

BURKINA FASO Food Security Outlook Update

March 2011

Grain prices are stable due to grain reserves and off-season cropping

Key Messages

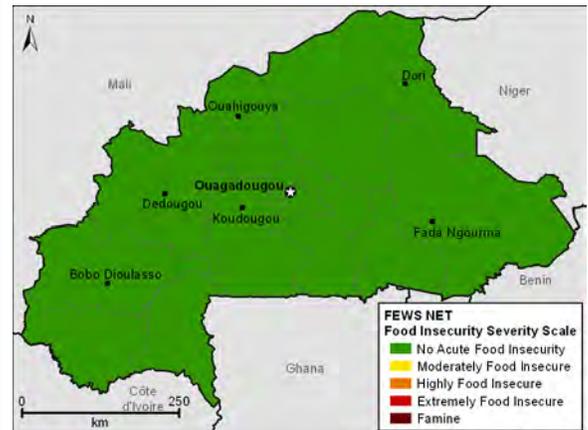
- Very poor and poor households are not facing acute food insecurity in any of the country's livelihood zones thanks to what, in most cases, are average to good grain reserves and income from market garden crops and/or off-season crops.
- Average to good pastoral conditions and the good physical condition of livestock are helping pastoralists rebuild their herds. With the comparatively small supply of animals and average to good supplies of grain, terms of trade for livestock-grain are still in favor of pastoralists.
- The crisis in Cote d'Ivoire could have a significantly negative effect on the food security situation of very poor and poor households dependent on cash remittances from that country, particularly in livelihood zone 4 (West cereals and remittances).

Updated food security outlook through June 2011

The final production figures for the 2010/11 crop year show a one million metric ton (MT) grain surplus, confirming the good outlook for the 2011 consumption year. For the most part, the majority of very poor and poor households are not yet facing acute food insecurity. Households in crop-producing areas in the western reaches of the country still have large food reserves, leaving traders with marketable inventories for the provisioning of livelihood zones 7 (North and east livestock and cereals) and 8 (North transhumant pastoralism and millet), and other normally grain-deficit areas (Figure 3). In spite of the record harvests for the 2010/11 agropastoral season, certain very poor and poor households in these areas are currently dependent on local markets for their grain supplies. In fact, the low reserves of certain poor households in livelihood zone 8 (North transhumant pastoralism and millet) will not even last until the beginning of April, which is not normally the case in an average year.

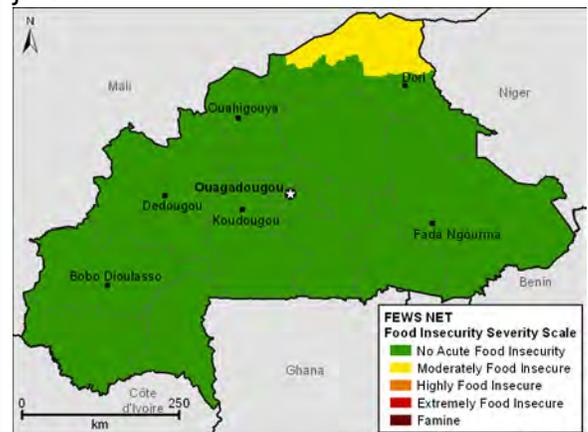
As mentioned in the outlook for January through June, the continuing post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire is affecting the prices of certain consumer goods (oil, soap, etc.). There are some 1.6 million people living in areas dependent on remittances from Côte d'Ivoire as an important source of income. In time, this crisis could undermine the food security of very poor and poor households in areas with close ties to that country, particularly livelihood zone 4 (West cereals and

Figure 1. Most likely food security outcomes, March 2011



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Most likely food security outcomes, April-June 2011



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

This report is an update of the January 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook assessing food security conditions for the period from January through June 2011. The next Outlook report for the period from May through September 2011 will be released in May.

remittances), where migrant remittances account for 30 percent of the yearly incomes of households in all wealth groups. In fact, the flow of cash remittances to households highly dependent on relatives working on plantations and in other industries in Côte d'Ivoire is declining with the disruption of that country's economy. Moreover, mass return migration by Burkinabès living in Côte d'Ivoire could force relatives back home in the village to start drawing earlier than usual on food supplies reserved for use during the farming season. However, as suggested in the outlook for January through June, this could simply be a localized problem, with no effect on the operation of markets and the food security of most very poor and poor households.

