

SAHEL WEATHER AND CROP SITUATION REPORT



Report No.1, 8 June 2001

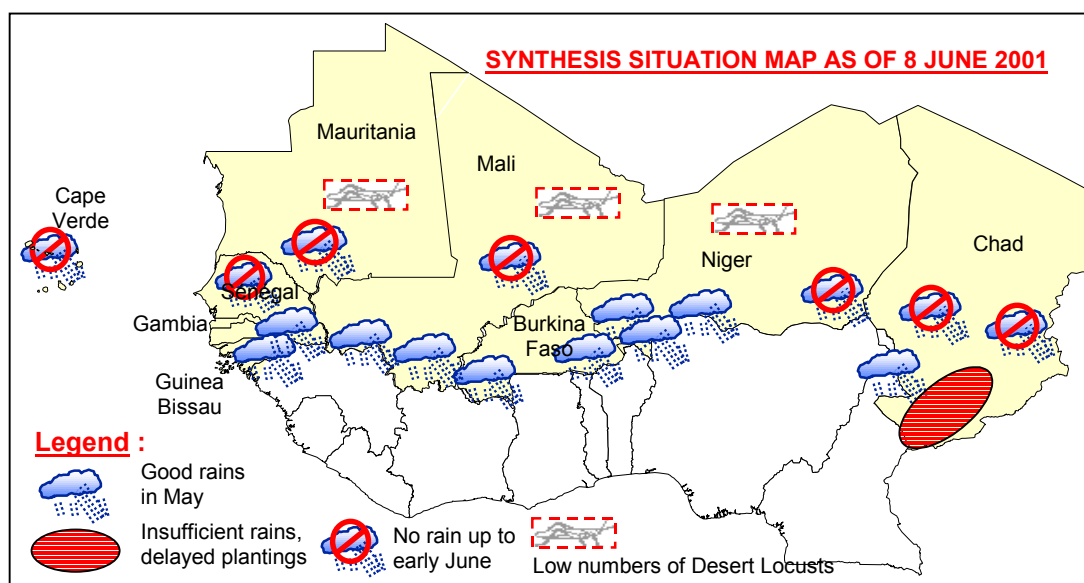
THE RAINY SEASON HAS STARTED EARLY IN NIGER BUT IS DELAYED IN SOUTHERN CHAD

SUMMARY

The rainy season started in early April in the extreme south of **Chad**, in mid-April in southern **Burkina Faso** and **Mali**, in May in **Niger** and in early June in **Guinea Bissau**, the south-east of **Senegal** and the east of **The Gambia**. Seasonably dry conditions prevail in the rest of Senegal and The Gambia, **Cape Verde**, and **Mauritania**. This corresponds to the normal pattern in the Sahel, except for Niger where the onset of the rains is somewhat earlier than usual. In Chad, precipitation decreased significantly in late May in the south. Satellite imagery for the first dekad of June shows that rains started in Guinea Bissau and the south-east of Senegal but that the intensity of the rains did not increase in southern Chad.

Land preparation and plantings are in progress following the onset of the rains. Dry planting is also underway in Mauritania. Crops are emerging satisfactorily in southern Burkina Faso and Mali. Improved rains are needed in southern Chad. Seed availability problems are likely in some areas following below average harvests in 2000 in several countries.

The pest situation is calm. A few Desert Locusts were reported in mid-April in Mauritania and are likely to be present in Timetrine and Adrar des Iforas in Mali and in Air and Tamesna in Niger.

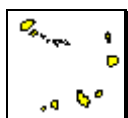


SITUATION BY COUNTRY



BURKINA FASO: The rainy season has started on time in the south and the centre. First showers in late March in the south-east, significant rains were registered during the second dekad of April in the south-west and the centre-south. Precipitation decreased in late April but improved and progressed northwards and remained widespread in May. The weather remained mostly dry in the north. Land preparation and planting of millet and sorghum is now underway in the south, the west and the centre.

The availability of seeds may be limited in some areas following poor harvests in 2000 in several provinces. No pest activity is reported.



