
EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY

No. 2011/08

IN THE GAMBIA

Period: July 11 - 20, 2011



Government of The Gambia

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Focal Point: Department of Water Resources

TEL: (+220) 4227631 / 4224122 / 8905229 - FAX: (+220) 422 50 09

E-MAIL: dwr@mofwrnam.gov.gm / WEB: www.mofwrnam.gov.gm



AGRHYMET Regional Programme

1. PROGRESS OF THE RAINY SEASON

The average surface position of the ITD that separates the dry and moisture areas lies over southern Mauritania stretching across northern Mali, central Niger and then sloping onto Chad.

Places to the south of this position were characterised by convective cloud development resulting to rain showers and thunderstorms. The occurrences were confined to the evenings and nights.

The Sub-Tropical High Pressure System, Azores High, remained quite intense and quasi-stationary over the North Atlantic Ocean with an average core value of 1034hPa during the first half of the dekad. The relative position of this system and its magnitude enhanced the inflow of North-westerly winds over the Gambia which suppressed the moisture surge and consequently caused the short dry spell. Meanwhile, the system later retreated slightly to the north which enabled the perturbation of monsoon, hence the wet conditions at the end of the dekad.

2. RAINFALL OUTLOOK FOR JULY 21 - 31, 2011

Rain and thunderstorm is expected at the beginning of the dekad which is expected to give way to short dry spell around the middle of the dekad. Thereafter, wet conditions are expected towards the end of the dekad.

3. RAINFALL SITUATION

In the Middle 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 (coastal areas), rainfall amounts have increased as compared to the preceding dekad. Meanwhile, the number of rainy days increased and ranged from 2 to 5 days.

End-of-dekad totals ranged from 21.4mm at Sibanor to 64.9mm at Serekunda both in the Western Third of the country. Figure 1a shows the distribution pattern of rainfall during this dekad, with the western and eastern parts recording more rainfall.

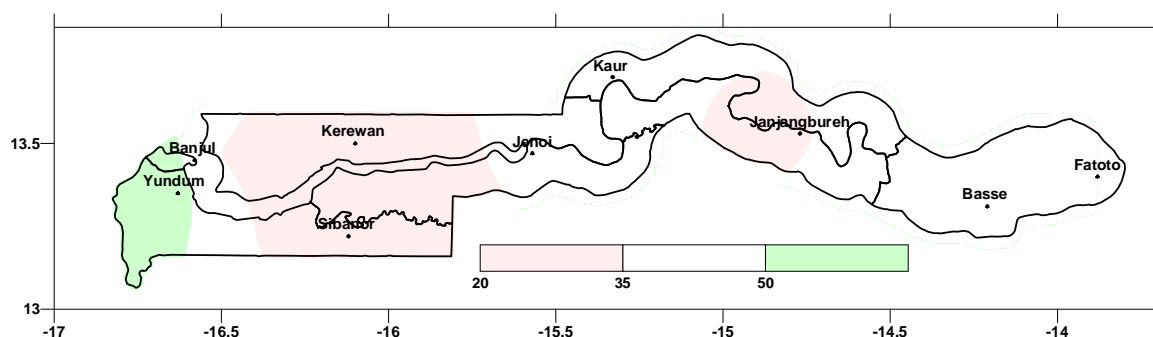


Figure 1a: Rainfall intensity during July 11 – 20, 2011

The seasonal total rainfall amount in the country (May 1 to July 20) ranged from 68.3mm at Sibabor to 216.5mm at Sapu (fig. 2b). The extreme Eastern and Western Thirds of the country recorded the lowest seasonal rainfall of less than 180mm. In the Middle Third, only Jenoi and Kaur recorded rainfall below 180mm.

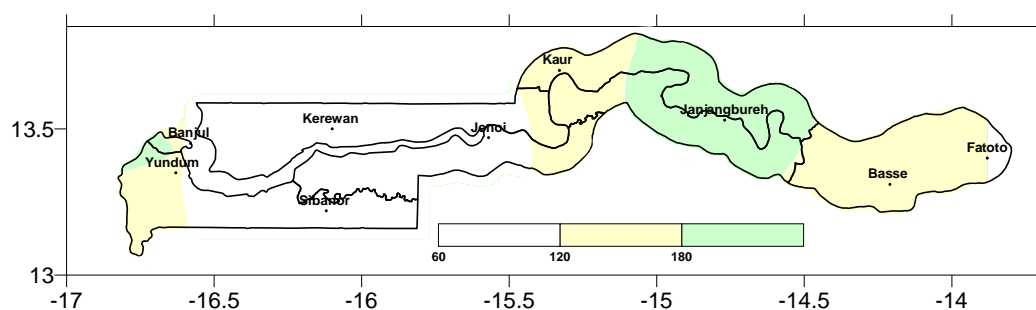


Figure 1a: Seasonal total from May 1 to July 20, 2011

A comparison of this year's rainfall situation compared to last year at the same period, showed deficit values in all network stations ranging from 36.0mm at Yundum to 272.0mm at Jenoi. The country average as at July 20, 2011 was 138.6mm, compared to 268.3mm recorded during the same period last year. When compared to the long term mean, this year recorded deficits ranging from 31.6mm to 197.0mm.

4. AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

In this dekad, mean temperatures decreased slightly across the country as compared to the previous dekad.

Thus maximum temperatures ranged from 32.6°C at Yundum in the Western Third to 36.4°C at Kaur in the Middle Third of the country, whilst minimum temperatures varied between 19.5°C at Kerewan to 22.7°C at Kaur.

