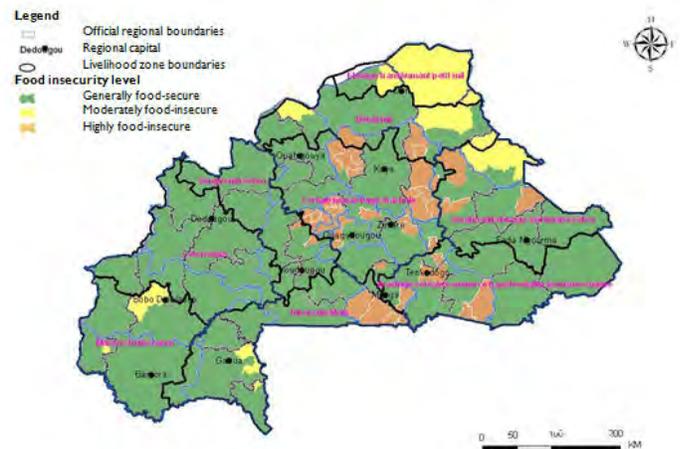


## BURKINA FASO Food Security Update

May/June 2008

- Season-long national weather forecasts for July, August and September point to a wetter than normal rainy season throughout most of the country. As a result, the government will need to take appropriate preventive measures throughout the rainy season, between May and September, given the risk of flooding in different farming regions.
- Current farming activities range from land preparation to sowing, depending on rainfall totals since the beginning of the rainy season in May.
- The arrival and accommodation by the Burkinabè government of a thousand or so Tuareg refugees in May, mostly from Mali, in the country's Central and Sahelian regions, could signal a new influx of refugees should fighting intensify in Mali and Niger.

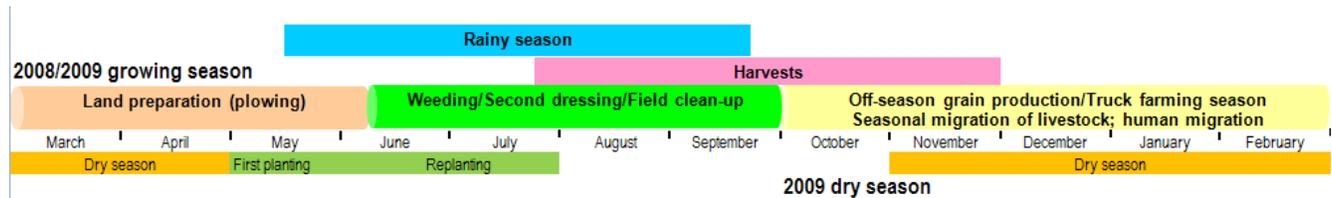
**Figure 1.** Current estimated food security conditions, June 2008, by department



Source: FEWS NET Burkina Faso

- The current household food security situation is challenging, with day-to-day problems engendered by the steep hikes in prices for basic necessities. Monitoring data for food-insecure areas identified at the end of last year's growing season shows a number of departments experiencing serious problems given the steadily rising prices, even with ongoing government measures (e.g., subsidized grain sales and farm inputs) (Figure 1).
- Market supplies in most regions of the country are fairly good, and households are relying on the market for part of their food supplies. The steady rise in grain prices in grain-deficit, food-insecure areas will likely mean a difficult lean period (July through August) for high-risk households.
- New plant cover in grazing areas is a good first step towards improving the feeding situation for small animals. Large animals are still emaciated due to the inadequacy of new vegetative growth, in the form of annual grasses, to meet their food needs and the shortage of agro-industrial byproducts, used as supplementary feedstuffs, due to their high market prices.

### Critical events timeline



Source: FEWS NET Burkina Faso

## Current food security situation

The current food security situation is characterized by low to good grain availability and inventory, depending on the livelihood zone in question.

