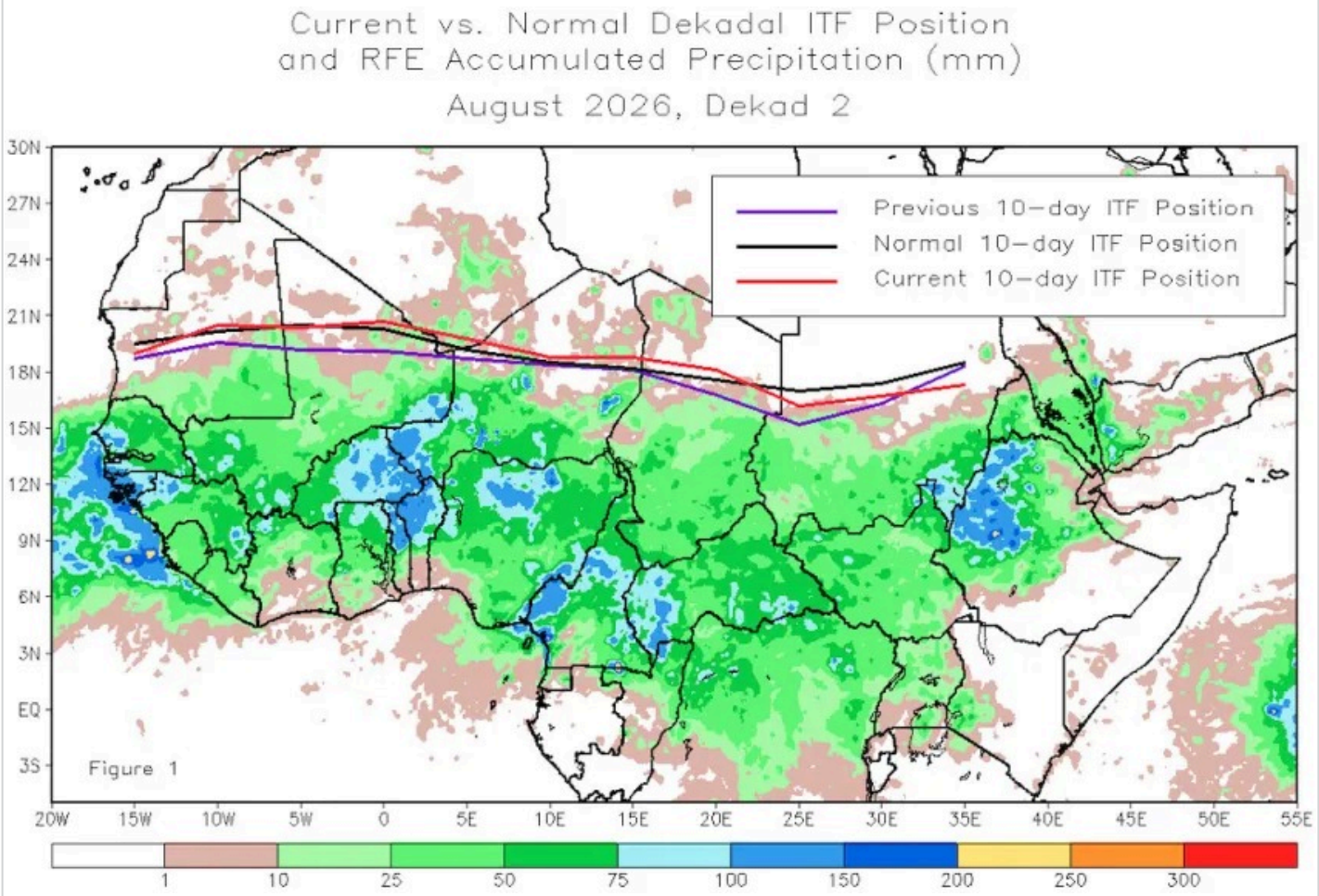
Rainy season progresses with localized deficits across the Sahel

Key Messages

- The Intertropical Front (ITF) reached its northernmost position, and it is located north of the climatological mean in the west and south of the long-term average in the east.
- In the bimodal rainfall regime along the Gulf of Guinea, main-season harvests are projected to be average to above-average.
- Localized rainfall deficits across the Sahel have reduced vegetation conditions and crop water availability, with below-normal rainfall forecast through mid-September likely to sustain and intensify these deficits.
- Above-normal SON rainfall is expected across much of the Sahel and northern Central African Republic, while below-normal rainfall is forecast over the bimodal zones.

