

Food Security: The Good and Bad

Here is the bad news: These are troubled times for food security in Burkina Faso. The July to September outlook suggests a “Stressed” Acute Food Insecurity Phase for much of central Burkina and a “Crisis” phase for parts of the north and east.

Food assistance is planned and ongoing in the livelihood zones of concern (i.e., 5, 7, 8, and 9), which will allow households to maintain an Acute Food Insecurity Phase of “Stressed” through June. Come July, however, a food insecurity crisis will be observed in the far north—which includes most of the territory north of Ouahigouya (i.e., Zone 8)—because of the stresses brought on by Malian refugees and rising grain prices. Many eastern parts of the country—running most of the distance along the Nigerian border and nestling in the nook of the Niger-Benin borders, about 120km east of Fada Ngourma (i.e., east of Zone 9)—will also be in a “Crisis” phase due to high grain prices.

Here is the good news: Current seasonal forecasts predict normal rainfall this rainy season, which should result in good 2012–2013 agro-pastoral production. But wait, there’s more! In an attempt to address the continuing problem of food insecurity in Africa, President Obama has announced a plan to invest over \$3 billion to help food security and agriculture in the continent. As if that wasn’t good enough (which it isn’t), this year’s G-8 Camp David Summit has also initiated The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. The goal of the alliance is to raise 50 million people out of poverty over the next 10 years using private sector investments, of which there are already strong commitments.

So to all you volunteers, keep doing what you are doing. Several volunteers have already taken advantage of the new seed bank at the transit house, grant money offered through the FSTF, and other resources for helping with food security in their communities. As great as volunteer efforts are, it is important to remember that we should be informing communities about the food security initiatives they can take part in to help themselves.