There is good on-farm grain availability in the country's major grain-producing regions, consisting of livelihood zones dependent on corn production (in the West) and the livelihood zone dominated, in part, by sorghum, millet and cotton farming activities. The exceptions are those departments affected by flooding, pockets of drought during the rainy season and the abandonment of certain pastoral areas. In some cases, grain availability in these areas has been bolstered by recent harvests of off-season crops.

Grain availability for rural households in livelihood zones dependent on livestock-raising activities in the North, parts of the Sahel and the East is deemed adequate. However, the flooding and isolation of certain parts of these areas with the onset of the rainy season are expected to create shortages.

Households in livelihood zones in the central part of the country characterized by grain and groundnut production and truck farming are at risk of becoming highly food-insecure (Figure 1). On-farm grain supplies are low in densely populated areas with poor harvests. Social marketing programs are helping high-risk households cope with food shortages as farming activities get underway. Given the approach of the hunger season (July through August), there are growing concerns for food-insecure households in certain departments in the North-Central region (Bam, Namatenga and Sanmatenga), Boulkiembe department in the Central-Western region, Koulpelogho department in the Central-Eastern region, and Nahouri and Zoundwéogo departments in the South-Central region.

Even with the pre-positioning of food supplies drawn from the national food security reserve and intervention stock, high-risk households will most likely experience serious, if not extremely serious, hardships during this coming hunger season, expected to begin sometime next month in most parts of the country. Currently, these pre-positioned food supplies are at less-than-optimum levels. The National Intervention Stock, consisting of local grains and cowpeas and whose level is normally at 10,000 metric tons, was established by the government to mitigate localized food shortages in different parts of the country. The rules governing its use are extremely flexible. The National Food Security Reserve, co-owned by the government and a group of donors, also consists of locally grown grains, and normally has a 35,000 MT physical inventory plus a financial reserve allowing for the procurement of 25,000 MT of grain. Its use is contingent on: (1) a grain balance sheet deficit greater than or equal to five percent of household consumption; (2) a disaster announcement by the government; and, (3) an agreement to replace all withdrawals from the reserve, grain by grain.

Finally, food security conditions for the 983 Tuareg refugees that crossed into the country in May, in the wake of armed rebellions in Mali and Niger, could deteriorate given the lack of resources available to the government, which has, together with its partners, provided them with food aid. This assistance will need to continue.

## Meteorological conditions and farming activities for the 2007/08 growing season

### Rainfall conditions, seasonal rainfall outlook, and vegetation conditions

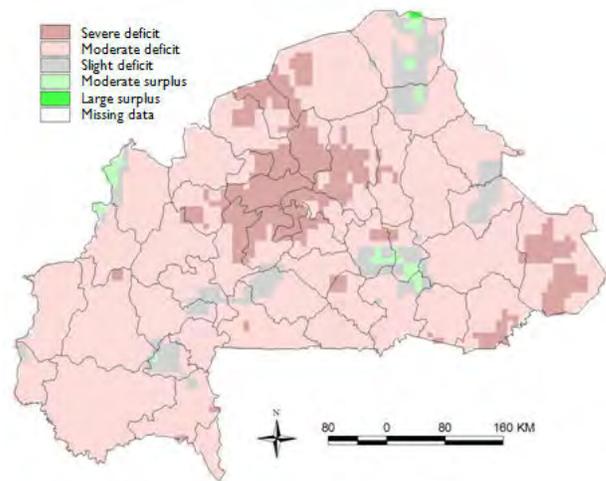
Burkina Faso's National Weather Service bulletin for the first dekad of June shows season-long cumulative rainfall totals ranging from 5.3 mm in Djibo, in the Sahel, to 156.6 mm in Bérégaougou, in the Cascades region. Compared with the historical average (1961 to 1990), this year's cumulative rainfall totals at all rainfall gauging stations were below-average to well below-average, except at the Fada station in the East and the Dori station in the Sahel, where rainfall conditions were near-average and above-average, respectively (Figure 2).

