FOOD SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

April 2012

Key Points

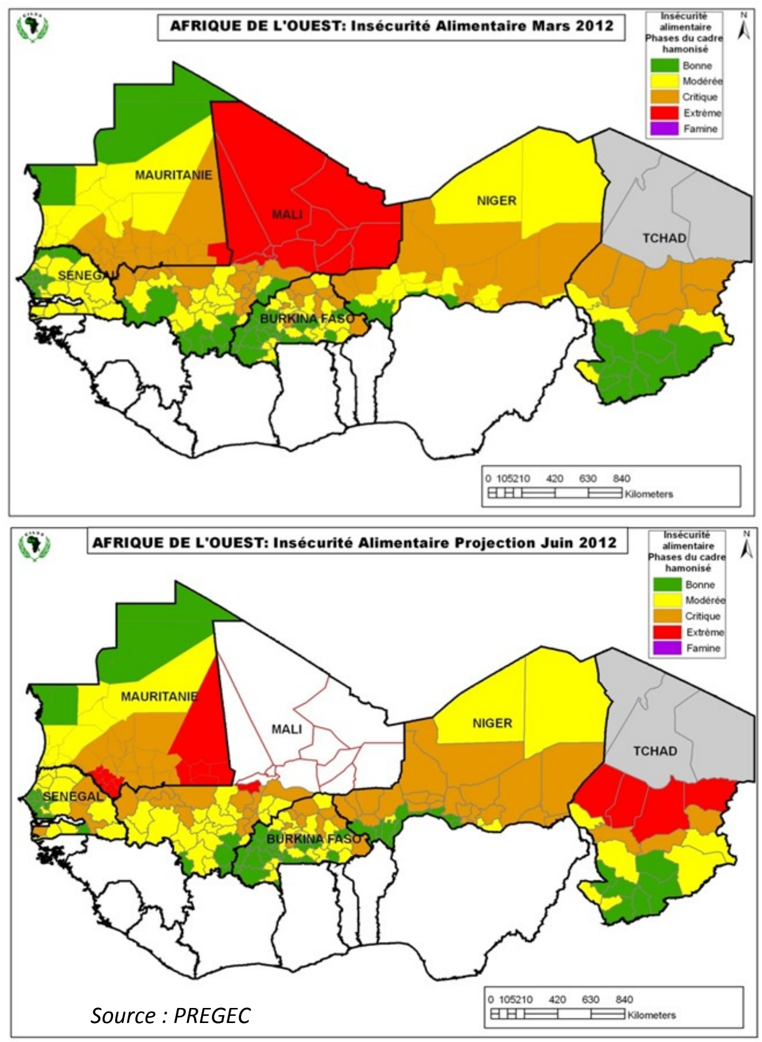
- In Mali, the food situation, already critical before the taking of the North by the rebellion, remains very uncertain
- Risk of deterioration to extreme food insecurity in Chad and Mauritania by June if no proper or sufficient response is provided
- Grain prices increased in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad
- The pastoral situation continues to deteriorate in most countries of the Sahel

Confirmation of the severity of the agropastoral crisis in the Sahel

The meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) organized by the CILSS and the OECD in Paris on 12 and 13 April 2012, reiterated the difficulties faced by Sahelian countries this year[1]: cereal production has considerably decreased in the Gambia (down 56% from 2010-2011 and 40% compared to 2006-2010), Chad (49%/22%), Senegal (36%/21%), Niger (31%/14%), Mauritania (34%/10%) and Burkina Faso (20%/5%), but, also, the pastoral conditions remain very precarious in many areas because of the scarcity of the grass cover and the low filling of water points.

RPCA members also endorsed the results of the joint regional analysis of food security in the Sahel (Figure 1) produced in Niamey from 2 to 6 April 2012 by the technical partners of the Harmonized Framework (CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET, IPC-GSU[2], WFP, ACF, Oxfam and Save the Children). This consensual analysis project that localized situations of extreme food insecurity (Phase 4) are to be expected in Chad, Mali and Mauritania by June if no adequate and proper response is implemented in these areas. The current conflict in Mali largely explains the extreme difficulties encountered by households in the North of the country (see page 2). In Northern Chad, households face significant drops in income, already report lack of food reserves and the pastoral situation is very compromised. In Mauritania, the areas at risk of extreme food insecurity are under pressure from the influx of Malian refugees and their livestock in an unstable environment security-wise.
By June, situations of critical food insecurity (Phase 3) are expected in all countries of the Sahel.

