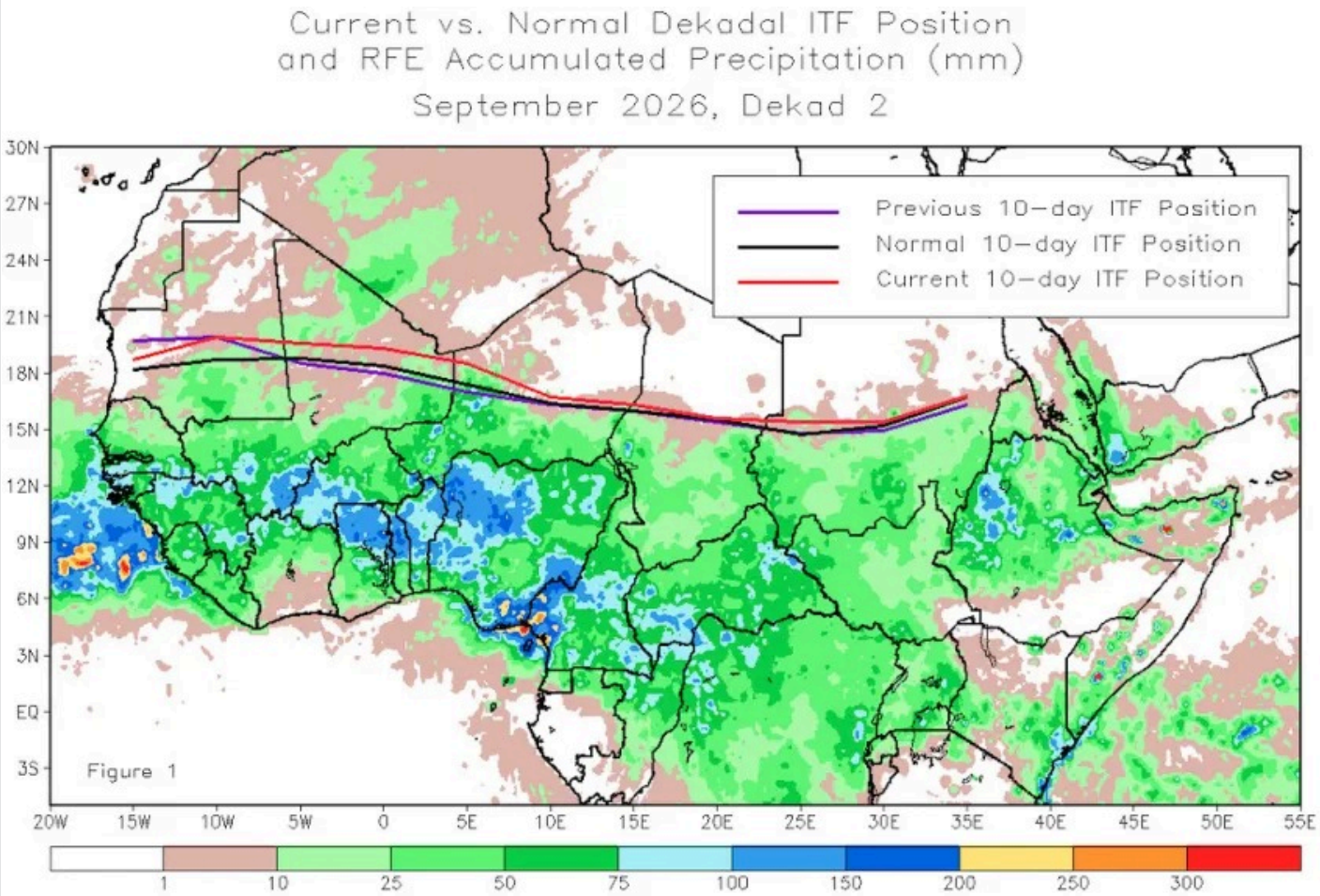
Localized Rainfall Deficits Persist Across the Sahel as the Rainy Season is Ending

Key Messages

- The Intertropical Front (ITF) reached its northernmost position in the second dekad of August, and due to an uneven southward retreat, it is currently located north of the climatological mean along its entire length.
- Rainfall deficits across northern part of the Sahel zone have reduced vegetation conditions and crop water availability.
- Rainfall forecasts for October and November show above-normal rainfall is expected across the Sahel, while below-normal rainfall is likely over the bimodal areas.
- Based on the extended streamflow forecast, the likelihood of flooding along the major Rivers in West Africa is extremely low through the end of the season.

