



Food and Agriculture  
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World Food  
Programme

# Hunger Hotspots

FAO-WFP early warnings  
on acute food insecurity

March to July 2021 outlook



Global Network  
Against Food Crises

Integrated  
actions for  
lasting solutions

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# Acronyms

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<b>CARI</b>	Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security
<b>CH</b>	<i>Cadre Harmonisé</i>
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>EVD</b>	Ebola virus disease
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FEWS NET</b>	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
<b>FSNAU</b>	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GRFC</b>	Global Report on Food Crises
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced persons
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IPC</b>	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NSAG</b>	Non-state armed group
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>RRP</b>	Regional Response Plan
<b>SOFI</b>	The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHAS</b>	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

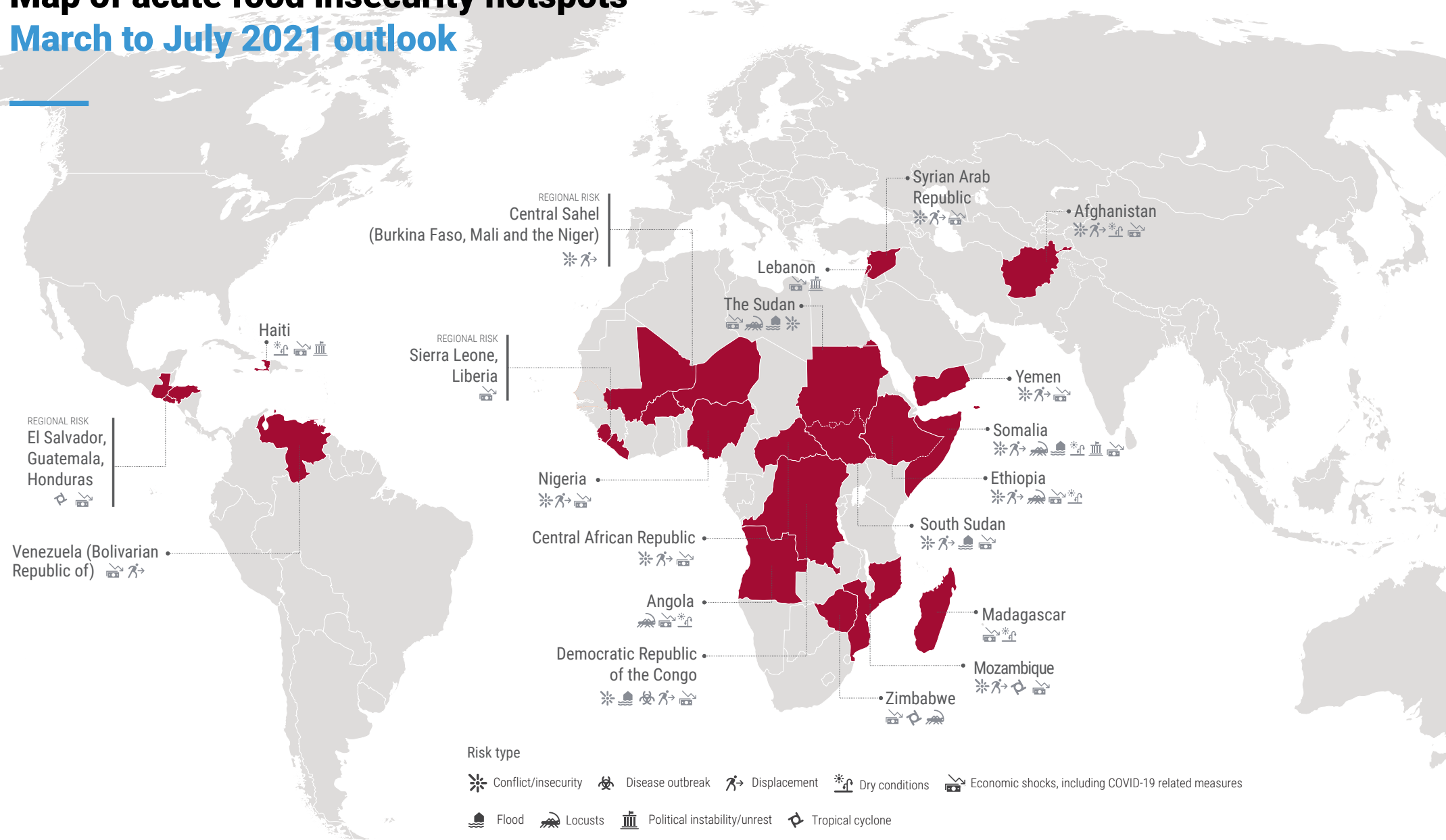
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# Map of acute food insecurity hotspots

## March to July 2021 outlook



Source: FAO and WFP, March 2021. Map conforms to United Nations World map, October 2020.

# Executive Summary



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The FAO-WFP Hunger Hotspots report is a forward-looking, early-warning analysis of countries and situations, called hotspots, where acute food insecurity is likely to deteriorate over the coming months. These hotspots are identified through a consensus-based analysis of key drivers of food insecurity, and their likely combination and evolution across countries and regions.

Looking at the outlook period of March–July 2021, there are 20 countries and situations where there is a likelihood of further deterioration in acute food insecurity, due to multiple drivers of hunger that are interlinked or mutually reinforcing. These are primarily conflict dynamics, economic shocks, the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, weather extremes and the diffusion of plant pests and animal diseases.

A specific group of hotspots – Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Nigeria, the Sudan, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and Zimbabwe – are particularly concerning due to the scale, severity and trends of the existing food crises. In some areas of these countries, parts of the population are experiencing a critical hunger situation, with extreme depletion of livelihoods,

insufficient food consumption and high acute malnutrition. In such fragile contexts, any further shocks could push a significant number of people over the brink and into destitution and even starvation.

Yemen, South Sudan and northern Nigeria in particular are countries with the highest alert for the outlook period, because of a combination of factors resulting in a risk of famine or – in the case of South Sudan's Jonglei state – the likelihood of famine already occurring. These factors include high percentages of the population living in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity, heavy constraints to humanitarian access, and a likelihood of worsening food insecurity levels due to conflict, economic blows and climate shocks. Urgent and at-scale targeted humanitarian action is needed to prevent hunger or death in these most at-risk situations and to safeguard the most vulnerable communities.

The report provides country-specific recommendations on priorities for emergency response, as well as anticipatory action to address existing humanitarian needs and ensure short-term protective interventions before new needs materialize. These actions are strongly recommended to save lives, protect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations and prevent further human suffering.



# Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are issuing an early warning for urgent humanitarian action in 20 countries and situations – called “hotspots” – where parts of the populations are likely to face a fast deterioration of high acute food insecurity\* that will put their lives and livelihoods at risk.

Identified through forward-looking analysis, the hotspots have potential for acute food insecurity to rise in the outlook period March–July 2021, under the effects of one or multiple drivers, often interlinked or mutually reinforcing. These are chiefly economic shocks and the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, weather extremes, conflict dynamics, diffusion of plant pests and animal diseases. Targeted humanitarian action is needed to prevent hunger or death in these most at-risk situations and to safeguard the most vulnerable communities. To this end, the report also provides country-specific recommendations on priorities for: 1) anticipatory action, meaning short-term protective interventions to be implemented before new humanitarian needs materialize; and 2) emergency response, meaning actions to address existing humanitarian needs.

Already in 2019, 135 million people were facing a food Crisis or worse (Phase 3 or above of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC] or *Cadre Harmonisé* [CH]) in 55 countries and territories. An additional 183 million were classified in Stress conditions (IPC/ CH Phase 2) across 47 countries, with a risk of further deterioration.<sup>1</sup> This was largely a result of conflict and insecurity, weather extremes, economic shocks or a combination of these. While the next Global Report on Food Crises will be launched in April 2021 by the Global Network Against Food Crises, a significant increase in the numbers of people in acute food insecurity is evident through new IPC analyses or similar analytical processes in countries where the IPC/CH analyses have not been undertaken, with 174 million people in IPC Phase 3 or worse in the 58 countries covered. Of absolute urgent and imminent concern today are more than 34 million people in IPC Phase 4 across the world who already face emergency levels of acute food insecurity. These deteriorating trends were again caused by conflict and insecurity, weather extremes, economic shocks or a combination of these, compounded by the effects of COVID-19.

\*High food insecurity refers to acute food insecurity at crisis or worse levels (IPC phases 3 and above)

Given a strict set of methodological parameters, the hotspot countries were selected through a consensus-based process, which involved WFP and FAO Rome-based and field-based teams. The parameters used in the forward-looking analysis included:

- assessed levels of recent or current food insecurity and malnutrition, with a focus on high acute food insecurity and deterioration in comparison to the previous year;
- assessed projections of acute food insecurity for the outlook period, based on analysis of:
  - a. primary and secondary drivers: economic shocks, adverse climate conditions and weather shocks, conflict and insecurity, political instability, diffusion of plant pests and animal diseases; and
  - b. the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. This includes direct impacts, such as those caused by border closures, travel restrictions, limits to mobility; and indirect impacts caused by decline in global demand, reduced foreign direct investments, aid and remittances, and current indebtedness levels, among others;
- presence of natural hazards, economic and conflict risks that are likely to drive up food insecurity levels even further, by having a direct impact on food insecurity (such as unforeseen climatic shocks destroying crops) or an indirect one (for example, increased internal displacement limiting people's access to food);
- absolute numbers of people projected to be highly acute food insecure and the prevalence of high acute food insecurity on the overall analysed population;
- macro-economic stability and percentage of food imports on total food requirements;
- planned and ongoing agricultural activities during the March–July period, and existing or likely disruptions caused by COVID-19-related restrictions; and
- presence of operational and humanitarian access constraints.



The main sources of data on acute food insecurity (current and projections) are the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification and the *Cadre Harmonisé*. For countries where IPC/CH analyses were not conducted and where no recent analyses were available, estimates of the number of people in acute food insecurity were primarily derived from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) IPC-compatible analysis; WFP assessments using the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security, or CARI; and from humanitarian needs overviews.<sup>2</sup> WFP's open-access Hunger Map actual data on insufficient food consumption was used to inform trend analysis, and as a triangulation tool during the assessment phase.

Some countries and situations of high concern could not be comparatively assessed, for reasons including unavailability of food

insecurity data, comparable projections or food insecurity trends, for example in Myanmar and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The report is divided into two sections: an overview of upcoming trends in the 20 hotspots, including countries of highest concern, and an analysis of the dynamics at play in the hotspots. The latter includes a list of country- or context-specific "anticipatory action and emergency response recommendations" that should be urgently implemented to mitigate or prevent the further deterioration of acute food insecurity.

The cut-off date for the analysis contained in this report is 28 February 2021.

This report is part of a series of analytical products produced under the Global Network Against Food Crises initiative, to enhance and coordinate the generation and sharing of evidence-based information and analysis for preventing and addressing food crises. In April 2021, the Global Network, in collaboration with the Food Security Information Network, will release the 2021 Global Report on Food Crises; this will provide further information on global acute food-insecurity figures in 2020. It will be available at [www.fightfoodcrises.net](http://www.fightfoodcrises.net) and [fsinplatform.org](http://fsinplatform.org).

## IPC/CH acute food insecurity phase description and response objectives

PHASE	TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY RESPONSE OBJECTIVE
<b>1 None/Minimal</b>	Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income	Resilience building and disaster risk reduction.
<b>2 Stressed</b>	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.	Disaster risk reduction and protection of livelihoods.
<b>3 Crisis</b>	Households either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; OR</li> <li>Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.</li> </ul>	<b>URGENT ACTION REQUIRED</b> to protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps.
<b>4 Emergency</b>	Households either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; OR</li> <li>Are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.</li> </ul>	<b>URGENT ACTION REQUIRED</b> to save lives and livelihoods.
<b>5 Catastrophe/ Famine*</b>	Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. (For Famine classification, area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality)	<b>URGENT ACTION REQUIRED</b> to revert/prevent widespread death and total collapse of livelihoods.

\* Households can be in IPC Phase 5 Catastrophe even if areas are not classified as IPC Phase 5 Famine. In order for an area to be classified Famine, at least 20 percent of households should be in IPC Phase 5.

