
EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY

No. 2024/12

IN THE GAMBIA

Period: August 21 - 31, 2024



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1.0 PROGRESS OF THE RAINY SEASON

1.1 Synoptic Situation

The mean surface position of the Inter-Tropical Discontinuity (ITD), a boundary layer that separates the dry north-easterly Trade winds from the moist south-westerlies has reached its northward maximum position with its western axis lying over central Mauritania, stretching across northern Mali, then sloping onto northern Chad.

Places to the north of the ITD remained dry and stable with occurrences of dust haze over parts of northern Mauritania, northern Algeria, northern Niger and Libya.

Conversely, places to the south of the ITD were characterised by convective activities resulting to rain and thunderstorms, occasionally heavy with associated strong winds.

1.2 Weather Outlook for the next Dekad (1st - 10th September 2024)

The next dekad is expected to experience occasional heavy rains and thunderstorms that may be violent and short-lived in nature over the country during the period.

The expected rainy days during the dekad are 01st, 05th, 07th, and 08th - 10th September 2024. The occurrence in nature will be mostly slight to moderate but occasionally heavy with associated strong winds especially at the beginning and end of the dekad.

1.3 Rainfall Situation

The rainfall situation in the country has significantly improved during the dekad. Recorded rainfall amounts during the dekad varied across the country. Highest dekadal totals in the western third ranged

between 34.1mm over Banjul to 51.2mm over Kerewan. In the middle third, dekadal totals were lowest over Jenoi (52.2mm) and highest (128.4mm) over Kaur. Whereas in the eastern third dekadal totals were 34.4mm and 76.4mm over Fatoto and Basse respectively, figure 1a.

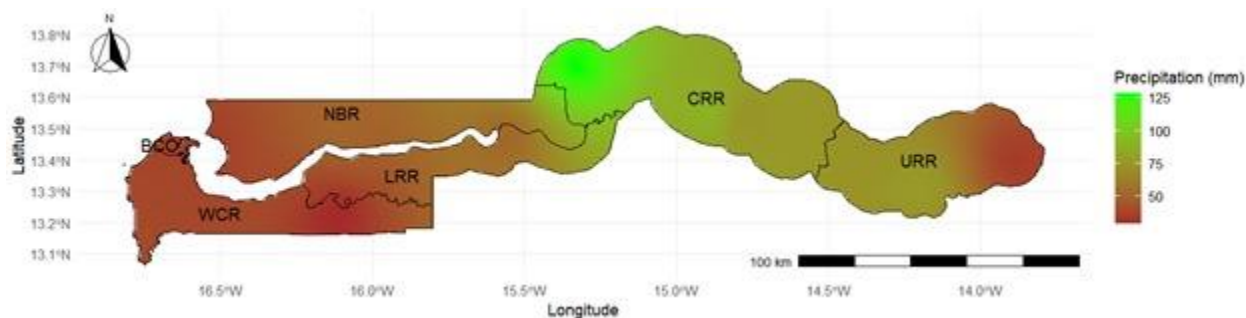


Figure 1a: Dekadal rainfall totals from 21st - 31st August 2024

Seasonal rainfall total has also increased significantly across all the region in the country, ranging from 408.5mm over Kerewan to 645.3mm over Sapu, figure 1b.

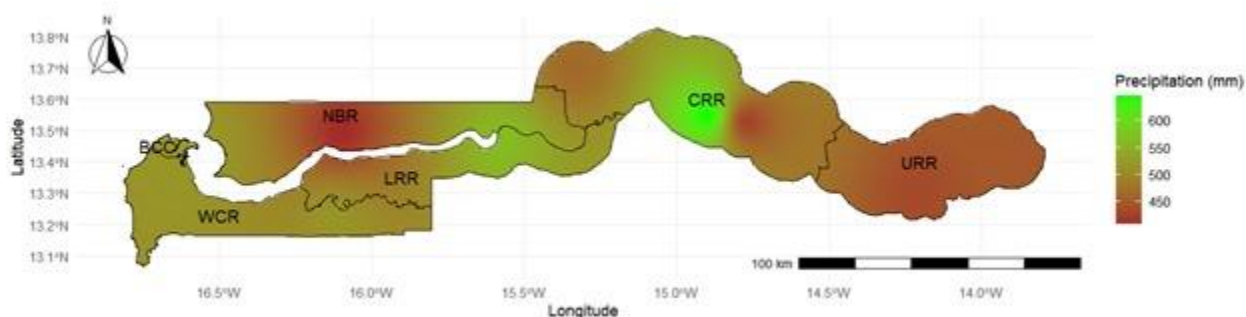


Figure 1b: Seasonal rainfall totals 1st May - 31st August 2024.

In comparison, this year's country's average rainfall as of 31st August 2024, stood at 494.3mm, which is 22% below last year's same period (634.5). In a similar way, the average number of rainy days over the country in 2024 (27 days) is below that of last year 2023 (31 days).