Figure 1 : Food insecurity situation in West Africa : as of March and projections for June 2012



Source : PREGEC

1 : http://food-security.net//medias/File/rpca_communique_finamars2012_fr.pdf
2 : IPC Global Support Unit

***Objective**: within the framework of the monthly meetings of the Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group for West Africa, it has been agreed that, in a humanitarian perspective, WFP and FAO provide the group with highlights on the food security situation of the previous month. This document describes key elements developed during this meeting.*

Confirmation of the severity of the agropastoral crisis in the Sahel (cont'd)

Regarding the locust situation, second generation outbreak began late March and early April in south-western Libya and south-eastern Algeria, where an outbreak of locusts is underway. This can cause a significant increase in locust numbers on both sides of the border and lead to a potentially dangerous situation during which swarms form and invade the northern Sahel of West Africa (Mali and Niger) in early summer affecting crops and pastures.

MALIAN CRISIS
More than 280 000 people displaced - Critical food insecurity situation

Conflict in Mali continues and the north of the country is under the control of anti-government, armed groups since the take of the cities of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu. The food security situation in the north of the country was already worrisome before the fall of the three regional capitals by the rebels.

Large scale looting of public, private and humanitarian food reserves were reported but few information exist on the possible social redistribution organized by the new authorities. Reports from local sources in Kidal, indicate that everyday life is becoming increasingly difficult for people. The ransacking and looting continues. Moreover, stocks of food in the city (including those of the humanitarian community and government that were looted) are progressively being depleted. In addition, there is a lack of medical and hospital staff to assist people. Banks remain closed, severely limiting access to liquidity. Similar reports come from Gao. The situation of the affected populations in the North is increasingly worrying and access by the humanitarian community to the most vulnerable populations is critical.

The situation could deteriorate rapidly in areas that will suffer of a lack of supply for weeks. A shortage of certain essential commodities in the markets of Timbuktu and Gao is currently being reported. In Timbuktu, demonstrations were held on April 20 against the deterioration of living conditions. In the Kidal region, the food supply continues somehow from Algeria. The situation is different in Mopti, where local authorities are back and banks are starting to reopen. According to the ICRC, populations in the North have also great difficulties in accessing potable water which increases fears of a significant deterioration in the health conditions of populations.

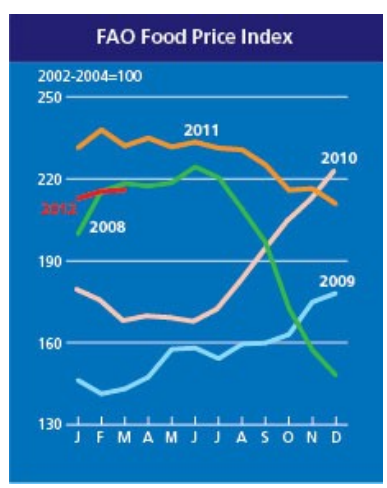
As for the pastoralists in the North, livestock and pastures conditions are average overall. Market channels and movement of herds are disrupted by the hostilities and herders no longer have the choice of grazing areas.

According to OCHA, the number of people displaced by the conflict has reached at least 283,000 people (April 23) out of which more than 160,000 outside the country, mostly in Mauritania (700 arrivals per day), Burkina Faso and Niger where refugees arrive in areas that were already among the most vulnerable to food insecurity. Within Mali, the official figures given on March 12 have lost all meaning after the blitzkrieg of the rebellion in late March that prompted many people to flee the North. According to the National Assembly of Mali on April 13, the number of IDPs is estimated at 200,000 people, a figure used by WFP for its planning. According to humanitarian organizations (NGOs), it is reported that some people from Gao took refuge in the surrounding villages where food accessibility of the population remains unknown.

