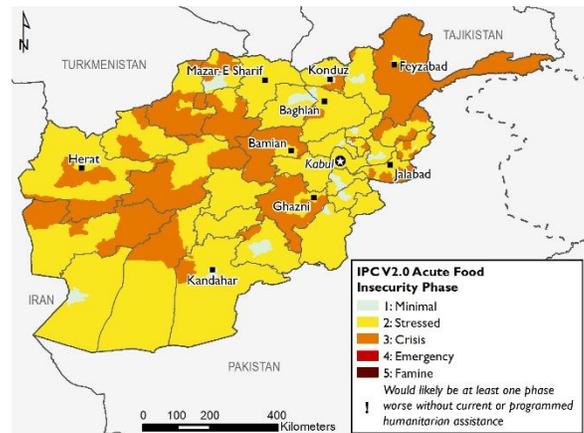


Low snow accumulation and dry soil conditions likely to impact 2018 staple production

KEY MESSAGES

- The weakening of the casual labor market since 2014 has made it more difficult for poor households to earn sufficient income to support dietary needs during the lean season. Furthermore, 2017 rainfed production was poor in some provinces, including in Ghor, Balkh, Jawzjan, Takhar, Badakhshan, Samangan, Herat, Baghlan, and Sar-i-Pul Provinces. Poor households affected by poor own production or who were not able to find sufficient employment to support food purchases are likely experiencing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes until local spring labor opportunities facilitate access to income and market purchases of food.
- The ongoing conflict between various insurgent groups, primarily the Taliban and IS, and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has increased in geographic extent and severity in recent years, with more than 1.1 million people displaced since the beginning of 2016. Beyond displacement, insecurity has continued to disrupt normal livelihoods by limiting access to farms, rangelands, markets, and labor opportunities, and by reducing local economic activity. Although seasonal improvements in access to food and income will occur during the spring and summer months, displacement and reduced non-agricultural labor opportunities are expected to drive Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes throughout much of the country during the scenario period, with many households in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).
- Snow accumulation and cumulative precipitation were well below average for the season through February 2018, with some basins at or near record low snowpack, with data since 2002. Forecast models indicate a likelihood for below-average precipitation through the end of the season in May 2018, with elevated risk for prolonged periods of dryness. These factors will likely have an adverse impact on staple production in marginal irrigated areas and in many rainfed areas.
- Due to below-average precipitation and extent of snow coverage, as well as forecasts for above-average temperatures during the spring and summer, rangeland conditions are expected to be poor during the period of analysis through September 2018. This could have an adverse impact on pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, particularly in areas where livestock movements are limited by conflict.

Current food security outcomes, February 2018



Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

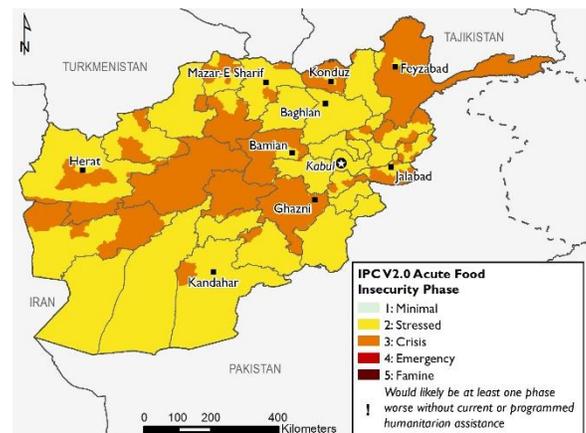
Current Situation

Several factors impacting many poor households in 2017 and in recent years led to high assistance needs entering the ongoing 2018 lean season, and limited households' ability to prepare for mitigating the seasonal decline in access to food and income sources. Conflict, which has hindered rural development for decades, has been particularly severe and widespread since early 2016, with more people displaced that year than at any time since 2002. In total, more than 1,100,000 people have been internally displaced by conflict since early 2016, and many more have had their normal livelihoods disrupted due to security concerns, such as the inability to safely access agricultural fields and rangelands, or to travel for migratory labor opportunities. According to ACLED, which tracks conflict events and fatalities through media reports, more than 53,000 people were killed by conflict in Afghanistan from January 2017 through February 2018. Further displacement is ongoing. According to UNOCHA, as of February 19th a total of 18,500 individuals in 18 of 34 provinces had been displaced by conflict since the beginning of the year.

As conflict has become more disruptive and widespread, casual non-agricultural labor opportunities in many areas have become scarcer. Although a reduction in casual employment opportunities was already observed in the Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) in 2014, the trend has continued over the three years since, likely due in part to the economic impact of the drawdown in ISAF forces since 2014/2015, which has reduced opportunities in areas including the provision of various goods to ISAF forces and civilian workers, opportunities in construction of facilities, and provision of transportation services. Information from the 2017 Seasonal Food Security Assessment (SFSA), conducted between April and June 2017, indicates that 11 percent of the respondents reported a substantial reduction in their income compared to the previous year, while 48 percent experienced some reduction in their incomes. As per SFSA, decreased economic opportunities have led some of the poorest households to increase use of negative livelihood coping strategies, such as withdrawing children from school, selling productive livestock, or even the sale of their land. It is important to note that the reduction in employment opportunities has had implications for urban food security as well as rural. It is common that urban households who experience a deterioration in income opportunities will withdraw children from school, often resulting in child labor in informal or even illicit markets.

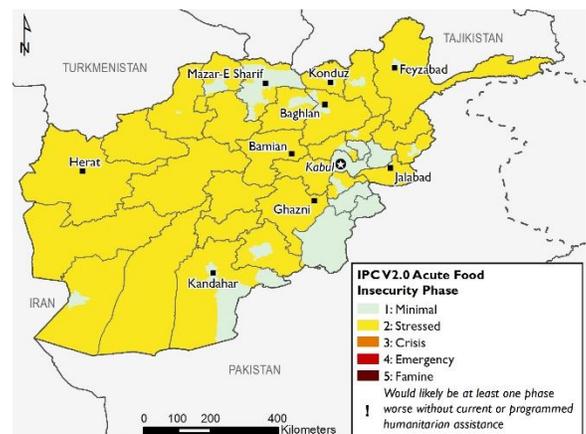
In addition to the ongoing impact of conflict and casual labor market changes on sources of food and income, extended periods of dryness during the spring rainfed season of 2017 led to poor rainfed staple production in many areas. Aggregate rainfed wheat production for 2017 was just 52 percent of the average for 2005 – 2017, according to estimates from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL). Although this brought aggregate national wheat production below the five-year average, strong regional wheat availability and continued imports from Kazakhstan and Pakistan kept wheat prices stable. However, rainfed staple production is a primary livelihood activity for many poor households in affected areas, either on their own land, as sharecroppers in the *dekhani* system, or as day laborers who are paid either in-kind or in cash. For these households, poor 2017 rainfed production led to a significant reduction in normal sources of food and/or income, leading them to rely on alternative livelihoods options and, in many cases, experience poor food security outcomes.

Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2018



Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2018

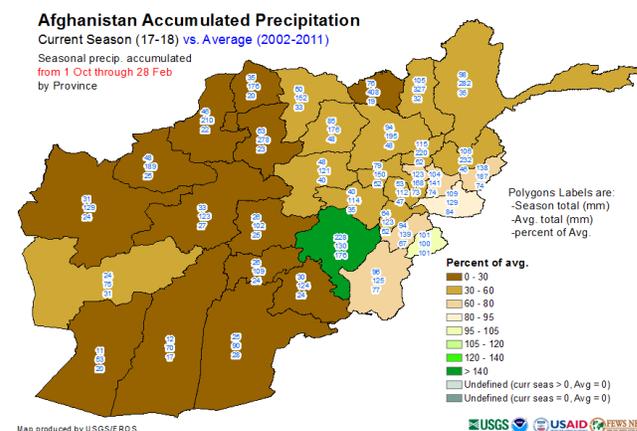


Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

The 2017 potato harvest was estimated at 513,194 metric tons (MT). Potatoes brought normal income for producers, particularly in the central highlands, where more than 40 percent of Afghanistan’s potatoes are produced. A reduction in cotton prices impacted livelihoods in major cotton-producing districts in Afghanistan, including Marja, Nadali, Ghramsir, and Hazarjuft Districts in Helmand Province, Charbolak and Balkh Districts in Balkh Province, and Baghlan Jadeed and Baghlan Kuna Districts in Baghlan Province. Cotton prices this season were almost 35 percent below the level of the previous year, and were lower than in other recent years, greatly reducing profit margins. However, the normal to slightly above normal yields of other second-season crops last year, including rice and maize, reduced the impact of lower cotton prices, as many poor households that typically rely on labor opportunities in the cotton sector were able to find other local agricultural labor opportunities.

Figure I. Accumulated precipitation, October 1, 2017 to February 28, 2018, percent of average (2002-2011)

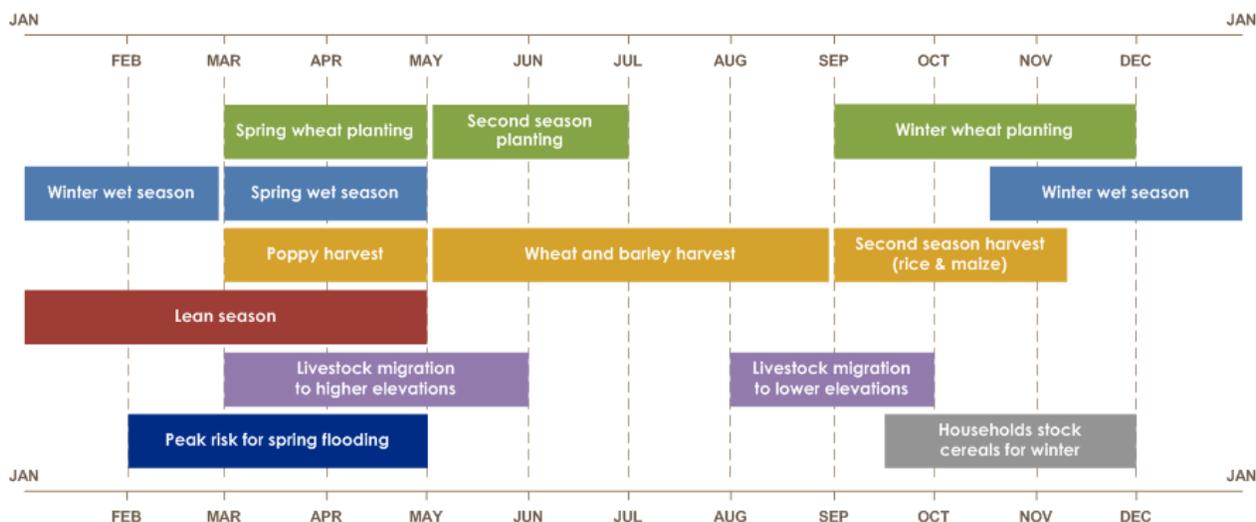


Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Horticultural harvests in 2017 had a slightly higher volume as compared to the previous year. Prices for many horticultural products were also higher than last year, leading to a reported increase in household income from horticultural sales.

The beginning of the 2017/2018 wet season was delayed by as much as two months in some areas, with the first significant precipitation in December rather than by the end of October, as is typical in most of the country. Cumulative precipitation for the season through February was well below average across the country, according to satellite-based estimates as well as qualitative information from different regions of Afghanistan. The poor start to the season delayed planting of winter wheat in some areas, particularly in the north and northeast. In areas where precipitation was too late for germination prior to freezing conditions, some farmers elected to plant their land as spring wheat later in the season.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET

Through February, estimates of water storage in snowpack were well below average in almost all basins, with data since 2002. Some basins were at or near their lowest seasonal levels on record. Due to above-average temperatures and limited precipitation during the beginning of the winter season, areas where snow typically affects market access have experienced a slightly later start to the period in which they must rely primarily or exclusively on food stocks. Due to below-average precipitation, winter wheat planting has not been completed, and spring rainfed wheat planting has begun and will continue until mid-March, depending on rainfall. The provincial directorates of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), as well as some NGOs, have distributed certified, improved seeds and fertilizers to some farmers. Households who do not have access to these inputs are either using their own produced seeds from last year or are purchasing seeds from local markets.