Figure 1

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



Source: NOAA CPC

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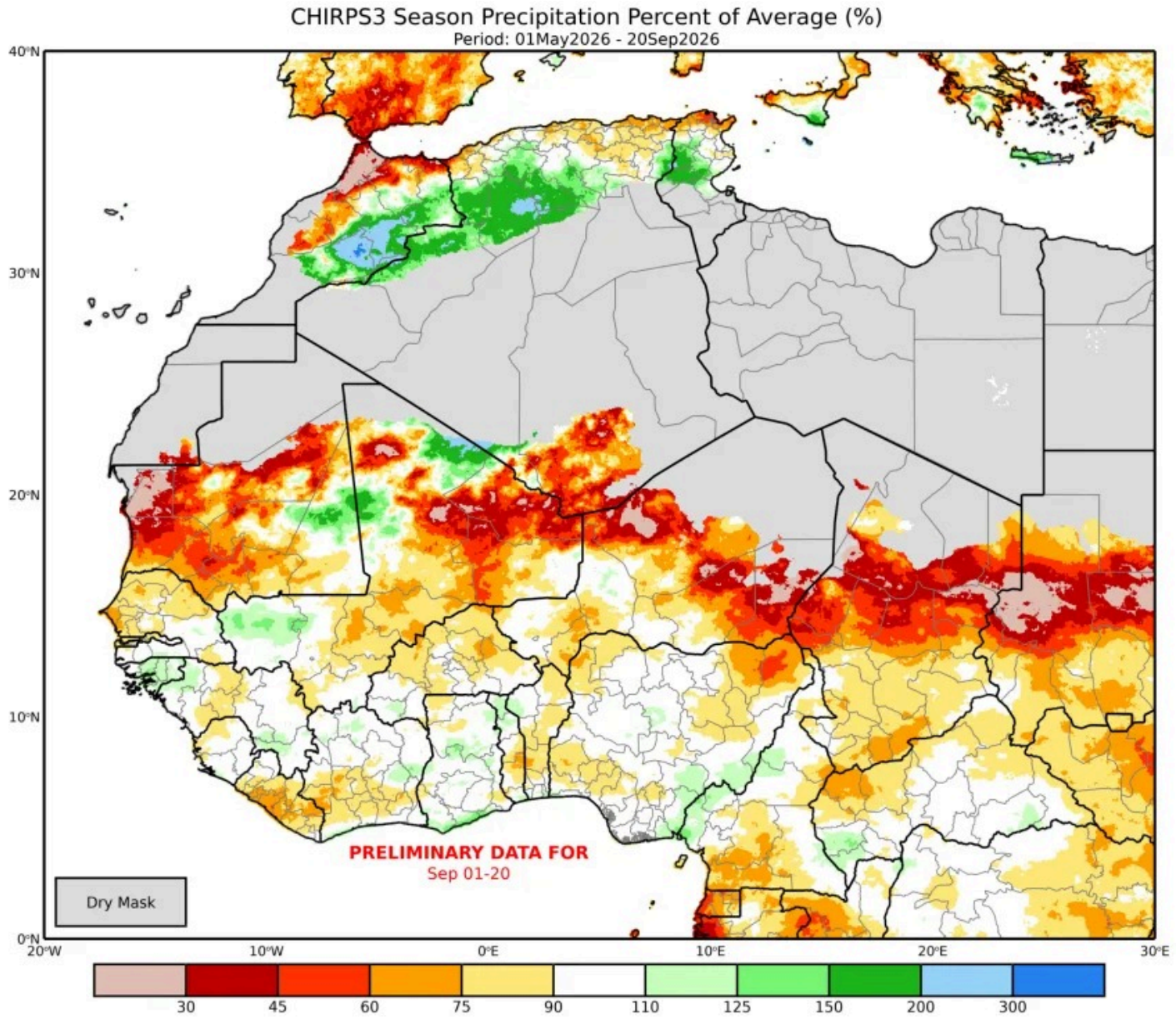
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Update on Seasonal Progress

