

## NIGER Food Security Update

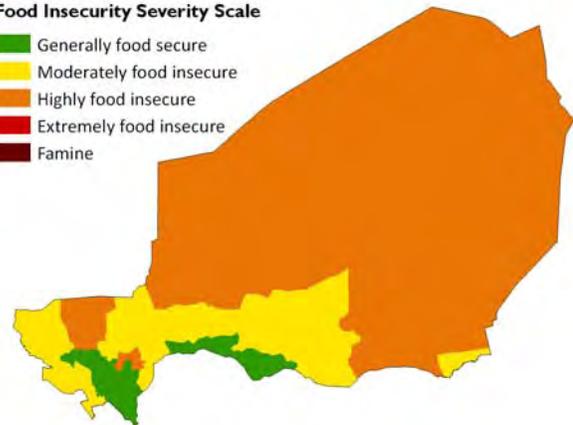
May/June 2008

- The 2008/2009 growing season began with localized rainfall, allowing farmers in some departments to start sowing crops. These regions have reported varying amounts of rainfall since the first dekad of April, with some rainfall gauging stations recording more than 100 mm of precipitation. However, cumulative rainfall totals since this year's start-of-season are below-average in several locations throughout the country's farm belt and agro-pastoral zone.
- The growing season has begun on a troubling note for some poor, food-deficit households. Most residents of the Tillabery region in Loga, Doutchi, Konni, Mirriah, Gouré and Mainé Soroa departments, having already depleted their household reserves, are now facing seed and food access problems, in addition to high prices.
- In general, pasture availability in pastoral areas is adequate due to last year's good pasture production. However, water availability for livestock may be limited, which could delay migration to the north, where rainfall rates are still low. This could trigger disputes between farmers and herders.
- Therapeutic feeding centers are reporting a high incidence of malnutrition in general, and of severe malnutrition in particular. Admissions for May 2008 are up as much as 100 percent in some departments since April. Overall, a total of 17,863 new cases were reported in May, up from the 9,921 cases reported in April, an 80 percent increase. This surge in feeding center admissions is a reflection of food shortages and of typical seasonal deteriorations in health status.

**Figure 1.** Current food security conditions (May/June 2008)

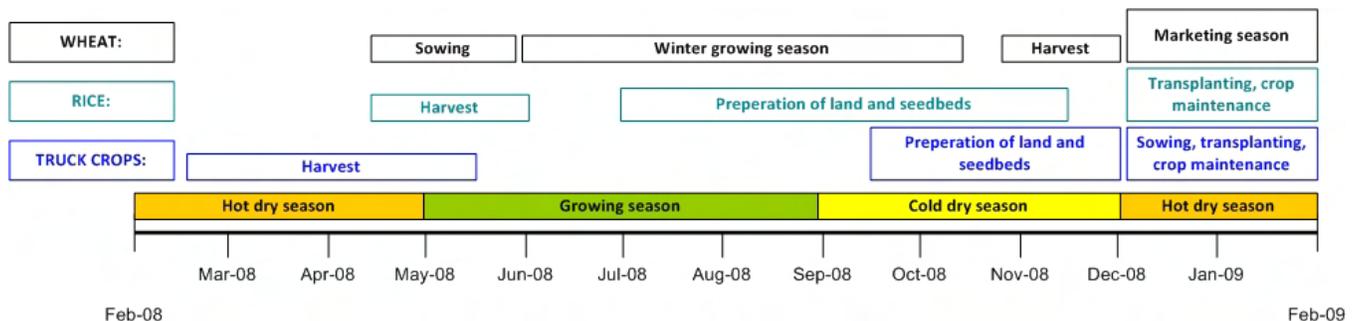
**FEWS NET  
Food Insecurity Severity Scale**

- Generally food secure
- Moderately food insecure
- Highly food insecure
- Extremely food insecure
- Famine



