AFGHANISTAN Food Security Outlook Update June 2013

The wheat harvest is underway and likely of above normal volume

KEY MESSAGES

- Between now and November 2013, staple food availability both at the household and market levels is likely increasing. This is primarily the result of the ongoing above average wheat harvest, which would be the second year in a row of above average production.

- Economic access to food is also likely to improve between now and November as labor opportunities, wages, and livestock prices peak during the summer.

- Wheat grain prices are likely to decrease during the June to September harvest time, reflecting seasonal pattern as well as increased supply from the above average national wheat harvest.

CURRENT SITUATION

- In most parts of the country, the wheat harvest is underway. Reports and observers perceive that the total volume of the harvest will be well above average. However, in Sabari, Ali Shir, Gurbuz Districts in Khost Province such as , and the central parts of Khost, the wheat yield was below last year due to excessive rain and high temperatures in April and May that facilitated the spread of wheat stem rust and smut. Similarly, wheat yields have also been reduced in both some irrigated and rainfed areas in Ghormach, Andkhoy, and other districts in Faryab Province. In the eastern parts of Jawzjan Province, judging from the start of the harvest, the wheat yields have likely been reduced because of the below average and poorly temporally distributed rains with dry spells in May. The previous harvest from June to September 2012 was the second highest volume wheat harvest recorded in Afghanistan, so even in some of the areas where conditions are below last year, the total amount of harvested wheat could still be near average.

- Heavy and late rains reduced wheat yields in some lower elevation areas, including parts of Khost and Faryab Provinces, but these rains improved pasture conditions and supported further development of wheat crops in higher elevation areas. May and June rains contributed to wheat crops reaching the vegetative stage in the central highlands and northeastern mountains, where the harvest does not typically take place until September.

- Following the completion of the poppy and wheat harvests that were well above average in eastern and southeastern parts of the country, the availability of agricultural labor opportunities has seasonally declined. In these areas, land preparation for the second crops such as paddy rice and maize is underway. Irrigation water availability in eastern Afghanistan is better than last year. In the rest of the country, the availability of labor opportunities has reached its peak, which continues from June until the end of July. The daily labor wages have reached up to AFN 500 to 600 per day in June and July.
northern Afghanistan. Due to good pasture conditions and fodder availability that contributed to livestock health and good body conditions, livestock prices remained higher than their five-year averages in most parts of the country.

- Conflict seasonally intensified across the country. In southern Afghanistan in Sangin District in Helmand Province, some wheat farms were damaged due to four to five days fighting between government and opposition forces.

- In comparison to spring 2012, fewer households have had their lives and livelihoods disrupted by natural disasters in 2013. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), approximately 120,000 individuals had been affected by natural disasters from January to May 2013 compared to approximately 240,000 in 2012 over the same period. The highest prevalence of natural disasters has been in eastern and northern Afghanistan, primarily earthquakes and some flooding.

- On April 24, 2013, an earthquake with a 5.7 magnitude on the Richter Scale hit the eastern region of Afghanistan. It affected 15 households in Kapisa, 1,799 households in Nangarhar, and 573 households in Kunar Provinces who were immediately assisted by aid agencies with both food and non-food items.

- May wheat grain prices remain mostly unchanged from April. However, May 2013 wheat grain prices are still slightly higher than their five-year averages in wheat deficit areas while below their five-years average in wheat surplus-producing areas because of the above normal volume of the ongoing harvest.

**UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS**

The current situation has not been affected the assumptions used to develop FEWS NET’s most likely scenario for April to September 2013.

**PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2013**

- Food security outcomes from June to September are anticipated to be classified at Minimal (IPC Phase 1) in most parts of the country. Many households will have well above normal access to both food and income. The wheat harvest is underway in the lower and middle altitudes, and it is expected to have above average volume, which would increase availability both at the market and household levels. Late precipitation positively contributed to wheat crop conditions at higher elevations, where the harvest also is expected to have an above normal volume. Livestock prices are higher than their five-year averages, and labor wages reach their peak during the harvest time, which improves poor households’ access to food through increased income.

- Wheat grain prices are likely to decrease over the coming two to three months, which reflects the usual seasonal trend. Rice prices are likely to stabilize after the recent price increases in eastern Afghanistan and the central highlands as demand for rice during summertime decreases due to availability of milk products and vegetables. However, during Ramadan in July and early August, food prices are likely to temporarily increase for most commodities.

- As of May 30, 2013, there were 570,705 internally displaced persons (IDPs), mostly concentrated in the South and the West. Additionally, there are 120,000 people who were affected by natural disasters in 2013, including spring floods and the recent earthquake in eastern Afghanistan. These households are expected to remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) between now and September. Since these segments of population are geographically dispersed and do not make up 20 percent or more of the population in any given area, their settlements are not mapped with the majority of the rural population (Figures 1 and 2). These individuals lost their houses, sources of income, crops in the fields, and food stocks. They are relying heavily on external assistance to meet their essential food and non-food needs. However, IDPs who have been displaced for a long time have likely adopted other, new livelihood strategies in their new areas of residence and are less likely to rely solely on external assistance.