

BURKINA FASO Food Security Outlook

May through September 2011

In April and May, FEWS NET is transitioning its classification system from the FEWS NET Food Insecurity Severity Scale to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification's (IPC) Household-based Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, which is scheduled for release with IPC version 2 in July 2011. For more information see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale.

Key Messages

- Globally, household food security will be good for the entire country during the scenario period. However, in the areas of concern, the Sahel and a portion of the North and East, very poor households will fall into Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity in August, the lean season peak. Food assistance needs will be lower than last year and even below normal.
- Livestock prices will remain high during the entire period, and even beyond the outlook, due to the relatively short pastoral lean period, favorable outlooks for the agricultural season and the strong demand for meat locally, and especially in coastal countries. The resumption of livestock sales to Côte d'Ivoire in May will bolster this situation. The terms of trade for livestock/grain will continue to favor livestock farmers.

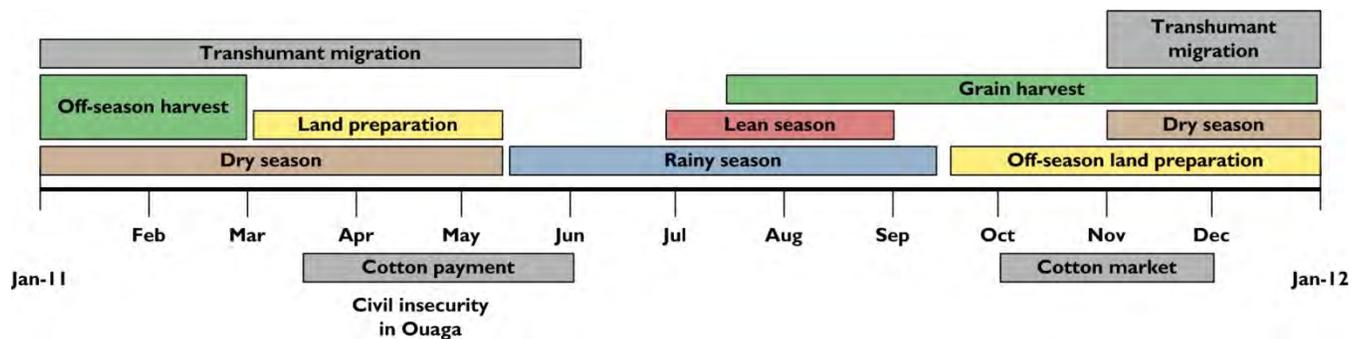
Figure 1. Current estimated food security outcomes, May 2011



Source: FEWS NET

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

Seasonal calendar and timeline of critical events



Source: FEWS NET

Most likely food security scenario, May through September 2011

The agricultural dry season (October to March/April), which is virtually complete, was satisfactory in terms of production and provided substantial income for agricultural workers and producers. In view of the rainfall already recorded in April, and in accordance with the seasonal calendar, now is the time to prepare the fields for rainfed crops and the first planting.

Household food security is good, overall, in all regions of the country. This situation is justified in part by the good production recorded in 2010, which improved household reserve levels, thereby extending the home consumption period. Food-producing stores are good to average in middle-income and wealthy households, but low in many poor households of

the livelihood zones 7 and 8 (Figure 2). In both of these zones, some towns have satisfactory community reserves, built in part with support from certain partners. With the exception of school lunch programs, there is no direct food assistance for the populations. In addition, the sales at supported prices usually initiated by the government have yet to begin because of the update underway in zones at risk for food insecurity.

The markets in these zones are generally well-stocked by traders from production originating from the western and southern parts of the country. Prices, which have remained stable over the last two months, and lower than the same period last year, favor access to grains for households dependent on the market for their current nutritional needs. This access is also made possible for middle-income and wealthy households through the sale of livestock, earnings from trade, etc., and for the poor, through income from gold washing, selling wood, providing services, etc. However, the use of family labor for the field preparations underway reduces opportunities for generating income to purchase staple foods. Therefore, for a majority of the poor households surveyed, the lean period is progressively taking hold this month of May.

