EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY IN THE GAMBIA

No. 2010/13 **Period: September 1 - 10, 2010**

Government of The Gambia

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1. PROGRESS OF 2010 RAINY SEASON

The mean surface position of the Inter Tropical Discontinuity (ITD), maintained its position as in the previous dekad, oscillating over central Mauritania and inclining towards northern Mali and gently sloping into south Algeria, central Niger and Chad. South of this position, scattered to widespread thunderstorms dominated the weather.

Both the Azores and St Helena High Pressure Systems remained quasi-stationary over the north and south Atlantic Ocean respectively with core values of 1030 hectopascal (hpa). Meanwhile, the equatorial thermal low featuring over Niger/Mali continued to receive moisture surge from southwesterly winds. By the end of the dekad, this low had slightly moved to a position over Mali and battered into two cells. One of the cells continued to move further west, though very slowly, marking the onset of the heavy downpour that affected the country at the later part of the dekad.

2. RAINFALL OUTLOOK FOR SEPTEMBER 11 - 20, 2010

Cloudy to partly cloudy conditions will prevail with rain and thunderstorm occasionally accompanied by strong winds from the 11th to 15th September 2010.

A convergence will prevail over The Gambia by the 16th September while a vortex is expected to develop over southern Mali. This scenario will enhance precipitation over the Senegambian sub-region.

Moderate to heavy rain accompanied by strong winds is expected to sweep the country with greater intensity to the southern parts of the country towards the end of the dekad.

3. RAINFALL SITUATION

This dekad has also witnessed continued intense rainfall experienced over the previous dekad, in terms of frequency and amounts of rainfall. Single day rainfall of more than 100mm was recorded on September 5, 2010 in the Western (Banjul – 154.4mm, Serekunda – 120.0mm and Yundum – 143.7mm) and Eastern Thirds (Fatoto – 106.0mm) of the country. Another heavy downpour of more than 50mm was also experienced on the 10th September 2010 in most parts of the country. The number of rainy days varied from 7 to 10 days leading to end-of-dekad totals to range from a minimum of 62.5mm at Kaur in the Middle Third to a maximum of 360.1mm at Yundum in the Western Third of the country (fig. 1a).

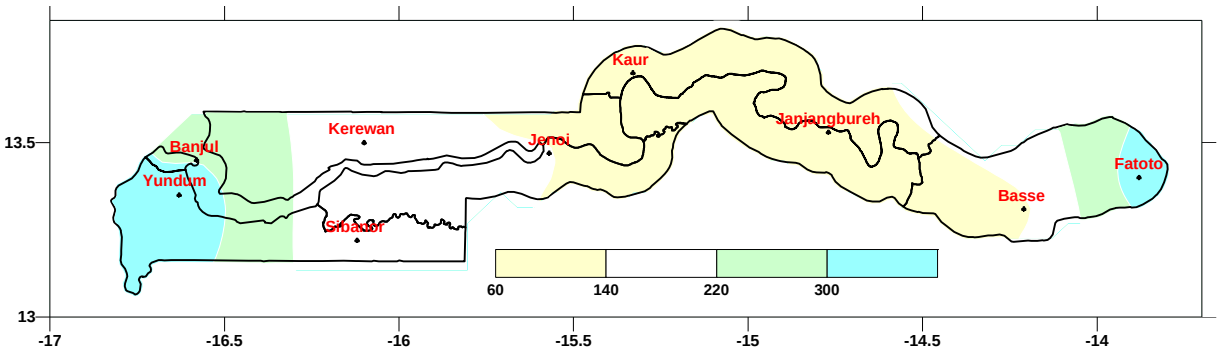

Figure 1a: ***Rainfall intensity during September 1 – 10, 2010***

The seasonal total rainfall amount in the country (May 1 to September 10) ranged from 629.0mm at Kerewan in the Western Third to 1,232.7mm at Fatoto in the Eastern Third of the country (details in fig. 1b). Meanwhile, Sibanor in the Western Third and Jenoi in the Middle Third also registered a cumulative rainfall of more than 1,000mm.