Deficits ranging from 18.5mm over Kaur in the middle third to 409.9mm recorded over Sibamor in the western third were observed across the country (table 1 below)

Table 1: Comparison of Seasonal total and number of rainy days for 3rd dekad of August 2024 and same period last year 2023.

Station Name	2024 Seasonal sums	Number of Rainy Days in 2024	2023 Seasonal sums	Number of Rainy Days in 2023	Deficit	Surplus
WESTERN THIRD						
Banjul	522.3	29	578.2	32	55.9	
Yundum	516.3	34	724.5	37	208.2	
Kerewan	408.5	24	785.6	30	377.1	
Sibanor	516.2	32	926.1	39	409.9	
MIDDLE THIRD						
Kaur	464.1	22	482.6	26	18.5	
Jenoi	563.1	26	701.9	27	138.8	
Sapu	645.3	27	486.0	25	159.3	
Janjanbureh	427.2	24	476.1	30	48.9	
EASTERN THIRD						
Basse	433.0	31	538.7	35	105.7	
Fatoto	447.1	39	648.8	29	201.7	

2.0 AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

Average temperatures during this dekad were slightly higher than the previous dekads and ranged from 28.0°C over the western third to 32°C over the middle third of the country. Extreme temperatures reached a minimum of 21°C in the western third, whereas maximum temperatures were as high as 35.3°C in the middle third of the country.

Relative humidity on average was above 80% throughout the country. Due to increased cloud coverage, average sunshine reduced to 5 hours during the dekad. Winds were low and occasionally moderate in speed, with a maximum gust of around **80km/h** recorded on August 24th 2024 in the eastern third of the country.

Extreme temperatures

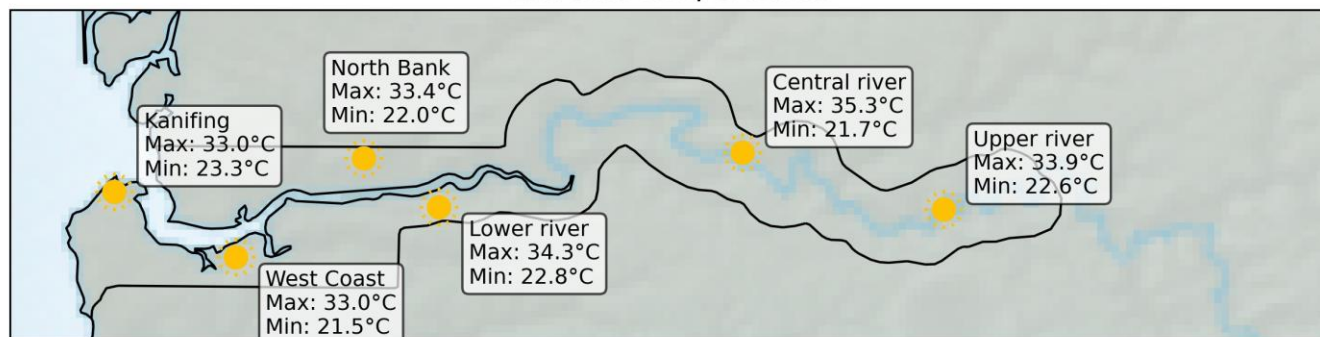


Figure 2: Extreme temperatures during the dekad (21 - 31 August 2024)

3.0 AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

3.1 General situation

Generally, crop performance across the country is impressive in terms of growth and development. However, the phenological development of crops differ from region to region across the country which is attributed to the different dates of sowing, caused by varying rainfall onset in June and July. Uneven rainfall distribution at the beginning of the season, also delayed crop development particularly in Upper River Region and parts of Central River Region - south and north.

Despite the uneven rainfall distribution across the country, the production of major Agricultural crops such as maize and millet have increased significantly as compared to last year, this could be link to support given to farmers in the form of seeds and fertilizer by Agricultural projects such as GIRAV, P2P2RS GAFSP and RICE Value Chain and the high cost of food stuffs which force them to go back to the land to grow what they eat and eat what they grow, thus increasing in the area under production.

3.1.1 North Bank Region

Crops in this region are performing well. According to the staff at Ngayen Sanjal Mixed Farming Centre, the area of production for groundnut, maize and rice has increase compared to last year, due to inputs support received from Projects at the beginning of the cropping season.

Early planted groundnut fields are now at pegging stage and others at flowering. Maize fields are at phonological phases ranging from tasseling to cob formation, while the late planted ones are at vegetative stages. Early millet fields that were planted early are at booting stages and late planted ones are at vegetative stage. In the lowland some farmers are transplanting rice whilst upland rice fields are at their vegetative stages. Currently, farmers are in their second weeding and application of fertilizer.

