DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
Food Security Outlook

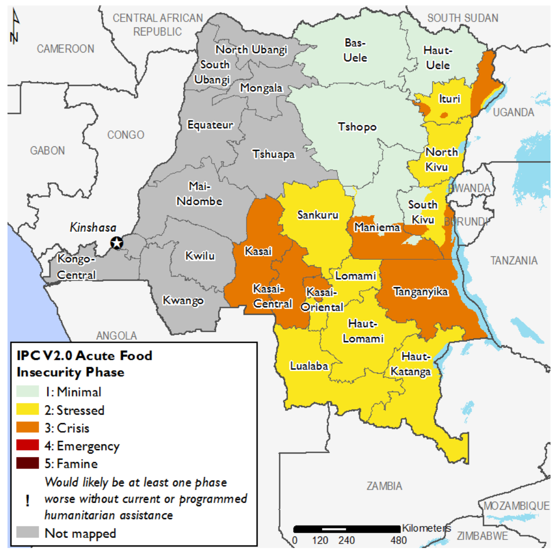
June 2018 to January 2019

A concerning food insecurity situation due to multiple conflicts and climate hazards

KEY MESSAGES

- The activity of armed groups, ongoing military operations and intercommunity violence in North Kivu, Tanganyika, Kasaï Central and Ituri are resulting in continued population displacement and, in turn, populations struggling to make a living. At present, there are 772,052 Congolese refugees in neighboring countries – of these, 104,351 arrived in the first five months of 2018. This is in addition to the 4.49 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) throughout the country.
- June marks the beginning of the season B harvest of the main food products in the northeast and central east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Given the irregular rainfall recorded during the season and the latest population displacements from crisis zones, current harvests are thought to be below average, and stocks are low.
- On account of the relatively low level of stocks following the conflicts and flooding in production areas, less food products will be available on the market and prices could rise during the lean season, which will arrive early (at the beginning of August). The volume of imports from neighboring countries during this period will be decisive.

Current food security outcomes, June 2018



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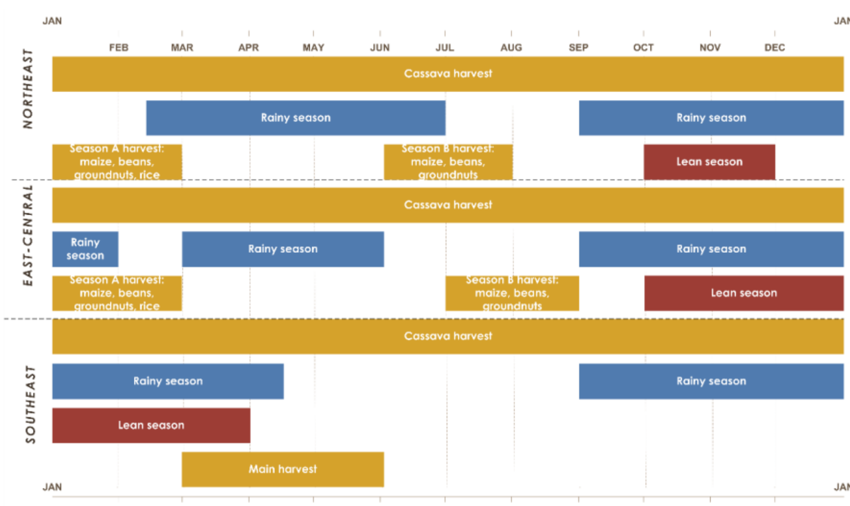
SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: *FEWS NET*

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NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Current Situation

Security: The humanitarian crisis in the DRC, one of the most complex crises in the world, remains worrying: from clashes between armed groups and government forces to conflicts between communities throughout the country. The situation is getting worse and spreading to areas that were once considered stable, jeopardizing populations' livelihoods and gradually exhausting their coping mechanisms, especially among populations that had already been affected. For example, in Djugu territory, Ituri province, ongoing conflict between the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups has led to wave after wave of people fleeing the violence in search of refuge in neighboring countries.

Population displacement: By May 2018, 772,052 Congolese people fleeing danger had found refuge in neighboring countries, mainly in Uganda, Burundi and Zambia.

Uganda alone has received just over a third of these refugees (285,000 people), with 104,000 having arrived since January 2018.

Within the DRC, there are around 4.5 million IDPs and 541,702 refugees from neighboring countries.

At least 13.1 million people (including 7.7 million children) are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, equating to almost 14 percent of the population. The DRC recently became the African country most affected by population displacement, with 1.7 million new IDPs in 2017, bringing the total number of IDPs in the country to 4.5 million (as at 30 May 2018).