The classification of areas in Famine Likely is permitted when all I IPC protocols for Famine classification are met, except for the existence of reliable evidence for all three outcomes – food consumption or livelihood change, global acute malnutrition (GAM), and crude death rate (CDR). Areas can be classified as Famine Likely if minimally adequate evidence available indicates that a Famine may be occurring or will occur. Famine and Famine Likely are equally severe, the only difference is the amount of reliable evidence available to support the statement.



## Upcoming trends of food insecurity drivers

To identify hotspots, FAO and WFP have assessed how key drivers of food insecurity are likely to evolve and combine across countries in the coming months. Below is an overview of key findings:

### Conflict risks

**Conflict or other forms of armed violence are likely to increase in parts of Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Central Sahel, Ethiopia, northern Nigeria, northern Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan.** In these contexts, violence will aggravate food insecurity through different pathways – such as new displacements, disruption of trade and cropping, population movements, confinement of communities, abandonment of agricultural land, and loss of life and assets – while also affecting access to humanitarian assistance.

In **Afghanistan**, one of the deadliest conflicts in the world, uncertainty about the withdrawal of foreign military forces, scheduled for May 2021, poses a major risk of further escalation of violence that will drive up displacement. The recent conflict in Tigray region in **Ethiopia** is likely to have wider repercussions on long-standing fault lines in other parts of the country and might lead to ethnic and intercommunal violence, especially in the run-up to the June elections. In the **Sudan**, potential for new intercommunal clashes across Darfur is high. In **South Sudan**, subnational conflict will probably intensify, in addition to fighting between opposition and splinter groups and non-signatories to the 2018 peace deal.

The crisis engulfing the **Central Sahel** will continue worsening, with high displacement levels and abandonment of agricultural lands triggered by violent insurgencies and counter-insurgencies. An expanding revolt and intercommunal strife in **Nigeria** are likely to continue driving multiple displacements and destroying livelihoods. In the northern province of Cabo Delgado in **Mozambique**, violence is expected to intensify again after the rainy season; this will lead to increased displacement and damage to agricultural production.

Following the election-related crisis in the **Central African Republic**, violence is likely to be protracted while further tensions may arise around upcoming legislative elections. In addition to new displacements, violence is affecting the markets as blockages of supply routes result in price hikes. Violence and major political instability are likely amid deadlocked electoral preparation and potentially contested electoral results in **Somalia**.

Protracted conflict in the **eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo** is unlikely to reduce amid renewed military operations, intercommunal tensions and a fragmented security environment. In **Yemen**, conflict is likely to persist on existing frontlines affecting further agricultural and livestock production and trade, while new escalations may happen in some other areas, including the capital. In **the Syrian Arab Republic**, conflict has

become static and more localized; for the coming months it is expected to affect mainly northeastern provinces.

### Economic risks

As a result of the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021 the economies of numerous countries will continue to be highly vulnerable to economic shocks. Decreased revenues from remittances, commodity exports, tourism and industrial production have been accompanied by ballooning expenditures aimed at supporting population groups whose incomes have been disrupted by movement restrictions and the near-total shutdown of vital economic sectors such as tourism. As a result, while several economies are expected to reach pre-crisis levels of output only in 2022,<sup>3</sup> debt levels have been increasing steadily and significantly throughout 2020 and are likely to grow further in 2021. In many cases, the debt accumulated over the past year has compounded high pre-existing sovereign and external debt levels, increasing the chance for many countries to default in absence of a strong economic recovery and support by international investors and donors.<sup>4</sup> The economic downturn has been particularly pronounced in economies characterized by high levels of informality in the labour market, and especially in countries that were already facing conflict, political and/or socio-economic crisis before the onset of the pandemic, and were therefore lacking crucial buffers to cushion its socio-economic impact. As a result of the slow recovery, 2021 is expected to see a continued loss of working hours worldwide in comparison to the last quarter of 2019, estimated at approximately – 3 percent (equivalent to 90 million jobs).<sup>5</sup>

In the Middle East and North Africa, countries that were already facing significant conflict and/or socio-economic crises at the end of 2019, such as **Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon**, are expected to see further economic deterioration driven by rapid currency depreciation and skyrocketing inflation.

In Latin America, the pandemic was preceded by a protracted period of stagnating growth and increasing debt levels. As a result, the region has been the most affected worldwide in terms of economic output decline, and is expected to see the slowest recovery in the coming years according to the IMF.<sup>6</sup> Those countries already struggling with political instability, protracted socio-economic issues, climate shocks and high poverty levels, such as Haiti, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), and the Central American republics of Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, are those poised to show the strongest economic deterioration.

Additionally, in **several African countries** such as the Sudan, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and Liberia, elevated levels of currency depreciation and food inflation continue to reduce people's purchasing power. Coupled with recent climatic shocks in some of these countries, which significantly depressed agricultural production, there is a considerable risk that with the likely reduction in domestic food supply, food inflation may worsen in the coming months.

## Natural hazard risks

Weather and climate extremes driven by the ongoing **La Niña event**, expected to continue through April/May 2021, are likely to affect several parts of the world.

In **Afghanistan**, poor rainfall has affected most parts of the country since November 2020 and continues to be forecast, threatening rainfed wheat-crop production. Water availability for spring and summer crops could also be limited due to reduced snowmelt in some basins.

In **South Sudan**, above-average rainfall is expected, with an increased likelihood for flooding in some areas.

Latest seasonal climate forecasts indicate mixed signals for average and potential below-average rainfall for the upcoming March to May rainy seasons in northern Ethiopia, southern Somalia and eastern Kenya. In northern parts of **Ethiopia**, following high crop losses due to desert locusts and climatic shocks, crop production and pastures are likely to be further affected by below-average rainfall expected from March to May. In **Somalia**, the *Gu* season (April to June) is expected to see below-average rains in southern and northwestern areas, likely leading to consecutive crop losses and reduced yields. Somalia already experienced erratic rains during the 2020 *Deyr* season (October to December), which resulted in below-average harvests in some areas. This is compounded by the devastating impact of Cyclone Gati, and desert locusts, which continue to threaten agricultural livelihoods.

**Madagascar** is currently facing severe drought in southern and central regions. The forecast is for continued below-average rainfall until the end of the season, likely leading to harvest losses. In addition, northern and eastern regions of Madagascar will continue to be threatened by the ongoing cyclone season in the southwestern Indian Ocean, which is at its peak until the end of March.

Southwestern provinces of **Angola** have been facing drought-like conditions since the start of the rainy season in October 2020, and below-average rainfall is expected to continue until the end of the season, leading to potential crop losses.

In **Haiti**, poor previous harvests, due to climate shocks and Hurricane Laura, could be further aggravated by potential below-average rainfall for the upcoming first rainy season from April to June. In **Central America**, the double impact of hurricanes Eta and Iota in the fourth quarter of 2020 have significantly affected vulnerable livelihoods.

## Transboundary threats

The desert locust situation in **East Africa** and on the **Red Sea Coast** remains of concern, and should be monitored closely in the coming months. In Southern Africa, more specifically in parts of **Angola**, **Botswana**, **Namibia**, **Zambia** and **Zimbabwe**, a serious outbreak of the African migratory locust poses a serious threat to summer cropping.

## Humanitarian access constraints

Overall, humanitarian access constraints continue to be a prominent aggravating factor for acute food insecurity, hampering crisis-affected

populations' access to much-needed humanitarian assistance. As of December 2020, access continues to be extremely challenging in **Yemen**, as a result of conflict and insecurity, bureaucratic impediments, and COVID-19 restrictions. People in need living in hard-to-reach areas increased to 19 million in August 2020 while new frontlines have been established around Marib and Al Jawf governorates, affecting access to these areas. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the availability of and access to basic services provided by humanitarian organisations remain limited. The delivery of humanitarian aid continues to be hindered by restrictions and checkpoints. Violence targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure is reported countrywide. Humanitarian organisations face multiple bureaucratic and logistical constraints. Constraints remain very high in parts of Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), while Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Honduras, Lebanon, Mozambique, the Niger and the Sudan are experiencing high constraints.<sup>7</sup>

## Countries of highest concern

This report flags 20 hotspots worldwide at risk of further deterioration in food security. A specific group of hotspots, however, is particularly concerning due to the scale, severity and trends of the existing food crises. In such fragile contexts, any further shocks could push a significant number of people over the brink and into destitution and starvation.

This section provides a brief overview of such hotspots, to bring attention to these most critical situations. These emergencies require ongoing – and in some cases increased – access to the most vulnerable populations, together with urgent and at-scale humanitarian assistance to save lives and livelihoods.

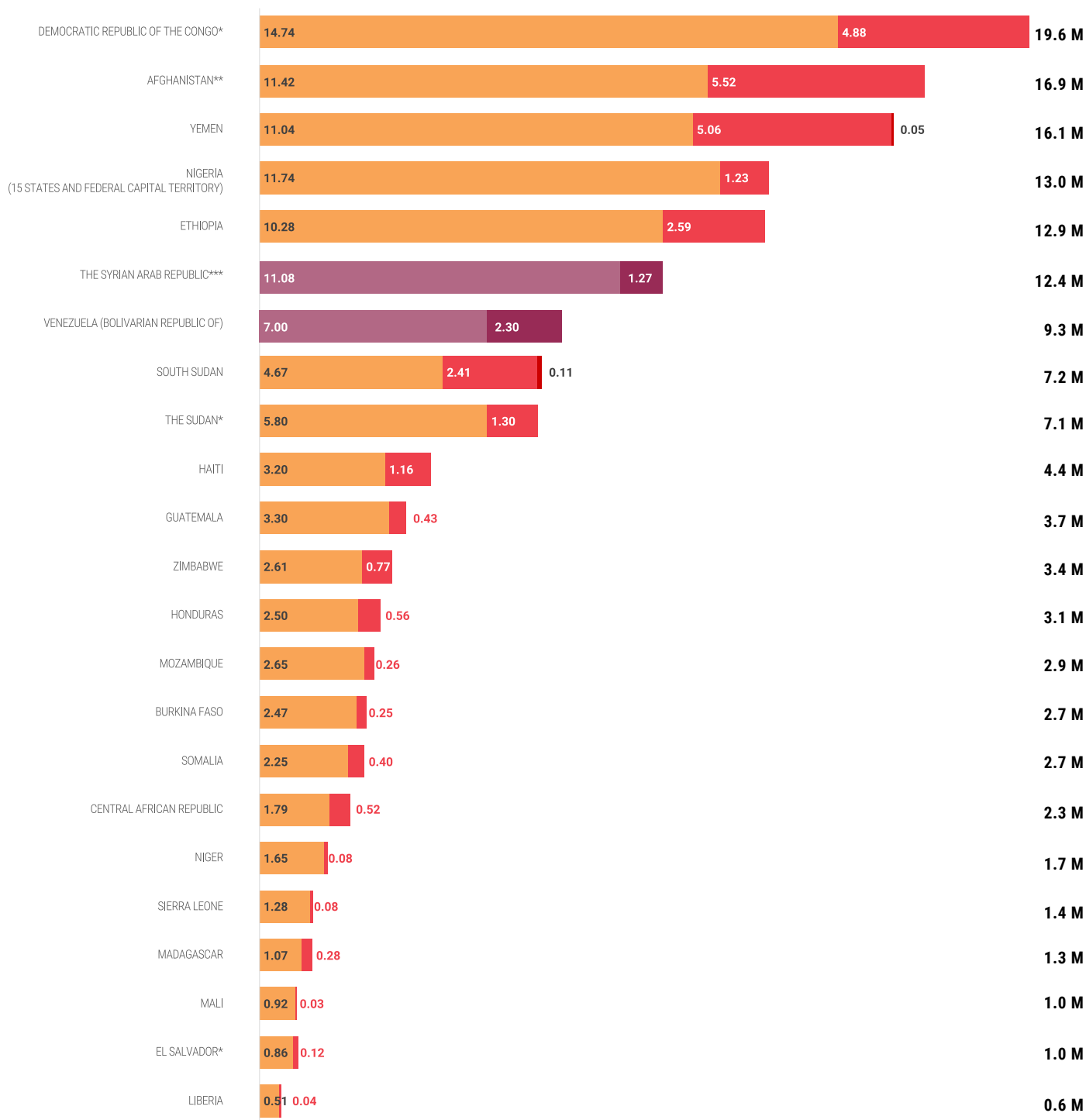
### Countries with catastrophic situations: famine-like conditions or factors leading to a risk of famine

Last October, FAO and WFP raised the highest alert for urgent humanitarian action in Burkina Faso, northern Nigeria, Yemen and South Sudan, to save lives, protect livelihoods and avoid further deterioration of extremely critical conditions.

