

# EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY

No. 2011/17

## IN THE GAMBIA

Period: October 11 - 20, 2011



Government of The Gambia

Produced and Published by the Multidisciplinary Working Group of the AGRHYMET Regional Programme

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AGRHYMET Regional Programme

### 1. PROGRESS OF THE RAINY SEASON

The mean surface position of the Inter-Tropical Discontinuity (ITD) during this dekad oscillated over southern Senegal stretching towards northern Mali, central Burkina Faso and on to southern Niamey.

The Azores High Pressure Cell intensified during the latter part of the dekad with a central core value of 1029hpa whilst the St. Helena High Pressure Cell remained quasi-stationary with a central core value of 1019hpa.

### 2. RAINFALL OUTLOOK FOR OCTOBER 21 – 31, 2011

Chances of thunderstorm and / or rains are expected over the country during 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> with drizzle from 24<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>.

### 3. RAINFALL SITUATION

During this dekad rainfall had reduced both in terms of frequency and intensity throughout the country as compared to the previous dekad. A long dry spell of 12 to 15 days had been observed from the previous dekad to this present one. The number of rainy days ranged from 1 to 2 leading to dekadal totals to vary between 3.7mm at Sapu in the Middle Third to 44.8mm at Sibanor in the Western Third of the country (Fig. 1a).

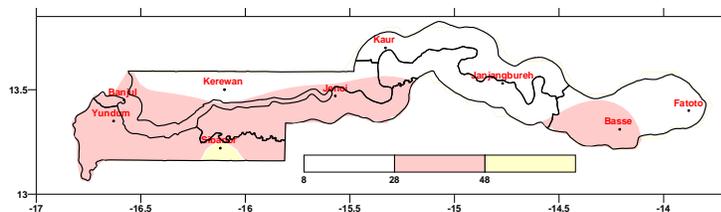


Figure 1a: Rainfall intensity during October 11 – 20, 2011

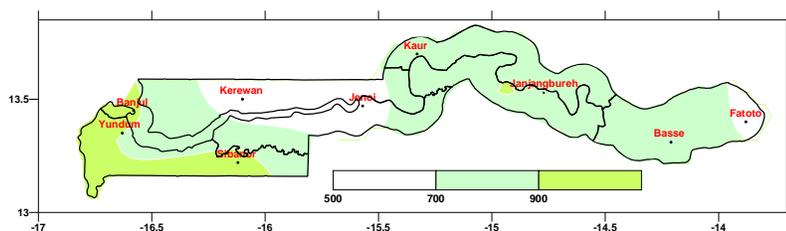


Figure 1b: Seasonal total from May 1 to October 20, 2011

The highest cumulative rainfall as at October 20 was recorded at Serekunda in the Western Third with 1043.9mm, whilst Kerewan also in the Western Third recorded the lowest amount of 536.1mm. (Fig 1b).

Compared with the same period last year, deficits were recorded across the entire country. However with the long term average, surpluses of 109.9mm, 66.3mm, 64.9mm and 10.6mm were recorded at Banjul, Kaur, Sapu and Basse respectively (Figure 1c).

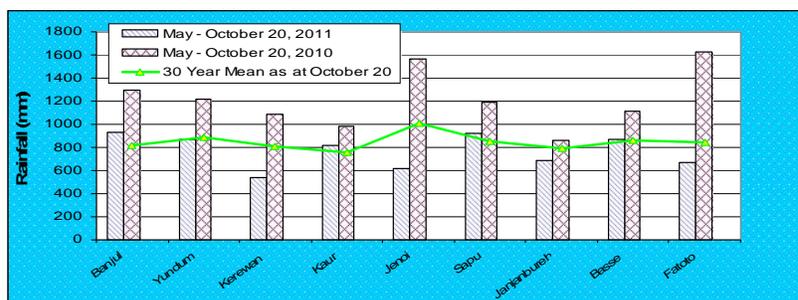


Figure 1c: Rainfall comparison as at October 20, 2011

#### 4. AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

Temperatures remained to be high during this decade; this can be attributed to the low cloud cover that led to the absence of rain for some period. The highest temperature was recorded at Fatoto in the Eastern Third with 35.5 °C, whilst Kerewan in the Western Third recorded the lowest temperature of 21.2 °C.

Maximum Relative Humidity remained above 90% throughout the country, whilst minimum Relative Humidity remained above 60% in the Western Third and below 60% in the Middle and Eastern Thirds of the country.

Winds were generally light to moderate in speed throughout the period with a maximum gust of 60.1km/h recorded at Yundum on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

#### 5. AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

##### 5.1 General crop situation

Hopes for this year's bumper harvest seem to be slightly dashed by the relatively low performance of some upland crops, precisely rice and groundnut in most parts of the country. This is more so for late sown fields due to erratic rains during the beginning of the season, and coupled with the long dry spell between October 1 and 16, 2011. The long dry spell has resulted in the permanent wilting of rice fields during their reproductive stages (Fig. 2). Hence rice production will **significantly reduce** this year as compared to last year.



Figure 2: Wilted rice field at Mabali kuta Village (CRR- south)

##### 5.2 Crop development

###### Millet:

Harvesting and on-field stocking of early millet is in full gear in most parts of the country. Most late millet fields are heading/flowering, while the lately planted fields (West Coast Region - WCR) are at vegetative stage. Inadequate rains at the beginning of the season, late planting and the long dry spell may have some adverse effects on the performance of the crop.

###### Maize:

Harvesting of maize is almost completed except the late sown fields in WCR and other isolated areas in the country.

**Sorghum:**

Majority of the fields are at heading stage with the early maturing varieties approaching maturity.

**Rice:**

The state of development of upland rice depends on the variety cultivated and date of sowing. While varieties such as NERICA are approaching maturity or at full maturity, most local short cycle varieties are at heading/maturity stages. Harvesting on early sown fields have started. Transplanting continues in some deep lowland swamps, while earlier transplanted fields are either at tillering or booting, depending on the variety cultivated.

**Groundnut:**

Groundnut fields across the country are at different growth stages ranging from pegging to full maturity depending on the variety and date of sowing. Harvesting of the Philippine pink varieties has gained momentum. In some places, groundnuts have reached full maturity but farmers are waiting for the rains to subside before harvesting.

**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  
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