
EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY

No. 2009/12

IN THE GAMBIA

Period: August 21 - 31, 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 Convergence Zone- ITD), continuing its north ward movement was located over North of Nouakchott (Mauritania), Tidjikta (Mauritania), North of Timbouctou (Mali) and Bilma (Niger) during the period under review.

Humid and partly cloudy to cloudy conditions prevailed over most parts of West Africa during the dekad, resulting to scattered/widespread rainfall and thunderstorms over places within Sahel and Gulf of Guinea States.

The prominent high-pressure cell centred over the North West Atlantic Ocean (the Azores), intensified itself by 3.09 hpa compared to the previous dekad to reach a mean core value of 1026.29 hpa. Its mean position was located at about 34°N 35°W. Whereas the high-pressure cell centred over the South Atlantic Ocean (St. Helena) has a mean core value of 1026.29 hpa intensifying by 5.04 hPa compared to the previous dekad and shifted its position northwest to 25°S 18°W. This pressure configuration resulted to increased 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.

Weather outlook for 01 – 10 September 2009

Warm, humid and variably cloudy conditions will prevail with rain and/or thunderstorms (sometimes squally) over most places by the beginning and towards the end of the first dekad.

2. RAINFALL SITUATION

This dekad has recorded rainfall similar to that of the previous dekad, in terms of frequency and intensities with significant daily heavy down pours particularly in Kerewan in the Western Third of the country. Daily intensities varying from 0.5mm (Janjanbureh) to 131.0 (Kerewan) were recorded, with the frequency (number of rainy days) varying between 4 and 9 days across the country. Total rainfall during the dekad ranged from 84.3mm at Kaur in the Middle Third to 351.6mm at Kerewan in the Western Third of the country (figure 1a).

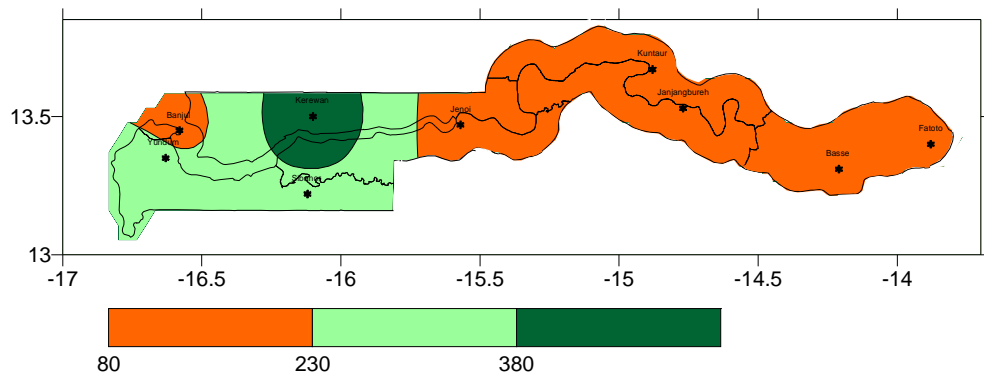


Figure 1a: Rainfall intensity during August 21 - 31, 2009

So far from May 1 to August 31, 2009 the seasonal total rainfall amounts in the country ranged from 328.7mm at Janjangbureh in the Middle Third to 1549.4mm at Kerewan in the Western Third of the country (figure 1b).

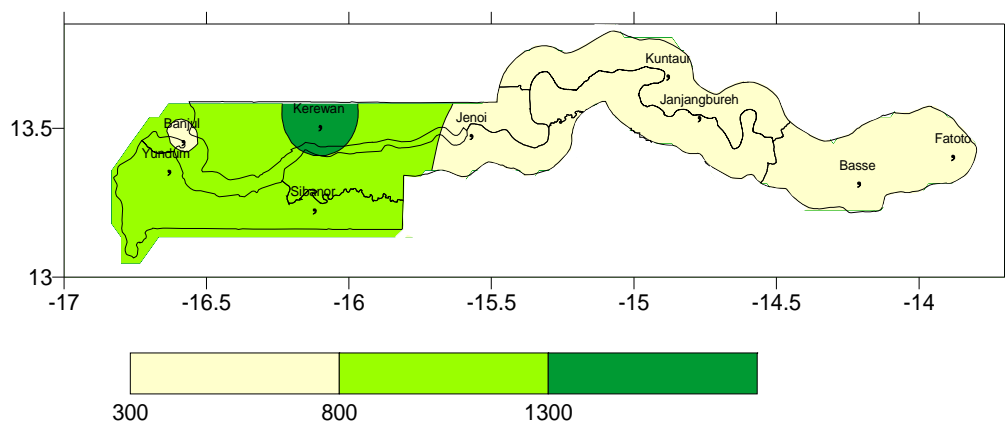


Figure 1b: Seasonal total from May 1 to August 20, 2009

Compared to the same period last year, only Kerewan, Kaur and Mankamang recorded surpluses, all the others recorded deficits ranging from 10.7mm at Banjul to 278.7 at Janjanbureh.

