MADAGASCAR Food Security Outlook December 2019

An early start to the 2019 cyclonic season brings atypically heavy rainfall to Western Madagascar

KEY MESSAGES

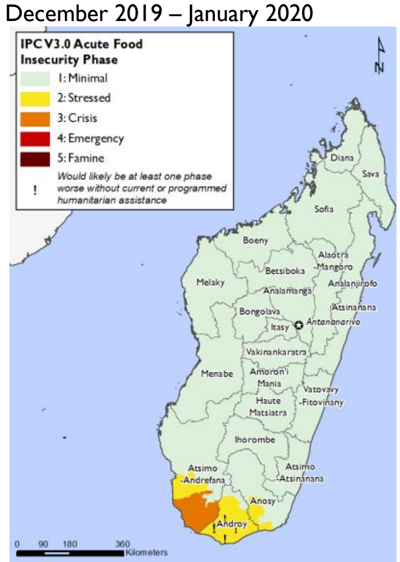
- Cyclone Belna hit Madagascar's west coast on December 10th, flooding Soalala District. Many homes, schools, hospitals, and other social infrastructure were damaged, and 1,400 people are temporarily displaced. The cyclone continued south along the western coast of Madagascar but weakened and did not cause further significant damage.

- Cassava and sweet potato stocks have started to deplete in sooouthern Madagascar leading to slight prices increases as food is less available in markets. Nevertheless, household market dependence has not significantly changed and as a result, sales of productive assets and of animals have stabilized.

- Mango production increased this year in the west, where they are cash crops sold to big cities like Antananarivo, and in the South where they are consumed as a main meal.

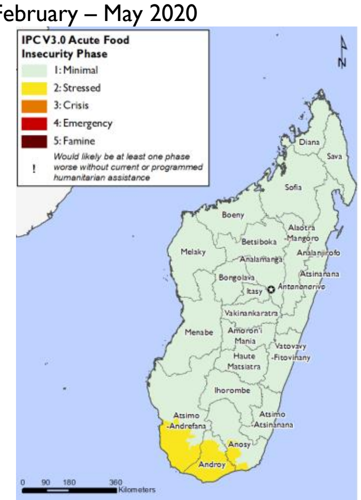
- The lean season has begun in some of Madagascar's most vulnerable areas. Households in the Mahafaly Plain: Cassava, Goats and Cattle (MG 23) and in Androy Semi-Arid Cassava, Maize and Livestock (MG 24) are experiencing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and will stay in this situation for the coming months expect in Ampanihy where Crisis (IPC Phase 3) persists, and in Beloha where households are currently facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) with the presence of humanitarian assistance. Other households throughout Madagascar are experiencing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity.

Projected food security outcomes, December 2019 – January 2020



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, February – May 2020



Source: *FEWS NET*

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CURRENT SITUATION

Since the start of the rainy season in November, rain has continued to fall throughout Madagascar. Areas in the south that started the season with below-average cumulative rainfall, are now near normal following the passage of Cyclone Belna.

The maize harvest has started in Vakinakaratra region, and green maize is currently being sold at markets. Production is estimated to be higher than last year because more area was planted. Rice development is in its early stages, and area planted for rice has also increased compared to last year and is near 5-year average.

Despite the 2018/2019 increase in domestic rice production, 169,000 MT of rice were imported since the beginning of the 2019/2020 marketing year, which is similar to the amount imported in 2018/2019, but 60 percent above the 5-year average.

Prices of staple foods like maize and sweet potatoes have started to increase in many markets, particularly in the south, due to the start of the lean season in December. Dried cassava prices also increased by 25 percent compared to October in Beloha and

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Betioky which will limit poor households' access to food as their stocks from their own production start to deplete. Overall, prices of both imported and locally produced rice remain stable. Prices of both rice and tubers are below the 5-year average due to improved supplies this year. Since food prices remain lower than last year at the same time, it is expected that food access will likely be better this year than last year during the lean season.

The most recent Système d'Information sur la Sécurité Alimentaire et la Vulnérabilité (SISAV) bulletin, number 43, in October, reported that labor wages were on average MGA 4,100 in the Extreme South - an increase of 30 percent compared to last year at the same period and of 5 percent compared to previous months. This increase is the result of a higher demand due to the increase in planted fields, particularly for tubers, thanks to near normal rainfall.

According to the World Bank Economic Update for Madagascar in October 2019, in recent years, vanilla has continued to be Madagascar's most lucrative export, supported by exceptionally high prices and robust demand in recent years. Both export quantities and unit prices, however, shrank in the first half of 2019. Despite vanilla being a key source of foreign exchange and income for Madagascar, gains are accruing to intermediaries and exporters, rather than to smallholders. Litchi is another important export cash crop that provides income to smallholder farmers and laborers along the eastern coast of Madagascar during its harvest period from Novembers to December. On average, Madagascar produces around 100,000 MT of litchis and exports around 17,000 MT each year. In 2019, while production increased due to favorable rainfall, the quantity exported decreased by 5 percent compared to last year because many fruits did not meet the size required for export.