Back then, the FAO-WFP hunger hotspot report warned that specific areas in these four countries – Jonglei State in South Sudan, Al Jawaf, Marib, Amran and Al Mahwit governorates in Yemen, Soum and Oudalan provinces of Burkina Faso, and parts of Borno State in northeast Nigeria – were facing a combination of factors: high percentages of the population living in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) conditions of food insecurity, heavy constraints to humanitarian access, and a likelihood of worsening food insecurity levels due to conflict, economic blows and climate shocks. The report warned that any further deterioration in these factors could lead to an elevated risk of famine.

# Number of people in high acute food insecurity in hotspot countries

In 2021, in millions



- IPC/CH PHASE 3
- IPC/CH PHASE 4
- IPC/CH PHASE 5
- MODERATELY FOOD INSECURE PEOPLE (WFP CARI SCALE\*\*\*\*)
- SEVERELY FOOD INSECURE PEOPLE (WFP CARI SCALE\*\*\*\*)

The data presented is from 2021 except for the Syrian Arab Republic and the Sudan (2020) and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (2019).

\*Most current data reported is non-peak. Peak numbers are presented in the graph on page 13.

\*\* Data from IPC projection based on Flowminder population

\*\*\*The 12.4 million include also 1.7 million people residing in camps which are considered highly food insecure and in need of full support according to the Whole of Syria Food Security Sector.

\*\*\*\*The Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) is used to classify individual households according to their level of food insecurity. All indicators included within the CARI approach can be incorporated within IPC analysis. The IPC technical manual provides guidance on where each indicator sits within the IPC analytical framework. For details see <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/data-analysis/quantitative/food-security/cari-the-consolidated-approach-for-reporting-indicators-of-food-security>.



**Yemen, South Sudan and Nigeria remain countries with the highest alert for the outlook period. For Burkina Faso, the alert level has slightly lowered but remains very concerning.**

Since the last warning, populations in some areas of **South Sudan** have slid into Catastrophe levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 5). More specifically, in parts of Jonglei State of South Sudan, urgent at-scale action is now needed to stop likely widespread starvation and death, as well as a complete collapse of agricultural livelihood strategies and assets.

Famine was most likely happening already between October and November last year and is projected to continue through the next lean season (July 2021) in Gumuruk, Pibor, Lekuangle and Verteth administrative divisions (*payams*) of Pibor county, in Jonglei State. This is according to the conclusions of the Famine Review Committee, which classified these areas in Famine Likely (IPC Phase 5).<sup>8</sup> Two other *payams* of Pibor (Kizongora and Marow) are at risk of famine if conflict reaches levels similar to 2020 and humanitarian access is disrupted. Evidence indicates extremely high food-consumption gaps, severely depleted livelihoods and extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition, which will continue and most likely deteriorate due to further violence, high food prices, climatic shocks and exacerbated humanitarian access constraints.

Overall in South Sudan, the population in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) is projected to reach 7.2 million people during the April to July lean season, up by approximately 700 000 compared to the same period last year. This includes 2.4 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 108 000 people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) conditions.

In Al Jawf, Amran and Hajjah governorates of **Yemen**, urgent action is needed to avoid further deterioration and destitution. The number of people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) is estimated to triple by June 2021, increasing from the 16 000 identified in the October–December IPC analysis to more than 47 000. As populations are already highly vulnerable, malnutrition is severe, displacement is rising, and as the economic situation is further deteriorating, including as a result of the effects of the severe fuel crisis, the risk of famine in Yemen is increasing. Overall, the number of people expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity is projected to increase by nearly 3 million, reaching a total of 16.2 million people (or 54 percent of the analyzed population), including an increase to 5 million in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). Food insecurity is particularly concerning in areas with fighting and with limited humanitarian access, and is particularly affecting internally displaced people (IDPs) and marginalized groups.

Continuing violence, deteriorating economic conditions and severe humanitarian disruptions are likely to persist over the coming months, causing displacement and further exhaustion of coping capacities. At the time of analysis, the acute food insecurity projection assumes a reduction of humanitarian food assistance – currently targeting 13.5 million beneficiaries per month – by 50 percent in January to June, because of an unfavourable funding outlook. Any further reductions and/or other shocks could lead to further deterioration, including additional people falling into Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5).

In the conflict-affected areas of northern **Nigeria**, the situation is extremely concerning given the marked deterioration of food security conditions despite the recent harvest.

Projections for the upcoming lean season (June–August 2021) portray a further marked deterioration with people in emergency acute food insecurity (CH Phase 4) likely to almost double, rising to over 1.2 million\* compared to over 669 000 people estimated in June to August 2020. The majority of people with critical food insecurity are in Borno State, as a result of heavy humanitarian access constraints and ongoing conflict. Here, the localities of Abadam, Dikwa, Guzamala, Kukawa and Marte, as well as other only-partially accessible garrison towns, remain of extreme concern. Should the situation deteriorate further, these areas may be at risk of famine.

Overall, in the next six months, northern Nigeria is expected to face a marked deterioration of food security and nutrition, due to conflict and economic factors, aggravated by the secondary effects of COVID-19; 13 million people are projected to be in high acute food insecurity (CH Phase 3 and 4) between June and August 2021, if food assistance and livelihood support are not scaled up. This would represent a further increase on the 9.2 million people estimated in November 2020. This is particularly concerning given that the October to December period is post-harvest, and there should usually be a considerable improvement in the overall food security situation.

In **Burkina Faso**, the alert level is slightly lowered for the outlook period. This is the result of a marginal improvement in food security, following a good performance of the main agricultural season last year. Additionally, since October, food assistance has been delivered to remote and previously inaccessible areas where pockets of households were facing Catastrophe levels of food insecurity (CH Phase 5) according to the CH analysis of June 2020, with the support and renewed efforts of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS). The situation, however, remains very concerning and requires close monitoring, since the violent insurgencies and counter-insurgencies are likely to continue to create insecurity, increased displacement and food insecurity, as well as access issues.

The November 2020 CH projections indicate that 2.7 million people will face high acute food insecurity (CH Phase 3 and 4) between June and August 2021, including over 250 000 people in Emergency (CH Phase 4), in particular in the province of Soum. Overall, Burkina Faso has experienced a sharp deterioration in food security over recent years, with people in high acute food insecurity (CH Phase 3 and above) increasing fourfold in one year, from around 700 000 people in the 2019 lean season to 3.3 million in the 2020 lean season.

In addition to this, contrary to developments early this year in the West Africa region,<sup>9</sup> the projection assumptions of the CH November 2020 analysis did not consider a second wave of COVID-19 as likely. Potential new lockdown measures could impact food security across the region.

In both Nigeria and Burkina Faso, the forthcoming release of the updated CH analysis, in late March 2021, will provide further information on the evolution of the risks, as well as on agricultural and food security prospects.

\*The *Cadre Harmonisé* analysis covered 15 out of 36 federal states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT): Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba and Yobe.

## Other countries of highest concern

Among the hotspot countries, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic are of absolute urgent and imminent concern, as they have large numbers of people or prevalence of people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). Further intensification of conflict, deepening economic crises and weather extremes, combined with varied restrictions to humanitarian access, are likely to further aggravate critical food insecurity levels in the next six months. In these countries, life-threatening conditions are expected to escalate further. Households are experiencing critical hunger, with extreme depletion of livelihoods, insufficient food consumption and high acute malnutrition. Excess deaths due to hunger are taking place. In these countries, households are resorting to emergency coping strategies and selling their assets in order to secure adequate access to food.

In **Afghanistan**, 2.2 million additional people moved into critical levels of acute food insecurity in one year, resulting in 5.5 million expected to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) as of March 2021. Escalating conflict, a weak economic environment and dry conditions for key harvests are expected to continue increasing food insecurity and reducing access to humanitarian aid.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, currently the country with the highest estimated number of food-insecure people worldwide, nearly 5 million are projected to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of acute food insecurity between January and June 2021. This reflects a combination of multiple shocks, including violence, natural hazards, epidemics, economic decline and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

In **Ethiopia**, the conflict in Tigray is further aggravating worrisome food security projections that estimate about 2.6 million to be facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels between January and June 2021. This results from a combination of conflict, macro-economic challenges, weather extremes and desert locusts.

Deteriorating macro-economic conditions, compounded by rising socio-political unrest and potential below-average rainfall leading to poor agricultural harvest are likely to drive increased food insecurity in **Haiti**, where 1.2 million people are expected to face Emergency (IPC Phase 4) between March and June 2021.

In the **Sudan**, a deteriorating economic crisis – compounded by the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 – has resulted in exceptionally high food prices. Along with a potential uptick in intercommunal clashes, these factors are expected to continue driving high levels of acute food insecurity in the country where 1.3 million people were already estimated to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) from October to December 2020.

In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the economy has been rapidly deteriorating in 2020 due to multiple shocks including mass population displacement, damage to infrastructure and services and a shortage of foreign-exchange reserves. This led to a rise in the number of food insecure people to 12.4 million, including 1.3 million severely food insecure. Among the 12.4 million, there are also 1.7 million people residing in camps, who are considered highly food insecure.

In addition, in the **Central African Republic**, **Honduras** and **Zimbabwe**, there are over half a million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

### Explanatory note

Famine is the most severe type of hunger, and accordingly, it is the most extreme phase of the IPC scale. As per the IPC definition, famine occurs in areas where: “at least one in five households has or is most likely to have an extreme deprivation of food. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition are or will likely be evident. Significant mortality, directly attributable to outright starvation or to the interaction of malnutrition and disease, is occurring or will be occurring.”<sup>10</sup> As such, famine classification and projections are subject to a rigorous technical process at country level which is validated by an external Famine Review Committee led by international food security and nutrition experts.

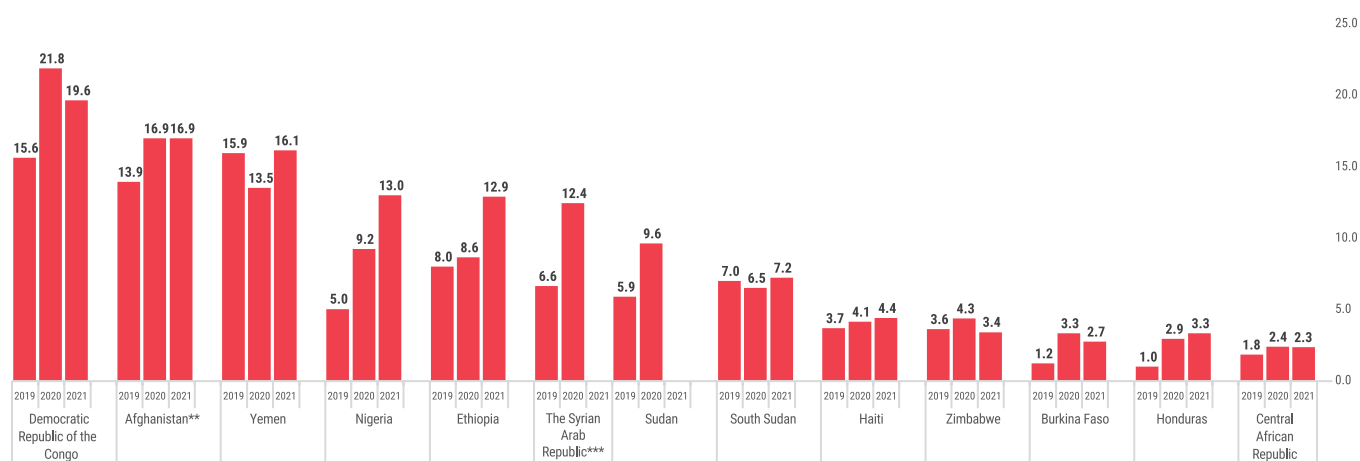
**The information contained in this section should therefore not be interpreted as a statement that famines are imminent in these countries.** The purpose of this section is to highlight those situations where specific factors are contributing to a risk of famine should certain conditions persist.

