



Update of the 2026 seasonal forecast for West Africa and the Sahel, July 30, 2026

Expansion of areas at risk of rainfall deficits

Compared with the seasonal forecasts published in April 2026, this update highlights a significant expansion of areas with a high probability of below-average cumulative rainfall during the August-September-October (ASO) period. This trend is particularly pronounced in Chad. Following several years of widespread flooding, these drought risks call for increased vigilance.

Introduction

The July update of the 2026 seasonal forecast indicates a less favorable evolution of rainfall prospects compared to those from the PRESASS (Regional Forum for Seasonal Forecasts of Agro-Hydro-Climatic Characteristics of the Rainy Season), held in April 2026 in N'Djamena, Chad. The current state of sea surface temperatures (SST) in the main ocean basins, influencing rainfall patterns in West Africa and the Sahel, remains generally unfavorable for above-average rainfall across the region.

The current high-intensity El Niño event is one of the main factors shaping the global climate in 2026. The combined effects of this phenomenon with a mixed situation of TSMs in the tropical Atlantic reinforce the trend towards a rainfall deficit in the region.

El Niño and TSM in major ocean basins

Analysis of the most recent ocean observations confirms the establishment of the El Niño phenomenon during July 2026. Forecasts for the coming months converge towards a strengthening of this phenomenon which generally contributes to a decrease in rainfall over parts of West Africa and the Sahel.

In the Tropical Atlantic Ocean, current SMT anomalies are close to normal, which would not favor a significant strengthening of the West African monsoon. Furthermore, the ongoing gradual cooling of SMT in the Gulf of Guinea (Figure 1) is likely to limit convective activity over coastal regions, thus reducing the probability of above-average rainfall for the remainder of the season. However, this cooling could facilitate greater moisture penetration towards the central Sahel.

SMTs in the Mediterranean remain significantly above normal, which is favorable for increased moisture inflows towards the Sahel, particularly its central region. These conditions could mitigate the adverse effects of El Niño. In the Indian Ocean, temperature anomalies exhibit a rather heterogeneous pattern, alternating between warm areas and areas close to normal, which would limit the regional influence of this ocean basin. SMT forecasts indicate the establishment of a positive dipole in this ocean as early as August, expected to reach its maximum between September and October. Furthermore, the gradual warming of SMTs in the North Atlantic could strengthen moisture flows and convective activity off the coasts of Senegal and Mauritania. This pattern is likely to increase the probability of above-normal rainfall in these two western areas of the region.

Ultimately, the combination of these different oceanic forcings suggests a more contrasting regional rainfall response than that predicted for April 2026.