According to USGS, the normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) anomalies show that the vegetation in Extreme South Madagascar remains near normal. Nevertheless, the situation has started to deteriorate in northern Amboasary, Bekily and Betioky where there is concern that if rainfall doesn't continue normally, that agriculture and pastureland could be negatively affected. Livestock are generally in good health with normal body conditions and livestock prices are generally 30 percent higher than last year. As of mid-December, cattle are being sold for between MGA 600,000 MGA in Beloha and MGA 1,000,000 in Tsihombe per head on average. Prices of small ruminants remain stable. With the increase in cattle prices, *dahalo*, zebu thieves, have started to appear again in Ambovombe and Tsihombe.

The results of exhaustive screenings by the Nutrition Cluster during the third quarter of 2019 indicate that the nutritional situation in 6 districts of Southern Madagascar have remained stable compared to the same period last year. Like in 2018, the situation in Betioky, Beloha, Tsihombe, Ambovombe, Amboasary and Taolagnaro is under control with a proxy-GAM below 10 percent while the situation in Ampanihy stayed at emergency with a proxy-GAM above 15 percent. The situation in the district of Bekily passed from "under control" in 2018 to "in alert" in 2019 with a proxy-GAM between 10 and 15 percent due to decreased access to safe water and the spread of waterborne diseases. Meanwhile, the number of admissions to the Centre de Récupération et d'Education Nutritionnelle Ambulatoire Severe (CRENAS) is below 200 children per month in the districts that are "under control" and shows only two peaks of 400 children in Bekily in March and September, while there were more than 1,000 children in Ampanihy in April and August 2019.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is distributing sorghum as part of an emergency program funded by USAID in Beloha which will last for 5 months. CRS has also recently started a new project named MAHARO under FFP/USAID funding, to help prevent food insecurity and acute malnutrition. The project aims to reach more than 55,880 poor households over 5 years, and is focused in 20 communes of Beloha and Tsihombe districts and in Ampanihy.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The current situation has not affected most of the assumptions used to develop FEWS NET's most likely scenario for the period of December 2019 to May 2020. However, the following assumptions have been updated:

- **2019/2020 rainy season progress:** The National Meteorological Department of Madagascar forecasts average to slightly below-average rainfall in the southern half of Madagascar between December 2019 and February 2020. Rainfall will likely be average to slightly above-average in the eastern, central and western areas of the country; and above average in northern regions. Between December 2019 and March 2020, there is an increased likelihood of a near average number of cyclones strikes in Madagascar. According to forecasts from the Madagascar Meteorology Department, one or two cyclones may directly strike the western side of Madagascar.

- **Livestock prices:** In southern Madagascar livestock prices will likely start to decrease in January when more sales will be observed, particularly for small ruminants. Nevertheless, it will likely remain higher than last year and the 5-year average.

- **Rice imports:** Imports of rice are expected to stabilize between 30,000 to 40,000 MT per month during the next few months of the lean season because large quantities were already imported in recent months. In total, rice imports will likely be around 400,000 MT in the 2019/2020 marketing year, which will be similar to the 2018/2019 marketing year but 10 percent above the 5-year average to compensate for the 2019 maize production deficit.

- **Staple food stocks and prices:** Following normal seasonality, food prices will continue to increase through February 2020, and then will likely decrease again in March when the first harvests begin. However, prices will likely remain 15 percent above the 5-year average due to continuing general inflation. Prices of dried cassava and maize in Ampanihy will likely stabilize near to or above the 5-year average throughout the outlook period. The absence of maize and dried cassava in Ambovombe will likely persist until the next maize harvest in April and March 2020.

- **Wild food consumption**: Mango production increased this year and will play a greater role in poor and very poor households' diets. Mangoes are mainly eaten to complement meals as a desert, a snack, or a juice in surplus producing areas, while it is consumed as a main meal in vulnerable areas like the South. Very poor and poor households in Southern Madagascar will consume more wild foods like wild squashes between January and March 2020. Between February and May consumption of yellow cactus fruit will increase as it becomes available and as households' stocks of staple foods continue to deplete.

- **Labor demand and income**: Local labor opportunities will stabilize from December 2019 to January 2020 due to the cereal sowing and tuber weeding, then will increase from February to May 2020 during the peanut cropping and cereal harvesting period. Generally, labor wages will likely follow the normal seasonality but remain above average due to the higher demand.