Stability of the FAO Prices Index in March

The FAO Food Prices Index (figure 2) reached an average of 216 points in Mars 2012, practically the same value as in February (215). Among the different groups of food products, only oils showed dynamic and higher prices, which compensate the decrease of prices for milk products. Cereal prices as well as those for sugar and meat are globally at the same level as the previous month. Prices for wheat also did not change much as supply remains good. After several months of decrease, rice prices are increasing slightly mainly due to important Chinese and Nigerian purchases

Figure 2 : FAO Food Price Index as ofMarch 2012



Source : FAO

Cereal prices in the Sahel : increases in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad

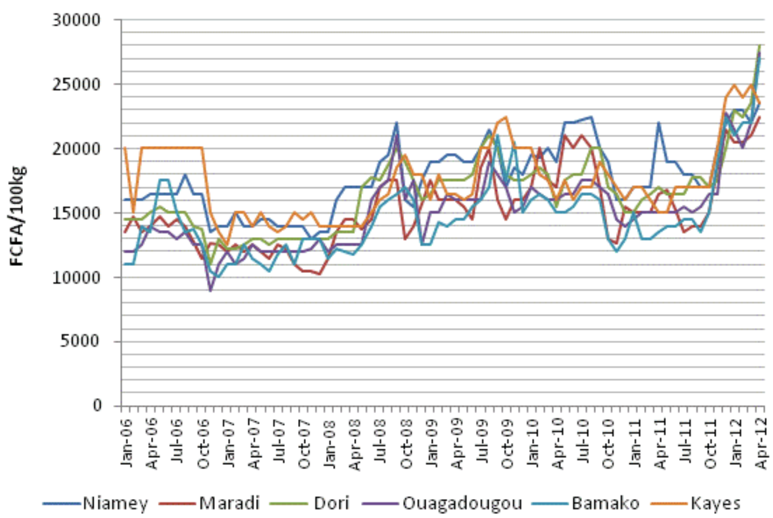
With regards to market developments of food products, the RPCA meeting in Paris indicated that prices remain at high levels and do not allow vulnerable populations to access food. The main grain flows are hindered by road blocks that have multiplied following the strengthening of border controls. Also, the social and political unrest in the Sahel, especially in Mali, and its consequences continue to disrupt the functioning of markets (Figure 3).

During April 2012, coarse grain prices, already at a high level compared to last month, experience a rise in three Sahelian countries: Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. As an illustration, Figure 4 shows an upward trend in millet prices in these three countries in April 2012. This increase in coarse grain prices is due to high demand and low supply markets in places.

In **Niger**, compared to March 2012, the most significant increases were observed in Maradi (millet and corn: 7% and 5%), Dosso (5% for sorghum and maize) and Niamey (millet: 7% and 8% sorghum). Millet prices in Niamey and Maradi respectively show increases of 28% and 47% compared to the five-year average, and 7% and 36% compared to April 2011. In **Burkina Faso**, compared to March 2012, the most significant increases were observed in Bobo Dioulasso for millet and sorghum (respectively 20% and 26%) and Kossi for millet and sorghum (respectively 21% and 26%). The price of millet in Ouagadougou has also increased significantly by 83% compared to April 2011 and 91% compared to the five year average. In **Mali**, compared to March 2012, the most significant increases are observed especially for millet in Bamako, Segou and Sikasso respectively 23%, 16% and 14%. The price of millet in Bamako has increased by 100% compared to April 2011, and 104% compared to the five year average.