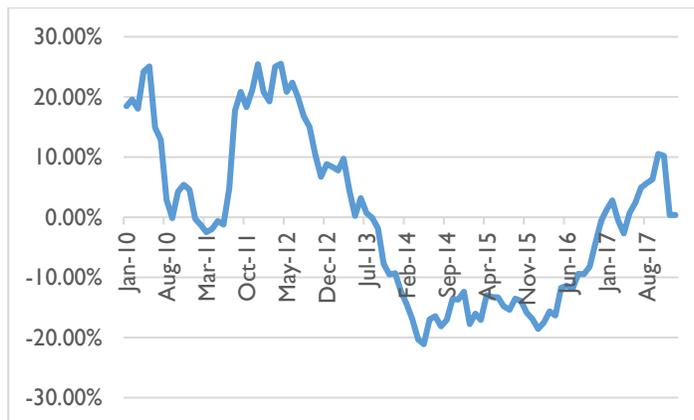
Irrigation is critical for agricultural production in much of Afghanistan, as rainfall during the growing season is unreliable or insufficient in many areas. Snow runoff from the mountain ranges of central Afghanistan provides over 80 percent of the irrigation water used. The timing and duration of annual snowmelt is a key factor in determining the volume of irrigation water and the length of time it is available, as well as its availability for use in marginal areas that experience below-average rainfall. Below-average availability of irrigation water throughout 2017, and particularly during the September to December winter wheat sowing period, affected the normal planted area of winter crops.

In most provinces, February through May is considered the peak of the lean season, when poor households have seasonally low income-earning opportunities and depleted household food stocks. Many mixed-farming areas of the north that rely substantially on rainfed production were negatively affected by extended dry spells in 2017, and are facing a high risk of poor agricultural production for 2018 due to the ongoing dry conditions. As of late February, most farmers had not been able to plant rainfed crops due to poor soil moisture conditions.

For most rural households, stocks of wheat and wheat flour are estimated to be below average due to last year’s below-average harvest, and will likely be depleted by the end of March. The January 2018 terms of trade between casual labor and wheat flour in the eight reference markets monitored by WFP were very near the January average for 2010 – 2017, at 11.7 KG of wheat flour per day of labor (**Figure 2**). However, limited labor opportunities may adversely affect the ability of poor households to make needed food purchases. Wheat flour prices were lower in January 2018 as compared to the previous year in most reference markets, ranging from a decrease of 4 percent in Faizabad to 20 percent in Maimana. This at least partially reflects recent stability in international wheat prices, particularly in Pakistan and Kazakhstan where Afghanistan sources most of its wheat and wheat flour imports.

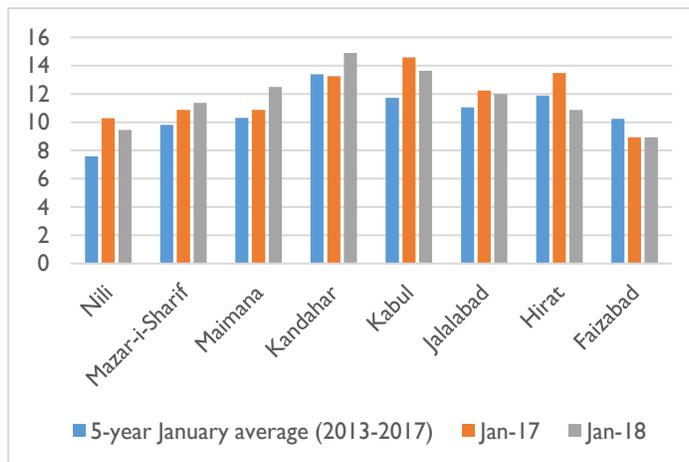
The average January 2018 terms of trade between sheep (one-year-old female) and wheat across the eight reference markets was 10.7 percent above the five-year average, helping households in agro-pastoral livelihood zones as well as *Kuchi* pastoralists

Figure 2. Casual labor to wheat flour terms of trade, eight market average versus 2010-2017 average



Source: Data from WFP

Figure 3. Casual labor to wheat flour terms of trade (KG/Day), January 2018 versus January 2017 and 2013-2017 January average



Source: Data from WFP

to purchase necessary wheat stocks ahead of the winter.

Although migration of unemployed youth to neighboring countries (primarily Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey) is a typical livelihood strategy, the reduction in casual labor opportunities within Afghanistan has led to an increase of approximately 21 percent in 2018 compared to last year. However, labor migration to Iran has become less attractive since the sharp depreciation of the Iranian Rial (IRR) against the Afghani (AFN) and other currencies since 2017. Though the labor migration has increased to Iran, the level of remittances from Iran has significantly decreased in comparison to recent years. The reduction in casual labor opportunities has also been a factor driving youths to join the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP). Remittances from the Arab Gulf countries, which constitute a significant source of income in southern and southeastern Afghanistan, are continuing at a normal rate.

Opium production has risen significantly in Afghanistan in recent years. The [2017 Afghanistan Opium Survey](#) indicates a 63 percent increase in area cultivated in 2017 as compared to 2016, with farmgate value estimated at USD 1.4 billion, a 55 percent increase from the previous year.

Nutritional outcomes in Afghanistan remain poor in many areas, although the government and partners have enhanced prevention and treatment efforts. In various SMART surveys between 2013 and 2018, results in 15 different provinces indicated GAM prevalence above 15 percent (Bamyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Jawzjan, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Paktya, Panjsher, Parwan, Uruzgan, and Wardak). Severe acute malnutrition (SAM) prevalence was above three percent in 24 different provinces. Annually, about 1.6 million children under five and 443,000 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) require treatment for acute malnutrition. Additionally, the prevalence of both chronic and acute child undernutrition is alarmingly high—ranking among the highest in the world. Malnutrition has long been understood as a geospatial problem in Afghanistan; however, its burden and distribution across sub-provincial zones is not well understood. While decades of limited economic growth have driven acute and chronic undernutrition, conflict further exacerbates the existing underlying conditions causing malnutrition; such as inadequate household food security, poor dietary intake, insufficient health services, lack of proper sanitation facilities and practices, and inadequate maternal and child care.

Acute malnutrition is a life-threatening condition that requires urgent treatment as SAM children are nine times more likely to die than their healthy peers while children with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) are three times more likely to die. Undernourished children who survive may become locked in a cycle of recurring illness and faltering growth, with irreversible damage to their development and cognitive abilities.

The most severe needs are found in areas and provinces experiencing ongoing conflict or hosting large numbers of IDPs and returnees, such as in Torkham (Nangarhar), Spin Boldak (Kandahar), Zaranj (Nimroz), and Islam Qala (Hirat). These areas are simultaneously affected by structural deficits predating the current crisis and include chronic food insecurity, malnutrition, and limited access to safe water and healthcare.

Currently, out of 1,922 health facilities across the country, only 973 (50 percent) provide services for the management of SAM and 567 (30 percent) for the treatment of MAM, resulting in a significant gap between the extent of the needs of the affected population and the possibility to access both preventative and curative services.

