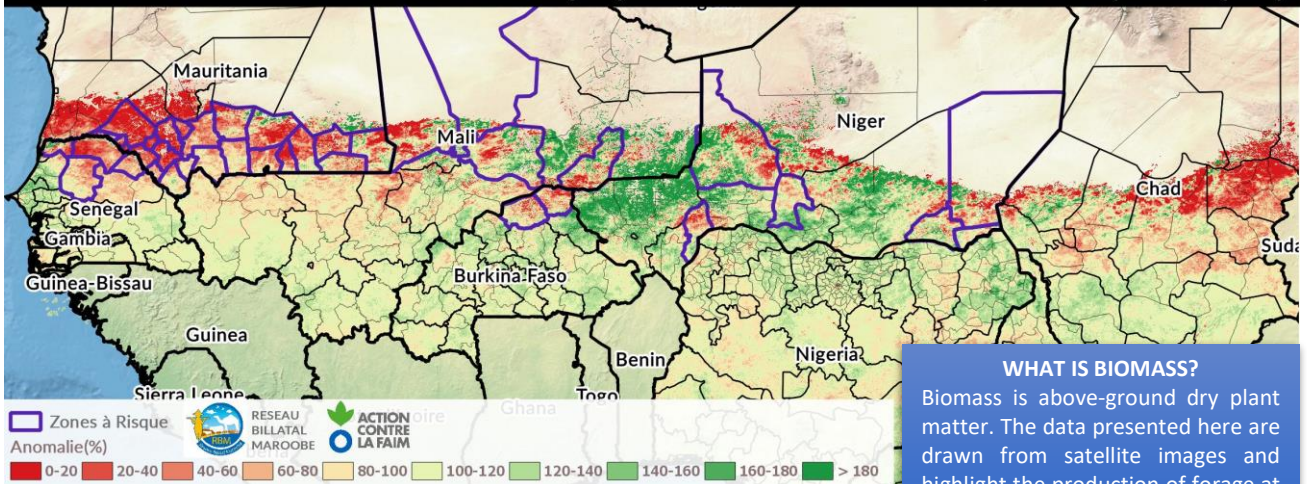


2018 SAHELIAN PASTORAL LEAN SEASON

HOW CAN WE AVOID A PASTORAL CRISIS?

Anomalie de la Production de la Biomasse au Sahel (ACF): 01 Octobre 2017 + Zones à risque de crise pastorale (RBM)



WHAT IS BIOMASS?
 Biomass is above-ground dry plant matter. The data presented here are drawn from satellite images and highlight the production of forage at the end of the 2017 rainy season (compared to the average from 1998-2017)

A destructive impending lean season

An unfavorable 2017 rainy season in the Sahel has resulted in dramatic biomass and water deficits across the Sahel. These deficits are extreme in Senegal and Mauritania and likewise alarming in Mali, Niger and Chad. The immediate impact of this will be an early lean season (the period between harvests that lasts from May to August) that will be particularly difficult for the poorest and the most vulnerable population of the Sahel.

Sahelian pastoralists, who are entirely reliant on natural biomass for forage resources, will be particularly affected. The lack of surface water likewise creates a considerable threat for pastoral communities. The food security of this population is highly vulnerable to livelihood shocks and the loss of their herds. As a reminder pastoralists and agro-pastoralists represent 30% of the population, contribute up to 40% of agricultural GDP and handle between 70 and 90% of the sahelian livestock.

With the current biomass production and surface water deficits, pastoralists will soon face shortages of animal feed, animal mortality and increasing competition over scarce resources. In the medium term it may force them to move their herds to agricultural production areas and will lead to increased agro-pastoral conflicts. More generally, it will strongly lower the availability of animal products in the Sahelian region (which is a critical source of protein for the local population).

The negative impacts of this deficit on the regional food security cannot therefore be ignored.

2018 Pastoral lean season: a focus on Senegal and Mauritania

Production of biomass in Senegal and Mauritania is critically weak. Production levels are close to (or in many cases, worse than) those of 2011/2012, which was an extreme drought year for the Sahel. Surface water is also critically low. Following the rainy season, a surplus of water is normally expected in the pastoral zones. However, instead, lakes that are normally full are now nearly empty. An exodus of herders has already begun. Herders in Senegal and Mauritania have left their normal grazing areas months ahead of schedule.



Learning from the shortcomings of 2016:

In 2016 the biomass analysis of the rainy season successfully predicted serious forage deficits in Chad, Mali and Niger. The serious consequences of these deficits were possible to anticipate.

In spite of early warnings issued in October by multiple actors, the humanitarian response was slow and inadequately funded. Distributions of livestock feed were programmed late and many interventions were not active until June or July, far too late in the dry season. Between December 2016 and June 2017, a number of pastoral areas across Niger jumped from Phase 1 (minimal) to Phase 3 (Crisis) in the Cadre Harmonisé Analysis.

Noting the gravity of the situation of the 2017 rainy season, a common response is needed. The seasonal calendar is well-known. Humanitarian and development actors must move forward on the path of resilience.

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Rainy season	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Analysis of Data+ Declaration of deficit or crisis	Light Blue	Green	Light Blue	Green	Green	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
response planning and fundraising	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Lean season: implementation of the response	Red	Red	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Red	Red	Red	Red

Recommandations for actions:

In order to both mitigate the short and long term impacts of this upcoming lean season, we call humanitarian actors, development agencies and regional and national institutions to work to:

1) Act in concert immediately and develop a joint response plan:

We must jointly plan our response and meet the needs of the pastoral populations. A special working group needs to be created under the regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group as it is the most inclusive fora available at the regional level. The role of this group will be:

- To facilitate the link between early warning and humanitarian pastoral action;
- To ensure that humanitarian actors and development agencies regularly monitor the pastoral situation in affected areas;
- To ensure data sharing among actors;
- Support governments in the distribution of food, animal feed, cash transfers, veterinary support and destocking/restocking of herds.

2) Strengthen coordination and cooperation with PRAPS in order to effectively build pastoralism resilience in the Sahel:

Sahelian pastoralist's livelihoods are among the most vulnerable of the Sahel. Many of the shocks that affect their livelihoods can be prevented or mitigated with the proper infrastructures and activities.

In particular, we must act to operationalize the 4th pillar of PRAPS, the management of pastoral crises. State technical services capacities should be strengthened to respond to pastoral needs. Their priority on the national agenda should reflect their critical contribution to food security.

3) Integrate pastoralism support activities as a core part of their intervention strategies in the sub-region:

The potentially disastrous impacts of this rainy season on the regional food security are not only due to the climate condition. It is also due to pastoralism's relatively low priority in the regional agenda, limiting resources and activities to build resilience.

4) Include representatives of the pastoralist organizations in all decision making processes related to the response:

Sahelian Pastoralist groups are well structured, with Réseau Billital Maroobé (RBM) as the leading representative organization. These Pastoralist Organizations (PO) have branches in every Sahelian country and defend the needs and the rights of pastoralists in the sub-region. Moreover, the RBM Pastoral Information System is critical for the monitoring of pastoral crises.