Source: FEWS NET Niger

### Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Source: FEWS NET Niger

### Current food security situation

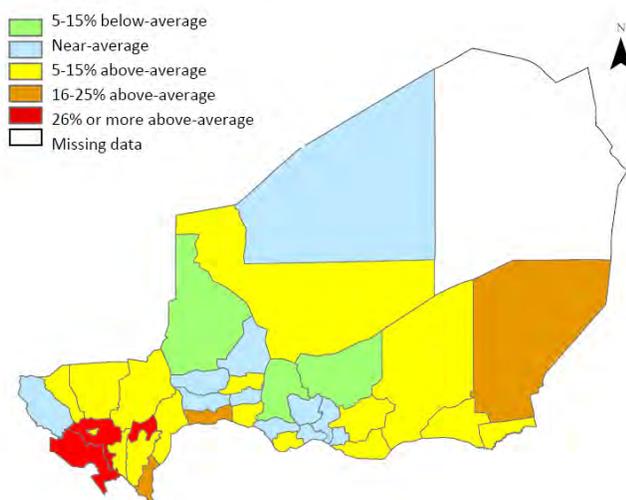
On the whole, food availability and access in May/June are normal for this time of year. However, the situation in the western part of the country (Say, Kollo and Loga departments) is extremely troubling, due to the continuing high prices reported in these areas (Figure 2). The surge in prices on the Say and Kollo markets is largely attributable these market's locations, in what are traditionally major crop-producing areas, which have led them to be almost completely overlooked by government relief programs, despite food shortages. The high prices in Loga are due to a combination of chronic food deficits in this area and a decline in the volume of grain positioned in this area for government subsidy programs. This decline relates to deterioration in road quality that has accompanied the start of the rainy season.

Limited access to grain crops, fruits and vegetables in the wake of the poor harvest of flood-recession crops is reflected in the deterioration in the nutritional situation, particularly for children in Tillabery, Téra, Kollo, Tessaoua, Matameye and Magaria departments.

In general, pasture availability in pastoral areas is adequate due to last year's good pasture production. However, water availability for livestock may be limited, which could delay migration to the north, where rainfall rates are still low. This could trigger disputes between farmers and herders. To remedy this problem, the government will need to ensure that boreholes used for the watering of livestock in these areas, at this time of year, are in good working order.

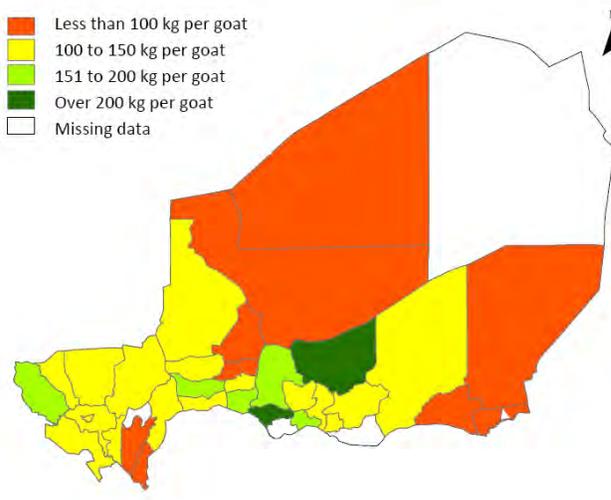
Terms of trade for livestock/grain in pastoral areas of Diffa and Agadez and parts of Tahoua are still detrimental to herders (Figure 3). In fact, pastoral households in the Arlit, Tchirozérine, Abalak, Keita, Mainé Soroa, N'Guigmi and Diffa areas are being classified as moderately food-insecure, having failed to earn enough income from animal sales to purchase adequate grain supplies. This situation, which could further deteriorate, has resulted from the large numbers of animals being sold on area markets by returning migratory herders (as in the Tahoua and Diffa regions) and from security threats (in the Agadez region).

