Food insecurity increases in regions affected by flooding and conflict

KEY MESSAGES

- Households who suffered flood-related crop losses last year (July to October) are currently experiencing below-average food stock levels and will become market dependent approximately two to three months earlier than normal in March/April. This has further been compounded by below-average levels of dry season activities, which has reduced incomes from both crop sales and labor activities. In flood-affected areas, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity will be observed from now through June 2013.

- Conflict relating to Boko Haram has intensified in the north, particularly in Borno and Yobe states, and has disrupted agricultural, market, and trade activities. Households in Borno and Yobe states are currently Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and are expected decline into Crisis (IPC Phase 3) between April and June 2013.

CURRENT SITUATION

- **Flood-affected households:** A field assessment to Kogi, Kwara, and Benue states in late March found that households displaced by flooding last year have now generally returned to their homes and are in the process of rebuilding their livelihoods. However due to flood-related losses to crops and other income sources, many are still dependent on food and nonfood assistance from friends and family, the government, and/or NGOs. While some households are engaging in dry season activities (ex. irrigated agriculture and fishing), flood-related damage to infrastructure, such as irrigation systems and fishing dams, has caused dry season activities to be less productive than usual. As a result, households have not been able to offset their income and crop production losses incurred during last season’s floods.

- **Conflict in the north:** Conflict relating to Boko Haram is continuing in northern areas, with Borno, Yobe, and Kano states being worst affected. This has resulted in substantial population displacements and below-average 2012/13 harvests. Security measures (e.g., curfews, bans on motorcycle taxis, and roadside security checkpoints) have also reduced population movements and have increased transportation costs. This, along with concerns by traders and residents about their safety at markets, has restricted food stocks, trade flows, and market functioning.

- **Staple food prices:** Food prices are generally following normal seasonal trends although they remain relatively high compared to last year and the five-year average. The 2012/13 national production levels for cassava and yams were...
down approximately three and eight percent, respectively, compared to average due to flood-related crop losses. As a result, tuber prices at this time are particularly high. The price of garri, an important food product in southern Nigeria derived from cassava tubers, has increased by about 72 percent on Bodija market in Oyo state compared to the same time last year. On the Makurdi market in Benue state, yam prices have increased by about 50 percent within the same period. Prices for cereals, such as millet, sorghum, and maize, have also increased by about 12 to 75 percent on the Ilorin, Makurdi and Lokoja markets (located in flood-affected areas) compared to last year as market supply is tightening and demand is above average due to households depleting their food stocks earlier than normal this year.

- **Industrial demand for maize**: During a normal year, industrial demand for maize from Nigeria’s poultry and feed milling industries makes up an important share of total demand for maize within the country. However in Ibadan, Oyo state - the major poultry production area of the country - poultry production has been estimated to be down about 40 percent compared to last year. This is due to several factors including below-average poultry demand from northern, conflict-affected areas, reduced access to farm credit, and high maize prices. This has caused industrial demand for maize to be lower than normal and has helped moderate price increases for this commodity.

- **Institutional procurements**: The government is in the process of purchasing about 50,000 tons of food commodities, including millet, sorghum, maize, paddy rice, garri, and cowpea, from surplus production areas to restock its national food security reserves. While the quantity of these institutional purchases is about 50 percent lower than in a normal year, these purchases are relatively late in the season as the government normally makes these purchases between December and February. As a result, institutional procurements may contribute to localized food price increases.

- **Imported rice levy**: In February, the Nigerian government raised its levy on rice imports from 40 percent to 110 percent, with the purpose of boosting domestic production and encouraging local rice consumption. This, coupled with last season’s flood-related losses to rice crops, has caused imported rice prices to increase by about 47 and 67 percent compared to last month and last year at this time, respectively, on the Ilorin market in Kwara state.

- **Current food insecurity**: In most areas of the country, households are relying on their own crop production and normal livelihood strategies to meet food and nonfood needs and are facing Minimal/None (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity. However, conflict and flood-affected households are becoming market dependent two to three months earlier than normal. Atypically high prices at many markets are also restricting household food access. As a result, poor households in conflict and flood-affected areas are only able to meet their basic food and nonfood needs through atypical coping strategies (ex. unsustainable sales of small ruminants, increased labor migration) and are currently facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity.

**UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS**

The current situation has not affected the assumptions used to develop FEWS NET’s most likely scenario for the period of January to June 2013. A full discussion of the scenario is available in the [January to June 2013 Food Security Outlook](#).

**PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH JUNE 2013**

- In most areas of the country, households will continue to rely on normal livelihood strategies to meet consumption needs and will continue to face Minimal/None (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity between April to June 2013.

- In conflict affected areas of Borno and Yobe states, household food stocks will generally be exhausted between April and June, causing households to be market dependent earlier than normal. In addition, high food prices will limit food access through market purchases. As the conflict has been ongoing for over a year, households face a reduced ability to cope. At least twenty percent of the population will resort to an accelerated rate of livestock, farmland, and farm tool sales to marginally meet food needs, and will face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity between April and June 2013.

- Due to significant crop losses in flood-affected areas, household food stocks are below average and will generally be depleted during the April to June period. This, coupled with high food prices, will restrict household food access. Households will be able to minimally meet their food needs but will be unable to meet essential nonfood needs without using atypical coping strategies, such as intense labor work, increased remittance levels, indebtedness, substituting to less preferred foods, and above-normal levels of small ruminant sales. Between April and June, households will face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity.