

BURKINA FASO Food Security Outlook Update

August 2012

Good outlook for the growing season; continued stress for poor households

Key messages

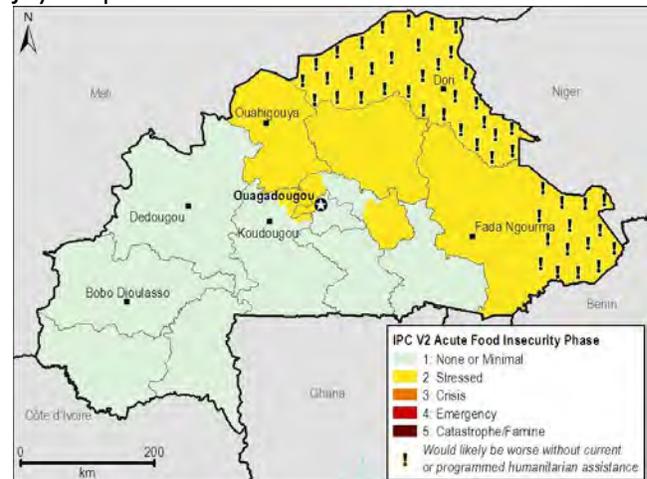
- The progress of the growing season is estimated to be better than average in 87 percent of the country's provinces and average in the other 13 percent.
- Continuing humanitarian and government assistance programs for vulnerable households have been effective. An estimated 95 percent of assistance needs under the revised scenario for Phase 3 (July - October) of the government's operational assistance plan should be met. Most households in livelihood zones 8 and 7 and parts of livelihood zones 5 and 9 are still in Phase 2 (stressed) of the IPC acute food insecurity phase scale.
- Cereal prices are still high (41 to 65 percent above the five-year average) and are up slightly from June (by one to three percent). Prices are expected to continue to climb, reaching their yearly highs before beginning to come down sometime in September.
- The presence of more than 100,000 refugees, with a steady influx of new arrivals creating growing needs for assistance, are a continuing source of concern for the government and the humanitarian community.

Nationwide overview

With the lean season currently at its peak, dwindling and in some cases nonexistent household food stocks have pushed most very poor and poor households forced to market purchase to meet their food needs. Cereal prices, which are well above the five-year average (by anywhere from 40 to 65 percent), continue to edge steadily upwards, in line with seasonal trends.

As part of Phase 3 of its operational assistance plan for food-insecure populations in 17 vulnerable municipalities (identified by the National Early Warning System in May), the government arranged for the sale of an initial tranche of 13,000 metric tons of cereal at subsidized prices (6,000 XOF per 50 kg sack and 12,000 XOF per 100 kg sack) in municipal shops in July, with sales of additional tranches of

Figure 1. Most likely estimated food security outcomes, July – September 2012



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

Figure 2. Most likely estimated food security outcomes, October - December 2012



This report is an update of the Food Security Outlook published in July 2012 assessing food security conditions for the period from July through December 2012. The next Outlook report covering the period from October 2012 through March 2013 will be released in October.

cereal scheduled to extend through the end of September. However, due to poor access to these target areas, only 11,000 of these 13,000 metric tons of provisions had been successfully pre-positioned as of the beginning of August. CONASUR (National Council for Emergency Aid and Rehabilitation) detachments are also in the process of distributing 3,200 MT of free food aid to recipients in different parts of the country. The mayors of 160 at-risk municipalities were allotted 5,000 metric tons of cereal aid by the National Land Management Program (PNGT) which they are in the process of distributing to high-risk households free of charge. WFP has also started up its targeted assistance program from July through October with 1,165,000 beneficiaries, providing 15,550 metric tons of food aid to 610,000 recipients and direct cash transfers (\$8.4 million) to 555,000 recipients. Thus, in all, over 54,000 metric tons of food aid are to be delivered to very poor and poor households by all interested stakeholders, meeting 95 percent of estimated assistance needs under the government's revised scenario for Phase 3 (July - October) of its assistance plan.

Seasonal Progress

The agricultural season is progressing normally in all parts of the country. In certain regions, progress is better this year than at the same time last season. In general, 39 provinces are having a good season and the other six (Boulgou and Kouritenga provinces in the east-central region or livelihood zone 9, Noubiel province in the southwestern region or livelihood zone 1, Boulikemdi and Sanguié provinces in the central-western region or livelihood zone 4, and Oudalan province in the Sahelian region or livelihood zone 8) are having an average season. However, FEWS NET's NDVI imagery shows lags in new vegetative growth between the second dekad of June and the first dekad of August in certain parts of livelihood zones 1, 2, and 9, suggesting the need to continue to monitor these areas. There have been reports of flooding across the country since the beginning of the rainy season and, with forecasts for above-normal levels of rainfall between July and September, the risk of flooding continues. The progress of crop growth and development varies from one part of the country to another, although plant health conditions are stable. Forecasts for the country's different livelihood zones point to average to good harvests, provided there are no major infestations of crop pests and assuming there is a good spatial-temporal distribution of rainfall and that rainfall patterns stay in line with seasonal rainfall outlooks.