**Figure 2.** Market prices in May of 2008, compared with the 2002/03-2006/07 average



Source: SIMA; Graphic by FEWS NET Niger

**Figure 3.** Terms of trade in May of 2008



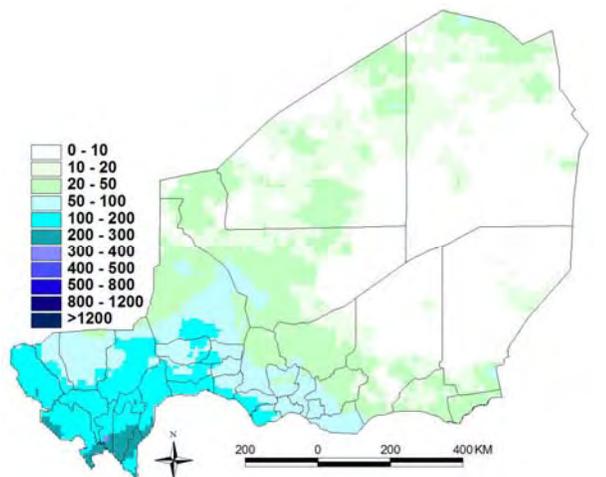
Source: SIMA, SIMB; Graphic by FEWS NET Niger

### Agro-pastoral conditions

#### Seasonal outlook for the 2008-09 growing season

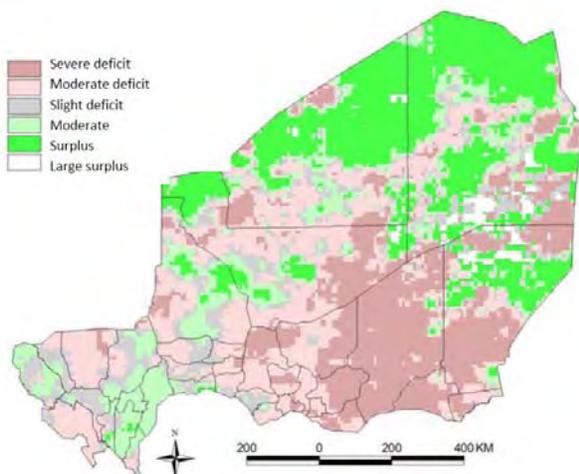
The regional Forum on Seasonal Forecasting and its Application to Early Warning Systems for Food Security in West Africa (PRESA-AO), conducted from May 21<sup>st</sup> through May 23<sup>rd</sup> in Niamey, issued forecasts for the months of July, August and September of this year. According to the forecast for Niger, rainfall conditions in 2008/09 should be similar to conditions in

**Figure 4.** Cumulative rainfall totals (mm) for the period from April 1 to June 20, 2008



Source: NOAA/USGS

**Figure 5.** Cumulative rainfall anomalies compared with the average, June 2008



Source: NOAA/USGS

1999, a year of above-normal rainfall, and the likelihood of a rainfall deficit in the West African subregion is negligible. However, the forecast of a wetter-than-usual rainy season poses some risks, including flooding, desert locust infestations and major outbreaks of water-borne diseases. Accordingly, the Forum recommended stepped-up surveillance for the protection of persons, property, crops, and human health.

The 2008/2009 growing season began with localized rainfall, allowing farmers in certain departments in the Dosso, Maradi, Tillabery, Tahoua and Zinder regions to start sowing crops. These regions have reported varying amounts of rainfall since the first dekad of April, with some rainfall gauging stations recording more than 100 mm of rain (Figure 4). However, cumulative rainfall totals since this year’s start-of-season (the period between the first dekad of April and the second dekad of May of this year) are below-average in several locations throughout the country’s farm belt and agro-pastoral zone (Figure 5). Nevertheless, the growing season is just beginning, and it will be five more weeks (until the end of July) until an accurate assessment of the 2008/09 start-of-season can be made.

Rainfall in the country’s pastoral zone and desert area bodes well for pasture production and the replenishment of watering holes in pastoral areas. However, current environmental conditions, including recent rainfall, are conducive to desert locust development in locust breeding areas of northern Niger (Figure 5). Current civil unrest in this area will hamper monitoring and treatment efforts but despite this challenge, large-scale monitoring and treatment programs should be mounted immediately in pastoral areas in preparation for any outbreaks.

