

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs- Regional Office for West Africa

Monthly situation report- January 2009

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS:

Millions of caterpillars destroy crops in Liberia
Yellow fever on the rise in West Africa
Mali-Niger: Insecurity persists in the north
Mauritania: Junta announces presidential election for June

1- HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Food Security and nutrition

West Africa: markets are well supplied with prices still high¹

The 2008-2009 agricultural campaign is characterised by a good rainfall well spread in space and time. The cereal production is estimated at 54 million tonnes including 9 tonnes of rice and 45 tonnes of dry cereals . In the Sahelian countries, estimates of the cereal production are at 15.5 million tonnes (estimates for Senegal not included). This production represents a 21% increase compared with last year (2007/2008) and 24% in comparison to the average of the last five years.

However, even though prices of local cereals are falling (including on the world market) since the start of the harvest season in October 2008, they remain higher than the seasonal average (particularly for rice).. To mitigate soaring food prices in 2008, some West African countries took measures seeking to restrict or even to ban food exports in spite of the regional agreements for free flow of goods and people within ECOWAS.. While food availability is generally sufficient in the whole region, states must put in place regulation policies in order to stabilize prices.

Liberia: Caterpillar infestation jeopardizes food security (FAO)

Hordes of caterpillars have destroyed crops and vegetation in northern Liberia². According to FAO, 62 towns and communities in the counties of Bong Lofa and Gbarpolu have been affected by the caterpillar infestation since 14 January 2009. For the moment, an estimated 350,000 people are affected in Bong County. On 27 January FAO received confirmation of the presence of caterpillars in Yomou in Guinée Forestière. The two to three-centimetres-long caterpillars travel in millions and destroy crops and vegetation forcing peasants to abandon their houses and farms. FAO fears this latest development could exacerbate an already precarious food and nutrition situation in the country. Numerous wells and watercourses have become unsuitable for consumption. On 26 January, the Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf declared a state of emergency and launched an appeal for international assistance to fight the caterpillar infestation. FAO warned that Liberia could face a new caterpillar infestation after 12 days. Caterpillars develop into adults and larvae lay 1,500 eggs a week that can produce destructive caterpillars in a few days.

Health

Some 500 cases of meningitis recorded in West Africa in early January

¹ Information note on Food Security (NISA, décembre 2008) FCPN

² The pest was not "army worm" but a caterpillar/pest identified as "*Achaea catocaloides leptoptera*", according to experts.

According to WHO, 489 cases of meningitis including 57 deaths were recorded during the first two weeks of 2009. As of 11 January, Burkina Faso reported the highest number of cases with 228 cases including 32 deaths, followed by Niger with 126 cases including 6 deaths, Chad with 43 cases including 7 deaths, Nigeria with 43 cases including 1 death. However with 6 deaths for only 20 cases, Cote d'Ivoire records the high death rate (30%).

West Africa: yellow fever cases on the rise

WHO is increasingly concerned about a rise in outbreaks across Africa. In 2008, Africa saw 13 yellow fever outbreaks, as opposed to an average two to five per year in recent years. There have been four outbreaks in sub-Saharan Africa since December 2008 - in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Guinea and Sierra Leone where the NGO Doctors Without borders (MSF) began on 10 January a vaccination campaign targeting 500,000 people in Bo district.

The vast majority of cases and deaths take place in sub-Saharan Africa, with 32 African countries considered to be "at risk." However, West Africa is the continent's most-affected region, with 72 percent of the region experiencing outbreaks since 2000, according to WHO. Through the Yellow Fever Initiative, WHO, governments and partners plan to vaccinate 49 million people in 12 yellow fever-endemic countries by 2010 -- Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. To date, vaccinations have been completed in Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Togo. Following confirmation of two cases of the yellow fever virus in Faranah, Guinea, international agencies on 26 January launched a mass vaccination campaign.