According to seasonal rainfall outlooks for the West African sub-region for the months of July, August and September 2008 (Figure 3a), rainfall amounts for Burkina Faso are expected to be anywhere from above-normal to well above-normal. Accordingly, the country's National Civil Aviation and Meteorological Agency has issued the following forecasts for the period from July through September, an essential period of rainfall leading up to the next harvest:

- Northern zone: Above-normal rainfall conditions (60 percent probability) compared with the norm (1961 to 1990), tending towards normal (20 percent probability). This zone coincides with the Sahelian region of the country, which usually has a rainfall deficit;
- Central zone: Above-normal rainfall conditions (60 percent probability) compared with the norm (1961 to 1990), tending towards normal (25 percent probability). This zone includes the Boucle du Mouhoun, Eastern, Northern, Central, North-Central, Central-Eastern, Central-Western, South-Central and Central Plateau regions.
- Southern zone: Above-normal rainfall conditions (60 percent probability) compared with the norm (1961 to 1990), tending towards normal (40 percent probability). This zone coincides with the Hauts Bassins, Cascades and Southwestern regions.

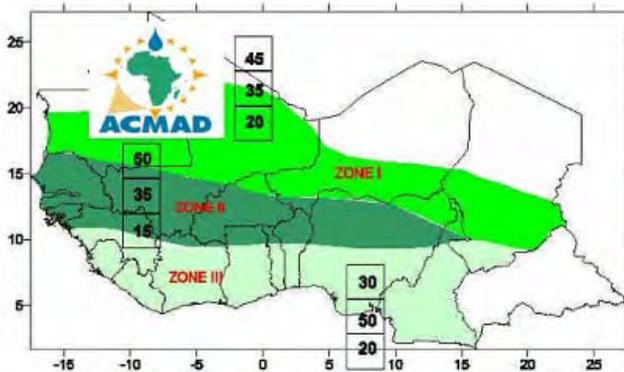
According to these forecasts, which will be updated over the next few months, there is a high probability of heavy rainfall, which poses a risk of flooding. Thus, local governments should consider taking preventive measures, depending on the severity of flooding risks in certain areas (Figure 3b).

**Figure 2.** Cumulative RFE anomalies compared with the average, as of the first dekad of June 2008



Source of images: NOAA; Map by FEWS NET USGS/Regional

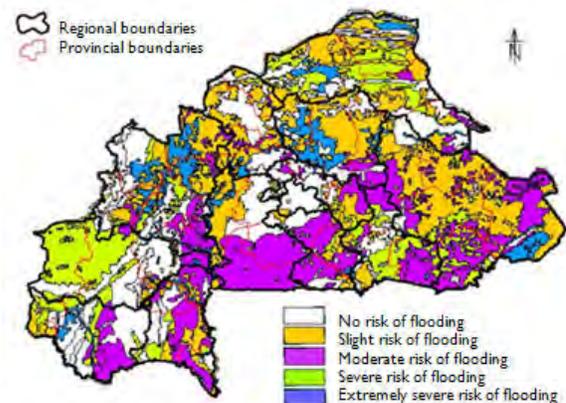
**Figure 3a.** Seasonal rainfall outlook for West Africa, July through September 2008



Zone I: Wet – Zone 2: Very wet – Zone 3: Normal  
 Note: The likelihood of rainfall deficits is negligible.  
 Expected rainfall amounts are similar to figures for the year 1999.

Source: ACMAD, June 2008

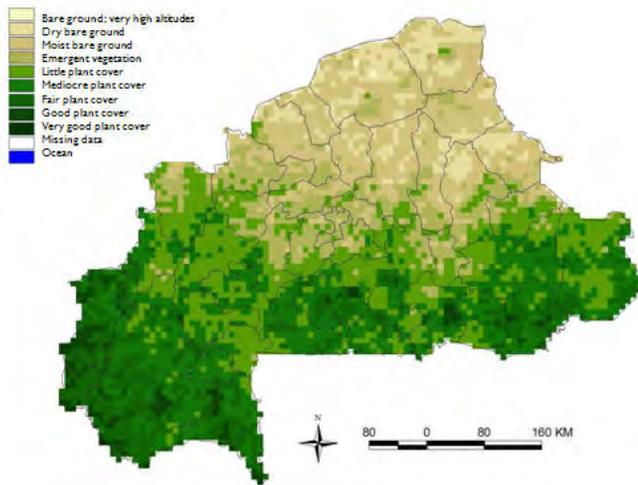
**Figure 3b.** Map of areas of Burkina Faso at risk of flooding