Access to healthcare for IDPs, returnees, and refugees is of concern, and many returnees and refugees have not been able to access basic essential services. Returnees in Torkham, Spin Boldak, Zaranj, and Islam Qala present with high prevalence of tuberculosis, HIV, and medical complications related to malnutrition and pregnancy. These diseases limit the body's ability to utilize available nutrients. The situation is further complicated by frequent exchanges of territorial control between the government and armed groups across large parts of the country. Afghanistan's rapidly changing political, socioeconomic, and insecurity landscape has both direct and indirect implications on nutritional outcomes.

Children under the age of five and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) continue to endure the most severe nutritional outcomes. An estimated 1.6 million children suffer from acute malnutrition annually, including 546,000 that suffer from severe acute malnutrition, according to the 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview.

Approximately 46 percent of children and 48 percent of PLW with acute malnutrition live in 120 conflict-affected districts. Poor

infant and young child feeding practices and high-levels of micronutrient deficiencies among children and mothers contributes to rapid deterioration of nutritional status among populations affected by natural disasters. Conflict induced IDPs are also at heightened risk of deterioration. Almost 60 percent of children under two years are not fed appropriately, 50.4 percent suffer from Vitamin-A deficiency and 40.4 percent women aged between 15-49 years are affected by iron deficiency anemia.

The most likely scenario for February to September 2018 is based on the following assumptions:

- The most likely scenario during the remainder of the rainfed spring wheat planting season and early development (February – April) is for below-average to average cumulative precipitation. There is also an elevated risk for extended periods of dryness, due to anticipated below-average frequency of storms in the region.
- It is expected that water availability for irrigation purposes will not be sufficient for the normal development of irrigated crops in all areas that typically rely on the availability of water in irrigation channels, and water availability for second season crops is likely to be below average.
- There is a below-average risk for widespread spring flooding, due to below-average snowpack in almost all basins. However, there remains a risk for flash flooding in localized areas, due to possible heavy rainfall events and rapid snowmelt.
- Import prices for wheat and wheat flour from Kazakhstan and Pakistan are likely to remain stable during the scenario period, due to stable prices and strong carry-over stocks in both countries. Wheat prices are not expected to increase to a level significantly higher than their current levels.
- Pakistan is expected to continue exporting wheat flour to Afghanistan throughout the scenario period, with no significant new restrictions on trade.
- Below-average 2017/2018 precipitation will likely result in below-average pasture and water for animals in most grazing areas, including key rangelands of the north and northeast. This is likely to result in weakened livestock body conditions and productivity as compared to last year, and below-average availability of livestock products for sale and for consumption.
- During the spring and summer of 2018, conflict incidents are likely to increase. It is assumed that displacement will affect a number of people in a similar range to the number of people displaced in 2016 and 2017, which were two of the years with the greatest number of displacements since 2002. Displacement is likely to occur in many provinces throughout most regions of the country.
- The government of Pakistan has indicated its intention to oblige the repatriation of many Afghan nationals during 2018. Based on consultations with partner agencies, the analysis assumes that the number of people repatriating from Pakistan is likely to be similar to 2016, when estimates indicated more than 600,000 refugee and undocumented returnees from Pakistan.
- Demand for agricultural day labor will follow a typical seasonal trend, with peak agricultural labor demand during the wheat harvest in June and during the spring crop harvest in August. Demand will be adversely affected by below-average staple production.
- Conflicts and civil insecurity will continue in many parts of Afghanistan throughout the scenario period, but conflicts are not expected to significantly alter access or travel to high mountain pasture for normal pastoral and transhumant migrations. More than the ongoing armed conflict, resource-based conflict during migration will be above typical levels.
- Prices for livestock and livestock products will be below normal seasonal patterns, remaining at seasonally high levels until September, when they will decline with the increase in sales as livestock return from high mountain pastures.

- Production of first season crops, especially wheat, and second season crops, particularly rice, will be below average in most parts of the country, with rainfed wheat production most likely to experience major impacts on production as compared to normal levels.
- Migrant laborers from Afghanistan currently living in Pakistan and Iran will continue to find some labor opportunities and provide remittances at seasonally normal times. However, the level of remittances from Iran will be less than average.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Low snowpack in most basins of the country is likely to lead to somewhat limited water availability for irrigation in downstream areas. This is likely to reduce yields in some areas under irrigated cultivation, for wheat and other staples. Additionally, some areas were too dry for winter wheat planting prior to the onset of winter, which has likely reduced the overall area dedicated to winter wheat cultivation. It is most likely that irrigated wheat production in 2018 will be below the five-year average. However, strong regional wheat supply and relatively low international prices are likely to drive stability in wheat prices and market availability.

As below-average precipitation has continued through February and forecasts indicate an increased risk for below-average precipitation during the remainder of the wet season through May, it is most likely that some areas of rainfed staple production will be adversely impacted by insufficient soil moisture or extended periods of dryness during critical stages of crop development. On average, approximately 25 percent of domestic wheat production is produced in rainfed areas, with significant year-to-year variation, ranging from 8 percent to 36 percent in the record since 2005, according to MAIL production estimates. Although the impact of dryness on rainfed production is unlikely to adversely impact availability or prices in main markets, it is likely to adversely impact own-produced food stocks for households in affected areas, as well as reduce the availability of local agricultural labor opportunities.

While the ongoing dryness is likely to adversely impact agricultural labor opportunities during the spring and summer, non-agricultural casual labor opportunities are also likely to remain weak, in part due to the expected additional influx of Afghan nationals from Pakistan into the casual labor market, as well as many people internally displaced by conflict. Although available data for major markets indicates stability in wage rates, it is likely that wage rates may decrease below average during the scenario period, due to high supply of laborers. It is also important to note that available data on casual labor wage rates collected by WFP is limited to eight major markets, which may not be adequately representative of labor market dynamics in more rural areas.

Rangeland vegetative conditions during the 2018 spring and summer (April – September) are expected to be below average in most areas, due to dry conditions entering the 2017/2018 wet season, below-average cumulative 2017/2018 precipitation, and above-average temperatures. This is likely to lead to poor livestock body conditions, and livestock selling prices that are below average and those of the previous year. The availability of dairy products among producing households will likely be well below normal levels.