The Intertropical Front (ITF) reached its northernmost position in the second dekad of August. From September 11–20, the Inter-Tropical Front (ITF) shifted northward compared with its position the previous dekad. In the western sector, the ITF is located at approximately 18.8°N, about 0.9° North of both its climatological position and its position during the previous dekad. Similarly, in the East, the ITF is located at approximately 15.8°N, 0.3° North of the long-term average position, and 0.4° North of the previous position (**Figure 1**).

Figure 2

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



Source: CHC/UCSB

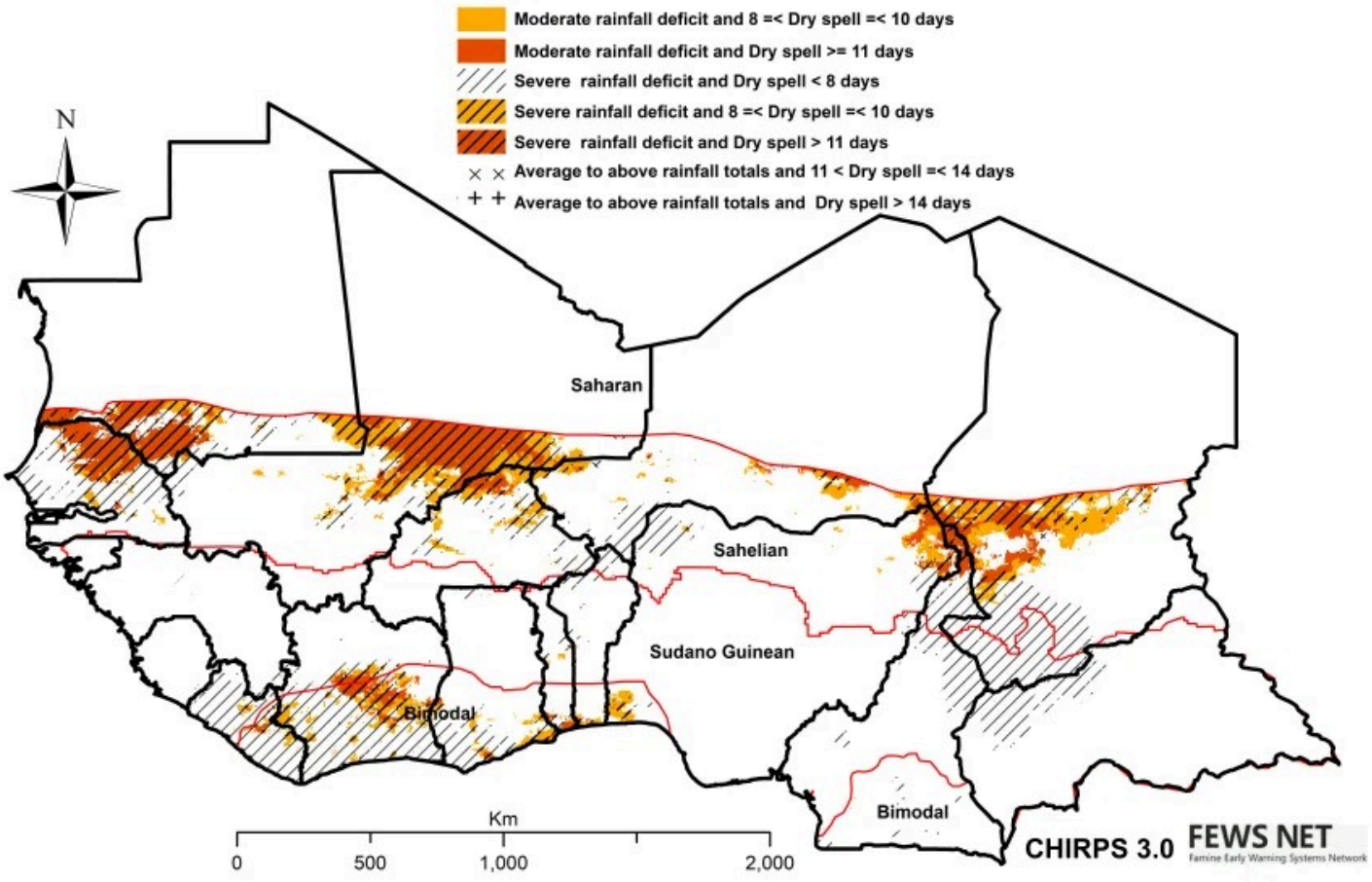
Throughout the season, cumulative rainfall deficits have been observed across the Sahel, including portions of western Mauritania, central and northeastern Mali, northern Burkina Faso, western and eastern Niger, southwestern, northwestern and northeastern Nigeria, and across much of Chad (**Figure 2**). These rainfall deficits have led to below-average **vegetation conditions** and **reduced crop water availability**. **Short-term forecasts** of near-normal rainfall

over eastern Sahel and above-normal rainfall over central and western Sahel through early October could provide brief relief in affected areas, though a full recovery is not expected. In addition, average maximum temperatures are forecast to exceed 38°C in **week 1** and **week 2** of October across much of the Sahel, which may drive high evaporative demand.

Moderate-to-severe rainfall deficits and long spells of consecutive dry days were observed in localized areas across the Sahel from 21st August through 20th September. The most severe rainfall deficits are concentrated in western Mauritania, northern Senegal, central and eastern Mali, northeastern Nigeria, and northwestern Chad, with several areas also experiencing dry spells of more than 8 consecutive days. Dry spells of more than 11 consecutive days were observed in Senegal, Mauritania, and Mali (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3

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

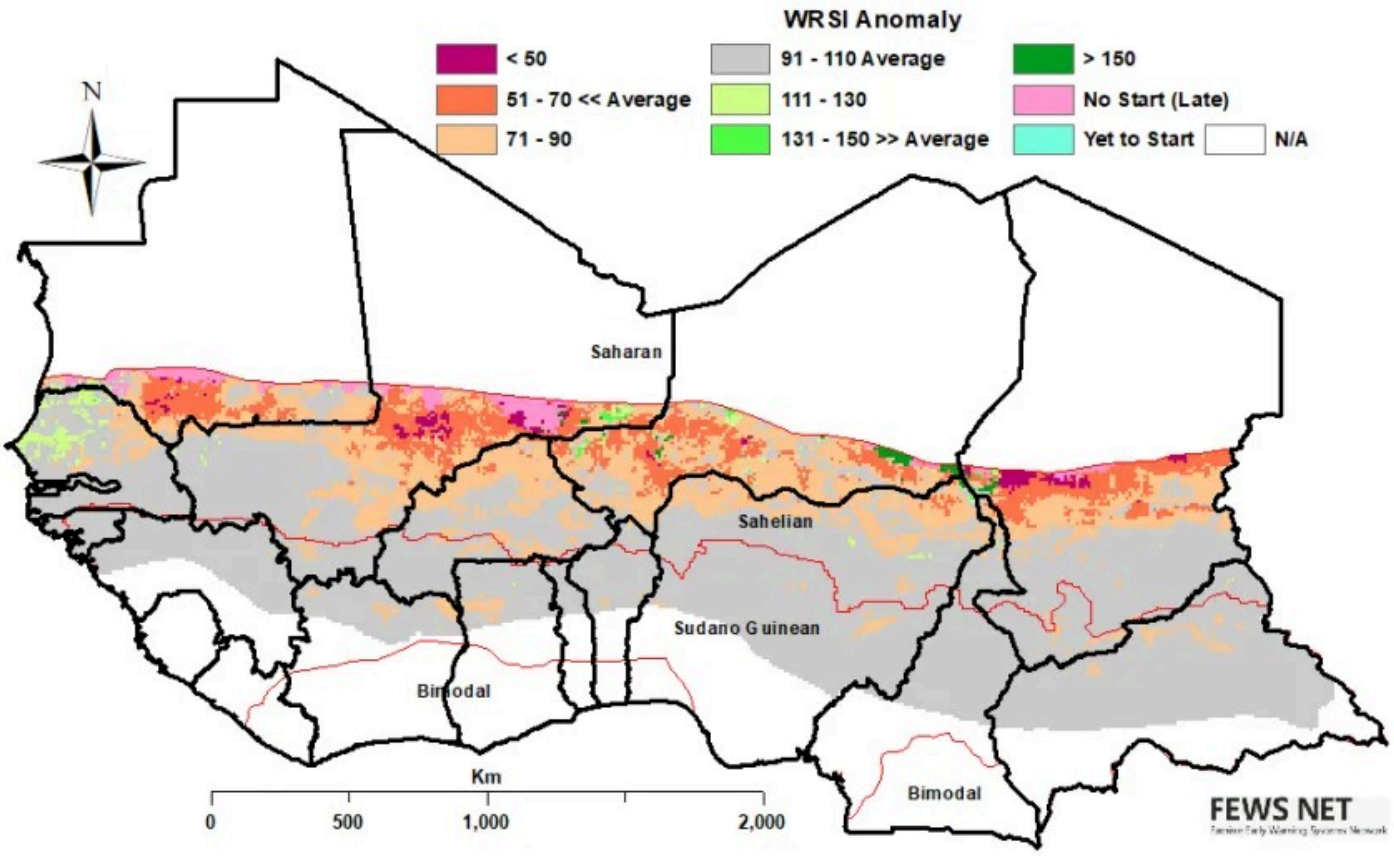


Source: USGS/FEWS NET

As a result of the rainfall deficits highlighted in **Figure 3**, the Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) anomaly map for millet in the second dekad of September showed that WRSI values below 90% of average were concentrated mainly across the northern part of the Sahelian zone. The most pronounced crop water requirement deficits (<50% and 51–70%) occurred in localized areas in central Mauritania, central Mali, western Niger, and northern Chad (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4