Market behavior

As usual, cereal availability on local markets is limited this time of year, which coincides with typical lean season tendencies. Most market supplies of cereal are furnished by traders. Inventory levels are lower than in previous years at this same time due, in large part, to current high prices, which are weakening household purchasing power. Cereal prices around the country are higher than last year and above the five-year average. As assumed in the outlook, prices on assembly markets are up slightly from last month (by three percent in the case of corn, seven percent in the case of sorghum, and eight percent in the case of millet). In general, average retail prices have stabilized. The higher demand for millet for the observance of Ramadan contributed to the rise in the price of this cereal following the stabilization and, in some cases, the drop in millet prices in June. According to SIM/SONAGESS, retail prices are above five-year averages by 65 percent in the case of millet, 54 percent in the case of sorghum, and 41 percent in the case of corn. As is usually the case, the Gorom-Gorom market (in livelihood zone 8) is showing the highest prices, at 350 CFAF/kg of millet and 300 CFAF/kg of sorghum, due to its long distance from sources of supply in high-production areas. Cereal prices are expected to continue to rise throughout the month of August, when they will reach their yearly high before beginning to come down as of September, likely declining through the end of December. The only possible exceptions to these price trends are in areas with high concentrations of refugees where, in the event of a reduction in or suspension of distributions of food rations, recourse to market-buying will likely boost cereal demand (particularly demand for millet), driving up prices as of September. Livestock prices are stable or slightly high, with larger than usual market supplies of small animals and good terms of trade for livestock-raising households in pastoral areas.

Locust situation

The government has had a locust control plan in effect since July. The country is not a normal breeding ground for desert locusts. However, a large-scale invasion from Mali or Niger between September and October would affect northern livelihood zones 8, 7, and 5, where it could cause losses of crops, particularly millet and sorghum. The government has strengthened its surveillance apparatus through the formation and training of locust control brigades and the deployment of canvassing teams in livelihood zones 7 and 8, which found no locust activity so far. In any event, the availability of necessary financial and physical resources for the control of locust activity is questionable.

Refugees and humanitarian aid

As of the end of July, there were an estimated 108,000 Malian refugees or 16,000 refugee households in Burkina Faso, a jump of over 450 percent compared with figures for February of this year. Most of this refugee population is concentrated

in livelihood zone 8 (*North transhumant pastoralism and millet*), with 79 percent, and the northeastern reaches of livelihood zone 9 (*North and east livestock and cereals*), with 15 percent. Assistance programs implemented by the government, its bilateral partners, and U.N. agencies could potentially meet food needs between August and December, though they may not always meet the preferences of the refugees. In spite of potential access constraints to remote areas, particularly with the rainy season underway, WFP has already distributed 1,600 metric tons of food to 70,000 recipients and is in the process of mobilizing additional supplies for continued distributions of food rations to the refugee population through the end of December of this year. Other humanitarian organizations will provide food aid to refugees at the Fererio and Gandafabou camps (in livelihood zone 8) and host households in the form of distributions of food rations and vouchers.

Livelihood zone 8 (*North transhumant pastoralism and millet*)

As usual, the main sources of income right now for very poor and poor households in this livelihood zone, which houses 79 percent of the country's Malian refugee population, are gainful on-farm employment, the tending of livestock herds for middle-income and better-off households (with a larger than usual labor pool this year in refugee receiving areas), remittances from migrants and transhumant pastoralists, and small-scale trading. The government is continuing its subsidized sales programs in municipalities identified by the national early warning system as most at risk for food insecurity. CONASUR, the WFP, and partner organizations have begun targeted distributions of free food aid to very poor and poor households.

This area has the highest prices in the country (350 XOF/kg of millet and 300 XOF/kg of sorghum), 29 and 34 percent, respectively, above national averages and 14 to 21 percent above prices on reference markets in adjacent areas (namely, the Dori and Djibo markets). However, prices had stabilized between June and July and, without the higher than usual demand for millet for the observance of Ramadan, current food assistance programs should help quickly bring down prices in this area.

The growing season in this livelihood zone got underway earlier than usual, but with initially poor spatial-temporal distribution of rainfall. However, cumulative seasonal rainfall totals for the period from April 1st through August 10th are above-normal and much higher than during the same time last year. Crops in general and millet crops in particular are in the sprouting and tillering stages, more or less on par with the norm. The first cowpea harvests could get underway by mid-September, helping to improve the household food security situation. There has been a visible improvement in animal feeding and watering conditions with the availability of ground cover, pasture, and surface water resources and with most refugee livestock herds back in Mali to avoid disputes and in search of good pastureland, as is normally the case at this time of year. This should help to improve milk availability and terms of trade for livestock/cereal, which are currently in favor of pastoralists and should remain so for the entire outlook period.