Most households who have cultivated this year will have below-average access to food from own production. Furthermore, access to income through seasonal agricultural labor from May through August will likely be below normal. There is a risk that sales of cash crops such as orchard crops, nuts, fruits, and cumin may be adversely affected by dryness. Poor livestock body conditions in some areas may also limit income from livestock sales. Access to milk will likely be below the seasonal norm at least through May, due to poor livestock conditions and the greater need to migrate livestock for grazing.

Planting for spring, mostly rainfed wheat will begin in March in most areas. Spring wheat planting will continue through mid-April, assuming sufficient precipitation. Although improved seeds have been distributed to some farmers through the provincial offices of the Ministry of Agriculture (PAIL), there remains additional need and demand for improved seeds. Farmers who do not have access to these inputs are either using their own produced seeds from last year or are purchasing seed from the local market.

Although the weather conditions and below-average seasonal precipitation and snowpack have worsened the outlook for food

security outcomes, a temporary, seasonal improvement is anticipated in the coming months, due to the increased availability of agricultural labor opportunities, the availability of milk products following spring livestock births, the resumption of some non-agricultural opportunities in sectors such as construction, and improved market and humanitarian access with snowmelt and warmer temperatures. All these typical livelihood strategies will improve food consumption as households gain income and increase their purchasing power. Also, dietary diversity increases as early vegetables and milk become available. The start of the irrigated grain harvest in May at lower elevations typically leads to a sharp increase in labor demand, and at this point, some households will already start to replenish their stocks for the next season.

Although seasonal improvements in access to food and income will occur during the spring and summer months, displacement and reduced non-agricultural labor opportunities are expected to drive Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes throughout much of the country during the scenario period, with many households in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Most areas of the country are expected to remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) for the entire period through September 2018, except for areas of the central highlands, northeast, north, and northwest, including Badghis Province, where Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are anticipated at least until main season harvests in these areas, mostly between June and September, depending on elevation. Although the classification for many areas is not expected to deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3), populations facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes are anticipated throughout most of the country, and will remain in need of humanitarian assistance. Food security outcomes following the end of the lean season in March and April will be heavily dependent on seasonal progress toward the 2018 grain harvest.

Many IDPs, refugees, and other returnees with no or limited cultivation of their own, whether staple or cash crops for sale, are likely to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes throughout the period, in the absence of assistance. The main viable income source for IDPs and refugees during the scenario period is seasonal agricultural labor on the farms of their host communities during the May to September harvest period.

Some poor households, as well as many who have been displaced or who have returned from Pakistan or Iran, are benefitting from ongoing cash and food voucher programs implemented by several aid agencies, including various NGOs, WFP, and the Afghan government.

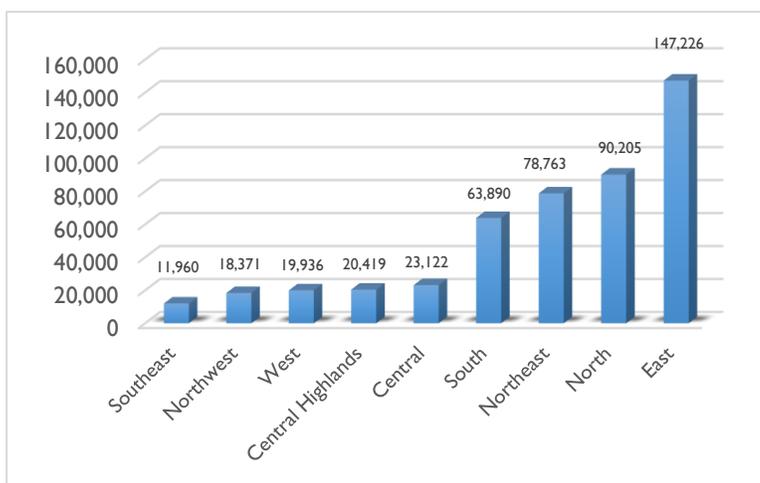
AREAS OF CONCERN

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), there are over 472,000 people designated as conflict-induced IDPs across the country, almost all of whom were displaced in 2017. The highest levels of displacement, and the highest number of IDPs, continue to be concentrated in the east, north, northeast, and south (Figure 4).

Forced displacement was reported in 31 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces in 2017. For many households, displacement has resulted in precarious living conditions that jeopardize both physical and emotional well-being. Many displaced people have faced acute food insecurity, inadequate shelter, insufficient access to sanitation and health facilities, and often increased exposure and vulnerability to ongoing armed conflict.

Figure 4. IDPs in December 2017, by region



Source: UNOCHA

Various humanitarian agencies anticipate that conflict-induced displacement in 2018 is likely to be similar to or greater than last year, as conflict between the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) is expected to

continue and may intensify. As displacement often leads people to unfamiliar environments, it is difficult to establish adequate livelihoods or even to find new sources of income. Most IDPs in the country are living in camps, though a large number also live among host populations, either in informal settlements or with local households.

After March, the number of labor opportunities increases in rural areas, including in agricultural activities after the spring planting season starts. Competition for urban labor opportunities increases, and IDPs often do not know how to find local opportunities that do exist. With limited ability to replace lost sources of income, the newly displaced tend to rely heavily on assistance. Many of these households are likely to remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) throughout the scenario period.

Khogyani District, Nangarhar Province

Current Situation

Khogyani is a district in the south of Nangarhar Province, and forms part of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The CSO population estimate for the district is ~138,000 people. The district center is the village of Kaga (or Kazha), also the most important economic center. Recently, the district has been connected by paved road to Jalalabad City. Khogyani is known for its pleasant, mild weather, and high-quality fruits and nuts, including apricots, walnuts, almonds, and grapes, which reach markets throughout Afghanistan.

During the summer months of 2017, the Taliban, ISIS affiliates, and other insurgents were able to largely control most areas of the province. Typically, fighting in Afghanistan increases during the summer months from June through September, when the climate is dry and warm. According to key informant interviews conducted by FEWS NET, the general economic climate in the province has deteriorated with the increase in conflict and insecurity, which has continued throughout the mild 2017/2018 winter.

Due to the escalation of conflict in Khogyani, particularly since June 2017, approximately 90,000 people have been displaced, primarily within Nangarhar Province and to nearby Kabul Province. According to ACLED data, conflict incidents have directly caused over 600 deaths in the district since January 2017. Both IDPs and host communities have struggled to meet basic needs, and poor local households have also experienced limited income-earning opportunities and increased rents with the large influx of people. Nangarhar Province, including Khogyani District, has also received many returnee Afghan nationals from bordering areas of Pakistan since mid-2016.

