
EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY

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IN THE GAMBIA

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Government of The Gambia

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Working Group of the AGRHYMET Regional
Programme

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AGRHYMET Regional Programme

1. SEASONAL CLIMATE FORECAST FOR YEAR 2009 OVER THE GAMBIA

The Department of Water Resources is pleased to present the **climate forecast** for this **wet season (2009)**. As in past years, this product is the result of collaboration with the National Meteorological Services within the sub-region and beyond.

To understand the forecast, the following facts must be noted:

- Seasonal forecasting relies on prediction of averages over space and time, and may not reflect all the various factors that influence regional and national climate differences;
- The Forecast is relevant only for the entire season and within relatively large areas, since local and month-to-month variations may occur;
- Rainfall results are usually expressed as being either **below normal**, **normal** or **above normal**, with Normal rainfall defined as the average rainfall during a 30-year period (1971 - 2000) of observed rainfall; and
- Finally the forecast is only valid for the combined period of July, August and September (**JAS**), when approximately 80% of the total seasonal rainfall occurs in the sub-region, including The Gambia.

Consequently, for the rainy season of JAS 2009, the forecast is one of BELOW NORMAL (most likely) to Normal rainfall (likely), that is a range of between 500 to 750mm of rainfall in The Gambia.

As at now, the above forecast is based on the best estimate of the impact of the various factors affecting rainfall in the country, and would be updated on a monthly basis starting from the end of June 2009.

The forecast is highly recommended for use in planning interventions in several socio-economic sectors.

2. ONSET OF RAINFALL

Analysis of past records of rainfall onsets over the Gambia indicate that in the:

- Eastern Third (all of Upper River Region - URR and eastern parts of Central River Region - CRR) sowing should only be undertaken from **June 9 onward**;
- Middle Third (eastern part of Lower River Region - LRR and North Bank Region - NBR and western CRR) sowing should only be undertaken from **June 15 onward**;
- Western Third (all of Western Region – WR, Kanifing Municipal Council and Banjul and Western LRR and NBR) sowing should only be undertaken from **June 22 onward**.

3. PROGRESS OF RAINY SEASON

The Inter-Tropical Discontinuity - ITD, demarcating boundary between the dry and moist regions over West Africa continued its northward movement especially along its eastern axis. However, the mean surface position of the ITD was located over Kolda (Senegal), Keneba (Mali), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Birni N'konni and Magaria (Niger) and Mao (Chad). Thus, the ITD was situated south of The Gambia and also below its position during the same period last year.

The Prominent High Pressure Cell centred over the north-west Atlantic Ocean (the Azores) had a mean core value of 1027 Hectopascals (hpa), whereas the St. Helena High Pressure Cell centred over the south Atlantic Ocean had a mean core value of 1028.25 hpa. This pressure configuration thus, favoured moisture influx into the West African sub-region, hence the rain and thunderstorms observed over the Gulf of Guinea States and southern Sahel.

4. RAINFALL OUTLOOK

Warm and variable cloudiness will prevail with the likelihood of slight rain over some places by early (2nd) and end (8th) of the 1st dekad (1 - 10) of June 2009.

5. RAINFALL SITUATION

During this dekad, measurable rainfall only occurred at Basse (2.1mm).

However, compared to the same period last year, deficits were observed in Sibanor (12.4mm) in the Western part and Kaur (10.3mm) in the Middle part of the country. Other stations recorded surplus ranging from 1.2mm in Kerewan to 32.4mm in Fatoto.

6. AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

Maximum temperatures remained above 41°C throughout the country, except in areas around the coast (Yundum and Banjul) where they were below 39°C. The above shows a slight decrease in temperature regime as compared to the past dekad.

Minimum temperatures followed the same trend as the maximum temperatures; decreasing gradually towards the coast.

Maximum relative humidity increased slightly compared to the previous dekad. The highest value was over 90% around the coast, reducing gradually to a minimum of 68% in the Eastern part of the country.

Winds during the dekad were generally moderate to light in speed (maximum speed of 43km/hr).

7. AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

The major on-field activities by farmers continue to be field clearing, acquisition and preparation of seeds and the repair of farming implements.

In the Western Third, women are still engaged in vegetable gardening in the low lands.

8. SITUATION OF MARKETS

8.1 Cereal Prices

Average prices at the cereal markets continued to fluctuate depending on the volume of the commodities supplied and the demand in the markets.

The food situation is generally good, due to the availability of stocks in households and products in retail and weekly markets.

Compared to the same period last year, average commodity prices for coarse grains decreased by a range of D3.35 to 4.86/kg, whilst imported rice has reduced by a range of D1.14 to D2/kg.

8.2 Price of beef and mutton

The price of beef (all categories) continued to remain stable during the period under review. In the Greater Banjul Area, the price of beef (meat and bone) is D65.00/kg compared to D80.00 during the same period last year and that of steak is D90.00/kg. In the rest of the country, the price of beef (meat and bone) is D60.00/kg whilst that of stake is D80.00/kg.

The price of mutton ranges from D80.00 to D110/kg in the Greater Banjul Area and D60.00/kg in the rest of the country.

Composition of MWG:

Department of Water Resources
Department of Planning - NADA
Department of Extension Services - NADA
Department of Veterinary Services - NADA
Department of Technical Services - NADA
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