EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY IN THE GAMBIA

No. 2009/13 **Period: September 01 - 10, 2009**

Government of The Gambia

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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 Convergence Zone- ITD) was located over Tidjikta (Mauritania), North of Timbouctou (Mali) and Agadez (Niger). Thus, the ITD maintained its position as in the last dekad.

Humid and partly cloudy to cloudy conditions prevailed over most parts of West Africa during the dekad, resulting to scattered to widespread rain and thunderstorm over places in the Sahel and Gulf of Guinea States.

The prominent high-pressure cell centred over the North West Atlantic Ocean (the Azores) had a mean core value of 1027 hectopascals (hPa), thus intensified by 0.71 hPa compared to the 03rd dekad of August. Its mean position was located at about 34°N/35°W, whereas the high-pressure cell centered over the South Atlantic Ocean **(**St. Helena) had a mean core value of 1028.6 hPa, intensified by 2.31 hPa compared to the past dekad and shifted northwest at 25°S/18°W. This pressure configuration resulted to moisture influx into the West African subregion, hence the rain and thunderstorms observed over the Gulf of Guinea States and the Sahel, including The Gambia.

Weather outlook for 11th – 20th September 2009

Warm, humid and variably cloudy conditions will prevail with rain and/or thunderstorm (sometimes squally) over most places by the beginning (12th, 14th and 15th) and the end (16th to 19th) of the 02nd dekad of September 2009.

2. RAINFALL SITUATION

Total rainfall during the dekad ranged from 120mm at Sapu in the Middle Third to 279.5mm at Kerewan in the Western Third. This shows a marked improvement in rainfall intensity in the Middle and Eastern Thirds compared to the previous dekads.

The number of rainy days varied from a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 9 days, resulting in very wet conditions that caused damage to infrastructure mostly in the Western Third and reduced on-farm activities. Dekadal totals ranged from 147.3mm at Janjanbureh in the Middle Third to 280.7mm at Kaur both in the Middle Third (figure 1a).

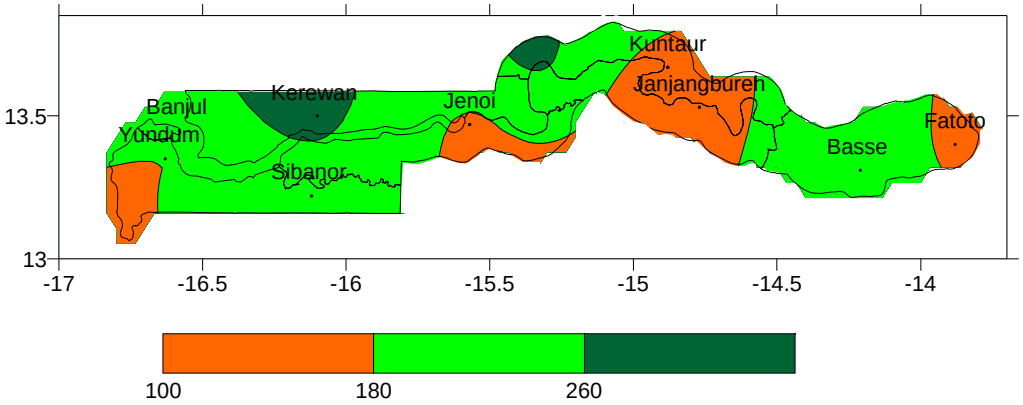

Figure 1a: Rainfall dekadal totals 1 – 10 September, 2009

The seasonal total rainfall from 1st May to 10th September, 2009 ranged from 476.0mm at Janjangbureh in the Middle Third to 1828.4mm at Kerewan in the Western Third.

As at September 10th, 2009 the country average stood at 877.6mm, which is 15% above last year's mean (760.5mm) and 42% above the long term mean (617.8mm) at the same period. Throughout the country, only Sapu, Janjanbureh, Basse, and Fatoto recorded deficits ranging from 24.7 to 193mm as compared to last year.