- **Nutrition in Southern Madagascar:** In January and February, acute malnutrition will likely increase due to less availability of food and more access to unsafe water following rains. However, most of the districts currently "under control" will remain as they are; and Bekily will likely remain in an "alert situation" (proxy-MAG between 10 and 15 percent) as well as Ampanihy in "Emergency" (proxy-GAM above 15 percent) because of the vulnerability of the population to food insecurity and the poor coverage of support programs.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MAY 2020

In the **Extreme south: cassava, maize, and livestock rearing livelihood zone (MG 24)**, food insecurity is expected to deteriorate as stocks deplete. Food is mostly purchased at markets. but household market dependence is near normal. Although prices will likely seasonally increase, they are expected to remain lower than this period last year. Availability of food at markets is decreasing but livestock holdings are stable. Livestock market prices are stable and above the 5-year average. As a result of this, and in addition to humanitarian assistance that is happening in Beloha, there are minimal gaps in food consumption and households in the South are in **Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity from December 2019 to January 2020**. With the upcoming harvests expected in the zone beginning around March 2020, household food access will be stable, and poor and very poor households will continue to face **Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from February to May 2020**.

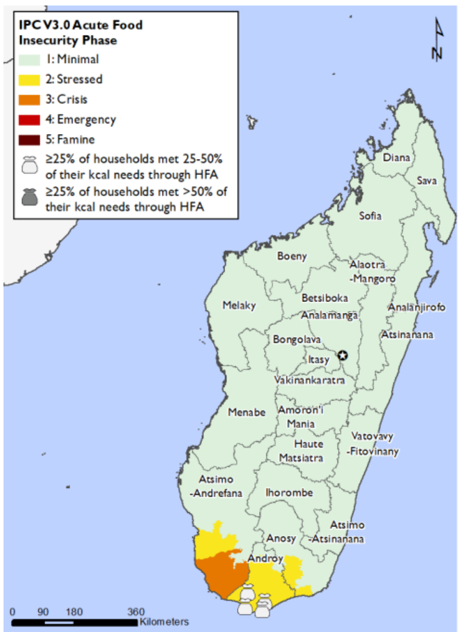
In the **Southwest: cassava and small ruminants (MG 23)**, food insecurity has also deteriorated compared to previous months due to the lean season. More consumption of mangoes has been observed, and food availability has decreased at markets. The situation remains more severe in Ampanihy because of the persistence of the emergency nutritional situation and higher food prices. Therefore, the very poor and poor households in the area are currently experiencing **Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity,** except in Ampanihy where households will face **Crisis (IPC Phase 3)** between December 2019 and January 2020. From February onwards, food consumption will improve in the zone as some maize harvests are expected to begin around March. There will likely be little to no Fresh cassava and sweet potatoes will also start to be eaten in April. Humanitarian assistance during this period, and poor and very poor households will face **Stressed (IPC Phase 2) between February and May 2020.**

Local stresses have been identified in Southeastern Madagascar due to above average food prices, but with no major impacts on food security. Therefore, **households throughout Madagascar** will remain in **Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity from December 2019 through May 2020** outside the areas of concerns.

MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES AND AREAS RECEIVING SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE*

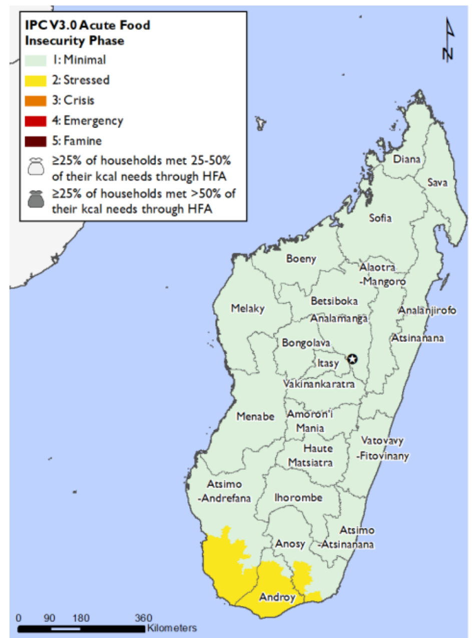
Each of these maps adheres to IPC v3.0 humanitarian assistance mapping protocols and flags where significant levels of humanitarian assistance are being/are expected to be provided. indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average 25–50 percent of caloric needs from humanitarian food assistance (HFA). indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average over 50 percent of caloric needs through HFA. This mapping protocol differs from the (!) protocol used in the maps at the top of the report. The use of (!) indicates areas that would likely be at least one phase worse in the absence of current or programmed humanitarian assistance.

Projected food security outcomes, December 2019 to January 2020



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2020



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ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

To project food security outcomes, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes these assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to arrive at a most likely scenario for the coming eight months. Learn more here.