Protection and population movement

Tripartite meeting on the ECOWAS humanitarian stockpile in Mali

OCHA conducted a mission in Mali from 22 to 26 January to exchange with Malian authorities and ECOWAS representatives on the establishment of the ECOWAS humanitarian stockpile in Bamako. In 2005, ECOWAS member-states decided to establish a humanitarian depot in Mali to facilitate quicker intervention in case of emergencies. . Mr. Putman Cramer, head of the Emergency Section Branch who led the mission, held meetings with authorities including the Prime Minister to exchange on different aspects including training, the storage of items, security, refrigeration, etc..

2- SOCIO-POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION

Nord Mali-Nord Niger: insecurity persists

The strip of land expanding from northern Niger, northern Mali to Mauritania remains insecure. Apart from rebel and military clashes, people are continuously kidnapped in the area. On 22 January, 2 Swiss, 1 German and 1 British were kidnapped in the Mali-Niger border area, one month after 2 Canadian diplomats were reported missing in the region of Niamey, Niger. The desert area is without much administrative presence which favours all kinds of trafficking.

In Mali, 31 Tuareg rebels belonging to the group led by Ag Bahanga were reportedly killed on 22 January in north-eastern Mali during an offensive launched by the Malian army. Malian military started early January an operation aimed at securing the north-eastern part of the country³. In addition, the three last soldiers held hostages by Ag Bahanga's group were freed on 25 January, according to the Malian presidency. Previously, the Malian president Amadou Toumani Touré had reaffirmed his will to apply Algiers peace accord that stipulates notably that Tuaregs must not claim for autonomy of their region while Bamako must accelerate the development of northern regions. But since 2007, the hard-liner Ag Bahanga demands since that the army lightens its weaponry in the area of Tinzaouatene, on the border with Algeria.

ECOWAS suspended Guinea

ECOWAS has suspended Guinea from the regional grouping, a decision that was taken on 10 January in Abuja in conformity with the organisation's zero tolerance policy for non-democratic changes. ECOWAS

³ Source : AFP, 22 January 2009

asked the ruling regime to take immediate steps to restore constitutional order and vowed to accompany Guinea towards the restoration of democratic order. The military junta seized power on 23 December 2008, after the death of President Lansana Conté. Besides, some 20 CEOs and high ranking officials of the Guinean State were interrogated on management of state funds in line with the junta's avowed wish to fight corruption.

Read the ECOWAS text: <http://news.ecowas.int/presseshow.php?nb=003&lang=en&annee=2009>

Mauritania : Junta announces presidential election for June

The military junta announced that a presidential election will be organized in Mauritania on 6 June 2009. The government was ordered by the high State Council to take the necessary measures to organize the election which will coincide with a 10-month transition period.

3- RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Sierra Leone : ADB disburses USD 112 M USD to support Sierra Leone's economy

Sierra Leone will receive US\$ 112 million from the African Development Bank (AfDB) to promote economic growth by rehabilitating its infrastructure, improving its agricultural sector and promoting good governance. The grant will serve for the construction of the road linking the north and the east of the country to the airport city of Lungi and also promote regional integration by contributing to the regional network connecting Liberia and Guinea. Besides, there is a water supply and sanitation project expected to provide adequate drinking water and sanitation facilities for rural residents.

http://www.afdb.org/portal/page?_pageid=293,174339&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&press_item=30779232&press_lang=us

CAP 2009

West Africa Consolidated appeals Process (CAP) 2009 of USD 362 million was launched on 24 November 2008 in Dakar. The CAP covers the 15 ECOWAS member countries and aims at funding 82 projects focused on the impact of the food crisis in the following sectors: food security and nutrition, health, protection, water and sanitation, and coordination information management and support services. As of 27 January, contributions to the 2009 CAP were as follows:

http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R32_A839_0901270208.pdf

Themes	Requests in US \$	Funding in US \$	%
Food Security and Nutrition	220 596 203	415 485	0%
Health	15 663 789	0	0%
Protection	62 191 033	0	0%
Water and Sanitation (WASH)	13 250 480	0	0%
Coordination/Information Management and Support Services	49 338 969	1 000 000	2%
Total:	361 040 474	1 415 485	0%

OCHA-Regional Office for West Africa

For further information on the humanitarian situation in West Africa and to consult other reports on the humanitarian situation in the region: <http://ochaonline.un.org/westafrica>

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