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



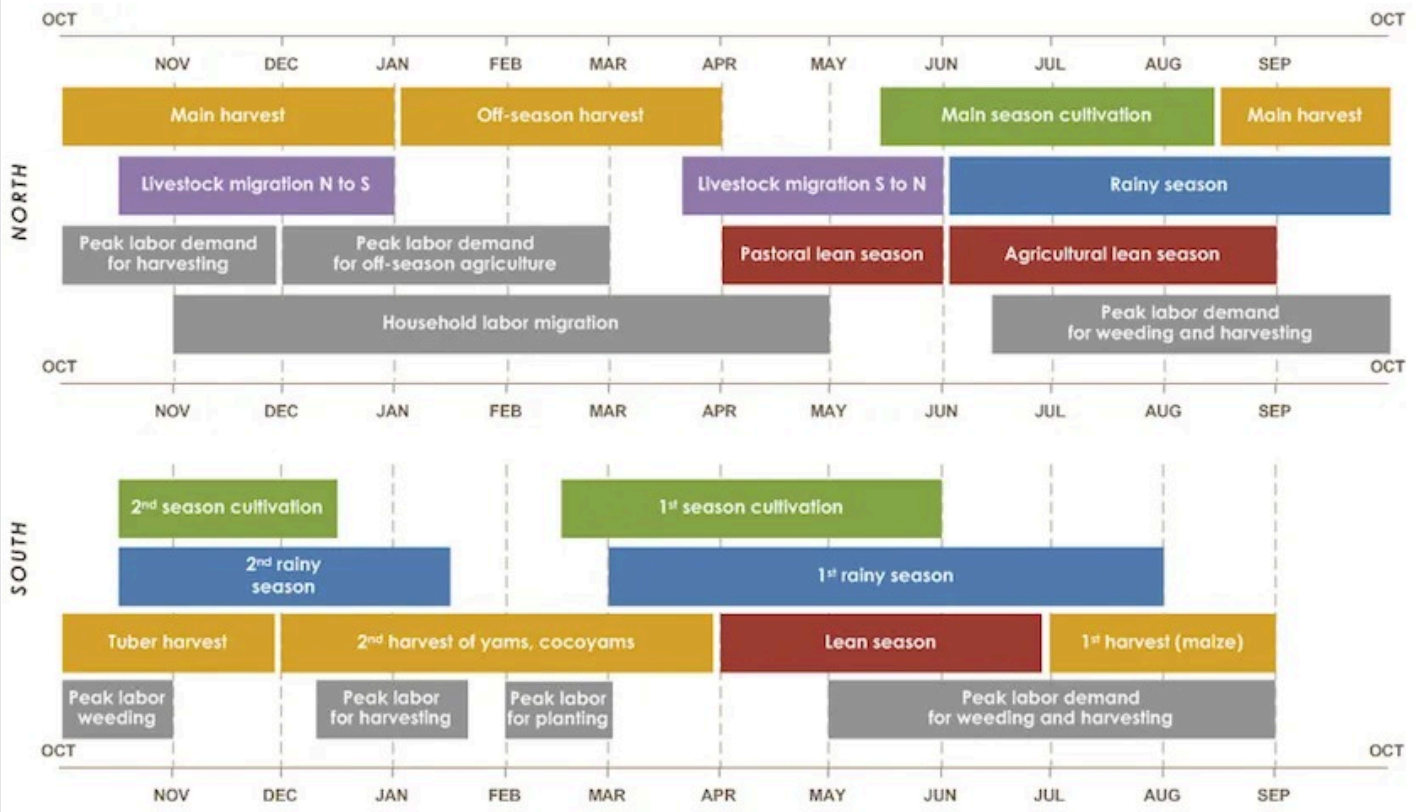
Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Forecasts

The latest **NOAA CPC ENSO probabilistic forecasts issued in September 2026** show a greater than 90% probability of a very strong El Niño through February 2027. During the October–December 2026 season, there is a 75% chance of a historic event that would exceed the strength of previous El Niño events dating back to 1950. The model ensemble points to an **exceptionally strong 2026–27 El Niño**, with all 22 models forecasting a "very strong" El Niño (Niño 3.4 ≥ +2.0 °C) from SON 2026 through DJF 2026–27.

According to **WMO** and **C3S** rainfall forecasts for October and November, above-normal rainfall is expected across the Sahel, while below-normal rainfall is likely over the bimodal areas. Above-average rainfall could support crop maturation and grain filling in areas of the Sahel where crops remain in the field, potentially limiting further yield losses. However, localized dry spells remain possible as the rains subside and could affect crops that have not yet reached maturity. Overall, late-season rainfall is unlikely to fully offset accumulated deficits. Across the region, climate models (**NMME**, **WMO**, **C3S**) confidently forecast above-normal OND temperatures in 2026, which could increase evapotranspiration and crop water demand. Continued monitoring of conditions will be essential for crops in reproductive-maturation stages across parts of the Sahel, as well as for the upcoming irrigated off-season cropping in the Sahel and second-season crops in the bimodal areas. Based on the **NMME streamflow forecast**, the likelihood of flooding along the major Rivers in West Africa is extremely low till the end of the season.

Seasonal Calendar in a Typical Year



Source: FEWS NET

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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**.