

FEWS NET overviews

For an analysis of conditions in West Africa, see back page

AFGHANISTAN: Satellite imagery of northern Afghanistan indicates that the ongoing drought is the most severe since 2000. Coupled with high food prices and ongoing conflict, this has contributed to deteriorating food security. The Afghan government and the United Nations have jointly appealed for USD 400 million to address emergency needs. Funding the food security component of this appeal is essential to prevent a humanitarian crisis.

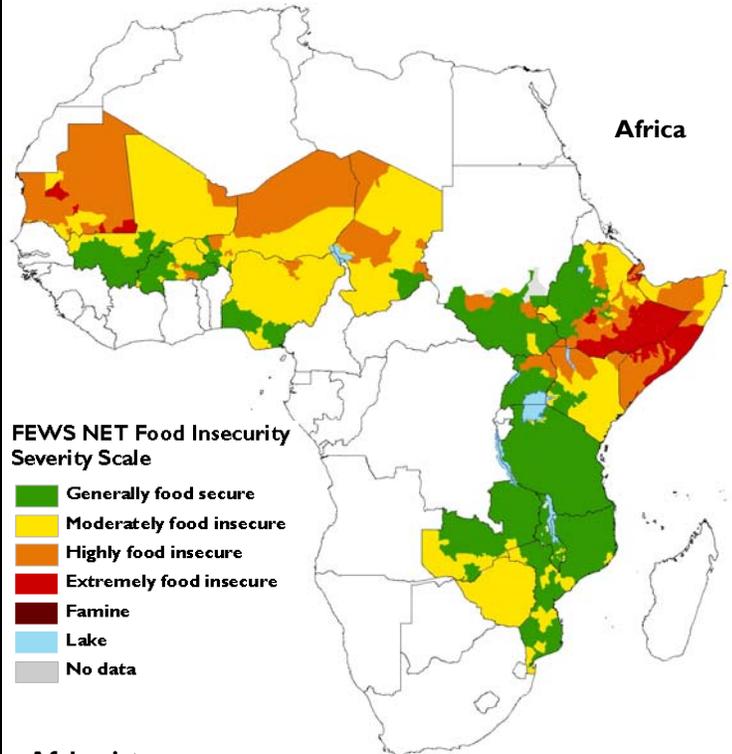
EAST AFRICA: Below-normal March-May rains, crop failure, and high prices threaten food security in much of East Africa. These conditions are exacerbated by market and trade disruptions, conflict, and limited food, water, and pasture availability. While recent rains have improved the situation in some areas, high and extreme levels of food insecurity persist in Ethiopia's Somali, Oromia, SNNP, Amhara, Tigray, and Afar regions; in Kenya's Turkana, Mandera, and Marsabit districts, and southeastern marginal farming areas; in central and southern Somalia; and in Djibouti's urban areas and pastoral livelihood zones. In northeastern Uganda's Karamoja Region, successive below-average harvests, high prices, and deteriorating pastoral conditions will prolong high levels of food insecurity through September 2009. Emergency food aid pipelines throughout the region face shortfalls through the end of the calendar year.

GUATEMALA: Above-normal rainfall in parts of northern and eastern Guatemala have damaged staple and cash crops, caused floods and landslides, and led to the death of at least 17 people. Additional rainfall, forecast for the days ahead, will exacerbate these conditions. Short-term assistance is needed to improve access to potable water, prevent water-borne diseases, rehabilitate damaged infrastructure, facilitate access to seeds and tools for re-sowing activities, and ensure adequate availability of food until the next harvest is available in November.

ZIMBABWE: Recent crop assessments by FAO/WFP indicate that maize production for the 2008/09 season is 37 percent higher than earlier government estimates. However, the country still faces a national cereal deficit of 1,051,000 MT. Grain prices remain high and supplies of basic commodities are limited and erratic on formal markets. Households across the country are now facing increased food access constraints and have begun shifting to less-preferred foods, bartering household assets for food, reducing non-food expenditures, and collecting wild foods earlier than normal.

Current estimated food security conditions

July to September 2008



FEWS NET Food Insecurity Severity Scale

- Generally food secure
- Moderately food insecure
- Highly food insecure
- Extremely food insecure
- Famine
- Lake
- No data

Afghanistan



Guatemala

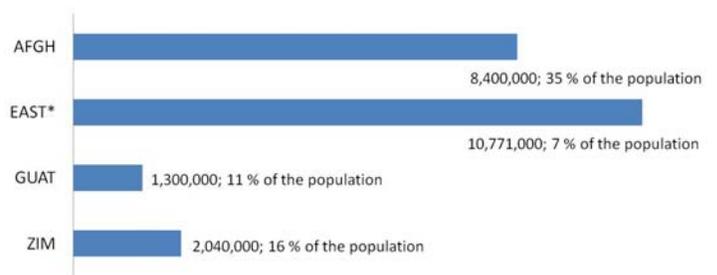


Haiti



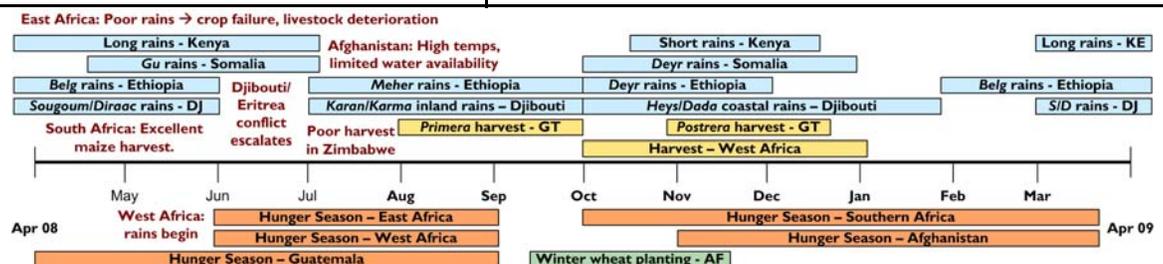
These maps show the highest estimated severity of food insecurity in each area, based on the latest assessment and monitoring data as well as baseline data and analysis.