CAPE VERDE: Seasonably dry conditions prevail. Planting of maize normally starts in July with the onset of the rains on the main islands. Following an above average harvest in 2000, the availability of seeds should be adequate.



CHAD: The start of the rainy season is delayed in the south. Above normal first rains were registered in early April in the extreme south. They progressed in the south-west in late April/early May while no rains were registered in the south-east. During the second dekad of May, precipitation improved in the south, in the Sudanian zone, but it decreased significantly during the third dekad. Satellite imagery does not indicate improved rains during the first week of June. Therefore, plantings of coarse grains are delayed in the south-east as shown on the map on page 4. Land preparation is starting in the Sahelian zone.



THE GAMBIA: Rains started in the east in early June. First rains have been registered in the east and parts of the centre in early June where they permitted land preparation and first early plantings. Planting will progress to the centre and the west in the weeks ahead following the onset of the rains.

Following a record harvest in 2000, seed availability is adequate for cereals.



GUINEA-BISSAU: The rainy season started in early June. First rains were registered in mid-May in the east but the weather remained mostly dry in late May. Abundant precipitation covered almost the entire country in early June. Land preparation and plantings of coarse grains and rainfed rice are underway in the east and the north. Planting of rice in seedbeds has also started. Transplanting will take place in July/August after desalination of swamp rice fields by more rains.

The pest situation is calm. Insect attacks have been reported on Bolama Island. Seed availability problems are likely in some areas, notably for groundnut.



MALI: The growing season has started in the south. The first significant rains were registered in the extreme south in mid-April. They progressed northwards and were above normal during the first and second dekads of May but they decreased during the third dekad. Land preparation is underway and first plantings of millet and sorghum has started in the south. They will progress northwards with the onset of the rains.

As recommended by the National Early Warning System, distribution of seeds has been undertaken in various areas. The pest situation is calm. Low numbers of Desert Locusts are likely to be present and will persist in a few areas of Timetrine and the Adrar des Iforas. Limited breeding could start in these areas if rainfall occurs.



MAURITANIA: Seasonably dry conditions prevail. Planting will start following the onset of the rains in late June or July. Dry plantings may already have started in some areas in the extreme south and the south-east.

Seed availability is generally adequate following good rainfed crop harvests in 2000 in most areas. Desert Locusts have been observed mid-April north of Aïoun. They may move towards the summer breeding areas in the south where they are expected to mature and lay with the onset of the rainy season.



NIGER: The rainy season started earlier than usual. Following first scattered rains in the centre-south in late April, above normal rains were registered during the first and the second dekads of May, allowing land preparation and first plantings to start. However, precipitation decreased in late May. The weather remains dry in Diffa nad Agadez departments. It is estimated that about 28 percent of the villages had finished their plantings as of 20 May, instead of only 4 percent last year.

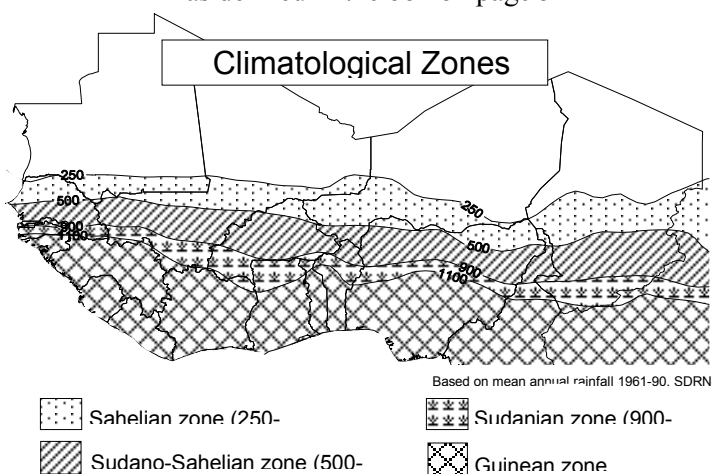
The pest situation is calm. A few isolated Desert Locusts may be present in parts of Aïr and Tamesna where conditions are suitable for survival and locally improving. Limited breeding is expected to commence in the Tamesna with the onset of the summer rains. No significant developments are expected.