Maximum relative humidity (RH) continued to remain above 90% throughout the dekad, while the minimum relative humidity also was above 55%.

Winds during the dekad were light to moderate in speed.

5. AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

Phenological development of crops varied 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 Eastern Thirds of the country (Central River north and south and Upper River Regions), sowing of maize, millet and sorghum is almost completed and these crops have reached a phenological stage ranging from seedling to tillering. Farmers are busy weeding their fields. In the Western Third, sowing of cereal crops in the North Bank Region is almost completed. However, in the West Coast and Lower River Regions, sowing has just gained momentum.

Sowing of groundnut is still ongoing in most parts of the country. Meanwhile, early sown fields have reached the phenological stages ranging from seedling to ramification.

Sowing of upland rice is on-going in most parts of the country. In the lowland fields, irrigated rice has reached full maturity and harvesting is in progress. Meanwhile, sowing of nursery plants is in progress. In the West Coast Region, women are still engaged in vegetable gardening in the low lands.

6. PEST AND DISEASE SITUATION

The dekad is characterised by continued proliferation of diverse fruit flies on especially mangoes and cashews. Other fruits such as guava, soursop, large pepper, orange and lime are similarly attacked. Specifically melon fruit fly (*Bactrocera cucurbitae*), Mediterranean fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*), mango fruit fly/marula fruit fly (*Ceratitis cosyra*), invasive fruit fly (*Bactrocera invadens*), Oriental fruit fly (*Bactrocera dorsalis*), vinegar fruit fly (*Drosophila melanogaster*) and other fruit flies have been found to be infesting fruits on plants as well as those that have fallen. The mango industry is additionally stormed by another pest called the mango mealy bug (*Rastrococcus invadens*). No assessment of the density of these pests has been made.

The occurrence of the variegated grasshoppers (*Zonocerus variegatus*) on vegetables and other plants has been reported in many areas in the West Coast Region of the country. On the other hand, vegetables like solanaceous plants (tomato, bitter tomato, egg plant) are heavily infested by red spider mites (*Tetranychus urticae*) in several vegetable gardens. The diamondback moths (*Plutella xylostella*) prevailed in the attack of cabbage, while thrips (*Thrips tabaci*) excelled in damaging onions. For okra, sorrel and spinach crops, problems are majorly caused by particularly leaf-eating beetles (*e.g. Nisotra sp.*).

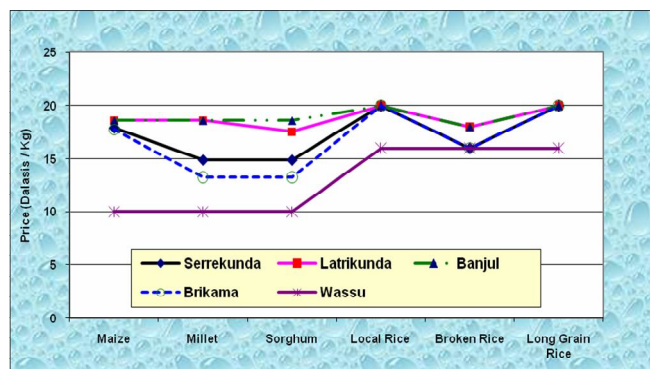
People affected were technically and individually advised on what integrated management approaches to take against their respective problems. An attractant and killing lure product known as FT Mallet-ME/M (containing active ingredients such as Methyl eugenol, DDVP and others) was fully recommended among other methods to control fruit flies.

Village weaver birds (*Ploceus cucullatus*) continue to devastate irrigated rice crops, particularly in the middle belt (Central River Region, North and South) of the country. However, these granivorous pests were often scared away from the rice fields as the most reliable, effective and safe method of control, although painstaking.

7. SITUATION OF MARKETS

Cereal Prices

Coarse grains and rice (local and imported) are present in all the markets. The prevailing price of cereals at both retail and weekly markets remained fairly stable as in the previous dekad. Meanwhile, the price of coarse grains decreased by 2% (maize) and 11% (millet and sorghum) in Brikama.



The price of cereals at the retail markets remained higher than in the weekly markets (Fig. 2). At Wassu, the price of coarse grains was D10.00/kg, whilst in the Greater Banjul Area, the price of these crops were within the range of D13.00 / kg and D18.00 / kg. The average prices of rice (local and imported) remained high at about D17/kg in retail markets. At Wassu the price of rice is D16.00 /kg.

Figure 2a: Comparison of cereal prices (Source: Planning Services - DOA)

Price of beef

The price of beef (meat & bone) is D75.00/Kg in Banjul, Serekunda and Brikama. Whilst at Latrikunda and Wassu, the price of this product remained at D80.00/Kg and D100.00 / kg respectively. The price of steak followed the same trend as the meat and bone, D100.00/Kg in Banjul, Serekunda and Brikama and D110.00/Kg in Latrikunda.

Composition of MWG:

Department of Water Resources
Planning Services - Department of Agriculture (DOA)
Communication, Extension & Education Services - DOA
Animal Health & Production Services - DOA
Plant Protection Services - DOA
National Environment Agency

Direct your comments and questions to:

The Director
Department of Water Resources
7 Marina Parade, Banjul
The Gambia
Tel: (+ 220) 422 76 31 / 422 41 22 / 890 52 29
Email: dwr@mofwrnam.gov.gm