Many farming households in the area have stopped growing rice and maize due to the insecure environment, despite the presence of fertile, irrigated agricultural areas within the district. Nevertheless, nearly 90 percent of the population in the district are pastoralists, with typical livelihoods heavily dependent on livestock.

Due to political instability and reduced government control in the area, poppy cultivation has increased compared to last year. Expanded area devoted to poppy cultivation is likely to decrease local wheat production, but will provide significant employment opportunities during the harvest time, temporarily increasing labor wages. Some labor opportunities in weeding poppy and vegetable areas have already become available in February.

The findings of the SMART survey conducted in December 2017 shows that the prevalence of GAM based on WHZ was at 12.6 percent, and based on MUAC was at 7.4 percent, indicating 'serious' and 'poor' nutrition situation respectively according to WHO severity thresholds. The prevalence of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) by WHZ and MUAC was at 3.0 percent and 1.7 percent.

Figure 5. Reference map for Khogyani District, Nangarhar Province



Source: FEWS NET

Humanitarian agencies have provided humanitarian assistance to 117,262 individuals in Nangarhar Province in 2017, including many IDPs, returnees, and natural disaster affected households. WFP also maintains food stocks in Jalalabad City, recently reported at 2,470 MT, for emergency response purposes.

Assumptions

In addition to the national-level assumptions in the National Overview section of this report, the February – September 2018 analysis for Khogyani District is based on the following assumptions:

- Imports of wheat flour from Pakistan are expected to continue at a seasonally normal rate. Market availability and prices for wheat products are likely to remain stable and follow normal seasonal trends.
- Remittances sent by domestic labor migrants, civil servants and from Pakistan are likely to be below-average during the outlook period. However, remittances from the Persian Gulf countries, Turkey, and European countries are expected to remain stable.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Conflict and insecurity will increase as is typical in the spring, as roads become more accessible in March and April. Continued displacement due to conflict is likely, and given ongoing insecurity, it is likely that the number of people displaced will be greater than last year. Although the security situation last year did not severely inhibit private sector trade in goods or typical local and long-distance labor migration, there is a significant risk that conflict could have an impact on markets and/or labor migration during the outlook period. Political instability and insecurity could also threaten the overall agricultural activities and typical livelihoods of poor households.

Fighting and insecurity continue to disrupt livelihoods and cause displacement in conflict affected areas of the district. Most IDPs remain displaced, and persistent insecurity is preventing them from returning to their homes and/or accessing their farms. With limited access to markets or own production, many displaced households are surviving on food aid from the aid community, relatives, and in-kind assistance from local people, and are estimated to be Stressed (IPC Phase 2). Those who are unable to access external assistance are likely in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Further deterioration of security conditions would likely result in disruption of the agricultural season in areas of ongoing fighting.

As the spring months begin, income-earning opportunities from both agricultural and non-agricultural sources will experience a sharp seasonal increase. Although the area is currently estimated to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) at the peak of the lean season, most households will be able to purchase food and non-food necessities as spring approaches, improving outcomes to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from March through at least September.

Newly displaced IDPs tend to rely heavily on assistance and seasonal construction labor during the summer. They will meet their basic food needs due to external assistance received, market purchases made with any remaining earnings from daily wage labor from last summer, and some casual wage labor earned during the winter. IDPs are expected to remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) during March, until normal daily labor opportunities resume beginning in April. At this time, acute food security outcomes are likely to improve to Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

Daykundi Province

Current situation

Daykundi Province, located in the central part of the country, has a population of about 475,000. Most of the province is high-elevation rangeland, with areas of irrigated land along river valleys and streams, and very limited arable rainfed land. However, irrigated agriculture (wheat, almonds, and other crops) and related labor opportunities remain significant livelihoods activities. Livestock-rearing forms the other major component of typical livelihoods for most of the population. The town of Nili, the provincial center, is located at an elevation of just over 2,000 meters (6,500 feet).

Staple foods for poor households are primarily wheat and maize, while better-off households are more able to diversify their diet with vegetables and rice. Poor households typically sell their labor, livestock, and livestock products to earn income for food purchases. Most households have sheep and goats, while some better-off households also own cattle. Small livestock serves as an important source of food (milk, qrut, and sometimes meat), but more importantly as a source of cash, through the sale of dairy products, wools, and animals. The main markets for these sales include Nili, Malistan and Jaghori (Ghazni Province), and Kabul. Primary hazards for the province include floods, landslides, poor rangeland conditions due to lack of rainfall, inconsistent precipitation, and crop and livestock diseases, including armyworms, aphids, locusts, wheat rust, smut, brown tail moth, and codling moth. The province has a structural deficit in wheat production, even in years with strong production.

Generally, there are few labor opportunities within the province, leading many poor households to migrate to Hirat, Dara-e-Souf (Samangan Province), Kabul, Iran, and Pakistan to look for seasonal work. Information from key informant interviews as well as the Ministry of Economy indicates that remittances from migrant laborers form a very significant portion of rural household income.

Market access is limited due to long distances from rural areas to local markets, poor road networks, insecurity, and land mines, as well as snow during the winter. Fruits and nuts are generally sold to traders at the farm gate, then transported to the provincial center and on to regional markets. Livestock are sold before the onset of the winter at weekly livestock markets, then transported to Kandahar, Hirat, Nili, and Qalat (Zabul Province) to be sold for slaughter.

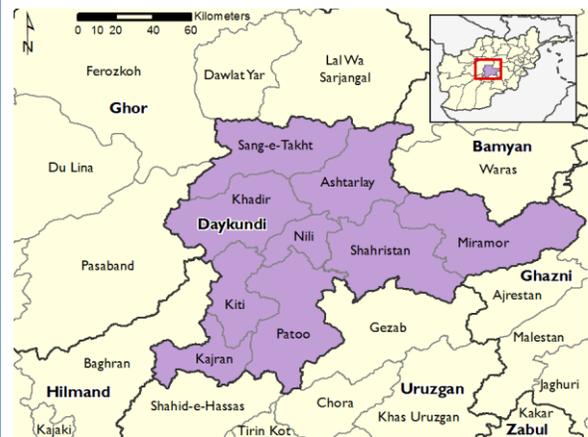
According to key informant interviews, the price of one-year old sheep in January 2018 remained similar to the previous year, at approximately AFN 3,000. Data from WFP for the provincial center, Nili, also indicates stability in livestock values, with sheep to wheat flour terms of trade in February 2018 slightly above the 2013 – 2017 five-year average for February (+ 7 percent).