SENEGAL: Seasonably dry conditions prevail in most parts. Early limited rains were registered in the extreme south-east in May. Rains improved significantly in the south-east in early June. Elsewhere seasonably dry conditions prevail. Rains will start and progress towards the centre and the north in June. Land preparation and plantings of coarse grains are underway in the south.

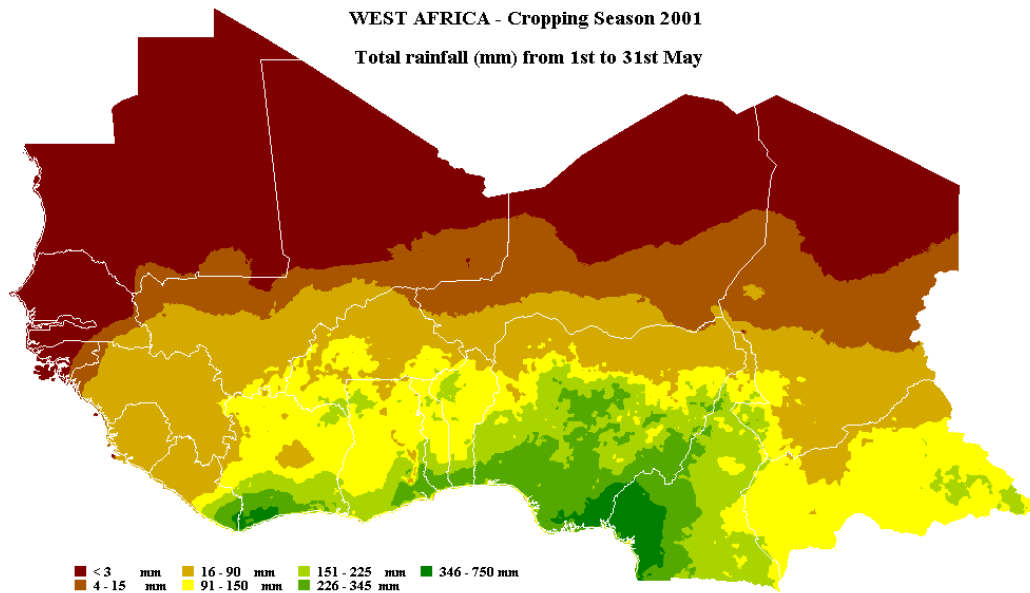
Seed availability is generally adequate following 2000 above average harvest. No significant pest activity has been reported.

The following map provides reference to the different climatological zones of the Sahel as defined in the box on page 5