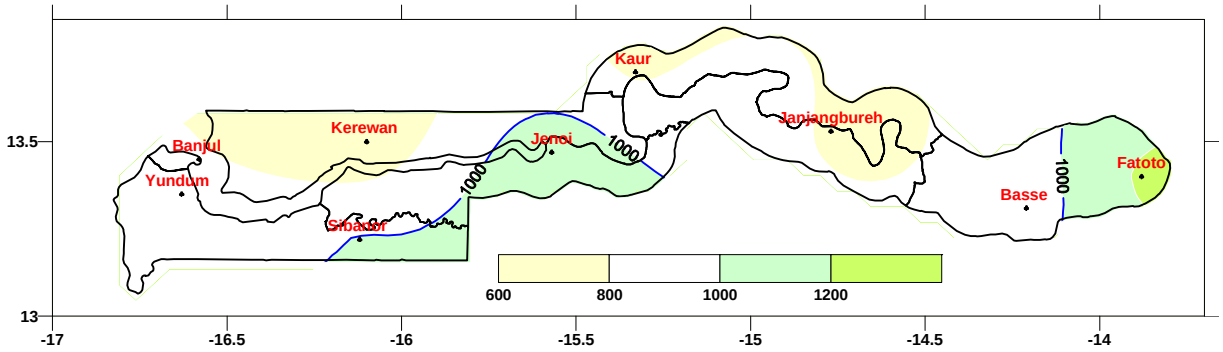

Figure 1b: ***Cumulative rainfall as at September 10, 2010***

During the same period last year, the seasonal total rainfall ranged from 476.0mm at Janjangbureh in the Middle Third to 1215.0mm at Yundum in the Western Third of the country. Thus, when compared to the same period last year, deficits were recorded at Kaur in the Middle Third and the entire Western Third of the country. The rest of the country recorded a surplus.

The country average rainfall as at September 10, 2010 rose to 897.8mm which is 6% above last year (849.9mm) and 27% above the normal (617.8mm) during the same period.

4. AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

Generally, average temperatures during this dekad had virtually remained unchanged as compared to the preceding dekad. However, when compared to the 30-year average (normal) this year had registered slightly higher temperatures.

Extreme temperatures recorded were 35.0°C at Kerewan and Jenoi in the Western and Middle Thirds respectively, and 34.0°C at Basse in the Eastern Third of the country.

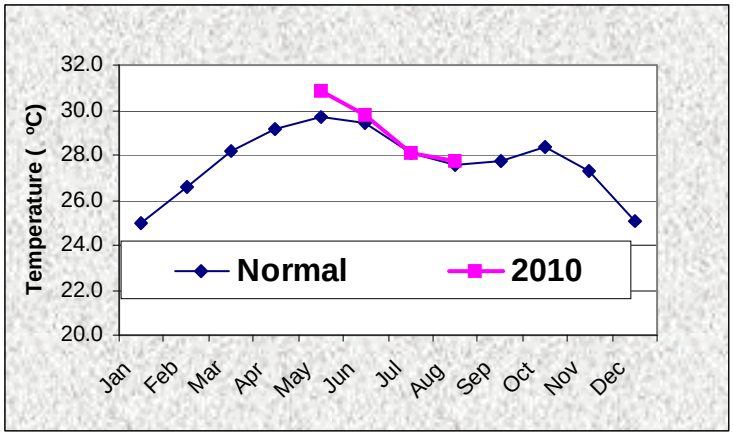

Figure 2: Evolution of temperature

Maximum relative humidity (RH) remained above 90% throughout the country except in Banjul where it dropped to 85%, while the minimum RH generally remained above 55%.

Winds across the country generally varied from low to high in speed, ranging from 7km/hr to 50km/hr, the latter indicating the passage of squally weather on the 10th September 2010. ***The heavy downpour caused severe devastation to households in the Western Third resulting to demolition of houses and damage to stored food.***

5. AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

5.1 General crop situation

Overall crop performance in terms of growth and development is progressing satisfactorily across the country.

5.2 Crop development

Cereals

The growth stages of early millet across the country ranged from flowering to grain formation, whilst late millet is generally at jointing stage of development. Sorghum is also at jointing stage of development. Maize fields ranged from tasseling to cob formation/maturity and harvesting is in progress in some fields.

Upland rice across the country is growing as expected and most of the crop is at the tillering and booting phases. In the swamp rice fields, transplanting of rice nurseries has started but it is yet to gain momentum.

Groundnuts

Groundnuts across the country are progressing well, with development stages ranging from flowering / ramification to pegging. For early sown fields of Philippine pink, harvesting has already started.

5.3 Pest Situation

No report on pest infestation was received during this period.

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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