

Stressed food insecurity in Karamoja; bimodal rains begin in other areas

KEY MESSAGES

- Land preparation and planting activities are ongoing with the timely onset of the rains in mid-March in bimodal areas of Uganda. These rains are also improving livestock body conditions. Household and market food stocks are currently average, food prices are stable, and poor households are accessing food normally. Minimal/None (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity will continue in bimodal areas through at least June 2013.
- Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected to continue through at least June 2013 in the Karamoja region due to the effects of last season's below-average harvests. In Karamoja, poor households are experiencing minimally adequate food consumption levels and are currently engaging in irreversible coping strategies to meet food and nonfood needs.

CURRENT SITUATION

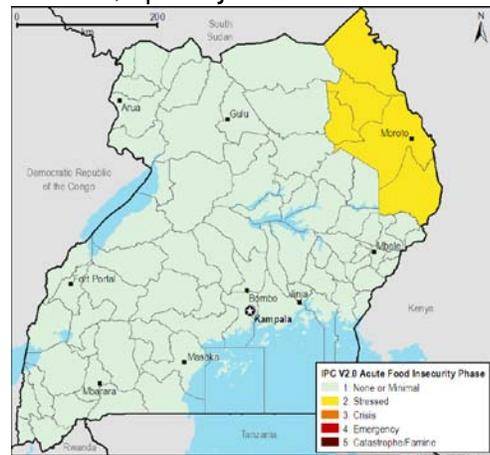
- **Food stocks in bimodal areas:** The second season harvests (November to January) replenished household and market stocks to normal levels in bimodal areas. Poor households will depend on their own production for most of April to May, as usual, before becoming temporarily market dependant until the next harvests begin in June.
- **Start of first rainy season:** In most bimodal areas of the country, the first rainy season started normally around mid-March although unseasonably early showers have fallen since early January. The rainy season is expected to continue until mid-May with a peak in late April. In the unimodal areas of the country (Karamoja), the rainy season is expected to begin in early April.
- **Agricultural activities:** Although some farmers planted their crops before the start of the rains, the majority of farmers are active in planting activities at this time. The main crops for this season are maize, beans, and root crops (sweet potatoes and cassava). Harvests are expected to occur normally in June and July.
- **Favorable livestock outcomes:** The unseasonably early rains received during the past two and a half months have tempered the normal decline in pasture and water resources that generally occurs during the December to February dry season. As a result, livestock have sustained relatively normal body conditions. Due to the recent dry season, milk production is still low although livestock production outcomes are expected to improve in the next several months as the first rains replenish pastoral resources.
- **Normal market functioning:** No abnormalities have been noted with regards to the movement of staple commodities from surplus to deficit areas. Normal cross border trade with Kenya has resumed now that the Kenyan presidential elections have passed. Market food stocks were replenished during the recent second season harvests and have been

Figure 1. Current food security outcomes, March 2013



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Projected food security outcomes, April to June 2013



Source: FEWS NET

These maps represent *acute* food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making, and do not necessarily reflect *chronic* food insecurity.

supplemented by the ongoing harvests of alternative staple crops, such as sweet potatoes, cassava, yams, and bananas.

Staple food prices: February food prices followed normal seasonal trends and enabled poor households to access food normally on the market. Compared to last month, February prices declined for bananas and sorghum (-7 to -27 percent), were stable for cassava chips and maize, and rose for beans (8 to 17 percent). However compared to both last year's levels and the five-year average, market prices for most staple commodities had increased. The only exception is the price of matoke, which has declined 11 to 39 percent compared to the five-year average depending on the market.

- **Low household food stocks for the Karamoja poor:** The pastoral and agropastoral Karamoja regions experienced below-average crop production during last season's harvests (August/September). This poor production was caused by wet weather conditions, waterlogging, and a fungal disease outbreak on sorghum (the main staple crop). As a result, household food stocks were insufficiently replenished and incomes from crop sales were below normal. This has also caused the lean season to begin two to three months earlier than normal (December/January compared to March during a normal year). To meet household food and nonfood needs, atypical coping strategies, such as selling additional livestock assets and reducing the number of meals consumed, are currently being employed by households.
- **Non crop incomes for Karamoja poor:** Charcoal and firewood sales continue to be an important source of income this month. In addition, the timely onset of rains in early April will increase opportunities for casual labor (ex. land preparation, planting, and weeding activities). Food assistance to the most vulnerable households, as well as cash for work (CFW) and food for work (FFW) programs by the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAFII) and implemented by the World Food Program and other partners, is ongoing.

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 bimodal areas of Uganda, most households will continue to meet both their food and nonfood needs through normal livelihood activities and are not expected to engage in any atypical coping strategies through the rest of outlook period. While food prices will slowly begin to increase as household food stocks deplete, no market shocks are anticipated and these prices will be in line with normal seasonal trends. As a result, households will face Minimal/None (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity through June 2013 (Figures 1 and 2).

While the start of the rainy season in early April will create agricultural labor opportunities, increase milk production, and improve wild food availability, these income and food sources are not expected to offset the effects of last season's below average harvests. In addition, terms of trade for sorghum to livestock and sorghum to charcoal/firewood are expected to deteriorate as food prices in the Karamoja region begin to rise amidst above-average market demand and deteriorating road condition during the rainy season. According to the FAO Karamoja food security assessment conducted in November 2012, very poor households in the central agro-pastoral areas of Napak and Kaabong are expected to suffer food deficits of up to 41 and 34 percent, respectively. At least 20 percent of households in the Karamoja region are experiencing minimally adequate food consumption levels and are unable to afford some essential nonfood expenditure without engaging in atypical coping strategies (selling additional animals and above-average consumption of wild food products). As a result, households in this region will face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity from March to June 2013.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This Food Security Outlook Update is a monthly report on current conditions and changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in Uganda. It updates FEWS NET's Food Security Outlook, an in-depth quarterly report that uses scenario development to forecast outcomes over a six-month period. These reports and details on methodology are available at www.fews.net