Regional report on food security and nutrition in West Africa and the Sahel 2025 | In brief

Benin | Cabo Verde | Chad (residents and refugees) | Côte d'Ivoire | Gambia | Ghana | Guinea | Guinea-Bissau | Mali | Mauritania (residents and refugees) | Niger | Nigeria | Senegal | Sierra Leone | Togo

47.4M people or **11.8 %** of the analysed population are projected to face high levels of acute food and nutrition insecurity between June and August 2025 in the 15 countries analysed, unless action is taken.

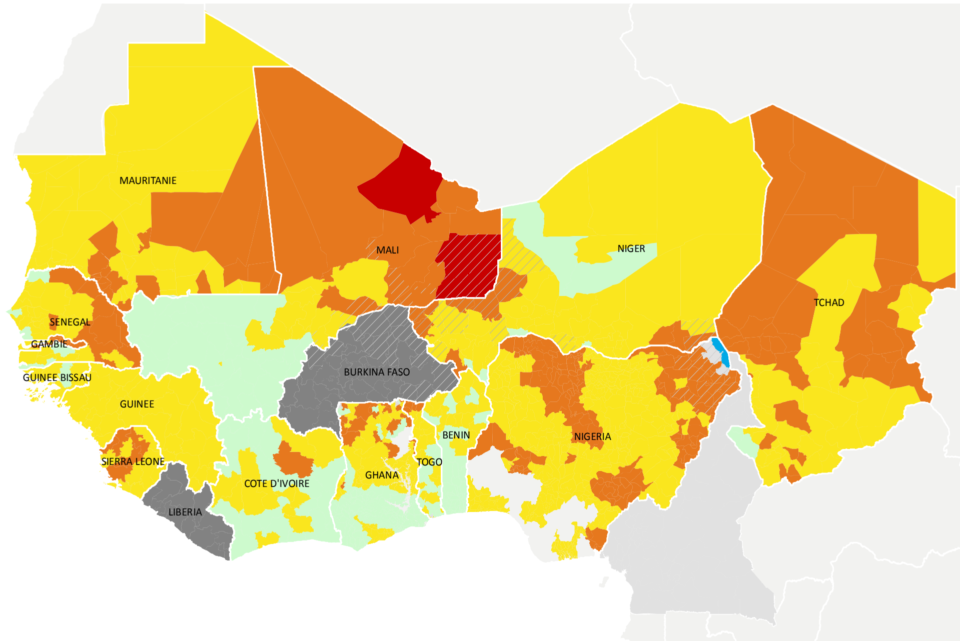
16.3M children under 5 years old are affected by acute malnutrition across **14** countries in the region, including **4.3** million suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

1.3M pregnant or breastfeeding women are estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition in **four** countries in 2025.

9.1M people were forcibly displaced at the beginning of 2025, including **6.6** million internally displaced and **2.5** million refugees and asylum seekers.

CH data for June–August 2025 are not available for **Burkina Faso** and **Liberia** as these two countries did not conduct recent CH analyses. For **Cabo Verde**, **Gambia**, **Mali**, **Niger** and **Togo**, projections from the October–November 2024 CH cycle were used. **Senegal** updated its projections from the October–November 2024 CH cycle during the February–March 2025 CH cycle.

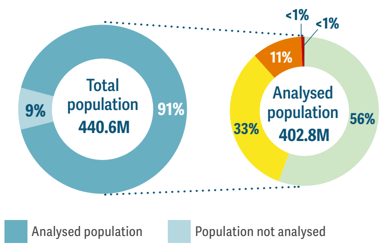
FIG. 0.1 **Regional acute food and nutrition insecurity situation for the projected period (June–August 2025)**



1 - None/Minimal | 2 - Stressed | 3 - Crisis | 4 - Emergency | 5 - Catastrophe/Famine

Areas not analysed | Has a CH analysis but is not a CILSS member | Data gap | Areas with limited or no access

Source: CH, October–November 2024 and February–March 2025.



Source: CH, October–November 2024 and February–March 2025.

Numbers reach a new high in 2025

The June–August 2025 period marks the highest figure projected by the Cadre Harmonisé in the region, in a context of declining humanitarian funding and growing international economic and geopolitical uncertainty.

Approximately 34.5 million people, or 10.7 percent of the analysed population, were already facing high levels of food and nutrition insecurity (CH Phase 3 or above) between March and May 2025 in the nine countries analysed.

In the absence of appropriate measures, this figure could rise to about 47.4 million people, or 11.8 percent of the analysed population, during the lean season (June–August 2025) across 15 countries. This seasonal increase is also driven by protracted conflict, which continues to disrupt markets, erode livelihoods and displace millions of people, as well as the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

The number of people in Emergency (CH Phase 4) during June–August rose from 2 million in nine countries in 2024 to 2.1 million in 11 countries in 2025. Most countries in the region are following this upward trend, only **Chad**, **Mali**, **Mauritania** and the **Niger** have fewer people in this phase.

Around 131.7 million people, or 33 percent of the population in the 15 countries analysed, are projected to be in Stressed (CH Phase 2) during June–August 2025.

These figures remain an underestimation, as they do not include populations in Burkina Faso and Liberia, which did not conduct a CH analysis.

In June–August 2025, 2 645 people are projected to face Catastrophe (CH Phase 5) in the Ménaka region of **Mali**, marking the third consecutive year of such extreme levels of acute food and nutrition insecurity in the area, driven by conflict and internal displacement.

A complex food crisis driven by conflict, insecurity, economic hardship and climate shocks

Acute food and nutrition insecurity is driven by the interaction of multiple shocks, compounded by persistent structural vulnerabilities.

Countries throughout the region typically rely heavily on imports, are largely exposed to extreme weather events, experience rapid population growth and have limited economic capacity to cope with repeated and multiple shocks. In many Sahelian countries, heavy reliance on rainfed agriculture with uncertain yields, limited access to basic services, and poor economic opportunities exacerbate livelihood vulnerability.

Conflict/insecurity remain the major drivers of acute food and nutrition insecurity in **Chad**, **Mali**, the **Niger** and **Nigeria**, where nearly 80 percent of the people in the region facing high levels of acute food and nutrition insecurity live. Prolonged violence in the Lake Chad Basin, the Liptako-Gourma area and the Central Sahel has severely disrupted agriculture, livestock, markets and humanitarian access. Internal and cross-border displacement continues to rise, straining local resources. Eastern **Chad** is experiencing a continued influx of refugees and returnees fleeing the conflict in the Sudan, increasing humanitarian needs.

Economic shocks are also a key driver, especially in **Benin**, **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Ghana**, **Senegal** and **Sierra Leone**. High inflation, currency depreciation and rising input prices limit access to basic food staples. In **Nigeria**, exchange rate reforms and the end of fuel subsidies have fuelled persistent food inflation. Trade is constrained by restrictions, rising transport costs and insecurity, driving high food prices, particularly in coastal countries.

Weather extremes have affected millions, especially in **Chad**, the **Niger**, **Nigeria**, **Mali** and **Senegal**. Flooding in 2024 led to major crop losses, population displacement and reduced crop production, especially in **Senegal**. While some Sahelian areas benefitted from good rainfall in 2025, recurring climate hazards continue to threaten the livelihoods of vulnerable households.

Acute malnutrition: continued deterioration amid multiple crises in 2025

Conflict-affected areas, such as the Liptako-Gourma area, northern Nigeria and Chad, have the region's highest levels of acute manlnutrition.

About 16.3 million children under 5 years old are affected by acute malnutrition in the 14 countries with available data, including 4.3 million with severe acute malnutrition. This is a notable deterioration since 2024 when 13.1 million children were estimated to have acute malnutrition including 3.3 million with severe acute malnutrition.

Around 1.3 million pregnant and breastfeeding women are affected by acute malnutrition in four countries with available data (**Mali**, the **Niger**, northern **Nigeria** and **Chad**).

The deterioration is linked to a combination of factors, exacerbated by conflict, insecurity, weak public services and reduced humanitarian funding.

- Inadequate food intake is a major contributor, with few children receiving an acceptable and sufficiently diverse diet due to its high cost, especially in **Chad**, the **Niger**, **Benin**, **Senegal** and **Togo**;
- Weak or inaccessible health services lead to shortfalls in care, including lack of vitamin A supplementation, diarrhoea treatment and monitoring of children's growth;
- Limited access to safe drinking water and sanitation increase the spread of waterborne diseases, worsening child malnutrition.

The increasing levels of acute malnutrition in the region require an urgent scale-up of integrated interventions in nutrition, health, food security, WASH and social protection.

Forced displacement in 2025: over 9.1 million affected

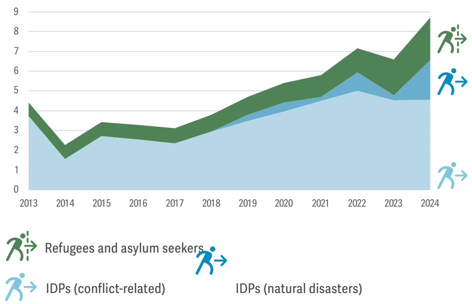
As of early 2025, more than 9.1 million people were forcibly displaced across the 15 countries analysed, including approximately 6.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 2.5 million refugees and asylum seekers.

Persistent displacement stems from expanding hotspots of violence and insecurity, which continue to drive displacement in border areas. The Liptako-Gourma area, the Lake Chad Basin and northern Nigeria remain the epicentres of these security crises, which have displaced millions. Insecurity is also spreading to coastal countries – **Benin**, **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Ghana** and **Togo**.

Severe flooding in 2024 displaced over 1.3 million people, particularly in **Chad**, **Nigeria**, the **Niger**, and to a lesser extent, **Senegal**.

Chad and the **Niger** are among the main host countries for refugees, together accounting for nearly three quarters of the region's 2.5 million refugees and asylum seekers, primarily from the **Sudan**, **Nigeria**, **Mali** and **Central African Republic.**

Number of forcibly displaced persons in West Africa and the Sahel (in millions), 2013–2024



Sources: 2013–2024, UNHCR, IDMC.