It is important to note that talking about the risk of famine does not mean that famine is the most *likely* scenario in these contexts but that it is a *possible* outcome. Given the severity of these situations, an understanding of the key drivers and how they may deteriorate over the forthcoming period provides critical early warning information which can support a scale-up of monitoring efforts as well as advocacy and interventions to curb further deterioration. Within the framework of the IPC, work has been initiated to define technical parameters and processes to better identify countries and areas facing a risk of famine.

At this early stage, the following context-specific parameters are tentatively being considered, among others, to work towards the identification of contexts facing a risk of famine: prevalence of IPC Phase 4 in the population, constraints to humanitarian access and co-presence of compounding shocks to food security.

## High acute food insecurity trends in the hotspots of highest concern

2019-2021\* peak numbers in millions



\*Data for 2021 is considered as expected peak based on information available as of February 2021. For Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, no peak data is yet available for 2021.

\*\* Data for IPC projection based on Flowminder population.

\*\*\*Data derived using WFP CARI methodology.

Disclaimer: Comparison over time indicates a general trend however comparability issues exist in terms of (i) geographical/population coverage for Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Honduras, and Sudan and in terms of (ii) analysis time periods for the Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Nigeria, Yemen and Zimbabwe. Caution in reading and using this analysis should be observed.





# Country Overviews

## Asia and the Pacific

### Afghanistan

**Key drivers of food insecurity: escalating conflict, a weak economic environment and dry conditions compromising key harvests.**

A staggering 17 million people, or nearly half of the population, are estimated to already be in Crisis levels or worse of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above), and that number is expected to continue rising. Violence, which is already high, is likely to get worse, too, amidst uncertainty over the scheduled withdrawal of foreign forces in May.<sup>11</sup> Conflict is likely to surge around urban centres and along supply routes, causing further displacement and disrupting livelihoods. In addition, most parts of the country have experienced poor rainfall since November 2020. Forecasts indicate the situation will continue until May, driven by ongoing La Niña conditions. Low rainfall and snowpack, alongside above-average temperatures, are expected to threaten the winter wheat crop and limit water availability for spring and summer crops.

Reduced agricultural production constrains farmers' incomes and reduces livelihood opportunities for casual agricultural labour, often

the main source of employment in rural areas and for returnees. Drier conditions can constrain pasture availability for livestock farmers who, given the high cost of feed, are more likely to sell their animals. A continuation of high food prices and the loss of remittances is likely to further impact food access,<sup>12 13</sup> reducing the coping capacity of vulnerable households.

As a result of these multiple drivers, already-worsening acute food insecurity trends are likely to continue beyond March 2021 and may surpass the 17 million people that were estimated to face high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) between November 2020 and March 2021.<sup>14</sup> That number was up by 3 million compared to the same period a year before.<sup>15</sup> Notably, 2.2 million additional people moved into critical levels in one year, resulting in 5.5 million people in Emergency conditions (IPC Phase 4).<sup>16</sup> Escalating conflict is expected to further increase already very high humanitarian access constraints.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Anticipatory actions

- Advise farmers on supporting wheat crop growth, plant protection measures and maintaining livestock body conditions.
- Distribute drought-tolerant wheat seeds and short-cycle crops by March/April, for the spring/summer planting season and winter wheat crop protection packages and alternative cropping kits in the northern provinces.
- Distribute livestock protection kits with veterinary support in areas where pastures are at risk of being depleted due to drought, especially targeting vulnerable Kuchi herders.
- Increase unconditional cash transfers as a short-term income boost for meeting emergency food, nutrition and other basic needs.
- Ramp up food assistance for asset creation and resilience-oriented activities, including watershed management and rehabilitation of small-scale water harvesting and irrigation infrastructure.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Emergency response

- The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) calls for USD 553.9 million for food security and livelihoods, and USD 72 million for nutrition interventions.
- Advocate for immediate resources – and access – to deliver emergency food and livelihood assistance to people in IPC Phase 4, including people not yet covered by food assistance programmes. Emergency food assistance is required through the first six months of 2021 to cover extreme gaps in food consumption through the lean season.
  - Advocate for and diversify supply corridors, mitigating over-reliance on existing corridors with Pakistan to avoid operational delays.
  - Increase coverage for prevention and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition in La Niña 'hotspot' areas, as part of an integrated package of health, nutrition, and water and sanitation services.

#### OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Continue monitoring weather and crop conditions to project likely impact on winter and spring crop production, as well as market price for key food commodities. The next IPC exercise will start in March 2021.

# Latin America and the Caribbean

## El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras

### Key drivers of food insecurity: impact of hurricanes Eta and Iota, and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

Acute food insecurity is expected to rise due to the double impact of hurricanes Eta and Iota and the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Large cropland areas reported damage as a result of the hurricanes, as did the productive, livestock and fisheries sectors, alongside transport infrastructure. Resulting diminished supplies and transport disruptions spurred an increase in food prices. With the lean season pending (March to August), households lost food reserves at a critical time. At the same time, disruptions caused by COVID-19-related restrictions reduced employment, especially in the informal sector, with income losses and less access to food.<sup>17</sup> The recent increase in COVID-19 cases in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras will further delay an economic recovery.<sup>18 19</sup>

The situation in **Honduras**, currently at nationwide Crisis level (IPC Phase 3), is projected to worsen between April and June 2021: about 3.1 million people are expected to face high acute food insecurity, including almost 570 000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).<sup>20 21</sup> The Sula Valley, which previously generated around two-thirds of GDP, has been among the hardest-hit regions.<sup>22</sup> The impact of the hurricanes further damaged a fragile economy already weakened by the secondary effects of the pandemic. Movement restrictions resulted in an 8-percent GDP contraction in 2020,<sup>23</sup> increasing unemployment mostly in the informal sector, which is estimated to account for 75.6 percent of non-agricultural employment.<sup>24</sup>

In **Guatemala**, in contrast to projections in the October 2020 analysis, seven of the departments most affected by the hurricanes

are expected to change to a higher phase of acute food insecurity between November 2020 and March 2021. They are expected to move from Stressed (IPC Phase 2) to Crisis (IPC Phase 3), with a total of 3.7 million people projected to be in high acute food insecurity, including 428 000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).<sup>25,26</sup> This would represent a year-on-year increase of 8 percentage points in the total acute food insecurity figures. The hurricanes' impact on the food supply exacerbated the negative effects of COVID-19. By the end of 2020, food inflation had risen 8.6 percent year-on-year as a result of disruptions caused by the pandemic, with the price of beans increasing by 19.3 percent.<sup>27</sup>

In **El Salvador**, about 1 million people are expected to face high acute food insecurity between March and May 2021, including 121 000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). The worst affected are those who depend on agricultural and livestock activities, work in the informal sector or own small businesses. These groups have experienced income losses due to COVID-19-related mobility and transport restrictions.<sup>28</sup> In 2020, El Salvador was among the hardest-hit economies in Central America. According to the World Bank, the country's GDP is estimated to have contracted by 8.7 percent in 2020. Economic growth is expected to be 4.9 percent in 2021.<sup>29</sup> In **Nicaragua**, damages and losses caused by hurricanes were estimated at more than USD 742 million (6.2 percent of GDP), with about 3 million people exposed. These were mainly from the indigenous territories, where artisanal fishing, forestry and agriculture were significantly impacted. Agricultural production reported serious damage to around 100 000 hectares of cropland.<sup>30</sup>

Action should target especially areas affected by compounding shocks and natural hazards in 2020, including rural northeast Nicaragua, the Caribbean basin and western areas of Honduras, northern and eastern Guatemala, and western and eastern El Salvador.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Anticipatory actions

- Where feasible, link cash- (or food-) based transfers to activities focused on land preparation and the establishment and maintenance of water-harvesting structures ahead of the 2021 *primera* planting season.
- Put in place timely anticipatory actions to safeguard assets and enable production, including:
  - distribute seeds and agricultural inputs to the most vulnerable at-risk farmers (especially in areas affected by hurricane Eta & Iota) ahead of the *primera* planting season; and
  - support animal health vaccination/treatment and animal nutrition support to vulnerable livestock owners – and consider if timely destocking is appropriate.
- Implement communication strategies to recommend livelihood protection measures in communities when early warnings show floods and/or droughts are expected to impact crops and livestock.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Emergency response

- Urgently complete post-hurricane livelihoods assessment to determine medium-term impacts of hurricanes Eta and Iota on populations. Within analysis, better understand migration dynamics.
- Advocate for urgent resources to scale up cash-based (or in-kind) support to the most vulnerable households through the *primera* harvest in September 2021; create concrete opportunities to support national-led responses, including meeting needs in the targeted areas and period through, for example, support for the procurement of food and nutritious products for national social systems.

## Haiti

**Key drivers of food insecurity:** deteriorating macroeconomic conditions, compounded by rising socio-political unrest and potential below-average rainfall leading to poor harvest

Food access and availability are expected to deteriorate in Haiti in the coming months, driven by a combination of economic decline – aggravated by the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions – poor harvest of past agricultural seasons and potential new crop losses in the event of further below-average rainfall during the first rainy season between April and June, which remains a moderate risk

Additionally, growing socio-political instability, with protests likely to intensify over the coming months, may aggravate economic slowdown through blockades and disruptions.<sup>31</sup> The deterioration of economic indicators, in particular the renewed depreciation trend of local currency after sudden appreciation in autumn 2020, combined with increasing inflation, is reducing incomes and purchasing power among the most vulnerable.<sup>32</sup>

While October 2020 saw a relatively large drop in the value of the food basket compared to August levels, prices regained an upward trend

from November, with foodstuffs such as rice, black beans, corn and cooking oil increasing to levels above the five-year average.<sup>33</sup> The poor performance of past agricultural seasons, due to climate shocks such as Hurricane Laura, and the sustained increase in inflation rates and the weaker currency, are hampering access to agricultural inputs for the upcoming spring season. The effects of COVID-19 restrictions are further compounding the situation, as they are hampering the movement of agricultural workers and the transportation of goods and inputs. The interplay of these factors is likely to drive increased food insecurity.

Around 4.4 million people – representing 46 percent of the population analyzed – are expected to face high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) between March and June 2021, including 1.2 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).<sup>34</sup> This represents an increase of 6 percentage points in people classified in IPC Phase 3 and above, in comparison to the same time last year.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Anticipatory actions

- Implement time-sensitive actions to support the main maize, rice and sorghum production campaign, and protect assets including:
- install or rehabilitate water-harvesting structures ahead of the rainy season (April to June and August to December), supported by cash-for-work schemes where suitable;
  - provide drought-tolerant seeds and short-cycle crops ahead of the planting season, targeting the most food-insecure farmers; and
  - scale up animal disease surveillance and distribute veterinary supplies to prevent drought-induced diseases.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Emergency response

- The 2021 HRP calls for: USD 156 million for food security and livelihoods and USD 5.2 million for nutrition interventions.
- Advocate for resources to ensure humanitarian access amidst an increasingly unstable and insecure operating environment, including enhancing the capacity for security risk management, and sustaining the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (for which no funding has been secured after March 2021).
  - Immediately scale up food and livelihood assistance coverage for people in Phase 4 food insecurity, in particular in rural areas of Ouest, Nord-Ouest and Sud-Este, as well as in urban pockets of vulnerability including Port-au-Prince. Scale up nutrition-sensitive programmes alongside emergency assistance, targeting nutritionally at-risk groups in vulnerable areas.

### OTHER KEY ACTIONS

Strengthen targeted monitoring and research. This includes monitoring market price fluctuations to inform real-time adjustments to cash-based assistance over the coming six months and strengthened research on urban security dynamics (including gangs) and social cohesion.

## Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

**Key drivers of food insecurity:** continuous economic deterioration and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19

The food security situation in **Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)** is likely to deteriorate further as a result of hyperinflation and the tightening of international sanctions. This is compounded by the impact of COVID-19-related restrictions and fuel shortages, which have affected logistics and agricultural activities across the country.<sup>35</sup>

Trade and financial sanctions have caused almost complete suspension of oil exports, which represent the country's main source of external revenues. Restrictions to fuel imports have led to dramatic shortages, resulting in increased energy and transportation costs, and subsequent soaring food prices.