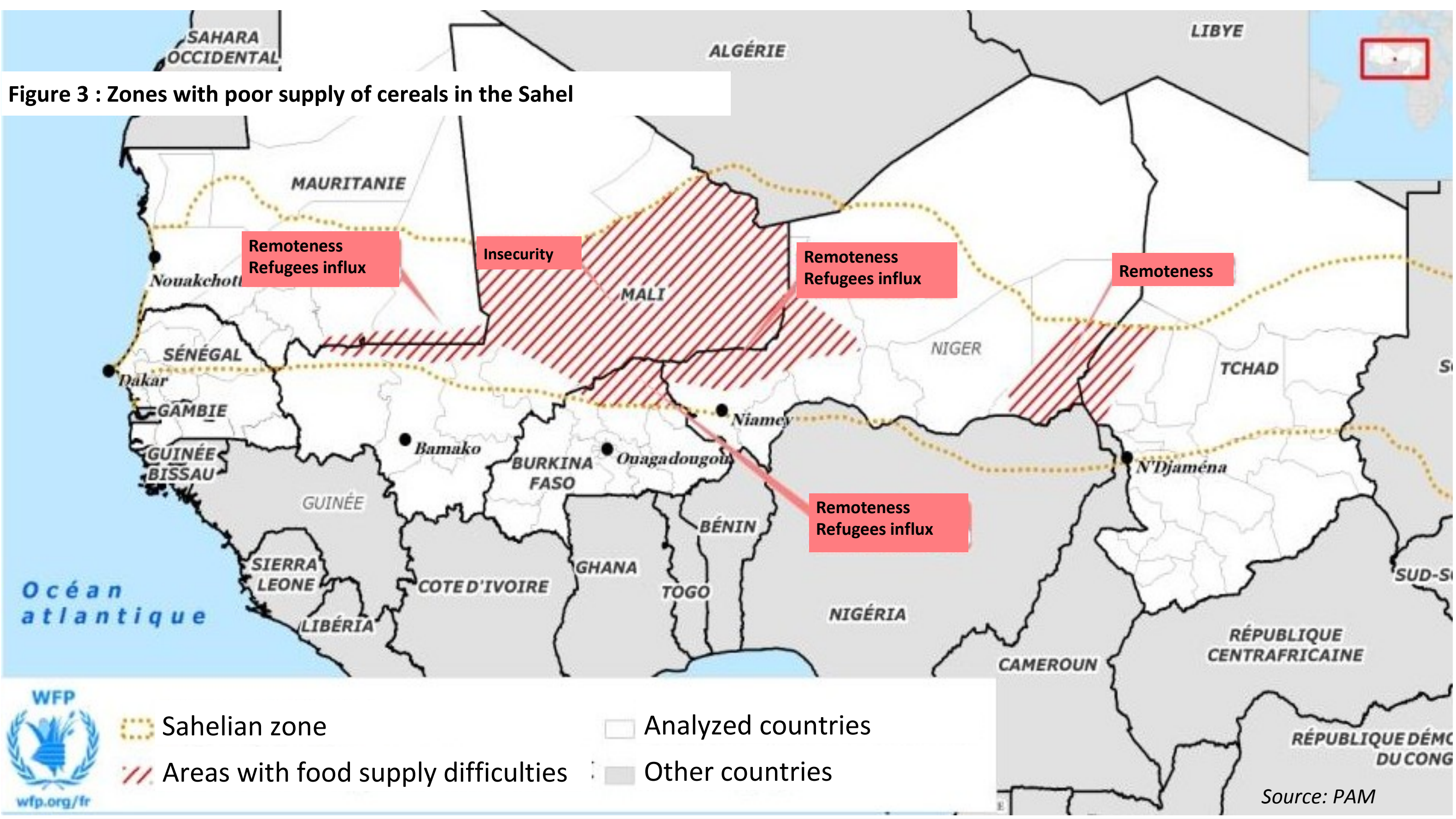
Concerning the terms of trade in Niger, in March 2012, there has been a significant level of degradation (-50%) (goat/mil) compared to 2011, but low compared to the five-year average (-9%). This deterioration of terms of trade is mainly due to the rising price of millet on the Abalak market (millet prices rise by 55% compared to March 2011 and 29% compared to the five-year average). However, it should be noted that the terms of trade remained in favor of farmers compared to 2005 (Figure 5, next page). In Mali, because of the occupation of city centers of northern towns, livestock markets are no longer functional.

Figure 4 : Evolution of millet prices in Burkina Faso (Dori Ouagadougou), Mali (Bamako, Kayes) and Niger (Niamey, Maradi)



Source: PAM, FAO/GIEWS

Figure 3 : Zones with poor supply of cereals in the Sahel

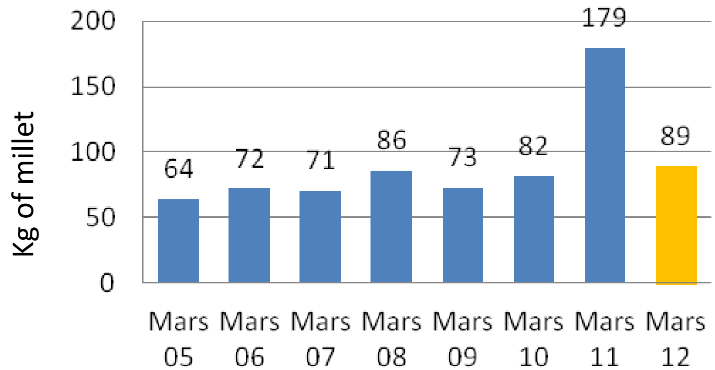


Cereal prices in the Sahel: increases in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad (cont'd)

It should be added that, in March 2012, in the market of Agadez, the terms of trade continue to be unfavorable for onion producers that put great hopes on this culture. Declining terms of trade (onion/mil) is -62% compared to March 2011 against 51% compared to the five-year average. As an illustration, a producer who sells a 100 kg sack of onion receives 79 kg of millet in March 2012, against 206 kg in the same period in 2011.

