
EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR FOOD SECURITY IN THE GAMBIA

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Government of The Gambia

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1. UPDATE ON 2013 SEASONAL RAINFALL FORECAST FOR THE GAMBIA

Given the current state and trends over the global tropical oceans, knowledge of relationships between Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTs) and West African precipitation; and products of statistical and dynamical long range forecasting systems and tools, the update on precipitation outlook for July-August-September (JAS) 2013 is NOT contradicting the initial forecast issued in late May 2013. The update maintains that rains are expected to be **near Average to slightly above Average precipitation over The Gambia**. The warming in Tropical North Atlantic Ocean though slightly weak, the cool tongue around Gulf of Guinea and the negative SSTs over central and eastern Equatorial Pacific Ocean persisted throughout the month of June 2013, a scenario that favours good precipitation for the Western Sahel including the Gambia.

1.1 CAUSES OF THE DELAY IN THE ON-SET OF THE 2013 RAINY SEASON

The position of the Inter Tropical Discontinuity (ITD) (imaginary line that separates warm moist air from dry air over West Africa) was well below its normal position at this time of the season most especially over Western Sahel particularly, The Gambia, Senegal and Southern Mauritania. Hence, the rain generating mechanisms were suppressed over this region by cooling of the adjacent Sea stretching from the northern coast of Mauritania onto Cape Verde. So in essence the moisture laden southerly component winds were blocked by the prevailing North-westerly and Westerly winds which were relative cool with inadequate moisture.

Furthermore, because of this cooling effect along the Western Sahelian coast much of the weather systems that propagate westwards terminates at about 10 degrees west or eventually moves southwest wards onto Guinea Conakry.

1.2 OUTLOOK FOR THE REST JULY

From all information available, indications are that the ITD is advancing further North most especially over the Western Sahel. At the lower levels, South-westerly winds occasionally becoming Southerly winds will dominate the flow; whereas, at the mid-levels there will be periods for which the Easterly waves will be well organized i.e. enhancement on the passages of Trough and Ridges.

From the above configuration, we do expect outbreaks of scattered to widespread moderate rain and Thunderstorm.

2. PROGRESS OF RAINY SEASON

The surface position of ITD during the dekad has moved steadily northward to over southern Mauritania and northern Mali resulting to increased inflow of rain bearing winds into the sub-region including the Gambia, hence resulting to the rains recorded in the Dekad.

1.1 WEATHER SUMMARY FOR THE GAMBIA

Thunderstorms and rain accompanied with strong winds were experienced across the country during the period.

1.2 RAINFALL OUTLOOK FOR JULY 11 – 20, 2013

Rain and thunderstorms (sometimes accompanied with strong winds) will affect the country during the period.

2. RAINFALL SITUATION

During this dekad, rainfall was recorded across the country, much of it during the latter parts of the dekad. Highest daily rainfalls were 25.2mm over Kerewan and 24.2mm Yundum both in the western Third, 62mm over Sapu and 57.2mm over Janjanbureh both in the Middle Third, respectively, elsewhere records were below 20mm. Dekadal totals varied from 31.5mm over Banjul in the Western Third to 151.5mm over Sapu in the Middle Third. The seasonal totals varied from the lowest of 70.3mm over Kaur in the Middle Third to 302.6mm over Sapu in the Middle Third.

As at July 10, the country average stood at 127mm, 68% below last year's (184.6mm) and 1% above the long term mean (125.5 mm) of 1981 to 2010.

The seasonal totals compared to last year during the same period, only Fatoto recorded a surplus of 15mm, whilst all the other stations continued to record deficit ranging from 32mm to 189mm.

4. AGROMETEOROLOGICAL SITUATION

Average temperature across the country dropped slightly (25°C along the coast to 29°C in the East) compared to the previous dekad (between 26°C and 30.8°C). This drop was due to the rains recorded during the dekad.

Highest temperatures were between 33°C and 35°C over the Western Third, 35.0°C and 37.1°C over the Middle and Eastern Thirds of the country.

Minimum temperatures remained unchanged across the country compared to the last dekad, varying between of 19.8°C over Banjul and 24.7°C over Kaur.

Average maximum relative humidity (RH) stood at 95%, with an increase of 3% over the previous dekad, whilst the minimum also stood at 51%, with an increase of 7% over the previous dekad.

Wind speed during the dekad varied from light, moderate and strong in speed, ranging from 7.9 km/hr to 74 km/hr across the country. The strong winds caused some damages across the country.

5. AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

During this dekad planting of field crops was a major on-farm activity across most part of the country, except in the West Coast Region. Crops planted include early millet and ground nuts. Meanwhile, in the Eastern part of the country (Tumana and Kantora) were crops (Ground nuts, maize, sorghum) are at seedling stages of growth, weeding is in progress. Due to the late start of adequate rains in some parts of the country, planting of long cycle crops (maize, sorghum, ground nuts) of 120 days is risky as there is no certainty for these to reach complete majority if the rains stop at mid-October.

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Communication, Extension & Education Services - DOA
Animal Health & Production Services - DOA
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