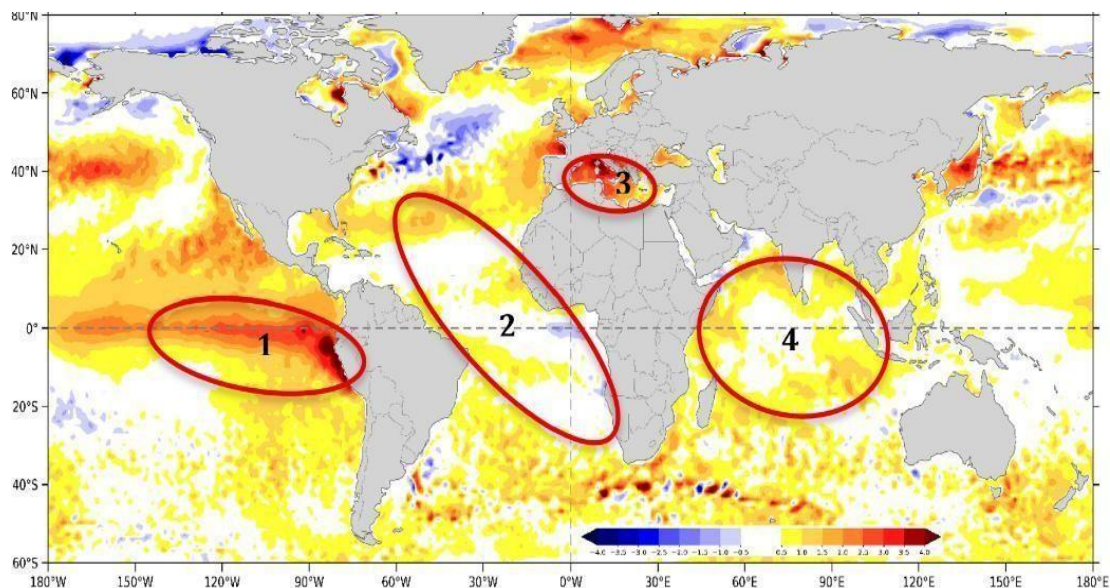


Figure 1: Sea surface temperature anomalies over the period from June 28 to July 25, 2026 compared to the 1991-2020 reference period (source NOAA/PSL)

Ocean basins:

1) Eastern Equatorial Pacific indicating the establishment of El Niño; 2) Tropical Atlantic indicating globally neutral TSMs; 3) Mediterranean Ocean indicating warm TSMs and 4) Indian Ocean indicating mixed TSMs.

Rainfall and temperature forecasts for the period August-September-October 2026

This seasonal forecast update was produced by AGRHYMET CCR-AOS using the objective seasonal forecasting approach based on the WASS2S tool. This update, incorporating the most recent observations of ocean conditions and the latest outputs from major global climate models, including those from NMME and C3S, highlights the following trends:

- **Risks of rainfall deficits:** The probability of below-normal rainfall totals has increased for the August-September-October (ASW) period in central and eastern Mauritania and Senegal, central and western Mali, northern and eastern Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, most of Ghana, Togo, and Benin (except for the northern parts), the central strip of Nigeria, and most of the agricultural zone of Chad. The rainfall deficits forecast for the ASW period in the Gulf of Guinea countries mainly concern the second rainy season in the southern parts. These deficits contrast with the above-average rainfall totals observed during the first rainy season, which caused widespread flooding, particularly in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo (Figure 2).
- **Normal to above-average rainfall totals:** Seasonal forecasts for the ASW period indicate normal to above-normal rainfall totals across the central Sahel, including most of Niger, central and eastern Burkina Faso, eastern Mali, and northern parts of Nigeria, Benin, and Togo. Excess rainfall is also expected along the Atlantic coast, from southern Mauritania to central Liberia (Figure 2).