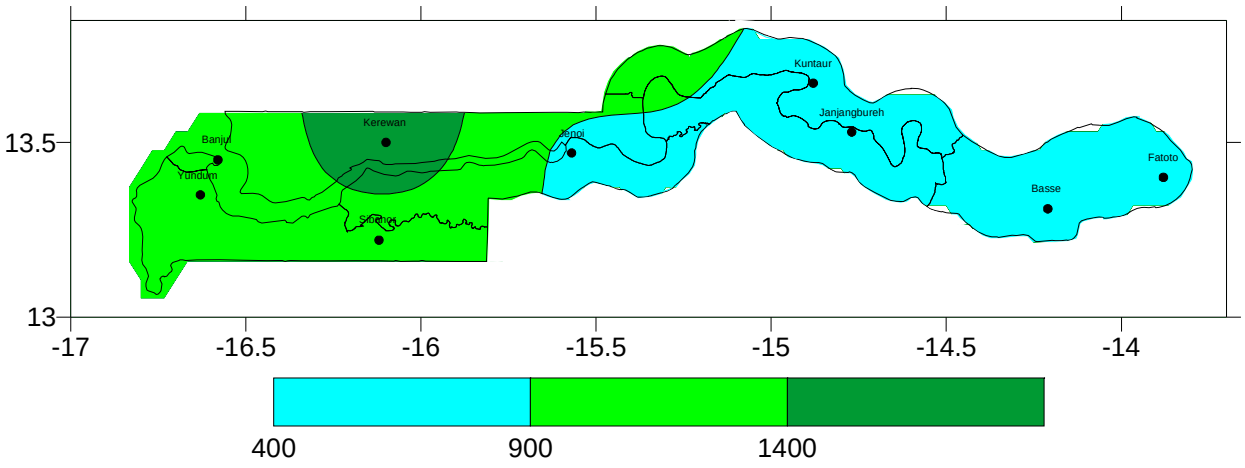

Figure 1b: Seasonal total from May 1 to September 10, 2009

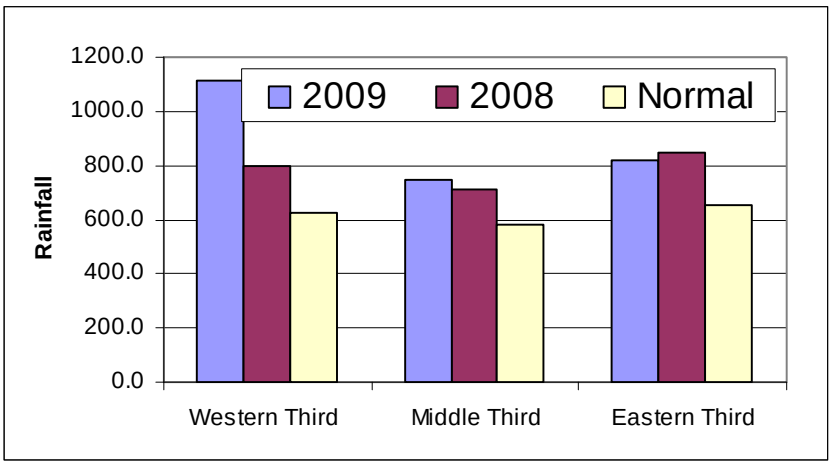

Figure 2: Graph of seasonal rainfall in 2009, 2008 and the long term mean (normal) as at Sept. 10, 2009

Extreme events: The daily down pours recorded during this dekad and previous ones have resulted to severe flooding of settlements around the Greater Banjul Area leading to destruction of houses and properties. Elsewhere in the provinces rice fields were submerged in swampy areas, particularly in CRR (Pacharr areas) and top soils eroded in upland fields.

3. AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

With atmospheric moisture and the amount of rainfall received during this dekad both mean and maximum temperatures did not change much compared to the last dekad. Highest temperature ranged from 32.0^{o}C at Banjul to 35.5^{o}C at Fatoto, while minimum temperatures maintained the same trend as the maximum, with the highest of 23.0^{o}C recorded at Sapu and the lowest of 19.5^{o}C at Banjul.

Maximum relative humidity (RH) remained above 90% throughout the country.

Winds during this dekad were generally light to moderate in speed, but a line squall of around 64 km/hr occurred resulting to the destruction of houses in some parts of the country.

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