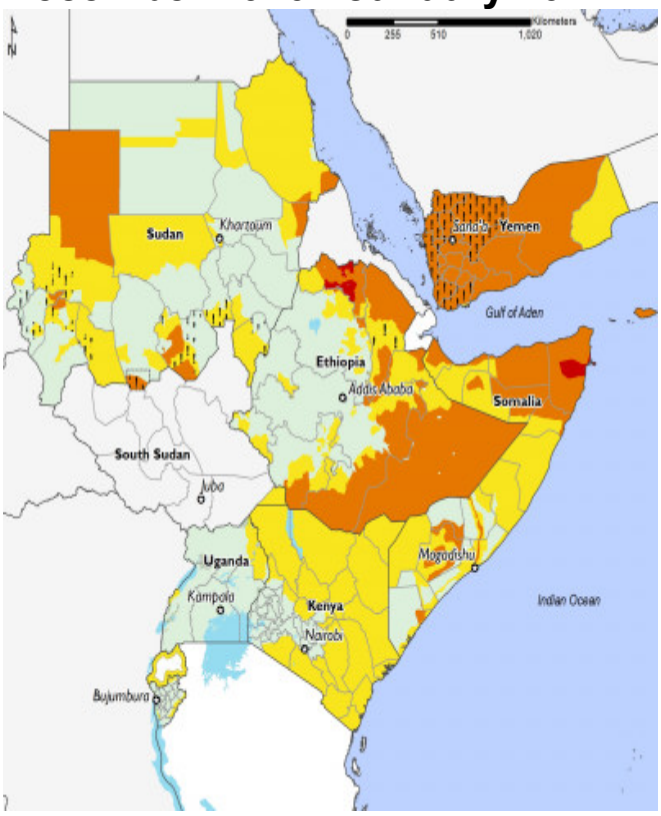
East Africa

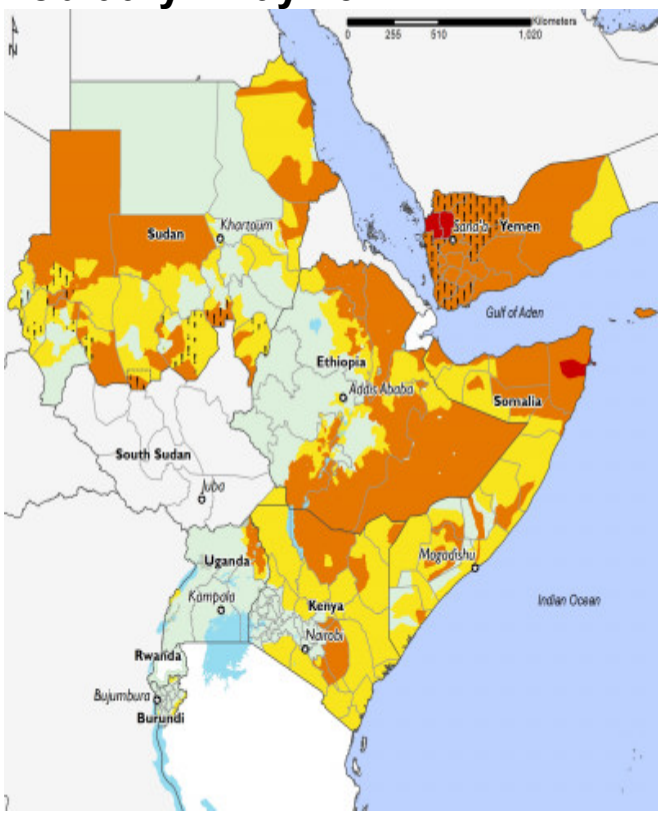
Key Message Update

Conflict, economic, and weather shocks drive elevated food assistance needs in 2021

December 2020 - January 2021



February - May 2021



IPC v3.0 Acute Food Insecurity Phase

Presence countries:

- 1: Minimal
- 2: Stressed
- 3: Crisis
- 4: Emergency
- 5: Famine
- National Parks/Reserves

Remote monitoring countries:

- 1: Minimal
- 2: Stressed

3+: Crisis or higher

Would likely be at least one phase worse without current or programmed humanitarian assistance

Not mapped

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.

January 2021

Key Messages:

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes are expected through at least May 2021 across much of the region, attributed to conflict and displacement, long-term macroeconomic challenges, the economic impacts of COVID-19, multiple weather shocks, and the ongoing desert locust upsurge. The areas of greatest concern include Yemen, Jonglei (inclusive of Greater Pibor Administrative Area) and the Warrap-Lakes region of South Sudan, the Tigray region of Ethiopia, and cyclone-affected areas in northeastern Somalia. South Sudan and Yemen remain among the worst food insecurity emergencies globally.

Conflict continues to be one of the primary drivers of food insecurity in Yemen, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, and conflict is also a contributing factor to food insecurity in Sudan and Somalia. In addition to the loss of life, the impacts of conflict include new and protracted population displacement, loss of livelihood assets and/or disrupted access to livelihood activities, and limited access to markets and humanitarian food assistance. Since the outbreak of conflict in early November between federal and regional forces in Tigray of Ethiopia, nearly 54,000 people were displaced to Sudan as of late December, and additional displacement is likely within Tigray and to bordering areas of Amhara and Afar.

Food security usually improves seasonally during the October-January period due to local harvests in unimodal areas and the start of agricultural activities during the second rainfall season in bimodal areas. However, food availability and access remain below normal and are contributing to atypically high food assistance needs in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. Rainfall has been erratic, and local harvests are either below the five-year average or insufficient to cover national demand. Meanwhile, food import levels in Yemen have significantly declined compared to the preceding months. Yemen imported just over 100,000 MT of food in November compared to the January-October monthly average of 450,000 MT.

Various macroeconomic factors – such as further local currency depreciation, foreign exchange deficits, and high inflation rates – have pushed staple food prices well above the five-year averages in several countries. In December, the retail price of sorghum was 700 percent above average in Sudan, 200 percent above average in South Sudan, and nearly 20 percent above average in southern Somalia. In Ethiopia, wheat prices reached 85 percent above average, while in Burundi, bean prices reached 30 percent above average. Further, fuel prices were 400 percent above average in Sudan.

In bimodal areas of the eastern Horn of Africa, the October to December 2020 rainfall season was widely below average. The rainfall season is critical for crop and livestock production in southern and southeastern Ethiopia, northern and eastern Kenya, and most of Somalia. Below-average rainfall led to the rapid depletion of rangeland resources, though unseasonably heavy rainfall in Kenya and Ethiopia in late December and early January somewhat moderated the impacts on livestock migration in pastoral areas. Late-planted crops face substantial water stress and are unlikely to reach maturity, resulting in broadly below-average harvests in January/February. Further, the desert locust upsurge is causing damage to crops and rangeland in southern and southeastern Ethiopia, northern Kenya, Somalia, and western Yemen.

A second consecutive season of below-average rainfall is most likely during the March to May 2021 rainfall season in the eastern Horn of Africa based on waning La Niña conditions. The timing of desert locust breeding and the rainfall season is also projected to accelerate desert locusts' maturation in February and March. A consecutive season of below-average rainfall coupled with widespread desert locust infestation will likely result in another below-average crop and livestock production season, which would reduce agricultural labor income, substantially restrict food and milk consumption, and increase resource-based conflict. An increase in the population in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) is likely, and food assistance needs in the eastern Horn will likely reach an annual peak during the June to September 2021 dry season.

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https://fews.net/east-africa/key-message-update/january-2021
