food needs estimates presented periodically in FEWS reports *should not* be interpreted to mean food aid needs, e.g., as under PL480 or other donor programs.