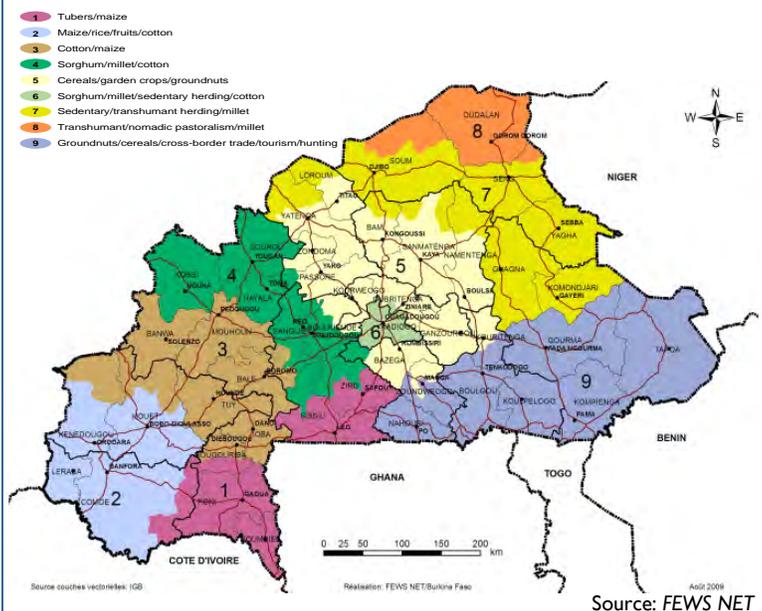
In response to the recent social crises, the government has taken steps to reduce the price of certain staple goods such as rice, oil and sugar beginning May 9th and continuing for three months. These reductions are XOF 80/kg of rice, XOF 75/liter of oil, and XOF 100/kg of sugar. These government interventions primarily consist of payment in kind and in cash when a portion of the stock is not worth a bag. These interventions began on May 18th in the city of Ouagadougou, once the traders' initial stocks were known. In other regions of the country, the new prices are not in effect due to trader distrust and weak oversight.

The National Food Security Reserve Management Company (SONAGESS) was also called into action. It established charter shops in Ouagadougou where a 25 kg bag of local rice sells for XOF 7,500, compared with XOF 9,500 to 11,000 on the open market. In the next few days, SONAGESS plans to supply the charter shops with corn, corn flour, couscous, beans, millet and sorghum packaged in 50 kg bags. Charter shops pose a risk of discouraging the sale of products on the open market, thereby creating artificial shortages. Local grain prices were not affected by any similar measures since their levels are considered affordable.

In livestock-raising zones, the food situation for animals is satisfactory despite the seasonal short supply of pastures and watering places, except in the Soum province. In this province, good pastoral production in 2010 did not prompt transhumant animals to leave, although the concentration of animals created pressure on the pastures and watering places, and accelerated their deterioration. Animal feed sales at subsidized prices in March in the Soum province involved the remainder of 2010 stock. In addition, animal feed sales at subsidized prices for livestock farmers were virtually nonexistent this year, compared with the previous year, when their requirements were relatively high. The good weight condition of the animals, combined with good grain availability for households since the previous harvests, has reduced the animal supply on the markets in the face of heightened demand overall, in particular in coastal countries. Therefore, livestock prices, which have remained virtually stable since last December, favor livestock farmers. The resumption of livestock sales to Côte d'Ivoire will bolster this situation. The terms of trade for livestock/grains remain favorable to the latter.

The nutritional situation remains a concern in the area. According to the August/September 2010 SMART survey results, the prevalence of acute malnutrition, which was 14.7 percent in 2009 in the Sahel region, remained basically unchanged in the same period in 2010.

Figure 2. Livelihood zone map

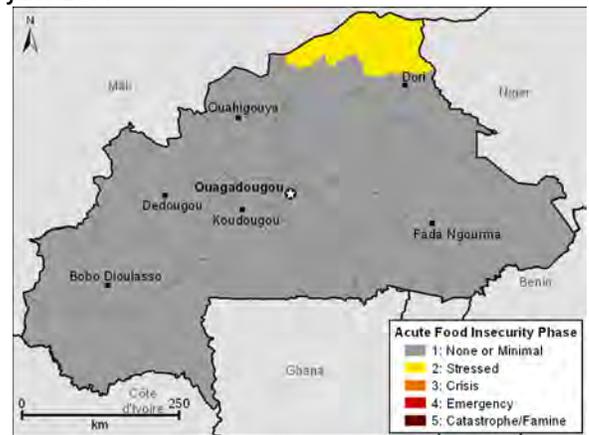


The most likely food security scenario is based on the following general hypotheses:

- Normal establishment of the rainy season in May-June in the South and West, and in June-July in the Central Zone and the North. This hypothesis will mean the corresponding drawing down of grains by traders, and large producers from the West toward the northern and central zones, which are home to the deficit towns, among others, an increase in the acreage planted in grains, pasture legumes and other food-producing products, and normal regeneration of the grass cover.
- Normal to abundant seasonal cumulative rainfall during the 2011/12 winter season, according to global meteorological forecasts. This will translate into normal the development of crops and pastures between July and September, and good water availability for animals, human needs and irrigation of dry season crops. Agricultural production, beginning in September with the harvest of yams in the South and green grain harvests throughout the country, will also be normal to good (at least equivalent to the average of the last five years), thereby supporting food security in the agricultural surplus zones and normal grain supplies for deficit zones in the North and East, beginning with the harvests in October.
- The increase in the price of cotton (from XOF 210/kg in 2010/11 to XOF 245/kg in 2011/12) will have no major impact on production since the price of inputs (especially fertilizer) will remain high. Despite the lower prices granted by cotton companies for fertilizer, levels remain high for producers, which could reduce the amounts to be purchased, leading to lower yields for corn, which also uses cotton fertilizer. Production may surpass the average, however, thanks to the increased acreage.
- Grain sales at supported prices will likely take place in July, August and part of September in zones at risk for food insecurity, at prices 40 to 45 percent below market, as usual.
- Unusual informal restrictions will affect external flows of grains, thereby permitting normal to good grain availability on all the country's markets during the outlook period.
- The seasonal rise in grain prices in structurally deficit areas of the northern part of the country will be less substantial than the same period last year and similar, overall, to the average of the last five years until July. Beginning in late July-early August, the start of the Muslim Ramadan period, the increase will be more substantial for millet, in particular, which is the grain in highest demand during this period.
- The normal nutritional and health assistance programs will continue, and the annual peak in admissions of undernourished patients will occur between July and September.
- The availability of non-wood forest products (NWFP) and other harvested products will be normal due to their reconstitution between June and September.
- In the Sahel, central-northern and eastern zones of the country hit by flooding in 2010, the households affected have not fully recovered their livelihoods. As a reminder, the assessment made by the Burkinabè Red Cross in these zones listed 114,941 people affected among 13,608 households. Cash transfer activities initiated by partners of the World Food Programme (WFP) and Action Against Hunger (ACF) should protect and restore the livelihoods of about 13,000 households (12,200 by the WFP and 800 by ACF).

In general, while the northern transhumant livestock -raising and millet zone (zone 8) risks food insecurity for a longer period, in terms of space and human population, the northern and eastern livestock-raising and grain-growing zone (zone 7) presents more issues (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Most likely food security outcomes, May-June 2011



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 4. Most likely food security outcomes, July-September 2011



Source: FEWS NET

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

Northern and eastern livelihood zone for livestock raising and grain crops (zone 7)

Household stores among the middle-income and wealthy are at good levels, whether they originate from their own production of the previous agricultural season or purchases made locally to rebuild reserves. Some of these households that still have reserves prefer to obtain supplies from the markets for their current consumption, thereby saving their reserves for the lean period. In poor and very poor households, food-producing reserves are low or nonexistent for some, as usual for the period. Nevertheless, the normal stocking of markets by traders from the western and southern zones of the country combined with the level being relatively similar to five-year nominal price average ensure access to them. In fact, while households consider prices high compared with their buying power, they are virtually stable compared with the previous month and lower than the same period last year. The poor's access to grains is made possible by income generated through the sale of livestock, fuel wood, gold washing, shopkeeping, agricultural work and various services provided throughout the zone. Poor households have access to two daily meals as usual for the period. However, milk availability is low, but normal. Sales at supported prices by the government and other partners have yet to begin, in view of the continued satisfactory food situation in the zone.

The good quality of the 2010/11 winter season led to a normal (February to March) to late (April) departure for transhumance this year. The destinations are Mali for the northwestern portion of the zone, and neighboring coastal countries (Ghana and Togo) for the northern and eastern portion of the zone. Local pastoral conditions are satisfactory despite the dry season. Livestock prices (cattle and goats overall), which have not suffered the usual appreciable decrease since last December (10 to 18 percent instead of 10 to 29 percent according to the nominal five-year average), give livestock farmers better access to staple grains.

The predominant agricultural activity underway is field preparation, although some isolated early sowing has already been reported in the zone. In this geographic area of interest, the normal start of the rains in June will lead to drawing down of grains by traders and larger producers from the production zones, with the consequent regular supplies to the main markets (regional and provincial). Supplies for secondary markets in the area of interest will be average between July and September due to the reduced accessibility of some towns and the normal boost in demand, thereby contributing to the seasonal surge in prices. Poor and very poor households will be greatly dependent upon the market for their supplies. The seasonal price increase propelled by the heightened demand to pay for field work and consumption needs during the Muslim Ramadan in August will be small compared with the same period last year. Poor and very poor households will have average access to provisions in July and poor access in August, the lean period peak. Beginning in July, the procurement of provisions will be ensured through the sale of livestock for those with a sufficient quantity, or the sale of harvested products and milk obtained in exchange for tending herds, payments in kind or cash for agricultural labor or loans. For the most part, these households will have to use non-wood forest products and other harvested products to supplement grains, which will be consumed in slightly smaller quantities.