As projected, food and non-food aid for refugees and host communities is meeting current needs through distributions of monthly food rations and the provision of health and nutrition monitoring services. During the monthly meeting of the national early warning system and its partners in August, participants suggested that some portion of recipient household part food rations are likely being used by the refugees to help feed relatives and family members back in Mali. Very poor and poor households are still in Phase 2 (stressed) of the IPC acute food insecurity phase scale due to ongoing food assistance programs and the stabilization of cereal prices, allowing them to buy a few boxes and/or helpings of millet or sorghum on local markets. Without this food assistance, most very poor and poor household would still be facing crisis levels of food insecurity.

Eastern reaches of livelihood zone 9 (*North and east livestock and cereals*)

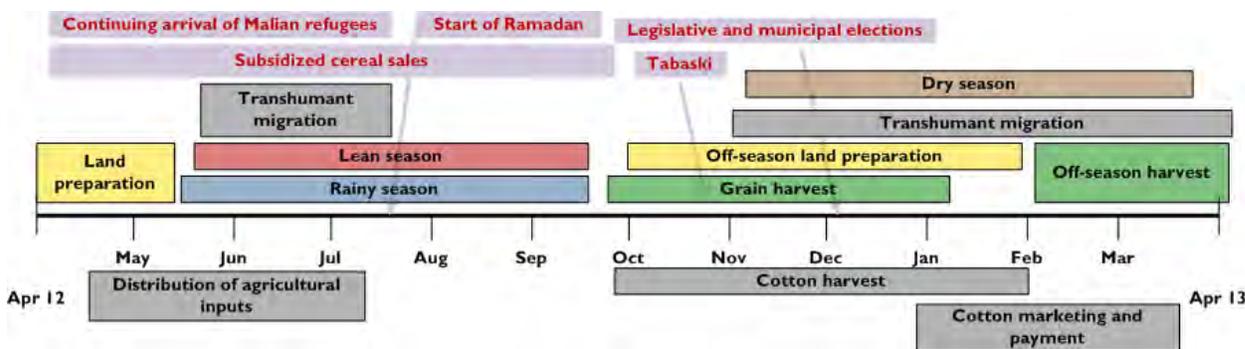
Visible pressure on markets continues in this area, particularly in the far eastern reaches (Tapoa province), where cereal prices are steadily increasing. White corn prices rose by 11 percent and sorghum prices by 14 percent between June and July due to abnormally low market supplies and the inaccessibility of markets in remote areas. The main sources of food are larger than usual cereal purchases on local markets or at government-subsidized prices in municipal shops operating through the month of October, the consumption of nonwoody forest products, and humanitarian aid (from the WFP and Action Against Hunger). The main sources of income are near-normal small-scale trading activities, larger than usual sales of livestock (small animals and poultry), gainful on-farm employment (with a larger than usual labor pool and a slight decline in wage rates) and cash-for-work or direct cash transfer programs. The growing season is moving ahead normally. A comparison of cumulative rainfall totals with the norm shows rainfall deficits of 10 to 50 percent in the northern reaches of this livelihood zone and average levels of rainfall tending towards above-average in the south. Reported lags in new vegetative growth between the second dekad of June and the first dekad of August suggest the need to monitor conditions in Gourma and Kompienga provinces in this livelihood zone. Harvests of green short-cycle millet crops (currently in the

heading/flowering stage) and of corn crops expected to fully materialize sometime in the last dekad of August should help improve the diets of the area’s poorest households. The combined effects of these harvests and of deliveries of food aid by the WFP and ACF are keeping very poor and poor households in Phase 2 (stressed) of the IPC acute food insecurity phase scale.

Livelihood zones 5 and 7

The growing season is progressing normally in both livelihood zones. In general, cumulative rainfall totals are normal tending towards above-normal, though there are pockets of drought in the northwestern reaches of livelihood zone 5 and the southeastern reaches of livelihood zone 7. The most advanced stages of crop growth and development are the height growth stage (for sorghum crops) and the tillering stage (for millet). The main sources of income are farm labor, cash-for-work activities (by NGOs), sales of livestock, and gold-washing activities (despite the official shutdown of these operations), all of which are at above-normal levels. The presence of many different stakeholders in these areas is ramping up food assistance programs for vulnerable households. Targeted assistance programs by the WFP over the period from July to October are expected to furnish more than 10,000 metric tons of food aid to over 457,000 recipients and to make direct transfer payments (of 12,000 XOF/household/month for a period of four months) to over 190,000 beneficiaries. Subsidized cereal sales continue in municipal shops and there are continuing distributions of free food aid through CONASUR. Very poor and poor households in livelihood zone 7 and the northwestern, western, and southwestern reaches of livelihood zone 5 are still in Phase 2 (stressed) of the IPC acute food insecurity phase scale.

Seasonal calendar and timeline of critical events



Source: FEWS NET