Figure 1

ITF position and RFE accumulated precipitation (mm), August 2026, Dekad 2



Source: NOAA CPC

FEWS NET West Africa
westafrica@fews.net
fews.net/west-africa

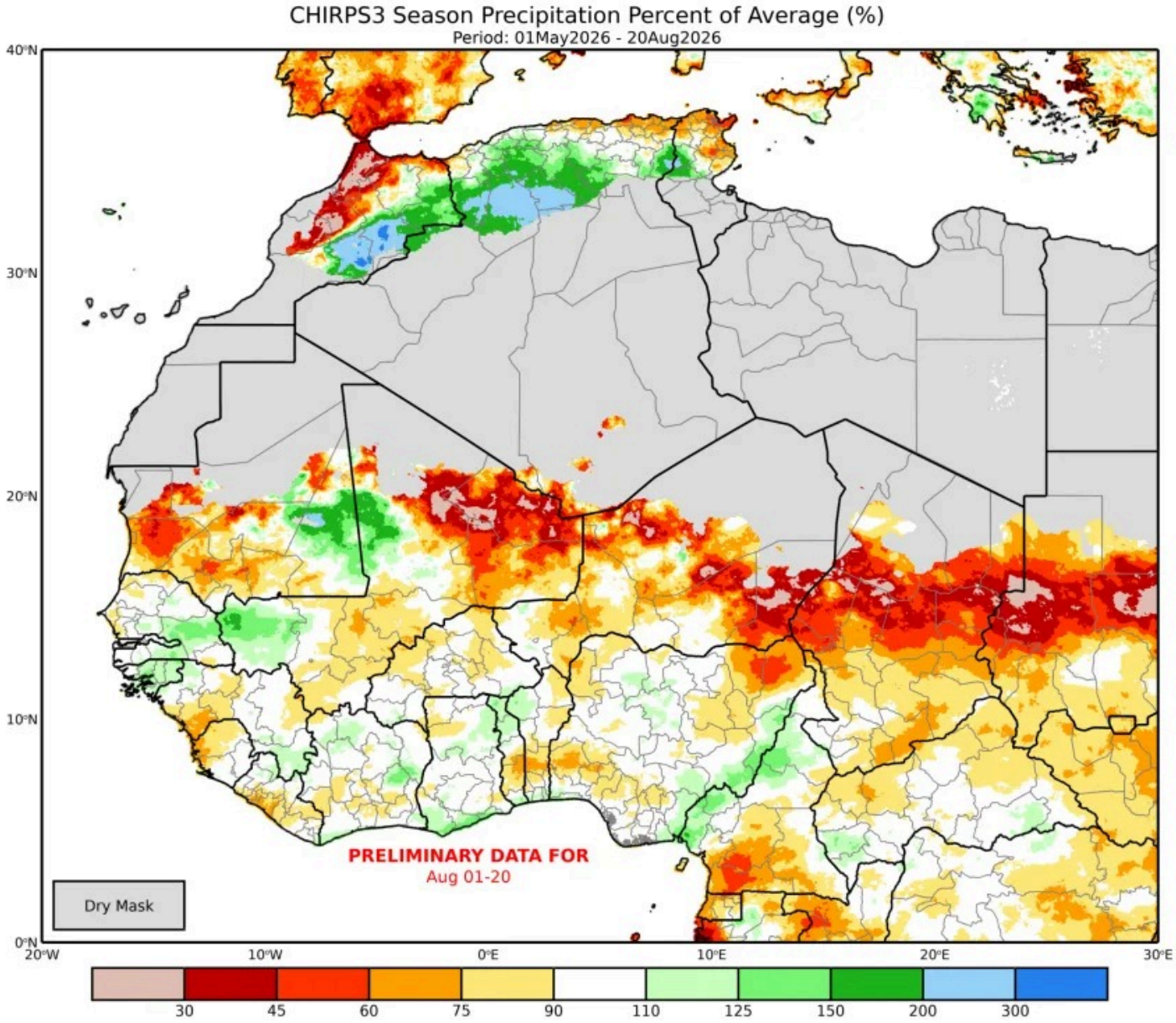
Update on Seasonal Progress

The Intertropical Front (ITF) has reached its northernmost position in the second dekad of August. From August 11-20, the ITF moved northward slightly relative to its previous position. In the west, the ITF was positioned near 20° N, about 0.3 degrees north of its climatological position. However, in the east, the ITF was located near 17.1° N, which is approximately 0.5 degrees south of the long-term average position (**Figure 1**).

In the bimodal rainfall regime along the Gulf of Guinea, main-season harvests are projected to be average to above-average. In contrast, localized rainfall deficits across the Sahel—including portions of western Mauritania, southeastern, central and northeastern Mali, central Burkina Faso, western and eastern Niger, southwestern, northwestern and northeastern Nigeria, and across much of Chad—have led to below-average **vegetation conditions** and reduced crop water availability. Short-term forecasts of **below-normal rainfall through early September** indicate that these deficits are likely to persist and intensify in the affected areas (**Figure 2**). In addition, maximum temperatures are also forecast to be **abnormally hot** across much of the Sahel, coinciding with many of the forecast below-average rainfall areas.