The country average as at August 31, 2009 stood at 745.5mm, compared to 569.0mm and 535.8mm recorded during the same period last year and the long-term mean respectively (figure 2).

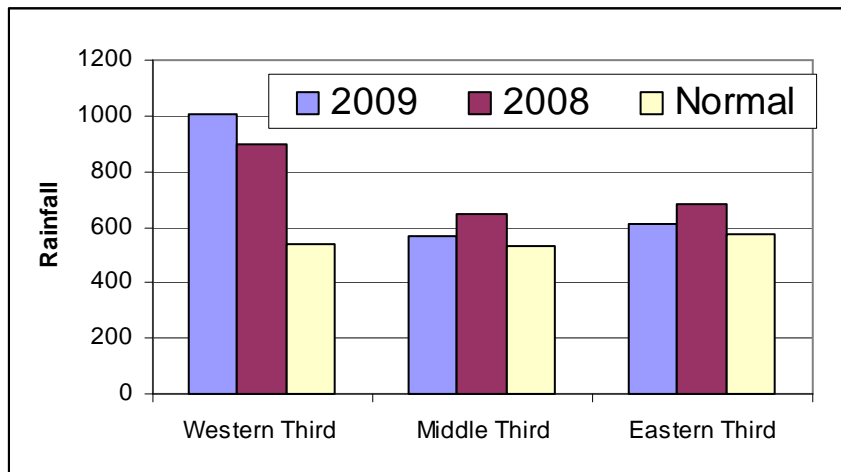


Figure 2: Comparison of this year's total against last year and long term mean (normal)

Extreme rainfall areas: The two points of concern are Janjanbureh which recorded the lowest rainfall total (328.7mm, 85% below last year's and 55% below the long term average) and Kerewan which recorded the highest (1549.4mm, 132% above last year's) (highest since rainfall records started there). The consequences are 1: for Janjanbureh, despite the total amount recorded, if intervals between rainfalls is not long (more than 5 days), upland crops may prosper, but there is a likelihood that swamp rice may face difficulties, as transplanting requires certain level of water in the plots. 2: On the other hand Kerewan with one third of its annual rainfall recorded in one day (5/08/2009), followed by other heavy down pours of above 100mm suffered floods and destruction of houses and properties. The impact on agricultural activities may be submergence of rice fields, erosion of top soils resulting to destruction of field crops.

3. AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

Mean temperatures (27°C) during this dekad have slightly dropped compared to the previous dekad. Thermal distributions across the country from west to east remained uniform, generally at mean temperatures of (27°C).

Highest temperatures ranged from 34.0°C at Banjul to 36.0°C at Kaur, whilst minimum temperatures fluctuated between 22°C and 23°C across the country.

Maximum relative humidity (RH) continued to remain above 93% throughout the country.

Winds during the period were generally light; however, a squall line (65km/h) traversed the country causing destruction of houses and properties on its way.

4. SITUATION OF CEREAL MARKETS

For the period under review average prices for rice ranged from D14.00/kg at Banjul to D17.85/kg at Sare Ngai. Meanwhile, prices of cereals at cereal markets continued to fluctuate depending on the volume of the commodities supplied and demand at the markets. The price of sorghum, varying from D10.00/kg to D16.15/kg remained the lowest cereal price, whilst *Findo* varying from D48.00/kg to D64.00/kg remained the highest in all markets (figure 3).

Compared to last year during the same period, this year's prices of coarse grains (maize, millet and sorghum) are slightly higher except for rice which has recorded a significant drop.

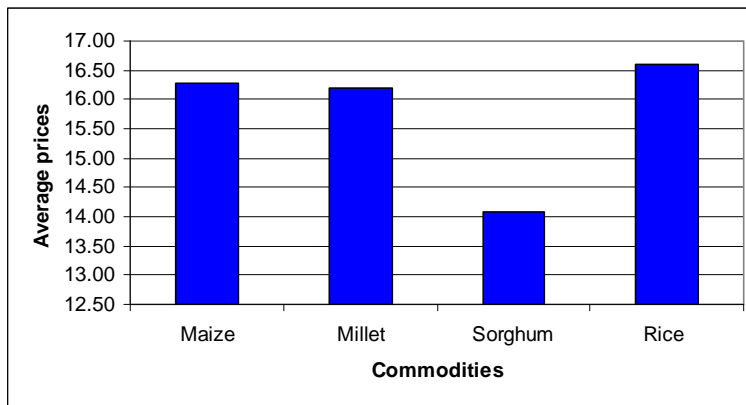


Figure 3: Evolution of commodity prices (*Source: Department of Planning Services*)

Composition of MWG:

Department of Water Resources
 Department of Planning Services
 Department of Extension and Communication Services
 Department of Plant Protection Services
 Department of Animal Health and Production Services
 National Environment Agency

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