Food inflation stood at a staggering 1 700 percent at the end of 2020,<sup>36</sup> further increased by the constant depreciation of the Venezuelan bolivar. The protracted instability of the local currency has led to a partial dollarization of the economy,<sup>37</sup> boosting disparities between those people who have access to US dollars –through remittances and/or export revenues– and the majority of people, who do not have such access. The Government is likely to continue to facilitate the economy's dollarization and the use of alternative currencies to stabilize the economy.<sup>38</sup>

The impact of sanctions and low oil prices, however, is expected to lead to further economic contraction, forecast at –10 percent in 2021,<sup>39</sup> and hyperinflation, forecast at 6 500 percent in 2021.<sup>40</sup> This will trigger a loss of income and employment, in addition to high food prices. The economic deterioration is likely to result in further migration into other countries.<sup>41 42</sup>

Food insecurity levels are expected to rise significantly beyond those of 2019, when around 9.3 million Venezuelans were food insecure, according to the WFP CARI Scale.<sup>43</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Implement cash-for-work programmes to support land preparation for the main maize and secondary rice cropping seasons, targeting agricultural workers with no other income opportunity.
- Provide agricultural inputs to vulnerable farmers with reduced purchasing power, ahead of winter rice and maize planting in April and May. Promote local production of seeds to ensure self-reliance and promote the strengthening of rural and women associations in order to diversify and accumulate financial, technical and social assets.
- Support Venezuelan migrants and host communities in bordering areas by improving access to essential needs including water, basic food and nutrition, and local food production, and by increasing income opportunities to improve food security and nutrition in view of potential new arrivals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response\***

- The HRP calls for USD 193.7 million for food security and livelihoods, and 32.7 million for nutrition interventions.
- Ensure school-age child feeding in the poorest communities nationwide, connecting with local food production in order to improve rural economies.
  - Scale up humanitarian assistance to meet the most urgent needs, which have grown significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes providing support for the implementation of the Humanitarian Response Plan and its food security and livelihoods component, funding the recently established Venezuela Humanitarian Fund and safeguarding the humanitarian space. Assistance should support both urban and rural populations, in order to prevent further food security deterioration caused by inflation, loss of purchasing power and loss of income.

\*WFP has no operational presence in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

## West Africa and the Sahel

### The Central African Republic

**Key drivers of food insecurity: displacements and disruptions to livelihoods resulting from escalated violence and COVID-19 economic impacts**

Armed violence by six non-state armed groups, starting around the December elections, is expected to continue driving displacement, affecting markets and disrupting livelihoods in the coming months. The violence is likely to be protracted, causing increased tensions around the upcoming legislative election rounds in March and May 2021. As a result of the recent unrest, over 105 300 people had fled the country as of 29 January 2021, and more than 200 000 were internally displaced. If the violence continues, an additional 200 000 IDPs and 100 000 cross-border displacements are likely. Food prices are likely to remain high, especially in the capital, with insecurity blocking key trade corridors (e.g. Douala-Bangui).

The number of people facing high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) is already likely to have surpassed the 1.9 million people (with 408 000 at IPC Phase 4) previously estimated for the period September 2020–April 2021.<sup>44</sup>

This estimate had already marked a steep increase from 1.6 million in the same period in 2019, and did not factor in the severity of the escalating violence in December. Similarly, food insecurity during the upcoming lean season (May–August) is also likely to surpass the previously projected 2.3 million in high acute food insecurity;<sup>45</sup> this will add to increased needs, driven by COVID-19 disruptions to food-stuff imports, low agricultural food production and the long-term impact of protracted conflict.

Several humanitarian operations were suspended due to security risks to humanitarian workers.<sup>46</sup> Access to populations in need will remain a serious challenge due to high insecurity, which is further complicated by a perception of UN agencies as a party to the conflict.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Provide emergency agricultural kits between April and June, including seeds (maize, paddy and sorghum) and tools, to increase the agricultural production of IDPs and host communities.
- Support livestock production through animal health interventions (vaccination and supplementary feed) between April and August, to anticipate and prevent potential spread of animal diseases ahead of transhumance. This activity should target vulnerable herders facing IPC Phases 3 and 4.
- Rehabilitate infrastructure (including water tanks, post-harvest storage, livestock infrastructure and market facilities) where possible to support the planting and harvesting seasons.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

- The HRP calls for USD 168 million for food security and livelihoods, and USD 35 million for nutrition interventions.
- Provide immediate food and livelihood assistance to support the most vulnerable, including displaced people, returnees and host families, people with special needs, poor and very poor households, and elderly people with chronic illness.
  - Advocate for unimpeded supply of essential goods from the Douala corridor to Bangui and for humanitarian access to conflict-affected provincial towns, such as Bambari, Bangassou, and Bossangoa.
  - Secure timely additional funding to continue and scale up the provision of livelihood, food and nutrition assistance to vulnerable populations in line with the CAR 2021 HRP and sustaining the essential United Nations Humanitarian Air Service.

## Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger)

**Key drivers of food insecurity: conflict and violence, along with COVID-19-related economic impacts, and climatic shocks**

Across Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, food insecurity will remain high due to interlinked factors: violent insurgencies and counter-insurgencies leading to displacement and livelihood disruptions, limited state presence, and competition over access and use of agricultural land and natural resources. In 2020, these factors have been exacerbated by the secondary impacts of COVID-19.

A five-year security deterioration across Central Sahel countries, including a higher number of violent events and linked fatalities registered in 2020 as compared to the previous year,<sup>47</sup> is likely to further worsen in the next six months. As a result, forced displacement in the three countries – which has already quadrupled in just two years, mostly concentrated in Burkina Faso – is expected to worsen in the outlook period, with negative repercussions on already-high acute food-insecurity levels.<sup>48</sup> A significant pattern is the consolidation of insurgencies that since 2019 have intensified their rivalry and are attempting to expand and consolidate their presence in Mopti and Ségou in Mali; Center-Nord, Sahel and East in Burkina Faso; and Tillabéry in the Niger. As a result, in these locations, and also in Diffa in the Niger, insecurity may further deteriorate in 2021, leading to displacement and food insecurity. Displacement levels are increasingly high and correlate closely with food insecurity: Burkina Faso counts 1.1 million displaced people, with 353 721 in Sahel and 438 557 in Center-North; in Mali, out of 295 015 people displaced, 131

150 are in Mopti; while in the Niger, out of 138 229 displaced, 82 604 are in Tillabéry.<sup>49</sup>

In the outlook period, pastoralists across Central Sahel will face domestic and cross-border mobility challenges during the peak of transhumance, due to security concerns and COVID-19-related border closures. For farmers, challenges will revolve around access to land in preparation for the agricultural season, with insecurity limiting access mostly in the tri-border area and Lake Chad basin. This may further increase tensions and competition over already limited natural resources.

According to November 2020 Cadre Harmonisé (CH) projections for June to August 2021,<sup>50</sup> the number of people in acute food insecurity remains extremely high in Burkina Faso, with 2.7 million people expected to face high acute food insecurity (CH Phase 3 and above). This includes more than 254 000 people in Emergency (CH phase 4), mainly concentrated in the regions of Sahel, Centre-Nord and East, and in the Niger with 1.7 million people in high acute food insecurity and 83 000 in Emergency, while in Mali around one million people are projected to be highly acute food insecure and around 34 000 people in Emergency.

Humanitarian access constraints remain high in Burkina Faso and the Niger, and very high in Mali.<sup>51</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Distribute agricultural inputs to IDPs and host populations to support preparatory activities for the agricultural season starting in June.
- Conduct cash-for-work activities for the rehabilitation of degraded lands and rural infrastructure during the last months of the dry season before June.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

The HRP calls for: Burkina Faso: USD 251 million for food security and livelihoods and USD 46.4 million for nutrition; Mali: USD 232.4 million for food security and livelihoods, and USD 66.2 million for nutrition; the Niger: USD 110.2 million for food security and livelihoods, and 104 million for nutrition.

- Secure timely additional funding to continue and scale up the provision of livelihood, food and nutrition assistance to vulnerable populations in line with the 2021 HRP. Promote and maintain access gains to conflict-affected Liptako-Gourma areas by strengthening coordination with key civil-military partners and supporting protection and access negotiation trainings with partners and governments.
- Support vulnerable households (displaced people, refugees and host communities) through the provision of feed and veterinary support.

## OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Work with government, humanitarian and academic partners to develop thresholds and triggers for agricultural drought and floods.

## Nigeria

### Key drivers of food insecurity: deterioration of conflict and economic decline, aggravated by COVID-19 secondary impacts

A steady deterioration that has already pushed 9.2 million people into Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity over the past two years is likely to continue. If this negative trend persists, it may lead to an increased risk of famine for areas of Borno State.

The northeast remains the key hotspot of conflict in the country: as of November 2020, 2.1 million people were internally displaced, largely in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States, as a result of the region's years-long insurgency.<sup>52</sup> Violence in the northwest and northcentral regions is extremely worrisome, with deep-rooted intercommunal strife increasing the number of people in need of food and livelihood assistance; this is now overlaid with a growing spread from the northeast of insurgent groups formerly known as Boko Haram. Vulnerable social groups – particularly children, women and elderly people – are disproportionately affected and exposed to multiple protection risks including human rights violations and abuses. Protection-sensitive livelihoods can mitigate exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as to sexual and gender-based violence.

The impact of the conflict is compounded by the detrimental economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic – driving a decline in

remittances – and low global prices for oil, which accounts for 50 percent of the country's revenue. Real GDP is not expected to return to pre-crisis levels before 2023 or 2024, while income losses and rising food prices are resulting in sharp losses in purchasing power.<sup>53 54</sup>

Across 15 states in northern Nigeria, nearly 13 million people are expected to face Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity (CH Phase 3 and above) in the next lean season (June to August 2021), up from 9.2 million between October and December 2020.<sup>55</sup> This marks a steady trend of serious deterioration, having risen from 8.7 million in mid-2020. Of the 13 million, 3.9 million are projected to be in the northeast and 5 million in the northwest, where there is little humanitarian presence.<sup>56</sup>

In coming months, people living in Emergency acute food insecurity (CH Phase 4) are likely to almost double, rising to over 1.2 million for June to August.<sup>57</sup> A total 970 000 of these are in the northeast, with 700 000 in Borno State alone, where the situation remains of extreme concern due to heavy humanitarian access constraints and ongoing conflict, particularly in the localities of Abadam, Dikwa, Guzamala, Kukawa and Marte. Should the situation deteriorate further, these areas may be at risk of famine.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Focus on providing conditional cash transfers to conflict-affected communities in the northwest and northeast, using the rapid response registry and the national social register where appropriate, to establish a predictive shock-responsive social protection mechanism.
- Provide agricultural inputs and livestock assets to the most vulnerable farming households ahead of the planting season in June.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

The HRP calls for USD 354 million for food security and livelihoods, and USD 129 million for the nutrition interventions.

- Maintain and expand humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas in the north, allowing for the scale-up of life-saving assistance.
- Reinforce supplemental nutrition assistance to women and children in the northeast and the northwest in coordination with government and existing nutrition partners.



## Sierra Leone and Liberia

### Key drivers of food insecurity: increasing food prices and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and its secondary socio-economic consequences – including increased unemployment in the informal sector and a drop in remittances – have severely compounded the ongoing economic crisis in Liberia and Sierra Leone, driving up food insecurity. Food prices in the two countries increased by over 40 percent on average in 2020, compared to the five-year average, due to rampant inflation.<sup>58</sup> This is having a major impact on food access and the food security of vulnerable households, as highlighted by the *Cadre Harmonisé* analysis. Moreover, cereal production estimates in both countries for the latest agricultural season (2020–21) are well below the five-year average, namely down by 54 percent in **Liberia** and down by 15 percent in **Sierra Leone**. These negative prospects are the result of various factors, including COVID-19-related restrictions on access to markets and people's mobility, which hindered farming activities in the early stages of the season. At the same time, inflation and increasing costs reduced the affordability of production inputs for vulnerable farmers. In Sierra Leone, below-average rains in 2020 contributed to the aforementioned reduced production prospects.