Poultry in the province is extremely vulnerable to diseases – especially Newcastle. As a result, mortality rates are high. In many villages, it was reported that almost all the poultry died in 2017. Due to the very quick contagion amongst the villages (poultry roams freely), most households are affected and do not find the expansion of poultry production as a viable livelihoods option.

Due to inconsistent precipitation, low fertility of rainfed lands, and land degradation, rainfed agricultural production is only significant in small, localized areas. Although irrigated agricultural production remains a key component of the local economy, household land holdings have decreased over time with population growth, and most poor households must rely on additional sources of food and income. Based on MAIL production estimates as well as key informant interviews with representatives from community councils, government agencies, and NGOs, 2017 wheat production was strong and significantly better than the previous two years.

The availability of irrigation water was reported to be lower than normal during the fall planting season, leading to an estimated 40 percent reduction in cultivation under winter wheat in some areas. Farmers are concerned about poor water availability for 2018 production due to low snowpack, and also about the likelihood of poor pasture conditions.

Figure 6. Reference map for Daykundi Province



Source: FEWS NET

Livestock herds have decreased in recent years, due in large part to shortages of fodders and pastures after inconsistent and below-average precipitation, over grazing, and cutting of wild bushes for fuel. Tuberculosis, PPR, sheep pox, foot and mouth disease (FMD), brucellosis, anthrax, and enterotoxaemia are the common animal diseases.

Based on the focus group discussions, poor agricultural households typically are able to rely on their own production of wheat for between two and five months in a normal year. Remittances sent by migrated laborers form a key component of income for household food purchases, with Iran being a key destination for labor migration. However, The value of remittances sent from Iran by migrated laborers is reported to have decreased by 40-50 percent over the past two years, due primarily to a decrease in the afghani (AFN) value of wages earned there, increased cost of living in Iran, and high visa costs. The Ministry of Economy has estimated that around 60 – 70 percent of rural household incomes in Daykundi are from remittances sent by household members.

Daykundi is a mountainous province with a mostly rural, scattered population. Most of the inhabitants do not have easy and economical access to services such as healthcare, nutritious foods, and potable water (as the source of water is 40 percent Karez, 10 percent wells, 30 percent open springs, and 20 percent river). Most of the mentioned sources are used by animals too, leading to a high prevalence of diarrhea, particularly in summer. More than 70 percent of mothers give birth at home and do not have access to antenatal care (ANC). Health services are limited, in part due to difficulty in recruiting qualified personnel for these areas. UNICEF operates nine mobile health teams in the province, which help rural households living in remote areas to gain access to basic health services.

A SMART survey conducted in August 2017 also collected food security indicators, including food consumption score (FCS), which indicated that 27 percent of the population had “poor” food consumption, while an additional 20 percent had “borderline.”

High stunting levels, with prevalence of 42.3 percent (38.3-46.5 95 CI) in 2017, are attributed to very limited access to health services, poor sanitation, low maternal nutrition status, and high disease prevalence. High stunting calls for long-term nutrition interventions combined with infant and young children nutrition (IYCN) and scaling-up deworming practice, as well as encouraging timely health-seeking behavior during illness. Maternal nutrition and reproductive health must be improved significantly to reduce the prevalence of stunting.

According to the August 2017 SMART survey, the Crude Death Rate and Under-five Death Rate were 0.42 (0.25-0.68; 95% CI) and 0.66 (0.29-1.51; 95% CI). The rates are both below SPHERE emergency thresholds.

Assumptions

In addition to the national-level assumptions in the National Overview section of this report, the February – September 2018 analysis for Daykundi is based on the following assumptions:

- Below-average performance of spring precipitation is likely to result in below-average pasture and water for animals. This will likely lead to poorer livestock body conditions and productivity as compared to last year, and below-average access to food and income from livestock products.
- Water availability for irrigation purposes is expected to be below-average to average, limiting yields in downstream and marginal cropping areas. Due to expectations for below-average spring rainfall, production in the limited rainfed areas of the province is expected to be below-average. However, harvest outcomes will depend on the quantity, frequency, and distribution of rainfall during the remainder of the season through May.
- Remittances sent by domestic labor migrants, civil servants, and from Pakistan and Iran are likely to remain below-average during the outlook period. However, remittances from the Persian Gulf countries, Turkey, and European countries are expected to remain stable. Overall, remittances are likely to remain near current levels, but well below average.
- Mother and young children nutritional outcomes are likely to deteriorate through the early months of the outlook period, prior to local harvests and labor opportunities. Seasonal deterioration is due to limited household access to sufficient nutritious foods, as well as increased prevalence of some illnesses.
- Although market access is typically limited during the winter months, by late March or early April roads are expected to clear and markets will become more accessible.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Marginal livelihoods and significant chronic food insecurity in Daykundi Province, including an extended annual period of depleted household food stocks, poor market access, and limited income-earning opportunities, leave poor households highly vulnerable to shocks to their normal activities and sources of food and income. Due primarily to the reduction in income from remittances over the past two years, as well as poor local harvests and rangeland conditions in 2015 and 2016 which led to reduced herd sizes and livestock-related income, many poor households entered the 2018 lean season with below-average food stocks. Those who are unable to access external assistance are likely in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

Area classifications throughout most of the province are likely to remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) through June 2018. Food security outcomes following the end of the typical lean season in March and April will be heavily dependent on seasonal progress towards the 2018 grain harvest and associated labor opportunities, which are expected to remain below average.

As the spring months begin, income-earning opportunities from both agricultural and non-agricultural sources will experience a sharp seasonal increase. Most households will be able to purchase food and non-food necessities as spring approaches, improving outcomes to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from June through at least September.

The wheat harvest in September/October will further reduce the number of people facing acute food insecurity. Own-produced foods, reductions in staple food prices, improved harvest labor opportunities, and increased livestock productivity should improve household food access and result in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes in most areas.

Although the security situation is relatively good in this province, there is a significant risk that conflict could have an impact on markets and/or labor migration during the outlook period. Political instability and insecurity could also threaten the overall agricultural activities and typical livelihoods of poor households. Further deterioration of security conditions would likely result in disruption of the agricultural season in areas of ongoing fighting.

Jawzjan Province

Current situation

Jawzjan Province experiences significant seasonal variations in temperature extremes, reaching as high as 46 degrees C (115 degrees F) during summer, and dropping to -25 degrees C (-13 degrees F) in the winter. The province has 11 administrative units, including the provincial capital of Shiberghan. Jawzjan has significant areas of both irrigated and rainfed arable land, as well as rangelands in the southern districts of Qush Tapa and Darz Ab, as well as along the entire border with Sari Pul Province.