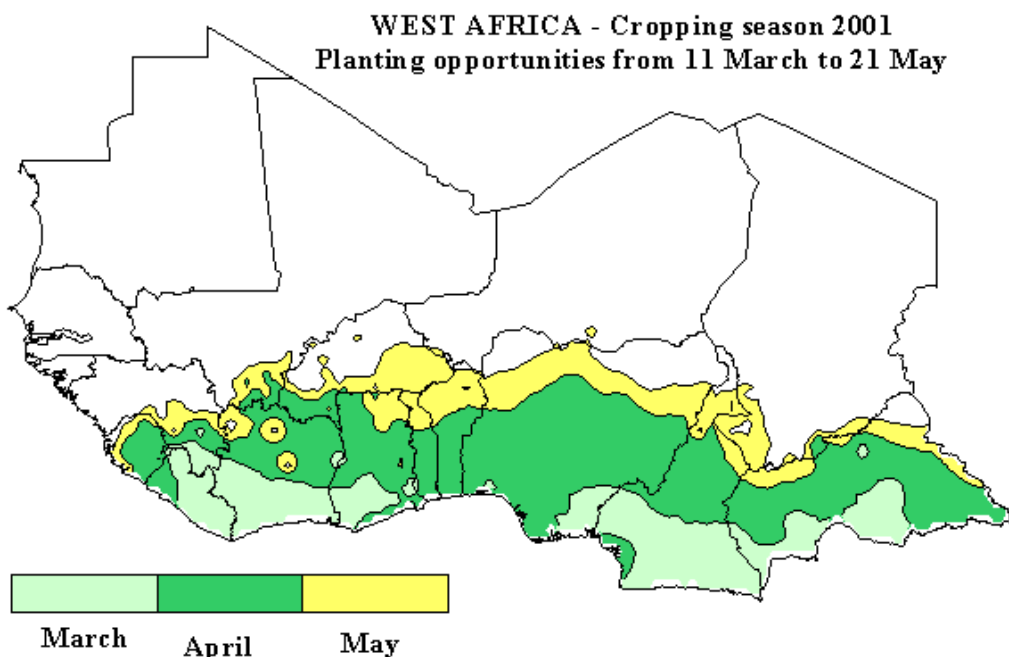


TOTAL RAINFALL AND PLANTING OPPORTUNITY MAPS

The first map indicates the total rainfall amount from 1st to 31th May. Data is extracted from FAO field reports and the RainFall Estimate (RFE) Satellite Imagery as produced by NOAA/USGS/FEWS/USAID project. The RFE images are obtained by interpolating various parameters recorded on the ground and obtained through remote sensing measurements such as: rainfall, relative humidity, wind speed, elevation, cold cloud temperatures.



The map below shows the estimated planting time (opportunity) as defined by the dekad (10-day) satisfying the following requisites: during the first dekad, 25 mm of rainfall should be measured and a total rainfall of at least 20 mm should be recorded during the two next dekads. Data used for this analysis are from FAO field reports and RFE imagery.



Data source: NOAA - Prepared by: FAO, SDRN, Agrometeorology Group

This is the first GIEWS report of the 2001 season on weather and crop conditions in the Sahelian countries of western Africa. Geographical coverage of these reports include the nine CILSS (Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) member states: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. Reports will be issued each month from June to November. The final report for 2001 with the first production estimates will be issued in late-November

These reports are prepared with data from, and in close collaboration with, out-posted FAO Representatives, the Agro-Meteorology Group and the Environmental Monitoring Group (SDRN), the Emergency Centre for Locust Operations (ECLLO), the Special Relief Operations Service (TCOR), the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's). In this report, satellite imagery provided by FAO/ARTEMIS, field data on rainfall, FAO agro-meteorological crop monitoring field reports and information provided by FAO Representatives up to 31 May have been utilized. The satellite images of the first week of June has also been utilized for final updating.

*In these reports, reference will be made to four different **eco-climatic zones** based on the average annual precipitation and agricultural features, i.e. Sahelian zone, Sudano-Sahelian zone, Sudanian zone and Guinean zone. They are shown in the map on page 4 and described below:*

***Sahelian zone:** Where average annual precipitation ranges between 250 and 500 mm. This zone is at the limit of perennial vegetation. In parts where precipitation is less than 350 mm, only pastures and occasional short-cycle drought-resistant cereal crops are grown; all cropping in this zone is subject to high risk.*

***Sudano-Sahelian zone:** Where average annual precipitation ranges from 500 to 900 mm. In those parts of this zone where precipitation is less than 700 mm, mostly crops with a short growing cycle of 90 days are generally cultivated predominantly sorghum and millet.*

***Sudanian zone:** Where average annual precipitation ranges from 900 to 1 100 mm. In this zone, most cereal crops have a growing cycle of 120 days or more. Most cereals, notably maize, root and cash crops are grown in this zone.*

***Guinean zone:** Where average annual precipitation exceeds 1 100 mm. Guinea-Bissau and a small area of southern Burkina Faso belong to this zone, more suited to root crop cultivation.*

*Reference will also be made to the **Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)**, also known by its trace on the earth's surface, called the **Intertropical Front**. The ITCZ is a quasi-permanent zone between two air masses separating the northern and southern hemisphere trade winds. The ITCZ moves north and south of the equator and usually reaches its most northerly position in July. Its position defines the northern limits of possible precipitation in the Sahel; rain-bearing clouds are generally situated 150-200 km south of the Intertropical Front.*

Please note that this report is available on the **Internet World Wide Web** at the following address: [HTTP://WWW.FAO.ORG/GIEWS/](http://www.fao.org/giews/) then click on "English" and "Sahel Weather and Crop Situation Reports".

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