Figure 2

01 May – 20 August, 2026 CHIRPS total anomaly (% of average)

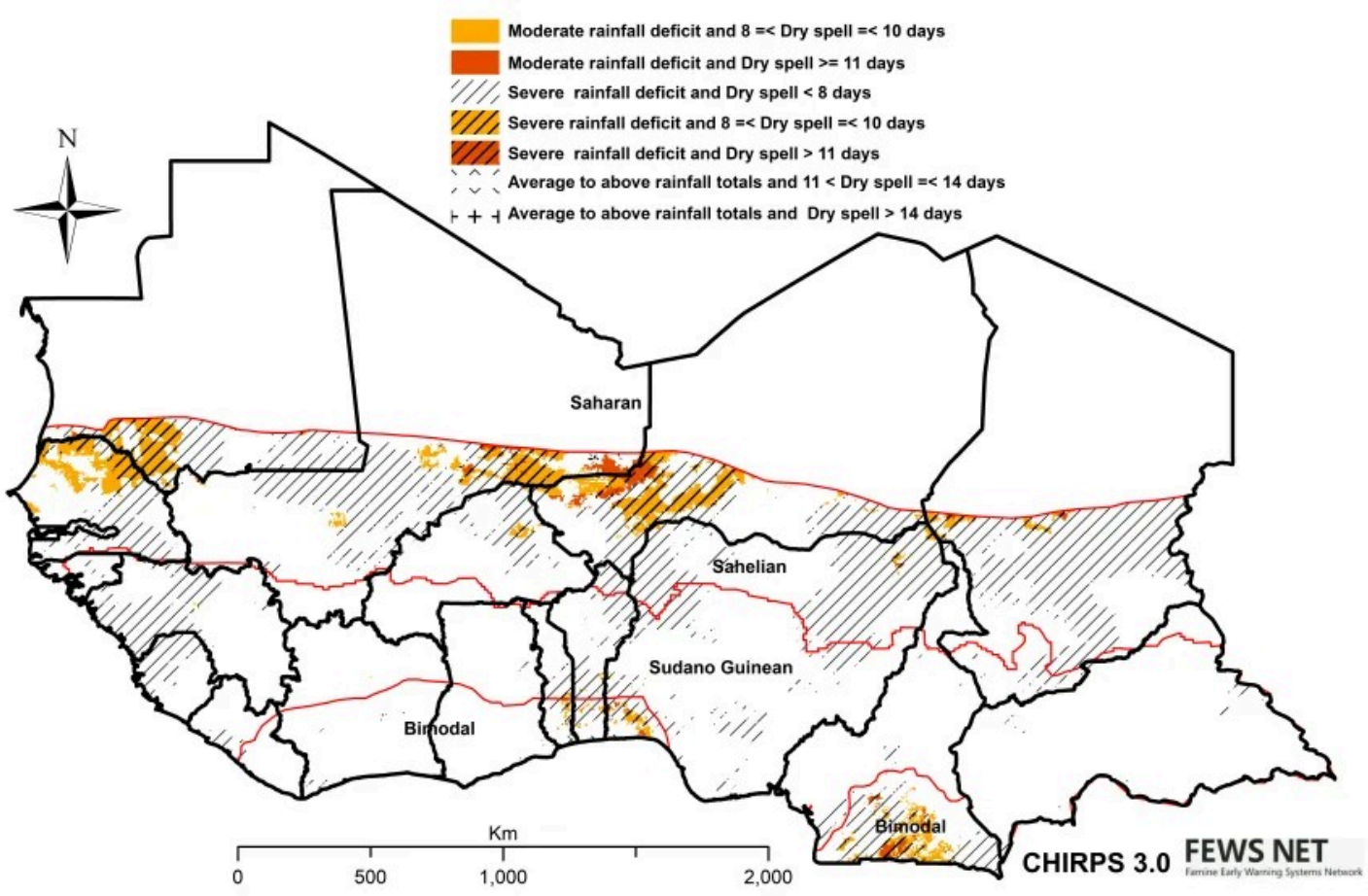


Source: UCSB/FEWS NET

Moderate to severe rainfall deficits and long consecutive dry days were observed in localized areas across the Sahel from 21st July through 20th August. The most extensive severe deficits are concentrated in western Mauritania, northern Senegal, eastern Mali, western Niger, southwestern Nigeria, and parts of central Chad, with several areas also experiencing dry spells of more than 8 days. Severe rainfall deficits with less than 8 days of dry spell were observed in localized areas in central Mali, northeastern Burkina Faso, eastern Niger, northeastern and northwestern Nigeria, and much of central Chad (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3

Combined CHIRPS anomaly and Consecutive Dry Days (CDD) from 21 July to 20 August 2026

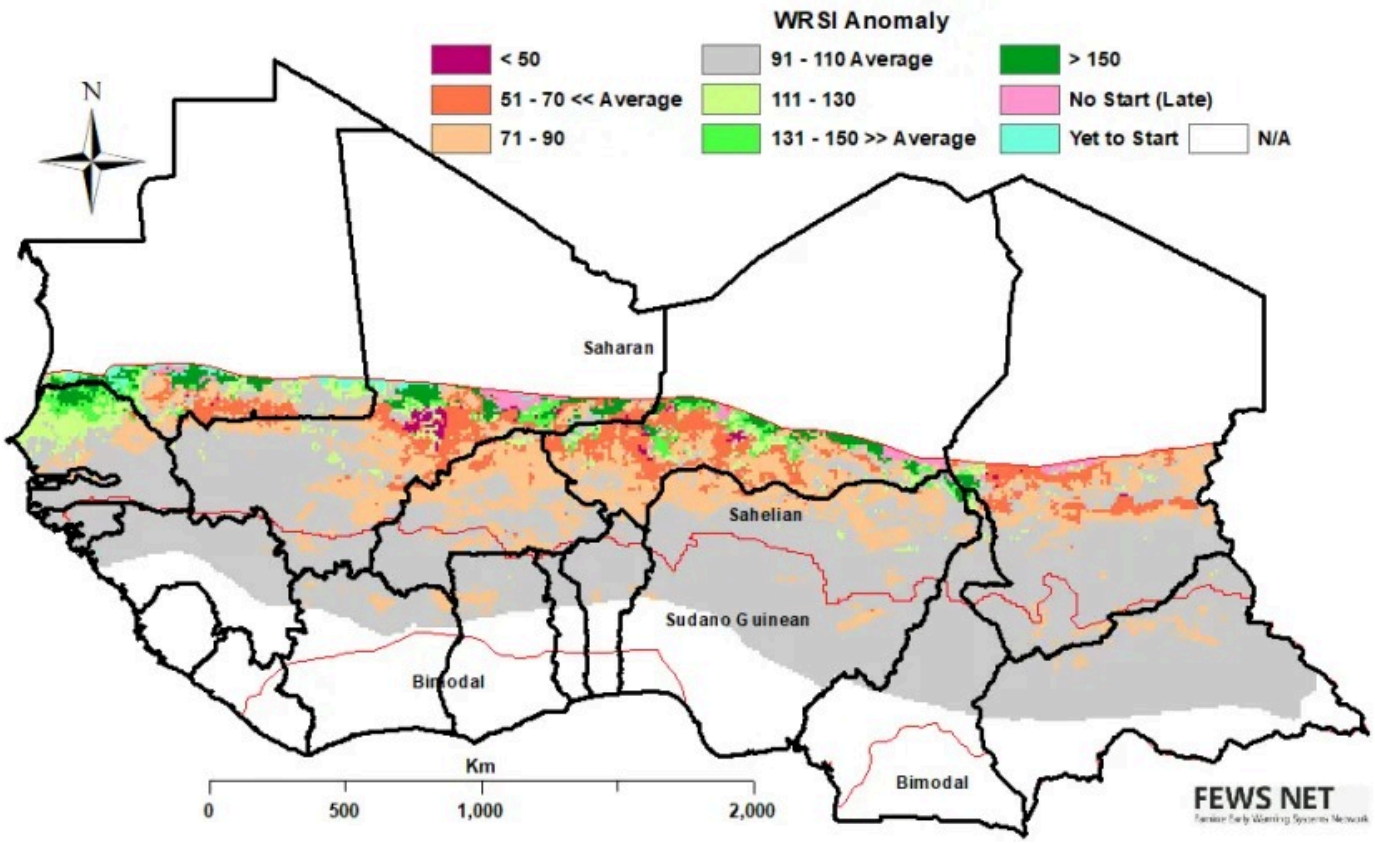


Source: USGS/FEWS NET

As a result of the rainfall deficits highlighted above, the Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) anomaly map for millet at the second dekad of August indicates that WRSI values below 90% are concentrated mainly across the western and central Sahel. The most pronounced crop water requirement deficits (<50% and 51–70%) occur in localized areas in southern Mauritania, central Mali, western Niger, and central Chad. Areas with 71–90% WRSI are particularly located in central-eastern Mali, northern Burkina Faso, southern Niger, and parts of northern Nigeria (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4

WRSI anomaly (millet) at the second dekad of August using CHIRPS



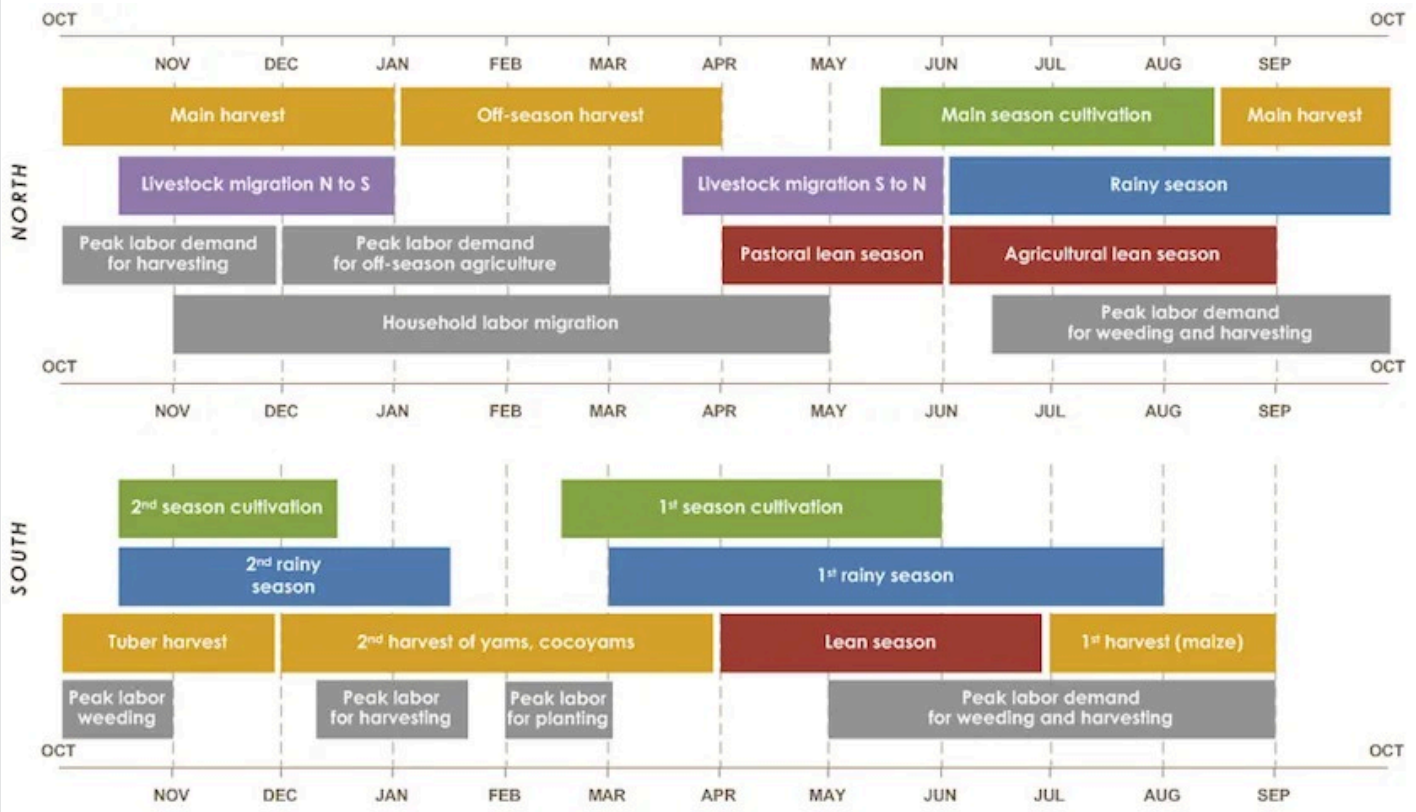
Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Forecasts

Short term rainfall forecasts indicate below-normal rains across the Sahel during **week 1** and **week 2** of September. Rainfall deficits thus far combined with forecasts of below-normal rains is likely to limit vegetation productivity across affected areas of the Sahel. Continued monitoring of conditions will be essential, as the rainy season comes to an end.

Seasonal rainfall forecasts for SON, (**NMME**, **WMO**, and **C3S**) indicate above-normal rainfall is expected in Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, northern Côte d'Ivoire, northern Togo, northern Benin, northern Cameroon, and central and eastern parts of the Central African Republic. However, during the same period, below-normal rainfall is expected in the bimodal zones and the Gulf of Guinea countries, including southern Côte d'Ivoire, southern Togo, southern Benin, southwestern Nigeria, and southwestern Cameroon. Across the region, climate models (**NMME**, **WMO**, **C3S**) confidently project above-normal SON temperatures in 2026.

Seasonal Calendar in a Typical Year



Source: FEWS NET

Recommended citation: FEWS NET. West Africa Seasonal Monitor August 31, 2026: Rainy season progresses with localized deficits across the Sahel, 2026.

Seasonal Monitor

FEWS NET's Seasonal Monitor reports are produced for Central America and the Caribbean, West Africa, East Africa, Central Asia, and Somalia every 10-to-30 days during the region's respective rainy season(s). Seasonal Monitors report updates on weather events (e.g., rainfall patterns) and associated impacts on ground conditions (e.g., cropping conditions, pasture and water availability), as well as the short-term rainfall forecast. Find more remote sensing information **here**.