

EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY

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IN THE GAMBIA

Period: July 11 - 20, 2009



Government of The Gambia

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Working Group of the AGRHYMET Regional
Programme

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AGRHYMET Regional Programme

1. PROGRESS OF RAINY SEASON

The mean surface position of the demarcating boundary between the dry and moist regions over West Africa (Inter-Tropical Discontinuity - ITD) was located over Podor (Senegal), Aioun Elatrouss (Mauritania), Gao (Mali) and Agadez (Niger). Thus, the ITD continued in its northward journey in the western axis, whereas in the central and eastern axis, it maintained its position as in the last dekad.

The prominent high-pressure cell centred over the North West Atlantic Ocean (the Azores) had a mean core value of 1027.6 hectopascals (hpa), thus intensified by 5.27 hpa as compared to the 1st dekad of July, whereas the St. Helena High Pressure Cell centred over the south Atlantic Ocean had a mean core value of 1031.2 hpa thus intensified by 1.2 hpa as compared to the preceding dekad. This pressure configuration thus, favored moisture influx into the West African sub-region, hence the rain and thunderstorms observed over the Gulf of Guinea States and the Sahel, including The Gambia.

2. RAINFALL OUTLOOK FOR JULY 21 - 31, 2009

Warm, humid and variable cloudy conditions will prevail with rain and/or thunderstorm (sometimes squally) over most places by the beginning (21st) and the end (26th to 29th) of the 3rd dekad of July 2009.

3. RAINFALL SITUATION

In the Central and Eastern Thirds of the country, rainfall intensity has reduced significantly during this dekad as compared to the previous one. Whilst in the Western Third, significant amounts were recorded (over 40mm) in some places. The number of rainy days in the country ranged from 1 to 5 with most places in the Middle Third recording between 1 and 2 days. End-of-dekad totals ranged from 16.5mm at Basse in the Eastern Third to 113.9mm at Kerewan in the Western Third of the country. Figure 1a shows the distribution pattern of rainfall during this dekad, with the western part recording more rainfall (over 50mm).

However, in the Middle Third of the country, rainfall amounts at the end of the dekad were **not adequate** to ensure good levels of soil moisture, to allow continued crop growth and development, if this trend should continue into the next dekad.

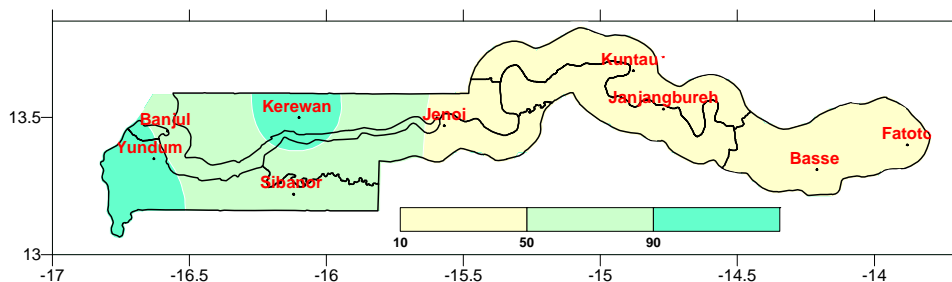


Figure 1a: Rainfall intensity during July 11 - 20, 2009

The seasonal total rainfall amount in the country (May 1 to July 20) ranged from 78.7mm at Janjanbureh in the Middle Third to 308.6mm at Kerewan in the Western Third of the country (details in fig. 1b). The distribution in space shows that the Western and Eastern Thirds continued to lead in rainfall intensities than the Middle Third.

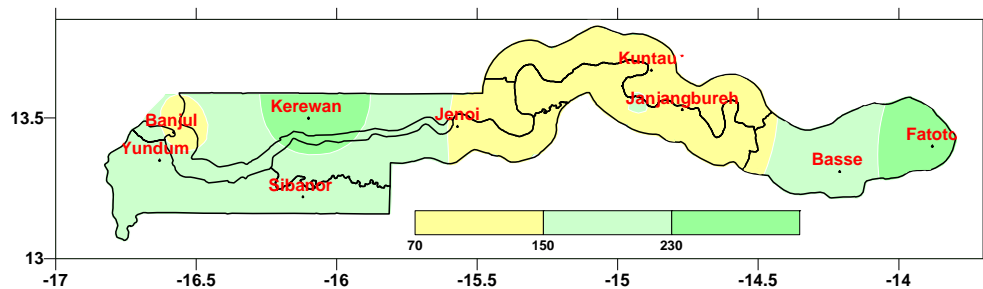


Figure 1b: Seasonal total from May 1 to July 20, 2009

In general, average rainfall from May 1 to July 20 remained below that of last year during the same period. *The country average as at July 20, 2009 was 161.4mm, compared to 268.3mm recorded during the same period last year. However, this year's seasonal rainfall (161.4mm) is slightly below the long-term mean (163.3mm) during the same period.*

4. AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

During this dekad, mean temperatures did not change much compared to the previous dekad, however, they fluctuated from station to station across the country. Thermal distributions within the country show that the Eastern and Middle Thirds remained hotter than the Western Third.

Maximum temperature was highest at Kaur (39.4°C) in the Middle Third, and the lowest at Yundum (33.6°C) in the Western Third. Minimum temperature followed the same trend like the maximum temperature. It was highest at Sapu (23.0°C) in the Middle Third and lowest at Kerewan (18.0°C) in the Western Third of the country.

Maximum relative humidity (RH) continued to remain above 90% throughout the dekad, while the minimum RH generally rose to above 60% in both the Eastern and Western Thirds. In the Middle Third, minimum RH ranged from 56 to 58%.

Winds during the period were generally light to moderate in speed, with the passage of a line squall on the 14th and 20th July 2009.

5. AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

Phenological development of crops varies in different areas across the country. This is attributed to the different dates of sowing, caused by varying on-set of rainfall.

In the Middle and Western Thirds of the country (Central River north and south and North Bank Regions) maize, millet and sorghum have reached a phenological stage ranging from seedling to tillering. Groundnuts are on flowering or ramification in some parts of the Middle and Eastern Thirds, whilst in the Middle Third the crop is at seedling stage.

In the Eastern and Western Thirds, however, due to late onset of rains and the subsequent dry spells, sowing/re-sowing of groundnut is ongoing and cereal crops (maize, sorghum and upland rice) are in advance leaf formation stage.

Ploughing and sowing in the up-land rice fields are ongoing, whilst in the low-land rice fields, transplanting is yet to begin. In the Western Third, vegetable gardening is continuing in some places.

Hairy grasshoppers were reported in few areas during the dry spell that occurred in the dekad.

6. SITUATION OF CEREAL MARKETS

Average prices at the cereal markets continued to fluctuate depending on the volume of the commodities supplied and demand at the markets. At Kaur, the price of coarse grains (millet, maize and sorghum) varied between D10.00 / kg and D15.00 / kg whilst the same commodities at Banjul varied between D16.00 / kg and D20.00 / kg (table 1).

Prices of coarse grains (maize, millet and sorghum) during this dekad are virtually unchanged as in the preceding dekad. Meanwhile, compared to last year, prices this year remained lower for all the cereals.

Table 1: Evolution of commodity prices (Source: Department of Planning)

Market	Maize	Millet	Sorghum	Imported Whole Rice	Local Rice Milled	Imported Broken Rice	Findo	Ground-Nut
Banjul	20.15	20.35	13.15	14.00	Na	15.00	42.50	25.66
Serekunda	17.33	17.33	16.38	15.16	20.00	15.33	45.70	25.43
Latrikunda	17.35	17.35	14.26	14.00	20.00	16.00	Na	25.62
Brikama	16.46	16.85	12.25	15.00	20.00	16.00	58.00	25.22
Bakau	18.59	16.37	15.21	15.00	20	16.00	56.69	28.28
Ndugukebbeh	14.86	14.94	Na	16.35	Na	17.00	Na	Na
Kerr pateh	14.55	15.55	Na	16.55	Na	17.00	Na	Na
Farafenni	14.45	15.45	11.15	16.65	Na	17.35	Na	25.55
Soma	14.82	15.82	Na	16.72	Na	17.45	Na	26.33
Bureng	13.12	14.11	Na	16.75	Na	17.55	Na	26.33
Kaur	13.19	14.11	10.00	16.57	18.00	17.45	Na	26.24
Wassu	13.73	14.43	12.66	16.25	18.75	17.15	Na	26.20
Brikamaba	14.5	15.90	12.10	16.25	14.00	17.15	Na	26.25
Sarre Ngai	Na	14.77	Na	17.00	Na	18.00	Na	26.55
Basse	14.65	15.85	12.55	16.95	Na	17.80	Na	26.25
Average	15.55	15.95	12.97	15.95	18.68	16.82	50.72	26.15

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