Selected populations at risk of food insecurity



* includes Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda

Critical events timeline



The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) is a USAID-funded activity. The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

2008/09 production season progressing well in West Africa

Despite concerns that high prices and localized production deficits would lead to a difficult lean season, most countries in West Africa are reporting food security conditions typical for this time of year. While staple food prices remain high, they have stabilized in many places, the cropping season has started well, and livestock conditions are improving.

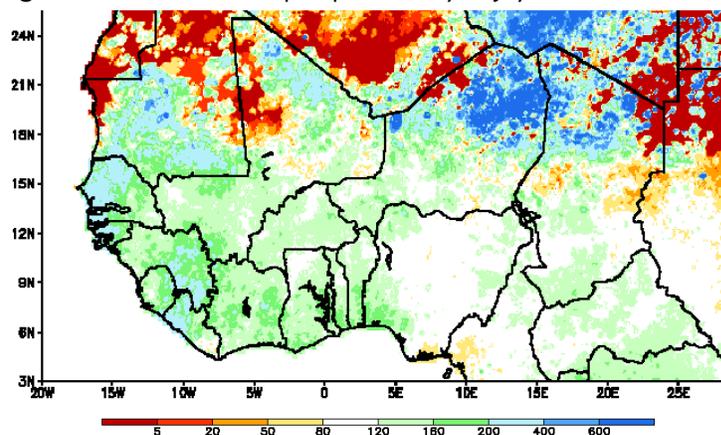
The season began on time, and in many cases early, across most of the region. Rainfall has been abundant since May, with precipitation totals 120 to 160 percent of normal for large areas of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger (Figure 1). As a result, crop conditions are good, and, while it is still early in the season, a normal harvest is expected in most areas, if favorable conditions persist. The Sahelian zone of Chad and parts of northern Nigeria are exceptions. In northern Nigeria, although planting has now occurred, dryness delayed the start of season by up to two months and, as a result, some areas could face reduced harvests in October, driving market prices even higher next year and leading to a more severe 2009 lean season. In north central Chad, planting is two dekads behind, although if rains begin soon and are adequate, a normal harvest is still possible.

Water availability, forage, and pasture conditions are also starting to improve as a result of seasonal rains, leading to enhanced livestock body conditions in pastoral areas of the region. However, in some areas (e.g., Burkina Faso and Nigeria) conditions for cattle remain poor because early season fodder is better suited to small ruminants and because agribusiness byproducts, like seedcake, which are used as supplementary animal feed during the dry season, are scarce and expensive.

Food prices remain above average in most of West Africa and, because initiatives to address food insecurity have largely focused on rural areas, the urban poor remain the most seriously affected. That said, current price trends differ significantly across the region. In Niger, northern Nigeria, portions of Mali, and parts of Chad (N'Djamena, Sarh, Chari Baguirmi, and Middle Chari), normal seasonal price increases have been magnified by localized poor 2007 harvests and high international food prices. At the same time, prices have stabilized or are declining in Burkina Faso, southern Nigeria, Mauritania, and some areas of Mali and Chad, due in part to government and United Nations programs. For example, replenishment of village level food reserves and distributions of food aid by the government, and as part of the World Food Program's emergency relief operations, have helped to stabilize maize prices and lower sorghum prices in Mauritania.

The absence of normal trade flows in some parts of the region is also affecting food security. In Chad, unofficial export restrictions during the past three months have prevented commodity outflows, while conflict with Sudan, and export bans in Nigeria and

Figure 1. Percent of normal precipitation, May 1– July 27 2008



Source: NOAA

Cameroon have reduced imports to the country. High prices in Senegal and Nigeria are diverting normal trade flows away from Niger and Mauritania, limiting food availability. In Nigeria, although high demand for meat in the south is driving a strong livestock trade with Niger and Chad, high food prices are limiting Nigerian cereal exports. To facilitate improved trade flows, a number of national governments (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Burkina Faso), have reduced import tariffs on some food commodities, primarily rice. However, while these policies have led to some small, short-term declines in urban rice prices, there has been little overall impact on food costs, and the effects on inter-regional trade have been limited because rice is largely imported from Asia.

Other issues also affect food security in the region. In almost all areas, rising fuel prices have constrained food access by driving up the cost of both non-staple foods and non-food items, particularly in more remote areas. Conflicts in eastern Chad, Mali, and Niger have resulted in displacement, interrupted trade flows, and increased aid requirements for both refugees and internally displaced people. Finally, in Burkina Faso there are concerns about flooding, given the high levels of recent rainfall.

Rains through October are forecast to be normal to above-normal across West Africa, particularly in Mali, Burkina Faso, southern Mauritania, and southwestern Niger. Although it is still early, especially in northern areas of the region where rains have only recently begun, prospects are good for an average harvest, assuming that adequate and well-distributed rainfall continues through mid-October. Increased food supplies following the main harvest between September and December will likely lower food prices. However, as international food and fuel prices are anticipated to remain high, prices will likely remain above historical averages in most markets in the region and could begin rising more quickly post-harvest than is typical.