Precipitation for the wet season through February has been well below average, according to satellite-based estimates. For October 1, 2017 through February 28, 2018, precipitation was just 20 percent of the 2002-2011 average. Ongoing precipitation deficits follow several years of below-average rainfall in the province. The recent prolonged dry spells caused a decrease in water levels in the dams.

In some areas of Jawzjan Province, farmers have reported a lack of fodder for their animals, while some displaced households have been selling remaining livestock to make necessary purchases, due in part to the difficulty in maintaining them during displacement. This has led to a decrease in livestock prices of 5 - 10 percent, according to field reports.

Sheberghan District has very good rangelands, but this year pasture areas are in poor condition due to the below-average precipitation. Poor rangeland conditions may lead pastoralists to migrate to other areas of the country. Livestock is one of the main sources of income for the people of Sheberghan District, and below-average precipitation in recent years as well as conflict have led to a decrease in the number of livestock. This year's poor pasture conditions may lead to further deterioration of the livestock sector.

Figure 7. Reference map for Jawzjan Province



Due to the mild winter and low snow accumulation, market access in the province has been better than typical during the winter, with some localized access problems between the insecure districts and the center of the province. Poppy cultivation has increased in this province compared to last year. It will decrease the wheat production as a staple food item, but will increase employment opportunities and labor wages during the harvest. Approximately 84,000 people were displaced within the province in the past year due to conflicts, which has adversely affected the food consumption of poor households.

Sources of food and income have slightly changed in recent years. Agriculture and livestock are still the primary sources of food and income for most households, but an increasing number of households rely partially on remittances and official employment as well. Due to weak local labor markets and the impact of poor rainfall on livestock and agriculture in recent years, an increasing number of households have sent members abroad to seek labor opportunities, primarily to Iran and Turkey.

In April 2017, ACF conducted a SMART survey in all 11 districts of Jawzjan Province. Results indicated a GAM prevalence of 10.5 percent for children under five (WHZ <-2), with SAM prevalence of 2 percent. The GAM prevalence by MUAC for children 6-59 months was 7 percent, while SAM prevalence by MUAC was 1.3 percent. The prevalence of stunting among children under five (HAZ <-2) was 43.6 percent (39.8 - 47.5, 95% C.I.). Stunting prevalence was also noted to increase with age. The high stunting rate is likely attributable in part to the typical high disease burden. In the survey, approximately one-third of children under five were reported to have suffered illness (diarrhea, Acute Respiratory Infections, and others) during the previous two weeks. Additional contributing factors include lack of vitamins and/or minerals in the diet, and poor deworming practices.

Maternal nutrition and reproductive health must be improved significantly to address the high stunting rate. In the survey, 20.1 percent of the pregnant and lactating women were suffering from acute malnutrition based on MUAC < 230. Iron deficiency among pregnant women is a major concern. Iron supplementation, which can prevent anemia during pregnancy and eventual life-threatening complications during pregnancy and delivery, was 62.1 percent according to the survey.

Due to below-average licit employment opportunities, displacements, deterioration in the livestock sector, and reduced income from remittances, many poor households are currently facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes.

Assumptions

- During the primary 2018 staple season from March – August, it is most likely that the availability of water for irrigation will be below normal in this province.
- Remittances sent by domestic labor migrants, civil servants, and from Iran and Pakistan are likely to be below-average during the outlook period. However, remittances from the Persian Gulf countries, Turkey, and European countries are expected to remain stable.
- Wages for agricultural labor as well as for casual labor in other sectors are likely to remain similar to last year, but below average. The exception will be the short period of approximately two weeks in May of poppy harvesting, during which labor wages may increase three to four times.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Fighting and insecurity continue to disrupt livelihoods and cause displacement in conflict affected areas of the province. Most IDPs remain displaced, and persistent insecurity is preventing them from returning to their homes and/or accessing their farms. With limited access to markets or own production, many displaced households are surviving on food aid from the aid community, relatives, and in-kind assistance from local people, and are estimated to be Stressed (IPC Phase 2). Those who are unable to access external assistance are likely in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Further deterioration of security conditions would likely result in disruption of the agricultural season in areas of ongoing fighting.

Food security outcomes will begin to improve seasonally after April, with increased agricultural labor opportunities and availability of livestock products. However, due to below-average conditions in both the labor market and the livestock sector, it is expected that most areas of the province will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) throughout the period of analysis through September.

EVENTS THAT MIGHT CHANGE THE OUTLOOK

Table I: Possible events over the next eight months that could change the most-likely scenario.

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Nationwide	Above-average precipitation from March to June	Above-average cumulative precipitation and/or favorable geographic and temporal distribution could remove the moisture stress on rainfed cereal crops, primarily wheat, resulting in an increased national cereal harvest and a potentially substantial positive development for poor households who rely on rainfed production. Import needs for wheat would decrease, which often results in lower prices for net consuming households. This scenario would improve household purchasing power both by decreasing prices for wheat and wheat flour and by increasing incomes from labor associated with the rainfed harvest. If the rainfall is very good, pasture conditions may be improved, positively impacting livestock body conditions and prices.
Eastern, Northern, Northeastern and Southern Regions	Severe summer floods	If the rains from the Indian monsoon unexpectedly increased towards the end of August, then severe floods could occur, likely leading to displacements and damaged or lost crops.
Urban Areas	Pakistan refrains from forcible repatriation of Afghan refugees	If Iran and/or Pakistan do not forcibly repatriate Afghan refugees, urban food security outcomes would not likely deteriorate further, as labor wages would likely remain stable.
Western Afghanistan and the central highlands	Further depreciation of the Iranian Rial (IRR) against the Afghanistan Afghani (AFN)	For the households who receive a large proportion of their income as remittances from Iran, food access would deteriorate due to the falling purchasing power of remittances. This would be especially difficult during the months prior to local staple harvests, when food prices tend to be highest and other income opportunities are more limited, leaving these households with few coping options.
Badakhshan and the east- central mountainous agro-pastoral livelihood zone	An excessively cold spring with temperatures well below average in March and April	Cold temperatures during the kidding, calving, and lambing period in March and April could lead to excess livestock mortality, especially for very young or very old livestock. This impact would be very similar to cold winter temperatures, but losses of younger animals can take many years to replace in the herd.

ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

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