**Preparations for the 2008/09 growing season**

The growing season has begun on a troubling note for some poor, food-deficit households. Most residents of the Tillabery region in Loga, Doutchi, Konni, Mirriah, Gouré and Mainé Soroa departments, having already depleted their household reserves, are now facing seed and food access problems, in addition to high prices. Government agencies involved in different aspects of the growing season (e.g., seed supplies, plant protection, assistance for farmers’ organizations, awareness-raising) are assembling financial and logistical resources and developing field-level monitoring programs. For example, as part of its assistance program for food-insecure population groups, and to help farmers in food-deficit areas adequately prepare for the 2008 growing season, the government of Niger, with partners, has mounted an emergency program to provide farm inputs. The government is also supporting the sale of 2,000 MT of improved millet and sorghum seeds to residents of food-short areas, positioning 480,000 sacks of fungicide in different regions of the country, and mobilizing 16,000 MT of fertilizer through the end of May or beginning of June. Other activities include awareness-raising programs by the National Committee for the Rural Code and land management commissions. These initiatives are designed

to teach respect for grazing lands, and herd movements corridors, as part of efforts to prevent disputes between farmers and pastoralists.

**Markets and Trade**

With the growing season getting underway in some farming areas, there has been a slight improvement in market supplies in May and June of this year, as farmers with surplus crops disposed of their stocks in order to buy other necessary foodstuffs (e.g., salt, oil, powdered milk and other condiments) and farm inputs. With the visible improvement in food supplies and with what, thus far, has been adequate rainfall, prices on most markets are generally stable and, in some cases falling (Figures 6 and 7). However, demand for grain is steadily mounting as a result of the increasing needs of grain-deficit households and because herders are looking to replenish their food reserves in preparation for their seasonal migration.

Strict export requirements, together with good animal body conditions, are keeping livestock prices high, helping to bolster the purchasing power of herders. Figure 8 illustrates that May 2008 prices for bulls are running higher than in either reference period. This price trend could gather strength if the agro-pastoral season develops normally. Moreover, the lulls in grain prices are working to the advantage of livestock markets and improving the income of herders and their families.

For pastoralists, the months of May and June are generally spent traveling back to pastoral areas and building up food reserves. Thus, as usual, there were large numbers of herders frequenting markets in May of this year, which helped increase demand for grain. More importantly, it also boosted market supplies of livestock, particularly small animals, which are generally the first to be sold off to cover the cost of food. This larger supply of small animals is weakening terms of trade, as illustrated in Figure 9. However, in general, this year's price ratios show an improvement over the reference period (2004/2005) as well as the five-year average, confirming the especially good conditions in pastoral areas.

**Nutritional situation**

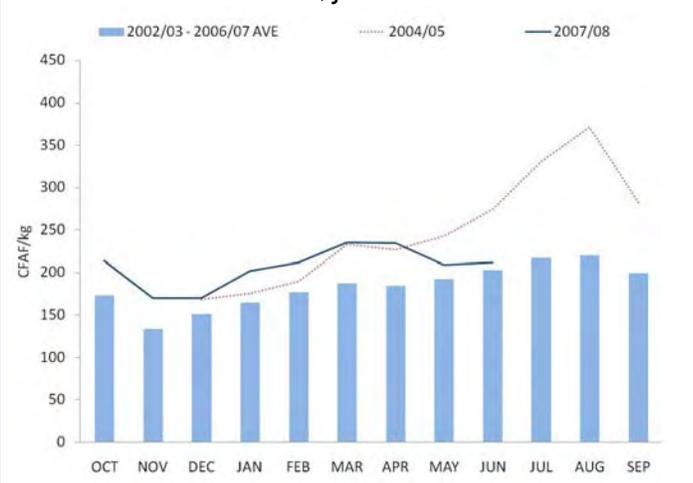
Therapeutic feeding centers are reporting a high incidence of malnutrition in general, and of severe malnutrition in particular. Admissions for May 2008 are up as much as 100 percent in some departments since April (Figure 10). Overall, a total of 17,863 new cases