Source: National Weather Service DACMN, adapted from FEWS NET Burkina Faso

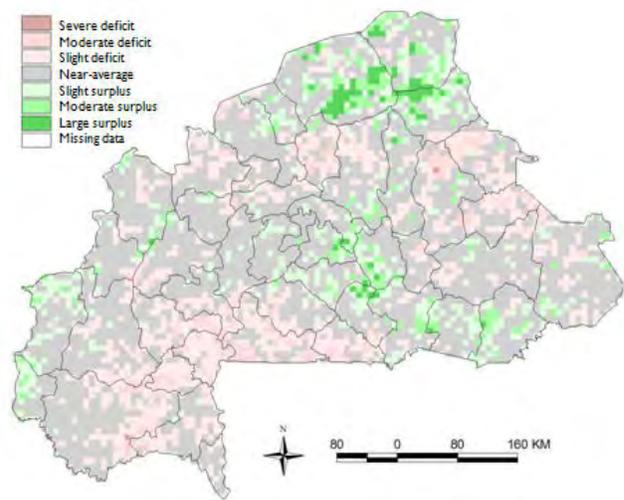
As was the case at just about the same time last year, an examination of the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) for the first dekad of June (Figure 4a) shows generally good new vegetative growth in all parts of the country, except in portions of the Central Plateau region and the North-Central, Northern and Sahelian regions. A look at NDVI anomalies compared with the average (Figure 4b) shows deficits in most parts of the country, where the progress of new vegetative growth is lagging. In contrast, data for the Sahel shows moderate to large surpluses.

**Figure 4a.** Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) for the first dekad of June 2008



Source of images: NASA; Map by FEWS NET/USGS Regional

**Figure 4b.** Comparison of vegetation indexes for the second dekad of June 2006 and June 2007



Source of images: NASA; Map by FEWS NET/USGS Regional

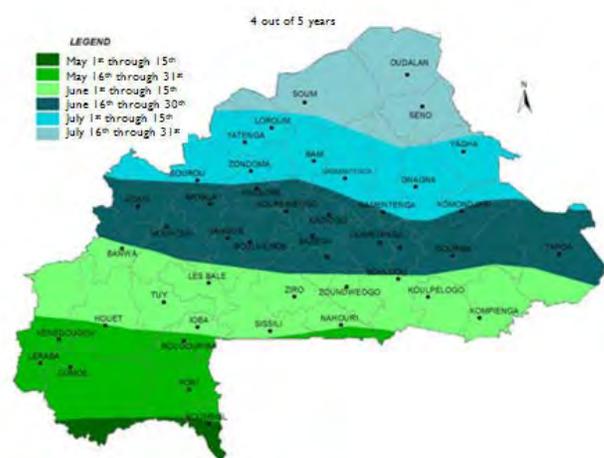
**Start of the growing season**

The late onset of the rainy season and distortions in the spatial-temporal distribution of rainfall are adversely affecting the start of this year’s growing season in general and, in particular, the planting of crops. Despite localized rainfall deficits, the growing season is gradually getting underway in all parts of the country as farmers begin to work their land. However, there is a fear that the late start of this year’s rainy season and reported rainfall deficits could have a negative effect on the country’s cotton crop, which is its main export (accounting for 59 percent of earnings in 2003) and an important source of income for its farmers.