Harvests of market garden crops and off-season crops are helping to improve market supplies of crops and are generating substantial amounts of income for farmers in market gardening areas. They are also helping to improve the quality of household diets for all wealth groups.

The good level of market supplies is attributable to the unloading of on-farm inventories and the rising inventory levels of traders, who have been buying grain crops in rural markets and increasing their grain inventories in urban markets with a view to bidding on institutional procurements by the National Food Security Reserve Management Enterprise (SONAGESS). There is still only a limited flow of local grain trade due to low demand in structurally-deficit areas of the North and the Sahel (livelihood zones 7 and 8). However, trade flows from western surplus areas (livelihood zones 2, 3, and 4) to grain-short areas should pick up by the beginning of April with the steady growth in market demand between April and June.

In spite of ongoing procurements, there have been no sharp drops or rises in prices since last month. Prices are stable due, in part, to good grain availability in domestic markets, as well to the small volume of institutional procurements of grain by SONAGESS (6,000 MT). Prices are lower than they were at the same time last year. Current price levels are approximately 13 percent above the five-year average in all markets, with the exception of Djibo. Millet prices are expected to rise by approximately 12 percent between February and June of this year (in contrast to the normal decline in prices or price stability during this period). Despite their comparatively high levels, prices should still be affordable for most very poor and poor market-dependent households.

The seasonal deterioration in the condition of natural pastures (green plant cover, crop residue, and fodder supplies) is beginning to undermine the physical condition of animals, which have been in good shape since June/July of last year. The lack of drinking water for livestock in certain areas is heightening this problem and beginning to trigger normal internal migratory movements within livestock-raising areas and out-migration to Togo and Ghana. Terms of trade for livestock-grain are still favorable to pastoralists. A whole Sahelian goat in good condition is selling for the equivalent of more than one sack of millet. However, this is hindering the efforts of very poor and poor households, which have lost part of their livestock to last year's floods and harsh lean season in pastoral areas, to rebuild their herds (through purchasing). Thus, the poor are relying on higher birthing rates to rebuild their livestock herds.

The results of the second national Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) nutritional survey conducted in August and September of last year by the Ministry of Health put the prevalence of global acute malnutrition (based on the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) weight-for-height standard) at 10.5 percent for the country as a whole, with a severe malnutrition rate of 1.5 percent. The values of these variables in potential problem areas are above these countrywide figures.

Figure 3. Livelihood zone map



Source: FEWS NET

Most very poor and poor households in **livelihood zone 7 (North and east livestock and cereals)** are not yet facing acute food insecurity thanks to the good harvests in this area in spite of localized flooding problems. In fact, on-farm production by poor households is covering their basic food needs. Some households are buying part of their food supplies or saving their earnings from sales of market garden crops or off-season crops or their income from sales of cash crops (cowpeas, groundnuts, earth peas, and sesame) for future food purchases. This is helping in preserving food reserves for the start of the farming season in June.

The normal seasonal decline in water availability for animals and market garden crops and off-season crops is limiting livestock-raising and farming activities and reducing demand for local labor. This reversal in reported trends over the past few months (from high demand for labor and good water availability) is triggering migration by youth to local gold washing sites and by livestock to normal seasonal grazinglands for transhumant herds in this part of the country.

With over 60 percent of last year’s flood victims concentrated in this area, the main concern of local households receiving different types of assistance from the government and its partners is the rebuilding of their homes and livelihoods. In fact, most flood-stricken households have concentrated on rebuilding their damaged homes, determined to have them completed before the start of the next rainy season in mid-May. Continuing aid from partner organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), Alliance Technique pour l'Assistance au Développement (ATAD), etc. should enable very poor and poor target households to restore their livelihoods through cash-for-work activities or to rebuild their livestock herds through grants of breeding animals.

Current food security conditions for most very poor and poor households in the far northern reaches of the country in **livelihood zone 8 (North transhumant pastoralism and millet)** are comparable to conditions in an average to good year. These households are able to meet their basic food needs by pursuing their normal livelihoods (raising livestock in good physical condition, labor migration, gold mining activities, sales of small animals, etc.).

Terms of trade are favorable to local pastoralists. However, certain very poor and poor households impacted by last year’s floods and lean season in pastoral areas, which are already relying on local markets to purchase grain, will require assistance to supplement their food supplies as of the beginning of April (which marks the start of this year’s lean season for pastoral populations in this area). This assistance could be provided by the usual government-subsidized grain marketing program and the normal assistance programs conducted by the country’s food security partners.

Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline

