East Africa

Key Message Update

Scale of food assistance needs in East Africa continues to outpace the humanitarian response

February, 2022

IPC v3.0 Acute Food Insecurity Phase

Presence countries:
1. Minimal
2. Stressed
3. Crisis
4. Emergency
5. Famine

Remote monitoring countries:
1. Minimal
2. Stressed
3. Crisis or higher

Concentration of displaced people - hover over maps to view food security phase classifications for camps in Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda

FEWS NET classification is IPC compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

FEWS NET continues to monitor food security conditions in areas mapped in grey. South Sudan remains of high concern for FEWS NET.

FEWS NET remote monitoring countries use a colored outline to represent the highest IPC classification in areas of concern.

Key Messages

- FEWS NET estimates approximately 45-55 million people across the region need humanitarian food and nutrition assistance to prevent Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes between January and May 2022. Conflict, drought, and/or floods — exacerbated by concurrent economic challenges — are the main drivers of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, and the Karamoja subregion of Uganda. These shocks continue to cause large-scale displacement and crop and livestock production losses, restrict household access to income-generating activities, disrupt market functioning, and constrain humanitarian access. Areas of highest concern include northern and southern Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Marib, Al Hassaydah, and Sanaa governorates in Yemen, where there are households facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes or worse. A scale-up beyond currently planned levels of food and nutrition assistance, supported by unhindered humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas, is required to avert the loss of lives and livelihoods.

- Ongoing conflict continues to have the most severe impacts on food insecurity in northeastern Ethiopia, Yemen, and parts of southern Sudan. Extreme food insecurity persists in Tigray, Abyei, and Amhara regions in northern Ethiopia despite a recent tail-off conflict, driven by continued restrictions on humanitarian access and severe damage to household livelihood systems. In Yemen, rising levels of remote violence and cross-border attacks since mid-2021 are driving increased levels of displacement. Many households have been displaced multiple times, resulting in reduced coping capacity, increased vulnerability to shocks, and higher reliance on humanitarian assistance. In South Sudan, subnational violence linked to political interests, rising resource scarcity, and retaliation for past attacks are driving food insecurity in many areas, especially in Jonglei, Warrap, and parts of Greater Equatoria.

- Intensifying drough in southern and southeastern Ethiopia, eastern and northern Kenya, and southern and central Somalia has resulted in severe water shortages, livestock deaths, significantly below-average harvests, and skyrocketing food prices. Available estimates place household herd sizes in the range of 30-50 percent below baseline levels, with additional livestock deaths likely to occur prior to the start of the rainy season in March/April. In southern Somalia, the deyey (dry) harvest in January was the third lowest since 1995, while southeastern Kenya's short rains harvest in February was 70 percent below the five-year average. Sharply rising cereal prices are eroding household purchasing power, with the goat-to-cereal ratio of trade declining by 20-70 percent below average in key reference markets across the eastern Horn. FEWS NET still anticipates a fourth consecutive below-average rainfall season is highly likely from March to May/June, driven by La Niña and related climate conditions.

- Internally displaced populations, numbering nearly 17 million across the region, are among those facing severe to extreme food insecurity. An additional 4-8 million refugees are located in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti, and Tanzania. Many are highly dependent on humanitarian food assistance, coupled with host community support, due to the loss of their livelihoods and productive assets. However, under-funded food assistance plans — coupled with physical access constraints in conflict and flood-affected areas — have led to cuts in food assistance to displaced populations over the last few years. In Uganda, for example, inadequate funding forced humanitarian organizations to cut food rations yet again in November, resulting in a 20-percent cut to rations delivered to refugees in southwestern settlements. In South Sudan, WFP expects food assistance rations will be 10-20 percent lower in 2022 than in 2021.