Farmers in certain parts of the country are still in the process of preparing their fields for planting (clearing the land, spreading organic fertilizer, and plowing), while sowing operations are already underway in the Southwestern, Northern and Eastern parts of the country. There are reports of farmers in certain localized areas dry-planting crops, particularly in the Boucle du Mouhoun region.

Given the favorable timeframes for sowing crops established by the National Weather Service at the beginning of the season (Figure 5), the current pattern of rainfall may prove concerning, should it continue. Thus, there could be delays in the sowing of crops in the country’s Western zone known for its large tracts of land planted with cotton, corn and millet, which would affect production. Sowing operations in other parts of the country are still on schedule.

**Figure 5.** Favorable time periods for sowing grain crops



Source: DGAMN Bulletin for the 1<sup>st</sup> dekad of June 2008

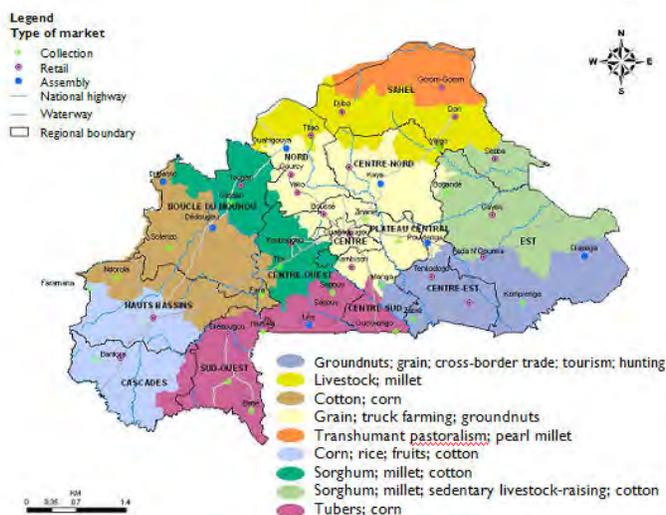
**Crop access on produce markets**

Crop availability on produce markets in different livelihood zones around the country (Figure 6) varies widely from one region to another, as well as from one area to another within the same region. Most regional and provincial markets in the Hauts Bassins, Boucle du Mouhoun, Cascades and Southwestern regions get their supplies from both on-farm and trader inventories. On the whole, market supplies are adequate, except in a handful of departments (Karangasso Vigué and

Karangasso Sambla, as well as Péni department in Houet; Gassan, Tougan, Sanaba, Tchiériba and Dédougou departments in the Boucle du Mouhoun region and Douna department in the Cascades region) affected by special problems caused mainly by flooding. Market supplies in other regions (the Central, Northern and Sahelian regions) range from poor to average. Market inventories for subsidized grain sale programs in other regions of the country with low grain supplies are virtually depleted and incapable of meeting the heavy demand for grain crops; these identified provinces are at risk of experiencing food insecurity problems as identified by the government and its humanitarian partners back in October of last year.