The continuously deteriorating economic crisis, coupled with secondary consequences of COVID-19 and localized impact of limited rainfall, is increasing food insecurity to alarming levels in both countries. The recent outbreak of Ebola in Guinea may further compound this fragile context, leading to future restrictions in cross-border trade and movement of people as measures are taken to prevent the spread of the disease. A total 1.4 million people in **Sierra Leone** and about 554 000 people in **Liberia** will be highly acute food insecure (CH Phase 3 and above) in June to August 2021, according to *Cadre Harmonisé* projections issued in November 2020.<sup>59</sup> These figures have risen tenfold over two years, and correspond respectively to 16 and 12 percent of the total population of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Food-insecurity projections may be revised upwards in March 2021, given the continuous rise in food prices. In the reporting period (March to July), farmers will initiate preparations for the next main agricultural seasons, though their access to production inputs may be affected by the continuously rising prices.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Anticipatory actions

- Increase access to productive inputs through the distribution of seeds and tools to the most vulnerable farmers, in preparation for the main agricultural campaign starting in April.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Emergency response

- Support access to food for the most vulnerable households affected by the economic impact of COVID-19, through voucher schemes (e.g. the rice seed-voucher scheme in Liberia).

#### OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Strengthen food assessments, risk analysis and targeting, together with government and partners.
- Strengthen cross-border disease surveillance and screening of Ebola in Guinea, while maintaining open trade and movement of people across borders.
- In Liberia, promote policies that facilitate the free movement of goods (food and agricultural inputs) across counties by supporting a platform for inter-county coordination.
- Build and rehabilitate agricultural infrastructure through cash-for-work initiatives involving vulnerable communities.

## East Africa

### Ethiopia

#### Key drivers of food insecurity: conflict, macroeconomic challenges, weather extremes and desert locusts

The conflict in Tigray is further aggravating food insecurity in Ethiopia – a country that already faced one of the largest food crises in the world. In the run-up to national elections scheduled for June and amidst continuing insecurity and significant disruptions to basic services in Tigray, there is a risk that ethnic and intercommunal violence, as well as anti-government movements, may intensify in other regions, particularly in Benishangul-Gumuz,<sup>60</sup> Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region.<sup>61 62</sup>

Growing violence is likely to increase the number of conflict-driven internally displaced people from current figures (1.1 million),<sup>63</sup> in addition to causing further displacements to Sudan, Kenya and Somalia. Significant macroeconomic challenges, including currency depreciation resulting in high inflation, exacerbated by COVID-19-induced impacts on employment and remittances, will continue to affect food access, due to declining purchasing power and rising food prices.<sup>64</sup>

This worsening macroeconomic situation will likely compound the effects of the lean season in *Belg* and *Meher*-producing areas (March to May and June to September, respectively).<sup>65</sup> Cereal production and rangeland conditions will likely be affected by forecast below-average rainfall in Afar and northern Somali regions from March to May. In addition, Ethiopia is likely to remain affected throughout 2021 by the worst desert locust upsurge in 25 years.<sup>66</sup> Between October and early December 2020, roughly half of cropping households and two-thirds of livestock-rearing households in affected areas experienced desert locust-related pasture and crop losses, with about 70 percent reporting high or very high losses.<sup>67</sup>

It is projected that 12.9 million people<sup>68</sup> face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) from January to June 2021, despite humanitarian food assistance, including about 2.6 million in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).<sup>69</sup> These projections do not include any food security and livelihoods impacts caused by recent fighting in Tigray, which means the number of people in crisis or worse may be even higher. The number estimated to require urgent humanitarian assistance in Tigray has increased to almost 3 million from a prior 950 000.<sup>70 71</sup> With conflict reported to be ongoing, very significant access challenges remain.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

Provide livestock, Cash+ packages (cash with inputs – animal feed or short-cycle, drought-tolerant seeds) and animal treatment services to pastoralist and vulnerable farmers potentially affected by the looming below-average rains during the Meher planting period starting in April and May, as well as to those potentially affected by desert locusts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

- Significantly increase humanitarian action in Tigray region.
- Strongly advocate for access of essential goods and personnel to deal with the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Restrictions and slow processes has made accessing conflict-affected populations very difficult.
- Limited confirmed donor funding is impeding the ability of actors to scale up. Immediate priorities for funding include:
  - Life-saving General Food Assistance, and Malnutrition Prevention and Treatment for pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of 5 at highest risk of deteriorating food and nutrition security.
  - Time-sensitive delivery of livelihood support including seeds and agricultural tools to meet the needs of the upcoming cropping season, which is starting in April/May.
- Provide resilience-building support, especially for communities and households affected by multiple shocks and those that have not yet recovered from recent droughts.

## Somalia

### Key drivers of food insecurity: climate hazards, desert locusts, socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and conflict

The combined effects of climate hazards, desert locusts, COVID-19 and conflict are projected to drive high levels of acute food insecurity in 2021. The October to December *Deyr* season was characterized by delayed and erratic rains, as well as below-average cumulative rainfall, which drove poor pastoral conditions and below-average harvests in many areas.<sup>72</sup> However, flooding was experienced between June and September,<sup>73</sup> and Cyclone Gati in November was the strongest storm to ever hit the country,<sup>74</sup> affecting nearly 180 000 people in Bari region. Forecasts show mixed signals for the 2021 *Gu* season, with some models indicating an increased probability of below-average rains in southern and northwestern Somalia. Additionally, desert locusts continue to threaten agricultural livelihoods, with 75 percent of affected cropping households and 70 percent of affected livestock-rearing households in Somalia experiencing high or very high losses.<sup>75</sup> Despite ongoing control operations, desert locusts are expected to continue to threaten crop production and pasture availability during the upcoming *Gu* season.<sup>76</sup>

The socio-economic effects of COVID-19 have also reduced incomes, particularly for urban populations and those receiving remittances.<sup>77</sup> Below-average incomes and above-average food prices in some markets will continue to limit food access.<sup>78</sup> A continuing dispute over the elections,<sup>79</sup> initially scheduled for January and February 2021, and potentially contested results, are likely to cause major political instability and violence.<sup>80</sup> Non-state armed groups are likely to exploit this political uncertainty, as well as the withdrawal of US troops, to increase attacks in central and southern Somalia.<sup>81</sup> Further climate shocks and escalating violence could also drive mass displacements, adding to the current 2.65 million people who have already been internally displaced.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, access constraints remain very high in central and southern parts of Somalia and could be further affected by growing insecurity.<sup>83</sup>

Up to 20 percent of the population (2.7 million people) face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity or worse between April and June, up from 1.6 million currently. This includes about 400 000 people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).<sup>84</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Provide livestock supplementary feed, Cash+ packages and animal treatment services to pastoralists potentially affected by drought.
- Provide short-cycle, drought-tolerant cereal seeds and pulses, as well as Cash+ packages, to support households already affected by floods and desert locusts, and potentially affected by below-average *Gu* rains.
- Provide farmers with vouchers for irrigation hours, to compensate for below-average rains.
- Intensify desert locust surveillance and early control operations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

- The HRP calls for USD 396.6 million for food security and livelihoods, and USD 157.5 million for nutrition interventions.
- Provide unconditional and/or conditional transfers (e.g. cash-for-work or food-for-work) that will meet the immediate food needs of affected populations while supporting the restoration of community productive assets.
  - Sustain operations and funding opportunities for food, nutrition, and livelihood assistance to meet the targets set out in the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan.

## OTHER KEY ACTIONS

Provide vulnerable households with livelihood diversification assistance (e.g. backyard poultry and kitchen gardens).

## South Sudan

### Key drivers of food insecurity: conflict, macroeconomic challenges and weather extremes

Recurrent conflict, a macroeconomic crisis and climate shocks continue to drive one of the world's most severe food crises, **with famine most likely occurring in some areas and likely to continue in the next six months**. Subnational and localized violence could intensify with the ongoing dry season (through April 2021), along with fighting between opposition and splinter groups, as well as non-signatory groups to the 2018 peace deal. Though forecast above-average rains could provide favourable conditions for crops, this also enhances the potential for a third consecutive season of severe floods and could lead to damages to crops and disruption of livelihoods.<sup>85</sup> Climate shocks and violence are likely to result in new displacements, adding to the 1.6 million people currently displaced, and further disrupting livelihoods and basic services.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, economic fragility, marked by high currency depreciation,<sup>87</sup> food inflation<sup>88</sup> and income reduction as a result of COVID 19,<sup>89</sup> has drastically diminished households' purchasing power.

During the upcoming lean season (April to July), a total of 7.2 million people (60 percent of the population) are expected to face high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above). This includes 2.4 million in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 108 000 people in Catastrophe (IPC

Phase 5).<sup>90 91</sup> In four *payams* (Gumuruk, Pibor, Lekuangle and Verteth) in western Pibor county, the Famine Review Committee concluded that famine was most likely happening in October to November 2020; it further stated that this is likely to continue until July 2021, in the absence of sustained and timely humanitarian assistance. Two other *payams* of Pibor (Kizongora and Marow) are at risk of famine in the December 2020 to July 2021 period, if conflict reaches levels similar to 2020 and disrupts humanitarian access.<sup>92</sup> Evidence indicates extremely large food consumption gaps, severely depleted livelihoods and extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition, which will continue and most likely deteriorate with further violence, high food prices and exacerbated constraints to humanitarian assistance. Additional populations in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) are projected in five other counties (Akobo, Aweil South, Tonj East, Tonj North and Tonj South) in Jonglei, Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Warrap.<sup>93</sup> The humanitarian operational space remains significantly challenged and highly restricted due to persisting insecurity and is likely to be further restricted by seasonal flooding in the outlook period.<sup>94</sup>



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Provide inputs to the most vulnerable farming households ahead of the main agricultural season starting in April, as well as fishing kits to vulnerable rural populations with access to fishing grounds, to increase food availability and income opportunities ahead of the lean season.
- Safeguard pastoralist assets through livestock vaccinations and treatments before the start of the rainy season.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

- Advocate for and negotiate humanitarian access in conflict-affected areas and unimpeded supply corridors for the movement of essential goods and personnel.
- Continue scale-up plan to provide unconditional food and cash transfers and emergency livelihood assistance to local populations, returnees and IDPs, particularly women and children in areas at risk of famine. This includes prepositioning life-saving food ahead of the rainy season in April wherever feasible and appropriate to do so. Leverage life-saving humanitarian programming in hotspots for hunger and violence, including in hard-to-reach locations, across large areas of the country, for more proactive contributions to peace.
- Reinforce supplementary nutrition assistance to women and children in areas with high malnutrition rates, in coordination with government and nutrition partners. Build and scale up integrated nutrition programming with WASH and health partners, in order to maximize benefits from nutrition assistance.

## OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Ensure transformative and sustainable programming by focusing resilience programming not only on 'pockets of stability' but also on hotspots of violence and high food insecurity. This will build the resilience of people in some of the most conflict-affected and food-insecure areas.

## Southern Africa

### Angola

#### Key drivers of food insecurity: drought conditions, economic challenges and an outbreak of locusts

Another dry cropping season in 2021 is likely to push families in the southwestern provinces of Angola into extreme vulnerability, increased food insecurity and livelihood losses, further worsened by the current economic downturn. Below-average rainfall since the start of the rainy season in October 2020 has led to abnormal dryness and drought conditions in southwestern parts of the country.<sup>95</sup> Low rainfall is expected to negatively impact crop production,<sup>96</sup> including in parts of the main cereal-producing areas. Reduced rainfall this season is also exacerbating the impacts on forage and livestock, which have suffered from consecutive droughts in the last few seasons. The outbreak of African migratory locusts is further compounding the situation. Initial field reports indicate that locust swarms damaged several crops in Cuando Cubango province, southeastern Angola,<sup>97</sup> and remain a serious threat to agriculture and food security.<sup>98</sup>

Economic challenges are expected to persist in the outlook period,

mainly driven by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, tightening credit conditions and overall reduced business activity. Although food prices typically decline in the harvest period starting in March, they are unlikely to fall significantly owing to the inflationary effects of a weaker currency, a high reliance on imports and the expected shortfall in cereal production in southern provinces.<sup>99</sup> <sup>100</sup> Prices of cassava flour and maize flour, the main food staples in the country, already increased by 30 percent and 25 percent, respectively, in the 12 months to December 2020.

An estimated 1 million people in Angola will suffer food insecurity this year, 17 percent above the five-year average.<sup>101</sup> Given that people have been struggling to cope with multiple shocks since 2016, the total population in need of assistance could rise sharply in the coming months.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Provide livelihood and food assistance to the most vulnerable households at risk of food security deterioration. Livelihood support may include inputs for off-season crop production and drilling of multi-use water holes near communities to minimize the effects of drought.
- Strengthen capacity for monitoring of locust swarms and scale up support to mitigate the impact of locusts on agriculture.

## OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Strengthen capacities of national institutions for vulnerability assessments, and food and nutrition security monitoring.
- Support national emergency preparedness systems and national social protection schemes for anticipatory action in response to climatic and economic shocks.



## The Democratic Republic of the Congo

**Key drivers of food insecurity:** conflict, a resurging Ebola outbreak, refugee influx, seasonal flooding, economic decline and COVID-19 aggravating effects

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has the highest estimated number of food-insecure people worldwide, with a projected 19.6 million people facing Crisis levels or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between January and June 2021. Such staggering figures reflect a combination of multiple shocks, including violence, natural disasters, epidemics, economic decline and the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. Protracted conflict remains a leading driver of food insecurity, most notably in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. The intensification of violence in these areas in 2020 led to livelihood disruptions,<sup>102</sup> access constraints and large-scale displacement, reflected in an estimated 5.2 million people being internally displaced.<sup>103</sup> Amidst renewed military operations, intercommunal tensions and a fragmented security environment, conflict-driven mass displacement is unlikely to see a meaningful reduction in the eastern provinces.

The resurgence of Ebola may further aggravate the situation, with new confirmed cases.<sup>104</sup> During the outlook period, floods and landslides are very likely in areas where excess rainfall is expected, which could drive additional displacements and affect livelihoods. Meanwhile, fighting in neighbouring Central African Republic in early

2021 also resulted in an influx of at least 92 000.<sup>105</sup> With prospects of continued insecurity in the Central African Republic, this figure is likely to increase further in the coming months.

Given the protracted nature of food insecurity drivers, other factors will compound the impact of conflict and natural hazards. Among these, macroeconomic conditions related to ongoing currency depreciation and GDP declines will affect purchasing power of the most vulnerable people, while COVID-19-related measures that restrict cross-border exchanges could contribute to a decline in economic activity.

The latest IPC analysis published in September 2020 projected that 19.6 million people would face high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) between January and June 2021, including 4.9 million at Emergency levels (IPC Phase 4). The operational environment for humanitarian organizations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains highly complex. The volatile security environment and occasional attacks against humanitarian workers hinder access, particularly in the main conflict-affected provinces in the East of the country.<sup>106</sup> Poor road conditions and infrastructure further impacts the operations.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Anticipatory actions

- Preposition strategic stocks of agricultural inputs to allow rapid distribution to vulnerable people affected by conflict.
- Provide unconditional cash transfers to vulnerable households (including IDPs, refugees and host communities) at risk of food security deterioration.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Emergency response

- The HRP calls for USD 830.9 million for food security and livelihoods, and USD 260.5 million for nutrition interventions.
- Sustain and adapt conflict-sensitive approaches, to ensure continuity of humanitarian assistance that can save the lives and livelihoods of people projected to face high levels of food insecurity in 2021.
- Scale up agriculture-based emergency livelihood activities targeting the most vulnerable, food insecure households.
- Scale up nutritional support interventions, including treatment of acute malnutrition and malnutrition prevention.
- Secure funding for the needs identified in the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan.

## Madagascar

**Key drivers of food insecurity:** drought conditions and economic shocks

Several regions in southern Madagascar<sup>107</sup> have experienced a prolonged period of poor rainfall since the start of the agricultural season in October 2020. Seasonal forecasts indicate a continuation of below-average rainfall until end of the season. During the peak rainfall period in January 2021, seasonal rainfall deficits were around 40 to 60 percent below average, resulting in extremely poor vegetation,<sup>108</sup> which will likely lead to a low harvest in 2021.<sup>109</sup> WFP analysis indicates this season (November to January) is the driest in southern parts since 1981.<sup>110</sup>

According to assessments conducted in January 2021 by FAO and WFP, farmers in southern regions reportedly planted later than usual owing to the poor rains and lack of seeds.<sup>111 112</sup> This limited the availability of pasture for livestock. Impacts of the 2020 economic shocks are likely

to linger into 2021, as income losses pushed a large number of people into extreme poverty.<sup>113</sup> Prices of key food staples are likely to remain at elevated levels, potentially exacerbating the adverse effects of income reductions.<sup>114</sup>

A sharp increase in food insecurity is foreseen over the coming months in the southern regions, driven by the effects of climate hazards and the economic downturn. Already, an estimated 1.3 million people are highly acutely food insecure (IPC Phase 3 and above) in the five southern coastal regions and require urgent humanitarian assistance between January and April 2021,<sup>115</sup> representing an increase of 15 percentage points in comparison to the same period in 2020. Additionally, more than 135 000 children are likely to suffer from acute malnutrition in the ten analysed districts, including over 27 000 severe cases.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Prioritize the implementation of a Cash+ approach to allow vulnerable households to meet their immediate needs and ensure access to quality short-cycle seeds and adapted tools for a staggered harvest.
- Distribute micro-irrigation systems, water pumps and quick-growing nutritious vegetable seed packs to the most food-insecure households in areas with shallow water tables and adjacent to river streams, for rapid off-season food production.
- Provide superior storage equipment (e.g. hermetic bags) and train vulnerable smallholder farmers on post-harvest storage and management, in order to reduce crop losses.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

- The Madagascar Grand Sud Flash Appeal calls for USD 56.1 million for food security and livelihoods, and USD 9 million for the nutrition interventions.
- Secure timely additional funding to continue and scale up the provision of livelihood, food and nutrition assistance to vulnerable populations in line with the Madagascar Grand Sud Flash Appeal, with priority given to 135 000 children in need of immediate treatment of acute malnutrition.

## OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Expand resilience-building and capacity strengthening activities to support household livelihoods and resilience to climate shocks

## Mozambique

**Key drivers of food insecurity: damage caused by Tropical Depression Chalane and cyclones Eloise and Guambe, COVID-19-related socio-economic impacts, conflict and insecurity in northern province of Cabo Delgado**

After Tropical Depression Chalane hit in December 2020, Cyclone Eloise made landfall in central Mozambique in January 2021. Both caused floods and displacement and damaging infrastructure and crops, with initial assessments suggesting 100 000 hectares of cropped land may have been affected.<sup>116</sup> In the southern provinces, crops were in the development stage and farmers do not have sufficient seeds for replanting vegetables, maize and other cereals for the second season starting in May. In the northern province of Cabo Delgado, amidst an increasingly fragmented security environment, violence is expected to intensify again as the rainy season comes to an end in March, after conflict levels reduced in January 2021.<sup>117</sup> As a result, displacement may further increase beyond the 668 000 internally displaced people in Cabo Delgado at the end of 2020.<sup>118</sup>

A spike in COVID-19 cases since January 2021, and the related reintroduction of restrictions,<sup>119</sup> are also expected to impact livelihoods and exacerbate humanitarian needs in the country.

A total of 2.9 million people in Mozambique were projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) between

January and March 2021, up from 2.7 million on the previous three-month period;<sup>120</sup> this includes nearly 265 000 in emergency (IPC Phase 4). While the IPC analysis projected that this number would shrink to 1.7 million between April and September 2021 due to the upcoming harvest and a tendency for food prices to reduce, this projection may still worsen as a result of the combined impacts of Cyclone Eloise and COVID-19-related restrictions, as well as likely further escalation of conflict in Cabo Delgado. In all cases, Cabo Delgado remains the main food insecurity hotspot, with IPC already projecting an increase from 665 000 to almost 769 000 people facing high acute food insecurity in April to September.<sup>121</sup>

Despite a scale-up in humanitarian support to Mozambique, the response has been significantly impeded by operational and funding constraints. In Cabo Delgado province, support to populations in need has been hampered by insecurity, which results in major access constraints to the main conflict-affected districts including Mocimboa da Praia, Muidumbe, Macomia, Quissanga, Palma and Islands of Ibo district. Rainy season flooding and heavy rains have limited delivery of food assistance to people throughout the country.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Scale up livelihood restoration activities for resettled IDPs in Cabo Delgado in view of preventing food security deterioration.
- Preposition inputs and pre-allocate cash for anticipatory action, in case of early warnings of floods and/or cyclones potentially affecting the most vulnerable households.
- Provide crop seeds to support replanting in the second agricultural season, starting in May, in the central and southern provinces.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

- The HRP calls for USD 136 million for food security and livelihoods and USD 15 million for nutrition interventions.
- Secure timely additional funding to continue and scale up the provision of livelihood, food and nutrition assistance to vulnerable populations in line with the Mozambique 2021 HRP.
  - Strengthen partnerships and advocacy to mitigate humanitarian constraints in Cabo Delgado.
  - Support shock-responsive national social protection schemes and emergency preparedness systems for IDPs and host households.

## Zimbabwe

### Key drivers of food insecurity: macroeconomic challenges, climatic shocks and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19

Zimbabwe continues to suffer from a complex food security crisis, driven by weather shocks and persistent macroeconomic instability that is worsened by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rampant food inflation remains a key driver of acute food insecurity. Despite a slowdown in monthly price increases since mid-2020, and a stabilization of the official exchange rate, food prices in February 2021 were still 35 percent higher than the year before.<sup>122 123</sup> The high prices continue to erode households' ability to afford food, while expectations point to persisting high levels of inflation. The arrival of newly harvested food crops is expected to improve the food security situation after March, particularly among rural populations, but conditions are likely to remain precarious, as many households have already exhausted their food stocks from previous harvests after two consecutive years of well-below-average production. In addition, the possibility of weather shocks, notably cyclones, along with outbreaks

of migratory locust<sup>124</sup> and other pests<sup>125</sup> continue to pose a risk and could cause shortfalls in production and disrupt livelihoods.

A significant number of households will also remain highly vulnerable on account of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reintroduction of lockdown measures, including a land-border closure with South Africa, could further disrupt the flow of goods, employment, incomes and prices, and is likely to hinder economic growth and recovery. These conditions are expected to constrain households' economic access to food for the outlook period. About 3.4 million people were projected to face high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) and to be in need of urgent humanitarian assistance during the peak of the lean season from January to March 2021,<sup>126</sup> including 769 000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Anticipatory actions

- Distribute fast-maturing nutritious vegetable seeds for garden production in rural and (where feasible) urban areas, combined with water harvesting and micro-irrigation equipment.
- Provide superior storage equipment (e.g. hermetic bags) and training in managing post-harvest losses
- Scale up livestock disease surveillance through the Department of Veterinary Services and provide livestock feed and animal health treatments to the most vulnerable livestock-raising households.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Emergency response

- The HRP calls for USD 353.3 million for food security and livelihoods and USD 11.3 million for nutrition interventions.
- Strengthen resource-mobilization efforts to sustain and scale up livelihood, food and nutrition assistance, both in rural and urban areas.

#### OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Sustain and support analysis and monitoring systems to track price fluctuations and other indicators of economic instability in order to inform anticipatory action programming.
- Scale up surveillance of fall army worm, armoured crickets, elegant grasshoppers, African migratory locust and red locusts, at community level and by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Preposition biopesticides and train farmers on their application and other methods of control.
- Train and equip livestock farmers associations on digital reporting of livestock disease outbreaks.

## Near-East and North Africa

### Lebanon

### Key drivers of food insecurity: deteriorating economic crisis and increased potential for political instability

The capacity of Lebanon to cope with, and reverse, the effects of multiple political and economic shocks since the end of 2019 has been dwindling. Increasing unemployment and poverty, skyrocketing inflation rates, the COVID-19 pandemic and measures introduced to contain its spread have contributed to a deterioration of food security for a growing share of the Lebanese and refugee populations.

In the coming months, the Central Bank's expected suspension of the allocation of US dollars at the official rate (LBP 1.507 /USD 1 instead

of the informal rate of over LBP 8 000 pound/ USD 1) in favour of importers of wheat,<sup>127</sup> essential medicines and fuel, is likely to lead to a further increase in prices of basic goods. Combined with a lack of economic growth and employment opportunities, the livelihoods of poor Lebanese and refugee households will be affected dramatically. Against this backdrop, civil unrest and violent clashes could become more frequent.<sup>128</sup>

As a result of the financial crisis that hit the country in autumn 2019, the Lebanese currency has lost more than 80 percent of its value, leading to a 146-percent<sup>129</sup> year-on-year increase of the inflation rate, with food inflation recorded at a staggering 402 percent.<sup>130</sup> At the end of 2020, 19 percent of Lebanese nationals and 21 percent of Syrian refugees had reported the loss of their main sources of income, owing to the combined impact of the financial crisis and COVID-19-related restrictions.<sup>131</sup> As a result, at the end of 2020, the proportion of Syrian refugees living in extreme poverty reached a staggering 89 percent, up from 55 percent only a year before.<sup>132</sup> At least 49 percent of Syrian

refugees were food insecure, according to WFP's CARI scale.<sup>133</sup> Without assistance received, these numbers would be much higher.