Agricultural season 2024/2025: favourable conditions but localized shortages

The 2024/2025 agricultural season benefited from generally favourable rainfall, with an early onset and above-average precipitations supporting crop development. However, excess rainfall caused flooding in the basins of the Senegal and Niger rivers and Lake Chad, leading to human and material losses. Dry spells necessitated localized replanting, while pests remained a concern, including fall armyworm and a risk of desert locust resurgence.

Regional cereal production is estimated at 76.2 million tonnes, 3 percent higher than the five-year average. However, per capita cereal production declined by 5 percent, highlighting structural constraints linked to rapid population growth. Pastoral conditions were mostly satisfactory, though localized pasture and water shortages were reported due to bushfires and insecurity-related movement restrictions.

Cereal production in the Sahel and West Africa region, 2024/2025

Culture	Production (million tonnes)	Annual variation from 2023/24 to 2024/25	Variation between 2024/25 and the 5-year average
Berebere	0.63	14%	18%
Orge wheat	0.18	7%	68%
Fonio	0.27	-3%	-54%
Maize	27.72	5%	3%
Millet	10.34	6%	1%
Rice	22.78	2%	2%
Sorghum	14.38	4%	1%
Total	**76.29**	**3%**	**3%**

Source: CILSS-Aghrymet, April 2025.

Regional and international markets

By early 2025, the FAO food price index had risen by 7.6 percent compared with early 2024, though it remained 20 percent below its March 2022 peak. Global cereal production for 2024/2025 is expected to decline slightly, driven by reduced maize output, while global trade is projected to fall by 7 percent to its lowest level since 2019/2020. This dynamic particularly affects West African and Sahelian countries that are heavily reliant on imports, notably **Benin**, **Cabo Verde**, **Mauritania** and **Senegal**, which are exposed to rising rice, wheat and oil prices.

In the region's markets, food availability remains limited in many agropastoral areas due to reduced per capita cereal output, low stocks and restricted cross-border flows. Coastal countries show more stable supply due to imports, but landlocked Sahelian markets – especially in the Central Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin – remain constrained by insecurity and trade restrictions. These pressures are exacerbated by increased demand in areas hosting displaced populations.

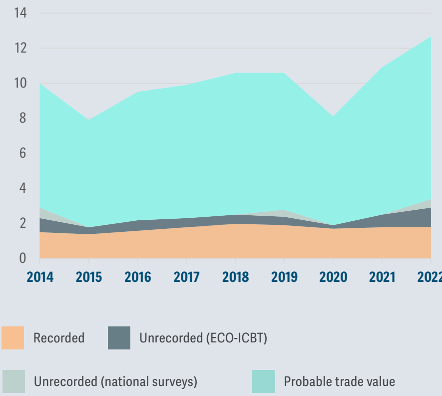
Cereal prices have increased sharply, especially in **Ghana**, **Nigeria** and **Sierra Leone** due to inflation, currency depreciation and high transport and input costs. Despite a slight easing in regional inflation, household purchasing power remains weak. Livestock prices, although high, fail to offset rising cereal costs, straining pastoralist livelihoods and limiting food access for the most vulnerable.

Intra-regional trade: an overlooked lever for food and nutrition security in West Africa and the Sahel

Intra-regional food trade plays a crucial but underestimated role in West Africa and the Sahel. Far from being marginal, it is valued at nearly USD 10 billion per year – six times higher than that captured in official statistics. These mostly unrecorded flows meet the annual caloric needs of up to 80 million people and contribute significantly to the supply of nutritious foods (animal protein, fruits, vegetables and legumes) in areas with low local production. They help stabilize markets during lean seasons and shocks, and support producer incomes by expanding regional market access.

Despite its strategic importance, intra-regional trade is disrupted by export restrictions, logistical obstacles (informal fees, multiple checkpoints, among others) and limited access to financing. The lack of reliable data also hampers evidence-based policymaking. Unlocking the potential of intra-regional trade will require removing these barriers and improving information systems to better integrate this lever into regional food and nutrition security strategies.

FIG 3.5 **Intra-regional trade in West Africa and the Sahel (USD billions), 2014–2022**



Source : OECD/SWAC, 2025.

2025 seasonal outlook: generally favourable but continued monitoring needed

The 2025 rainy season is expected to be broadly favourable for agriculture and pastoralism, with above-average rainfall projected in the Central and Eastern Sahel, notably in **Burkina Faso**, **Chad**, the **Niger** and northern **Nigeria**. An early to normal onset of rains is expected in most areas, except in the western part of the region – particularly **Guinea-Bissau**, **Guinea**, **Senegal** and **Sierra Leone** – where delays are likely. The rainy season is expected to end late across the Sahel, with conditions generally supporting pasture regeneration and crop growth.

However, dry spells are likely at the beginning and end of the season, particularly in the Central Sahel, northern areas of Gulf of Guinea countries and northern **Nigeria**. Flood risk remains high, especially in the basins of the Senegal and Niger rivers and Lake Chad. To protect livelihoods from localized shocks, it is crucial to reinforce early warning systems, accelerate the delivery of agricultural inputs, and deploy well-targeted contingency measures.