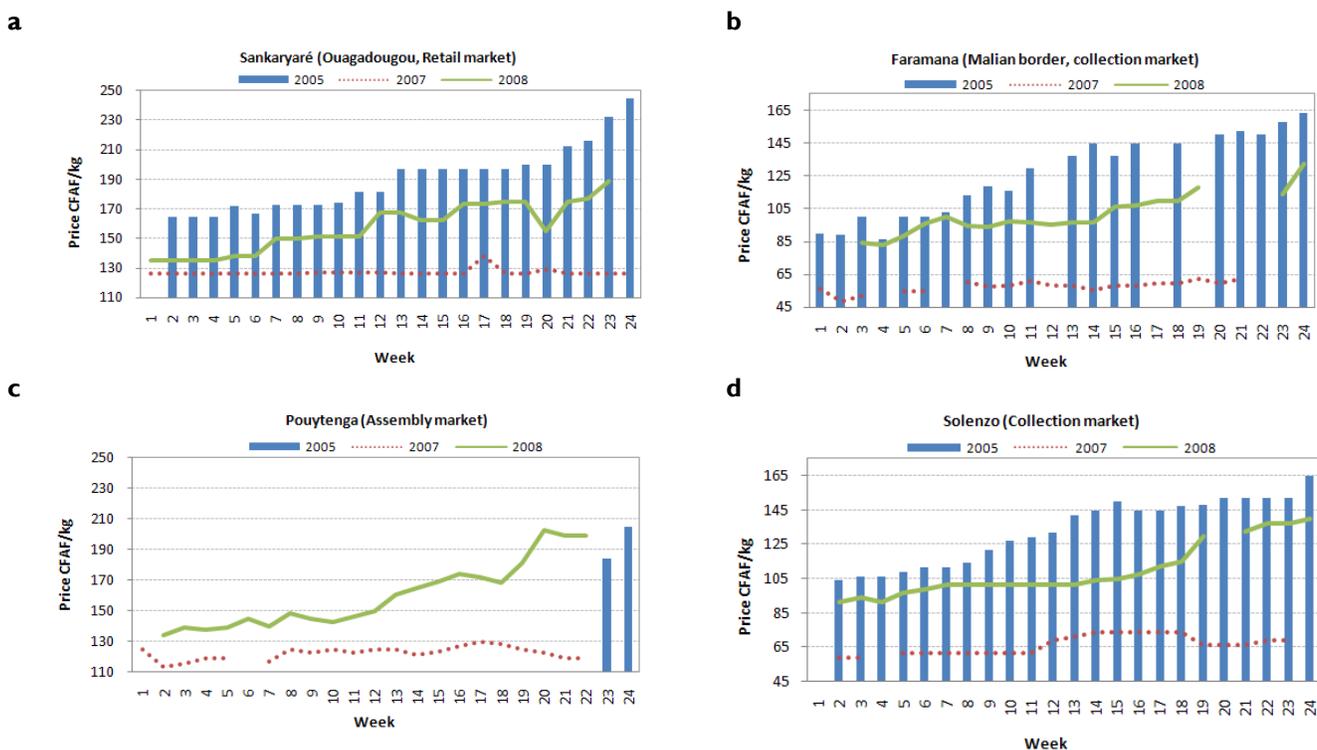
In general, grain prices on reference markets in different livelihood zones since the end of the last harvest period are considerably higher than they were last season and well above the five-year average. Price levels are high compared with the purchasing power of the most vulnerable households. A review and analysis of prices on selected reference markets (Figure 7) show a steady rise in prices on primary collection markets, as well as on both assembly and retail markets. Since the main purpose of collection markets is to put farmers and traders in touch with each other, without ruling out the possibility of retail sales, most likely, the reported rise in prices on these markets is a reflection of the conservatism of farmers looking to hold onto their grain reserves to avoid having to cope with a sudden surge in prices, as was the case back in 2005.

Figure 6. Livelihood zones and markets



Source: FEWS NET Burkina Faso

Figure 7. Trends in real prices for local millet crops on different types of reference markets in 2005, 2007 and 2008