In March 2012, the situation of the terms of trade remained unfavorable to farmers especially those of the Chadian Sahel. In Mao, for example, a farmer receives 88 kg of millet by selling his sheep against 98 kg in March 2011.

Figure 5 : Terms of trade goat/millet on the Abalak market



Impact on food security – lean season already in place in the Sahel

The results of the regional analysis of food security in the Sahel countries conducted by the analysis unit of the *Cadre Harmonise* (Harmonized Framework—CILSS, FAO, FEWS NET, IPC-GSU, WFP, ACF, Oxfam and Save the Children) has highlighted the main factors contributing to household food security in each of the most affected countries in the region. This analysis is presented below (except for Mali, see page 2), supplemented by recent analytical elements of our partners:

Mauritania: the 34% drop in agricultural production is important to consider when analysing the country's food situation but is not the most essential factor as the country regularly faces food production deficits. Adverse grazing conditions, rising prices and the steady influx of Malian refugees (over 56,167 as of April 23) are the main reasons behind food shortages and household food insecurity.

Senegal: the Government launched an emergency appeal on April 17 to deal with the severity of the situation in some regions of the country (Matam, Tambacounda, Casamance) where agro pastoral households face severe income losses (decreased production of groundnuts and cereals, declining terms of trade and lack of water points for pastoralists). Although some households benefit from high prices of cash crops, many engage in short-term coping mechanisms that can not compensate for the lack of assistance provided to vulnerable populations so far.

Burkina Faso: Following his visit to the north of the country on April 15, the Prime Minister qualified the situation as "highly alarming and urgent." More than 46,000 refugees add a constant pressure in the Sahel Region on low grazing resources and markets. Access to basic food commodities is compromised by record grain prices. According to Action against Hunger in Gnagna and Tapoa households have turned to food normally consumed only during lean season and no longer have food stocks. In some markets, a goat does not even provide the regular 100-kg sack of grain compromising even more pastoralists' access to an adequate diet.

Niger: the West of the country suffers the consequences of the conflict in Mali with the installation of more than 39,400 refugees in already-vulnerable communities (OCHA/UNHCR). Despite a good off-season harvest in some areas and a resumption of trade with Nigeria, households' access to a good and adequate nutrition is difficult: lower income from livestock, poor food supply in certain markets, high food prices, the onion crisis, decreasing trade with neighbouring countries and poor livestock conditions, all these factors reduce the income available for food.

Chad: the response is coming late to help vulnerable households especially in the Sahelian provinces. Pastoral households are most affected by the lack of pasture. An average to good off-season harvest allowed some households to have access to cereals that remain very expensive in most markets. The slow recovery of trade with Nigeria and the disruption of trade with Sudan do not allow for the improvement of supply in the markets. Strong competition for daily labour jobs prevent all

Malians IDPs from the city of GAO - ©WFP—Daouda Guirou, April 2012

Recommendations for the regional food security and nutrition group

Measures	Advantages
Share and consolidate information on food security on Northern Mali	Decision makers can develop a relevant advocacy and intervention strategy for the most vulnerable households
Conduct the Central Basin market study (Togo, Mali, Ivory Coast, Ghana)	Partners involved take adequate decisions to improve food availability and accessibility in the Central Basin
Update the joint CILSS/FAO/IPC-GSU/PAM/FEWS/ACF/ Oxfam/SCF regional food security analysis	The most affected zones are re-assessed and identified and partners have all necessary information for interventions during the lean season
Support Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania in the elaboration of their humanitarian appeals	Stakeholders are informed of the humanitarian needs in the three countries

Conclusions

- The situation in Mali is very serious and is likely to deteriorate in certain zones of the North if no food supply is available soon.
- In other countries, the situation is often precarious for the areas being affected by the political and security events in Malians and in particular by the influx of refugees.
- Across the Sahel, farmers, pastoralists and agro pastoralists remain the most vulnerable and in need while aid is not forthcoming and provided late.
- Markets continue to be highly volatile especially in Mali and Burkina Faso where new record prices have been set this month for cereals. The access to an adequate diet for the most vulnerable households will further to deteriorate.

@ Food security information in West Africa and the Sahel

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