

EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY

No. 2008/15

IN THE GAMBIA

Period: September 21 - 30, 2008



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 RAINY SEASON

Comparing the preceding dekad (September 11 - 20, 2008) and this one (September 21 - 30, 2008) the ITD continued with its southward journey, particularly along its eastern axis. Its mean position was observed at 16°N over longitude 20°W, 17.0°N over northern Senegal, 18.0°N over southern Mauritania, 18.25°N and 17.75°N over west and central Mali respectively. This situation remained favourable to the inflow of moisture bearing winds into the sub-region.

Development of convective clouds, rain and thunderstorms (sometimes squally) characterised the weather to the south of the ITD, including The Gambia. However, to the north, warm, dry and sunny afternoons characterised the weather.

2. RAINFALL SITUATION

During this dekad, daily rainfall amounts saw an improvement, as compared to the previous dekad. Highest single day rainfall was recorded at Banjul (41.5), Kerewan (43.5mm), Kuntaur (58.4mm), Kaur (53.3mm) and Sare Soffie (45.2mm). The number of rainy days ranged from 3 to 6, leading to end-of-dekad totals ranging from 72.3mm at Banjul and 195.1mm at Serekunda both in the Western Third of the country (fig.1).

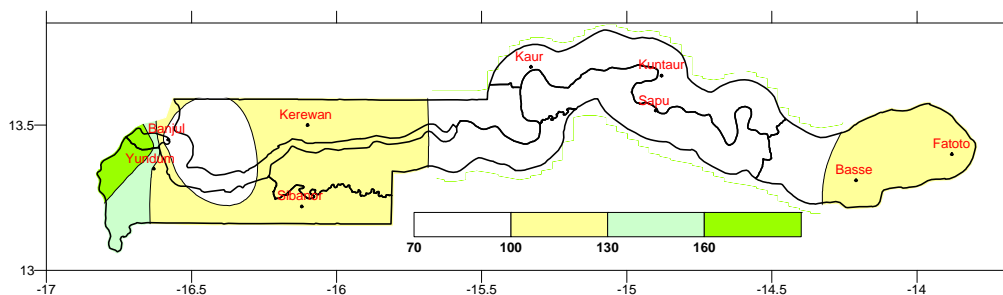


Figure 1. Total rainfall during September 21 - 30, 2008

The seasonal (May 1 to September 30) total rainfall amount in the country ranged from 793.9mm at Kaur in the Middle Third to 1338.8mm at Yundum in the Western Third of the country (details in fig. 2).

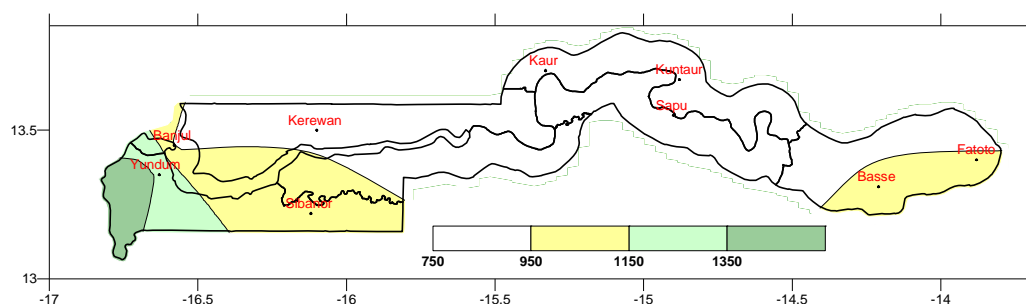


Figure 2. Cumulative (May 1 - September 30, 2008) rainfall

A comparison of the current season to last year (2007) at the same period shows the Eastern Third (Sare Sofie, 80.3mm and Basse, 211.2mm) and part of the Middle Third (Kaur, 116.7mm) recording some deficits. The rest of the country recorded surpluses ranging from 129.3mm at Kerewan to 600.2mm at Yundum. Meanwhile, this year's seasonal average rainfall (971.4mm) is above the long-term mean (769.4mm) during the same period. The spatial distribution shows that the entire country registered **normal** to **above normal** rainfall (figure 3).

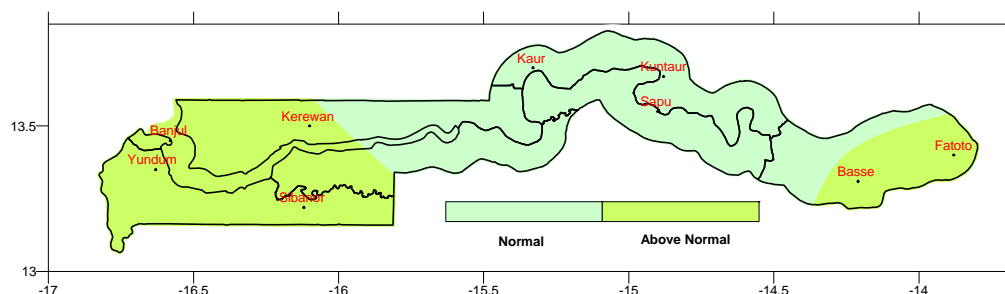


Figure 3. Comparison of the current season to the long-term mean (1971 - 2000)

3. AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

Generally, mean temperatures (27.8°C) were slightly lower as compared to the previous dekad (27.9°C). This may be attributed to the continued influx of moisture into the sub-region as well as the fully developed vegetative cover. Thermal distributions within the country show that the Eastern and Middle Thirds remained warmer than the Western Third. Highest temperatures recorded were 32.0°C at Yundum in the Western Third, 32.8°C at Kuntaur in the Middle Third and 33.5°C at Basse in the Eastern of the country.

Maximum relative humidity rose to above 90%, whilst minimum relative humidity continued to vary between 60% and 75% nationwide.

Generally, winds across the country were light to moderate in speed with squall lines on September 24 and 28, 2008 producing maximum wind gust of 36 km/hr and 40km/hr respectively.

4. AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

Generally, the agricultural situation across the country remained impressive, as most crops have completed or are about to complete their cycles.

Harvesting of early millet is in progress in both the Western (Lower River and North Bank Regions) and Middle Thirds (Central River region) of the country. Late millet is generally at heading/flowering stages in both the

Eastern (Upper River Region) and Western (in some parts of western region) Thirds of the country, but the late sown fields in Western Region are still at vegetative phases (jointing).

Harvesting of maize is almost completed except the late sown fields in Western Region and other isolated areas in the country. Sorghum is generally heading/flowering in the Eastern (URR) and Middle (in some parts CRR) Thirds where it is predominant.

Most upland rice fields have reached flowering and maturity stages across the country. In the swamp rice fields, transplanting of rice nurseries has gained momentum in the Western (Lower River and North Bank Regions) and Middle (Central River Region) Thirds of the country.

Groundnut fields across the country are at different growth stages ranging from pegging to full majority depending on the variety and date of sowing. Harvesting is continuing in most parts of the country.

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