Graphs: FEWS NET Burkina Faso

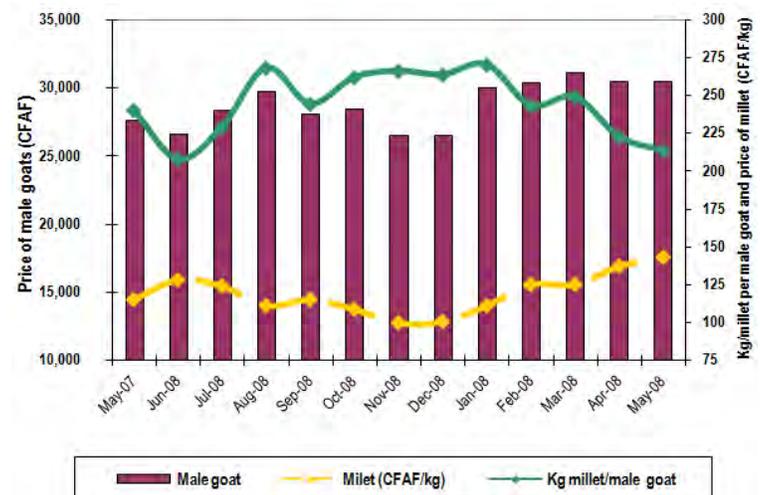
Millet prices on the Solenzo market (Figure 7d), a collection market in the country’s largest millet-producing area, rose 35 percent between weeks two and 24 of this year. Collection-point prices on this market, which supplies major consumer centers around the country, are showing the same pattern as in 2005 (when prices soared to record levels) and are running 30 to 50 percent higher than at the same time last year. Prices on the border market in Faramana (Figure 7b) are following this same trend. The oscillating prices for local millet crops on the Sankaryaré retail market in the nation’s capital are a reflection of the different sources of supply for grain traders on this market, as well as the government’s subsidized grain sale program which has been running since October of last year. Though still trailing 2005 prices, millet prices on this retail market are steadily climbing. This same trend has been reported on markets in deficit areas which, in principle, coincide with previously identified food-insecure areas, making grain crops unaffordable to vulnerable households in these areas, as well as in areas affected by last season’s floods. Millet prices are also moving steadily upwards on the Pouytenga market (Figure 7c), which serves as an assembly market for grain crops, where current price levels are running above those for both 2005 and 2007. This market, in an area which, this year, is being classified as a grain-deficit area, normally supplies grain crops to traditional deficit areas of the Sahel and the North, as well as to certain neighboring countries (Niger, Benin and Togo).

**Livestock feed and health conditions**

The first sign of new vegetative growth normally coincides with the beginning of the rainy season. The emergence of annual grasses and various other plants with proven nutritional value for small animals (sheep and goats) marks the beginning of a time of plenty for these types of animals. In contrast, there is still insufficient new vegetative growth to help fatten large animals. However, with the availability of rainwater, watering conditions are no longer a problem, which could help control disease.

Large animals are still in poor condition due to low government supplies of animal feed (mainly cottonseed cakes) and their unusually high market price (over 7500 CFAF, compared with last year’s figure of 3500 CFAF). According to interested stakeholders, the current shortage of animal feed is a result of the combined effects of last year’s poor cotton crop and heavy demand from Malian traders who, in turn, are supplying feed to Mauritanian traders.

**Figure 8.** Trends in prices and terms of trade for millet/male goats in Djibo between May 2007 and May 2008



Source of data: Animal Statistics Service - DGPSE, SIM-SONAGESS, RESIMAO, Regional Departments of Agriculture, Regional Departments of Animal Resources; Graph: FEWS NET Burkina Faso

A look at trends in terms of trade on the Djibo market (Figure 8) shows price ratios still in favor of herders, to the detriment of farmers. In fact, the sale of a goat on the Djibo market is still bringing in more than two 100 kg sacks of millet. However, with the differential between the price of a male goat and a sack of millet narrowing as the lean period gets underway (particularly if the current upturn in millet prices continues), this pattern could reverse itself, with terms of trade becoming more favorable to farmers.

**Food security outlook and suggestions**

Despite government measures and interventions by humanitarian organizations and the country’s development partners, given current trends in grain prices, the steadily rising cost of living (with hikes in fuel prices and the cost of basic necessities) and forecasts predicting heavy rainfall, this year’s lean period (July through August) could be especially severe for households in food-deficit areas, flood-stricken areas and areas becoming impenetrable during the rainy season. While there is very little risk of farming areas of corn-producing livelihood zones experiencing food insecurity problems, the

situation is entirely different in the Central, Northern, Sahelian and Eastern regions of the county, where it is imperative to extend social marketing programs until the upcoming harvest season to temper the effects of rising prices.

With certain areas and settlements at a high risk of flooding, information and awareness-raising activities for local residents need to continue throughout the rainy season.