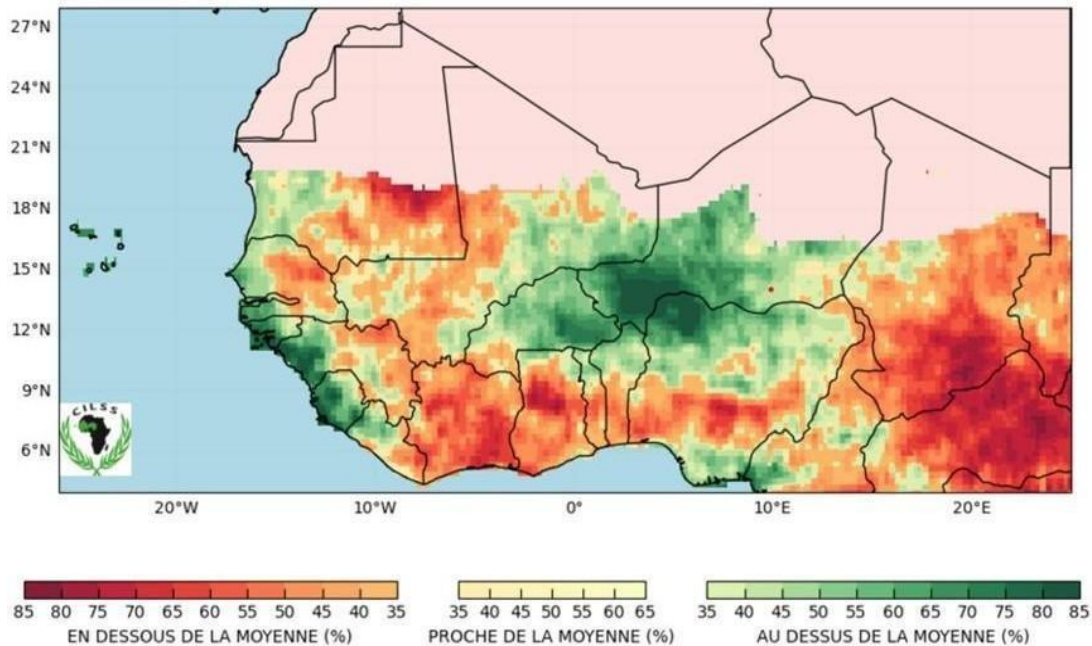


Figure 2: Seasonal rainfall forecasts for the ASO 2026 period, July update

- Temperatures:** Seasonal temperature forecasts indicate that the 2026 ASO season will be warmer than the reference period (1991–2020) across West Africa and the Sahel (Figure 3). This positive temperature anomaly is expected to increase atmospheric evaporative demand, potentially exacerbating water stress, particularly in areas with below-normal rainfall. Heat waves could also become more frequent and prolonged, with negative impacts on water resources, agriculture, ecosystems, human health, and energy.

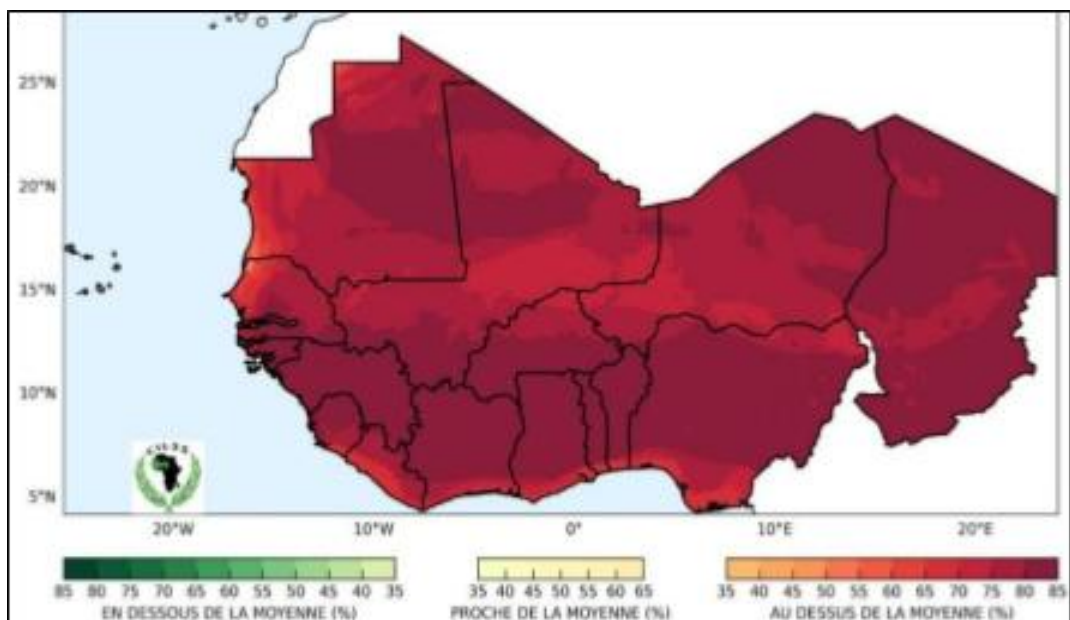


Figure 3: Seasonal temperature forecasts for the ASO 2026 period, July update

Conclusion

Current climatic conditions are characterized by a combination of a strong El Niño event and a generally less favorable tropical storm system (TSS) situation in the tropical Atlantic. This configuration suggests a seasonal outlook characterized by a high probability of below-average rainfall totals for the 2026 ASO period. However, rainfall conditions remain favorable in the central Sahel, where total rainfall is expected to be above normal.

These rainfall forecasts contrast sharply with the trends observed in recent years, during which several countries in the region have recorded above-average rainfall totals and floods of sometimes exceptional magnitude. This situation underscores the need for an integrated approach to climate risk management, maintaining high levels of preparedness and anticipation for both floods and droughts.

In this context, AGRHYMET CCR-AOS recommends that national authorities and stakeholders in climate-sensitive socioeconomic sectors strengthen vigilance and anticipatory action. It also recommends closer coordination with National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) to better account for country-specific circumstances.

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