Despite the support given to the farmers in the form of seeds and fertilizers, there are still problems facing them. This includes inadequate tractors, power tillers and draft animals to start production on time. Support from projects do come late and accessibility for fertilizer is major problem since fertilizer are not sold in Agricultural centers this year.

Technical advice given to farmers is to monitor their crops and to report any problem to extension officers for action.



Figure 3a and 3b: Groundnut and Maize fields at Ngayen Sanjal NBR

3.1.2 Central River Region - North

In the Central River Region-North, the crop performance is also impressive, but crop phases also vary due to the dry spelt in June ending and beginning of July. Most maize fields are at vegetative stages and about 30% are at tasseling stage. This was reported by a staff of NARI posted to Njau Mixed Farming Center. For groundnut fields a few are at pegging stages while the late planted ones are at vegetative stages. About 20% of the early millet is at booting stage and the others are at vegetative stages. The main agricultural activity in the upland is weeding.

In the lowlands in Wassu farmers are transplanting, some few farmers are still harvesting and threshing their rice while others are on land preparation. The delay could be as a result of late start of dry season production due to inadequate farm implements such as power tillers and tractors. Another constraint that rice growers are facing in CRR/N is the inadequate rice threshing machines which may cause post-harvest losses. In an interview with some farmers in Sami Panchoki the farmers said that area of production has increase compared to last year due to the support from Agricultural projects and the high cost of food stuff. However, farmers are facing problems accessing fertilizer, since it is not sold at the Mixed Farming Centers.

Due to the uneven distribution of rainfall in the region, extension workers advised farmers to grow early maturing crops.



Figure 4a/b: Transplanting of rice in Wassu, CRR and weeding late grown maize in Sami Panchoki, CRR.

3.1.3 Central River Region - South

The agricultural situation in this region is promising, however with varying phonological phases due to the uneven rainfall distribution at the beginning of the season. Farmers with farm implements are able to plant at first and second rain while those without took some time before planting.

Maize fields planted early are at con formation stages while late planted fields are at vegetative stages. Early millet fields planted early are at booting stages while those planted late due to uneven rainfall distribution are at vegetative stages. Groundnuts fields vary from vegetative to pegging stages.

Land preparation and transplanting of low land rice fields is ongoing while in upland rice are at vegetative stages. The late start of the production on the lowland is as a result of inadequately farm implements such as tractor, power tillers and threshing machines.

The area under production for cereal crops such as early millet and maize has increased compared to last year. This could be linked to huge support of inputs given to farmers from Agricultural projects and cost of food stuffs.

The message to farmers by extension officers is proper way of fertilizer application and monitoring their fields and to report any outbreak of pest or disease to extension workers as soon as possible.



Figure 5 a/b: Transplanting of rice seedling at Niamina and Early millet field at booting stage in Pacharr.

3.1.4 Upper River Region

In this region, the crops are performing well, despite the dry spelt that was experienced at beginning of the season. The early planted maize fields are at cob formation stage while the late planted ones are at vegetative stage. The early planted millet fields are at booting stages and the late ones are at vegetative stage. Groundnut fields vary from pegging to vegetative stages. Sorghum, which is wildy grown in this region, the fields are still at vegetative stages. In the low land farmers are transplanting rice while in the upland the rice is at vegetative stage.

Production of coco yam is increasing in some parts in Upper River Region, according to some farmers, it easy to grow and it always have good price at the market.

The area put on production has increase compared to last year as reported by the extension officers in Naudeh.



Figure 6a/b: Sorghum field and cocoyam fields in Nawdeh Village, URR

3.1.5 Lower River Region

The field crops in this region are performing well, despite the uneven rainfall distribution. Crops phenological phases in this region are equally at variable stages. Early planted maize fields are at tasseling whilst the late planted ones are at vegetative stage. Early planted millet is at booting stage while the late planted ones are at vegetative stage. Groundnut fields are at pegging while others are at vegetative stage. In the lowlands some farmers have started transplanting rice whilst in the upland the rice fields are at vegetative stages.

The area under production for field crops such as early millet, rice and maize has increased compared to last year. This could be linked to huge support of inputs given to farmers from Agricultural projects and high cost of food stuffs.

The main agricultural activity is transplanting in lowland rice fields, and some weeding in the upland.



Figure 7: Transplanting of rice in the lowland area of Kiang Kaiaf with inadequate water in field

3.1.6 West Coast Region

In the West Coast Region, the agricultural situation is almost the same as other regions, meanwhile, there is no serious uneven rainfall distribution reported compared to other regions. The upland rice fields are at vegetative stages, and in the lowland, some farmers are still transplanting. Early planted maize fields are at tasseling or cob formation whereas late planted field are at vegetative stage. The early millet fields are at booting stage while the late plated ones are at vegetative stages.