**Figure 6.** Nominal retail price trends for millet on the Bakin Birgi farmers' market, June 2008



Source: SIMA and FEWS NET Niger

**Figure 7.** Nominal retail price trends for millet on the Ouallam consumer market, June 2008



Source: SIMA and FEWS NET Niger

**Figure 8.** Nominal price trends for bulls on the Abalak market, May 2008



Source: SIMB and FEWS NET Niger

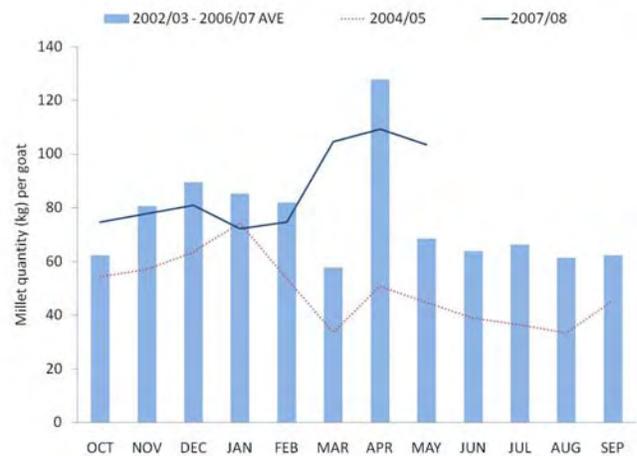
were reported in May, up from the 9,921 cases reported in April, an 80 percent increase.

In June, there was a continued deterioration in nutrition indicators, with admissions rates increasing more than 50 percent in areas typically affected by high levels of malnutrition, such as Magaria, Matameye, Aguié, Tessaoua and Dakoro. The same conditions are being reported in areas like Ouallam, Tillabery, Téra and Kollo which normally experience large seasonal increases in wasting during May and June.

This surge in feeding center admissions is a reflection of typical seasonal deteriorations in health status, poor food access in general and, in particular, limited access to fruits and vegetables (which, while providing various micronutrients required for a balanced diet and normal growth, are rarely eaten), supplies of which are extremely tight and whose prices are extremely high right now, with the end of the growing season for flood-recession crops. A total of 970 cases of meningitis have been reported in Tahoua, Dosso and Tillabery regions, including 44 fatalities, along with 1,168 cases of measles, including two fatalities, primarily in Maradi and Zinder.

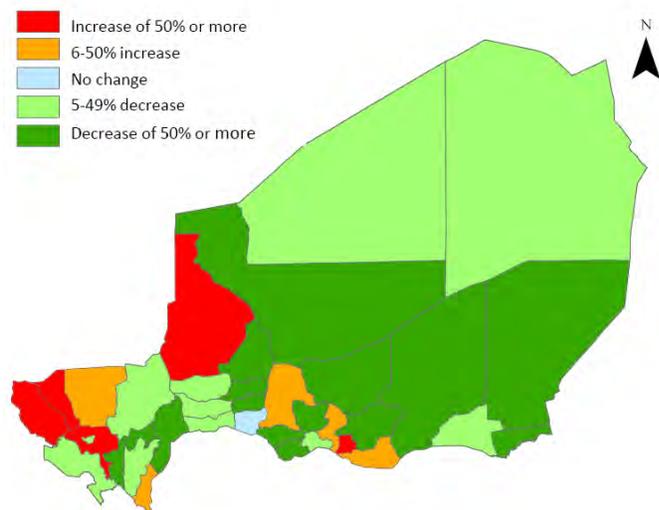
In light of these conditions, emergency programs are needed in areas like Téra, Tillabery, Tchintabaraden, Magaria, Matameye, Tessaoua and Dakoro, where the situation is extremely critical. The programs should be paralleled by development programs designed to bolster the livelihoods of at-risk groups. These activities should also focus on stepping up vaccination campaigns against measles and meningitis, micronutrient supplementation (vitamin A, iron and zinc), control programs for malaria and diarrheal diseases, regular parasite control programs, and the improvement of the maternal and child health and nutrition components of IMCI (Integrated Management of Child Health) and Reproductive Health programs.

**Figure 9.** Trends in millet/goat terms of trade on the N'Guigmi market, May 2008



Source: SIMA, SIMB and FEWS NET Niger

**Figure 10.** Therapeutic feeding center admissions in May 2008 compared with May of 2007



Source: DSSER, FEWS NET Niger