Planned social safety net programmes, targeting the most vulnerable nationals and expected to offset the impact of subsidy reductions,<sup>134</sup> are also likely to be challenged by the lack of foreign-exchange reserves and the lack of political stability required to implement such programmes. This will particularly affect poor Lebanese households, who are reliant on social welfare services as an income source, particularly as employment opportunities remain scarce.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Expand cash assistance to reach a potentially increasing number of Syrian refugees and refugees of other nationalities each month.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

- Sustain advocacy efforts to enhance resource mobilization and visibility, given the increasing humanitarian needs in the country, for both vulnerable Lebanese people and refugees.

## OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Continue to review, analyze and mitigate the possible replacement of subsidies on key food products, such as bread, with ration cards, which risks leaving out refugees – in particular the 1 million unregistered Syrian refugees.
- Continue support to reach 50 000 vulnerable Lebanese households via the National Poverty Targeting Programme and separately set up for the implementation of the Emergency Social Safety Net to reach 147 000 households, in collaboration with the World Bank and the Government.

## The Sudan

**Key drivers of food insecurity: macroeconomic crisis, depreciation of local currency, climate-related hazards, flooding, intercommunal conflict and COVID-19 impacts**

A deteriorating economic crisis that is causing exceptionally high food prices – compounded by the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 – along with a potential uptick in intercommunal clashes,<sup>135</sup> is expected to continue driving high levels of acute food insecurity.

Purchasing power and food access will continue to deteriorate as a result of steadily rising food prices and inflation caused by high production and transport costs and continued devaluation of the Sudanese pound. This will have significant repercussions for the most vulnerable communities. The announced floating of the currency in February 2021, and the Government's recent removal of fuel subsidies – which instantly led to increases of fuel prices of 400 percent –<sup>136</sup> are likely to drive up food inflation in the short term.<sup>137</sup>

Despite the impact of last year's floods on agriculture and livestock livelihoods,<sup>138</sup> national production of sorghum, millet and wheat in 2020 has been almost 19 percent higher than the five-year average, thanks to an increase in planted areas. Nonetheless, the year-on-year increase in input prices continued to inflate production costs and cereal prices. The persistent threat of Desert locusts could further worsen the food security situation.

A recent revival of intercommunal clashes across Darfur led to the displacement of almost 150 000 people in West Darfur.<sup>139 140</sup>

Similar episodes remain highly possible given the volatile security context. The situation in eastern Kassala and Gedaref states, with 60 000 refugees from Ethiopia, remains critical. In addition, in the al-Fashaga disputed border area, clashes between the Sudanese and the Ethiopian armies might escalate, leading to insecurity and displacement. As of December 2020, about 2.6 million people were internally displaced as a result of flooding, conflict and political instability.

The latest IPC analysis for October–December 2020, coinciding with the harvest period, estimates that 7.1 million people in the Sudan are highly acute food insecure (IPC Phase 3 or above), including 1.3 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).<sup>141</sup> While humanitarian assistance is ongoing, access challenges like the ones experienced in early 2021 remain.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

Scale up cash and in-kind support to the most vulnerable farmers and pastoralist households. This should include a wide range of schemes to intensify livelihoods and diversify income-generating opportunities, both on-farm and off-farm. For example:

- distribute unconditional cash and seeds (sorghum, millet and pulses) to severely food-insecure farmers, to improve immediate access to food and allow timely planting in June;
- distribute vegetable seeds to support the food production and income generation of severely food-insecure farmers in irrigated areas;
- provide livestock support services (e.g. veterinary care, feed, restocking, water access and demarcating migratory routes) to most vulnerable pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities; and
- provide fishing gear, nets and refrigerators to vulnerable fisherfolks.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

The HRP calls for USD 521 million for food security and livelihoods, and USD 149.1 million for the nutrition interventions.

- Prioritize livelihood and food assistance through in-kind and cash transfers, and nutrition assistance by May 2021, in support of the Government's Sudan Family Support Programme, which aims to ensure 80 percent of host populations' needs are met in the medium term.
- Sustain life-saving assistance to more than 60 000 Ethiopian refugees who have fled into Sudan.
- Secure adequate funding towards the needs identified in the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan.

## OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Support strategic food reserves and local seed bank initiatives stabilize staple food and input prices, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable, food insecure families.

## The Syrian Arab Republic

### Key drivers of food insecurity: continuous economic deterioration

The economic decline that worsened food shortages and inflation in 2020 is expected to continue driving up already rising levels of food insecurity in the coming months.

Although the ongoing conflict in the country became more localized, the economy, already battered by ten years of violence, deteriorated rapidly in 2020. This has been the result of multiple shocks including mass population displacement and damage to infrastructure and services, which together have eroded people's food security, livelihoods and resilience.

Shortage of foreign-exchange reserves, inflation, the socio-economic impact of COVID-19,<sup>142</sup> international sanctions and the ongoing financial crisis in neighbouring Lebanon have been the main causes of economic decline and are likely to continue impacting the country's

economy throughout the first half of 2021.<sup>143</sup> As a result, between the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2021, the Syrian pound lost two-thirds of its value while inflation rose by 200 percent.<sup>144 145</sup>

Shortages of primary goods have been constant over the past year,<sup>146</sup> constraining households' access to food and disrupting local production.

Despite relatively favourable conditions for winter cereal growth, high prices of domestic and imported inputs are hampering agricultural activities. These are the result of the dramatic currency depreciation and high transportation costs stemming from fuel shortages. The 2020 wheat production was estimated at 2.8 million tons, up from 2.2 million in 2019, but still well below the pre-crisis level of 4.1 million (2002-2011).<sup>147</sup>



Shortages of foreign-exchange reserves, combined with international sanctions, have reduced the Government's ability to secure wheat imports and satisfy local demand. As a result, the wheat crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has already led the Government to double the price of subsidized bread, impacting the population's purchasing power.<sup>148</sup>

The factors that contributed to a stiff economic deterioration in 2020 are likely to persist well into 2021, leading to additional weakening of the Syrian pound on the informal market, which currently stands at a 74-percent depreciation year-on-year. This will have a significant effect

on consumer prices, purchasing power and livelihoods and further worsen the food security situation.

Mainly as a result of economic deterioration, 12.4 million people (59.5 percent of the overall population) are now food insecure, according to WFP's CARI Scale – some 4.5 million more than in 2019, 1.3 million of them are severely food insecure.<sup>149</sup> Among the 12.4 million, there are also 1.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in camps, which are considered highly food insecure and fully dependent on external assistance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Restore basic irrigation schemes to improve access to irrigation before summer season.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

- Strengthen high-level advocacy to maintain access to northwest Syrian Arab Republic, enabling provision of life-saving assistance currently authorized until July 2021 through UNSC Resolution 2533 (2020). Non-renewal of the resolution would cut the primary lifeline of humanitarian assistance to millions of people.
- Urgent resource mobilization to maintain livelihood, food and nutrition assistance, without further ration cuts, to 12.4 million food-insecure people – of whom 6.6 million are not covered by food assistance.
- Urgently advocate for increased agricultural support to boost local crop and livestock production, especially while food prices remain high.

## OTHER KEY ACTIONS

- Maintain and support analysis on the economic situation and inflation, including tracking prices, to inform contingency planning for cash programmes.

## Yemen

### Key drivers of food insecurity: conflict, reduction of funding for humanitarian assistance, access constraints and economic crisis

Relentless conflict resulting in displacement, combined with deteriorating economic conditions and reduced funding for humanitarian assistance, are likely to further drive increasing trends of food insecurity in the coming months. In the outlook period, conflict is likely to persist on existing frontlines, with renewed clashes erupting in Ma'rib and potential escalation of conflict in governorates such as Taizz, Hudaydah, Sana'a and Sa'ada.<sup>150</sup> This is likely to result in new displacements, further hampering already constrained livelihood activities and humanitarian access.

Nationally, prices of food commodities and necessities continue to increase, driven by the depreciation of the Yemeni rial and the chronic lack of foreign-exchange reserves.<sup>151</sup> At the end January 2021, the cost of a food basket to meet basic needs was up 28 percent on the previous year, while the currency depreciated by 24 percent in areas controlled by the Internationally Recognized Government.<sup>152</sup> As a result, people are engaging further in negative livelihood and consumption coping strategies, hindering their capacity to recover. Furthermore, a worrying funding outlook for humanitarian assistance in 2021, may result in a further scale-down of humanitarian operations and reduced food rations. Renewed fuel shortages are likely to further increase fuel and food prices, and hamper transport.<sup>153</sup>

Moreover, the threat of desert locust remains, with small scale breeding likely to occur in a few limited areas in the Red Sea coastal plains.

Between January and June 2021, the number of people likely to experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) will increase by nearly 3 million to 16.2 million (54 percent of the total population), compared to December 2020. Out of these, 5 million people are estimated to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and approximately 47 000 in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5).<sup>154</sup> The number of people in IPC Phase 5, mainly located in Al Jawf, Amran and Hajjah governorates, is projected to triple, rising from 16 000 in December 2020 to 47 000 between January and June 2021. **As populations are already highly vulnerable, malnutrition is severe, displacement is rising, and as the economic situation is further deteriorating including the effects of the severe fuel crisis, the risk of famine in Yemen is increasing.** Similarly, record high levels of acute malnutrition are projected throughout 2021.<sup>155</sup>

Humanitarian access, supply chain disruptions and operability of partners are likely to continue to be extremely challenging as a result of conflict, insecurity, bureaucratic impediments and COVID-19-related restrictions (for example at health centres).

Persistent conflict and a dynamic security environment can challenge humanitarian access, leading to occasional disruption of operations and temporary relocation of personnel.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anticipatory actions**

- Provide key inputs to the most food-insecure farmers, including crop and vegetable seeds and agricultural tools, to allow timely planting for the summer planting season.
- Provide irrigation kits including solar water pumps, drip irrigation and water tanks to vulnerable farmers, to overcome the high cost and scarcity of fuel.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Emergency response**

- The HRP calls for USD 1.7 billion for food security and livelihoods, and USD 443 million for nutrition interventions.
- Continue focused advocacy with the Sana'a-based authority to maintain and enhance humanitarian access and ensure consistent assistance provision in Al-Jawf, Amran and Al Hajjah, where there is a high concentration of people in IPC Phase 5. Advocacy should also be directed at lifting the blockade and port restrictions, to enable the movement of much-needed goods and reduce their prices.
  - Urgent funding to maintain and scale up emergency livelihood and food assistance to millions of people facing acute food insecurity, particularly those in IPC phases 4 and 5.
  - Urgent expansion of nutrition programmes to maintain prevention and treatment of already malnourished pregnant and lactating women and girls, and children under the age of 5 with severe and moderate acute malnutrition. Particular focus on areas of highest levels of malnutrition and challenging access conditions, including Marib, Al Jawf, Sa'ada, Ad Dali' and parts of Hajjah, Raymah and Dhamar.
  - Provide emergency livelihood support, especially to populations in IPC Phase 3, ensuring close collaboration between humanitarian and development programmes, in order to tackle the root causes of food insecurity.

## OTHER KEY ACTIONS

Advocate for fast-tracking the necessary fiscal and monetary policies and explore opportunities to halt and reverse the accelerated depreciation of the Yemeni rial, thereby easing import constraints and related pressure on food prices.

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## Global Network Against Food Crises

FAO and WFP are the founding members of the Global Network Against Food Crises, together with European Commission for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). The Global Network seeks to better link, integrate and guide existing programmes and policy processes to sustainably address the root causes of food crises along the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus.

Within the Global Network's approach and framework, FAO and WFP together with relevant partners have established a coordinated monitoring system for food security, livelihoods and value chains in order to identify and inform critical anticipatory actions.

This report is the first joint FAO-WFP early warning analysis of food insecurity hotspots and is part of a series of Global Network's analytical products contributing to the generation and sharing of consensus and evidence-based information for preventing and addressing food crises.

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