Groundnut fields are pegging while late planted ones are at vegetative stage. Some of the farmers are now cultivating sweet potatoes and growing watering melon. As the season has advanced, farmers in this region are advised to grow early maturity crops and monitor their fields in case of any outbreak of pests or disease and report to extension officers for actions.



Figure 8a/b: Upland rice at vegetative stage in Mayork and Maize field at cobbling stage in Foni Bondali

3.2 Pests and diseases situation

3.2.1 Introduction

Outdoor production of crops is faced with numerous pest problems. However, as of the time of the data collection, few pest problems were observed or reported. The most important pest is the fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) which affects mostly maize and occasional millet and sorghum. It is already spreading like wildfires in all the regions. The species of grasshoppers (*Zonocerus spp*) is also found in CRR-S and they have a sporadic behavior appearing mostly during vegetative phase of the crops to feed on the leaves.

A potential and major pest of rice in the horizon is the weaverbird (*Quelea quelea*) which are currently causing economic damage to rain-fed rice. They were observed mostly in the CRR North and South where they are endemic and have caused economic loss to farmers over the past years.

3.2.2 Farmers Management of the fall armyworm

For the fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*), still the integrated pest management (IPM) approach is being promoted. For effective treatment, each maize stand should be treated in the whorls using the following options;

- Neem or hyptis leave extract solution with 30g of detergent
- Salt solution
- Application of a mixture of wood ash, saw dust, or sand to suffocate the larvae in the whorls
- Close observation and hand picking to kill the larvae
- Good crop management practices (fertilizer application, field sanitation)



Figure 9a/b: NBR: Botanical Preparation to Control FAW

The African armyworm (*Spodoptera exempta*) is an occasional pest, which walks on the ground in groups feeding on the plant leaves as they go. However, they can easily be destroyed by runoff water during heavy rains.

For the weaverbird (*Quelea quelea*), management also requires a holistic IPM approach. The methods used include explosives, mist nets, local long guns, and scaring. There are issues with the use of explosives and guns but mist nets used alongside scaring.

NORTH BANK REGION (NBR)

Spodoptera frugiperda (Fall Army Warm) found in this region; the infestation was due to late planting. However, with the technical advice of extension workers to farmers on how to control Fall Army

Warms and as a result of heavy downpour of rains has reduce the pest. The attack of the pests will cause effects on the performance of the crops.



Figure 10a. & 10b Fall Army Worm on maize plant in NBR and WCR respectively

Central River Region north (CRRn)

Quelea Bird reported in the region on rice was 70 percent infestation.



Figure 11: Quelea Bird

Central River Region south (CRRs)

Quelea Bird on rice at 70% infestation level. There were reports of bush pigs and monkeys in some groundnut field.

District infested with FAW in NBR: Upper Nuime 6 villages and Saba Sanjal 3 villages

3.3 LIVESTOCK SITUATION

The situation of the feed and water availability is satisfactory during the period under review. With the heavy downpours during the past decades, water is available in the natural water bodies (ponds), which are the cattle drinking points.

However, accessing the grazing lands remains a challenge, especially in the West Coast Region (Kombos) as people continue to settle or cultivate crops in the access routes.

In CRR there was an outbreak of disease among cattle, experts identify the disease as *trypanosomiasis* and *trelises* that resulted to the deaths of cattle. It was reported that one farmer alone lost 16 heads of cattles.

Livestock experts' advice that bush burning should not be encouraged and mass vaccination should be done at the beginning of the season. Meanwhile, the story for small ruminants is favorable as livestock officers acknowledge an increase in the population of small ruminants due to vaccination campaign.



Figure 12a/b: Death cattle in CRR and Cows grazing in CRR

4. Disaster Management

The Gambia continues to be vulnerable to disasters in recent times. Since the start of the rainy season, the country witnessed damage to critical infrastructure and farmlands, and injuries to individuals. As a coordinating institution, the agency uses its governance structure at the decentralized level to gather information on the situation and prepare data collectors using the National Multi-Hazard tool to collect data for informed decision-making. As evident, several communities are affected including Sikon Village where a roof fell on a household resulting in six (6) people sustaining injuries. Similar

incidents happened in Foni Bajagarr and Sinchu Pallen in the North Bank Region. The latest figure shows that a total of 9,699 people are affected across the country out of which 2,672 are displaced. The situation is worrying considering the significant loss and damage across the country.

Recommendation to the Ministry of Agriculture

- Provision of farming implements including tractors, power tillers and draft animals for timely farming operations.
- Timely provision of seeds and fertilizer to farmers.

Banjul, September 4, 2024
National MWG of The Gambia

Composition of MWG:

Department of Water Resources (DWR) – Focal Point
Department of Planning - MOA
Department of Agriculture (DOA)
Department of Livestock Services (DLS)
Plant Protection Services - DOA
National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA)

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