An increase in the acreage planted is also likely, with an emphasis on pasture legumes and sesame, in view of the positive marketing of these products. The demand for agricultural labor by middle-income and wealthy households will be stronger than usual so that field work is carried out in a timely manner, and it will enable poor households to obtain income that is average to 15 percent higher than normal.

The good rainfall expected will favor the strong development of crops and natural pastures, filling of groundwater levels and replenishment of the water table. Agricultural production will be robust, in particular yields for crops such as cowpeas, earth peas, peanuts and sesame, thereby increasing producer income from sales. The food and nutritional situation will be enhanced by the availability of green products beginning in September, and harvests starting in October. The good availability of water in ponds and other retaining reservoirs will be favorable to watering livestock and the intensification of dry season crops commencing in October. Agricultural laborers may see their income increase due to the heightened demand for labor at a time when auriferous sites are the main allure for young people. Flooding, which may occur locally, will result in the loss of household and trader reserves, destruction of housing and/or production infrastructure, and render certain towns inaccessible with the consequent reduced stocking of markets until September. In a year of exceptional flooding, around 10 percent of the population in the zones affected is harmed. The proportion of people impacted by flooding in 2011/12 is expected to be lower. The upswing in the price of staple grains may be greater than elsewhere, reducing the access of poor and very poor households, exposing them to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity in August.

The regeneration of natural pastures beginning in July will provide better food availability for small ruminants, and enable the return of transhumant animals to the base zones. The good production of natural pastures favors proper livestock feeding and progression toward more satisfactory animal body weights. Local milk availability will rise until-beyond October and generate income for some poor and very poor households as a portion of the payment for tending animals, improved feeding through the consumption of milk, return to normal operation of mini-dairies, which creates jobs for young retailers and considerable profits for the female members of groups managing the mini-dairies. In view of this favorable situation for livestock and humans, animal prices will remain high until-beyond the outlook period. The terms of trade for livestock/grains will continue to favor livestock farmers.

Government sales at supported prices in towns identified as at-risk for food insecurity, and sales of community reserves will take place from July-August until mid-September in order to facilitate access by the poor. To assist with rainfed production, the government and its partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Christian Aid, OXFAM, ACF, etc. will provide inputs (improved seeds, fertilizer and agricultural equipment) to vulnerable households at no charge. Households affected by the 2010 flooding are the priority target of the aid through the partners, in the framework of recovery and rehabilitation programs in these areas. Beginning in October, these production support activities will be geared more toward the dry season production.

The adaptation strategies employed by households to ensure their feeding during the lean period (June through mid-September) slightly erodes the livelihoods of the majority of poor households. The latter and a portion of middle-income households from towns that saw major decreases in production in 2009/10, livestock losses due to starvation during the same year and flooding in 2010/11 have not fully recovered their livelihoods despite the strong yields of 2010/11. However, the reduction in the number of meals, which will be seen in some poor households, will not seriously compromise their health. Middle-income to wealthy households will not experience food deficits during the scenario period. High livestock prices will ensure their easy access to staple grains. The heightened food insecurity in this zone will be in the “under pressure” phase in August. The availability of green products beginning in September and harvests beginning in October will reduce the dependence of poor and very poor households on markets in order to obtain grain, with the consequence of few turning to the sale of animals. This second satisfactory agricultural season will enable pastoral households to further rebuild their livestock through births.

Table I. Less likely events in the next six months that could change the scenarios above.

Zone	Event	Impact on food security conditions
National	Weak development of the rainy season	Agricultural production in surplus zones below normal, lack of pastures and forage, retention of stocks, reduced food availability on markets and in households, compared to normal conditions, decreased labor demand and reduced income of poor and very poor households, increased or even soaring price of grains and other foodstuffs commencing in July, decline in accessibility by the poor. Poor pastoral conditions in livestock-raising zones, increased supply of animals and reduced animal prices.
National	Severe flooding in the western and southern production zones similar to 2007	Household and trader stock losses, reduced transfers of provisions to northern deficit zones, price increases, reduced accessibility, deterioration of the food and nutritional situation.