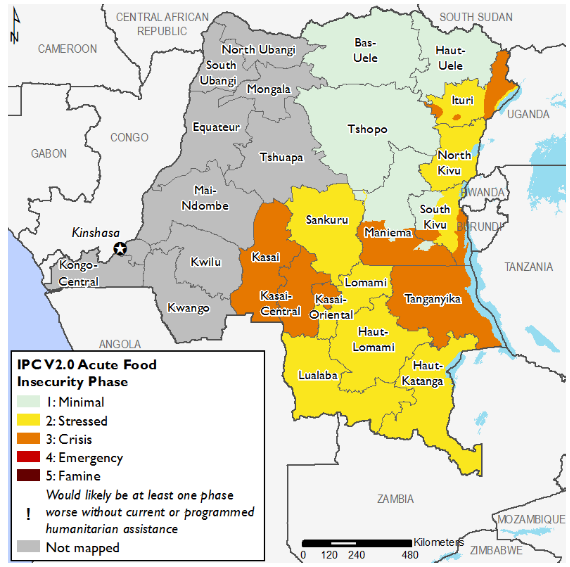
Irregular rainfall: Since the beginning of March, there has been heavy, above-average rainfall in the eastern part of the country, where the North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika provinces have seen their crops flooded and road infrastructure destroyed. Nevertheless, Ituri experienced delayed season A rainfall between October 2017 and March 2018. This irregular rainfall has had a significant impact on agricultural production. In the rest of the country, rainfall has been fairly good.

Agricultural production:

The available data show that agricultural production during season A was relatively good in comparison with the previous growing season. For instance, there was a relative increase in overall maize and bean production in Rutshuru territory, although it was still lower than normal.

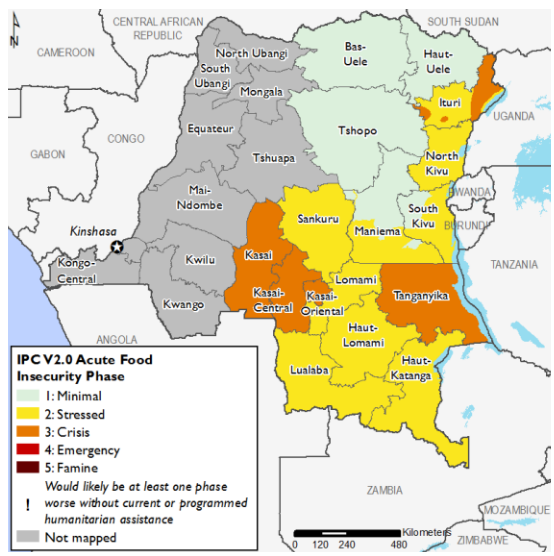
Pests: In the far north of the DRC in Aru territory, Ituri province, the variegated grasshopper (Zonocerus variegatus), first spotted in March 2015, is still causing significant crop damage, especially to cassava and maize. Resources in this area are already squeezed due to the presence of almost 15,000 refugees from South Sudan.

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2018



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, October 2018 to January 2019



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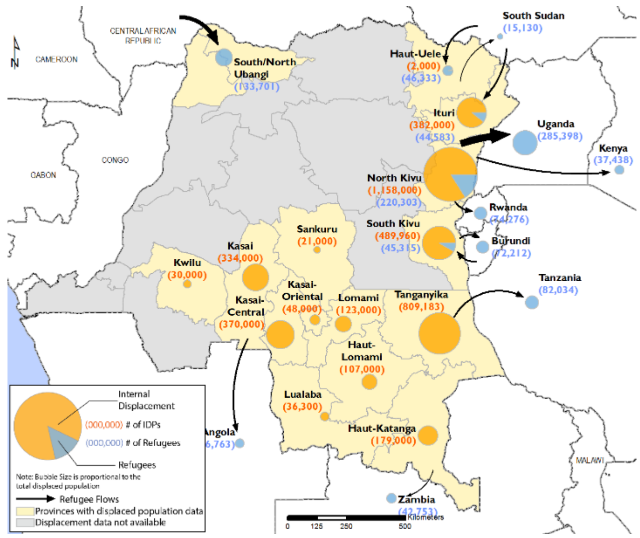
The presence of fall armyworm has also been confirmed throughout the country and is continuing to cause crop damage, especially to maize. A study is under way to investigate the impact of this pest on the crops it attacks, in order to anticipate how it will affect households' food security.

Furthermore, there are recurrent crop diseases (such as banana bacterial wilt and cassava brown streak virus) caused by farming households continuing to use seeds taken from infected plants for new seedlings. Every year, this results in a drop in production.

Humanitarian assistance: This is mainly provided by United Nations organizations – namely the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – and national and international nongovernmental organizations working with the Government. The level of humanitarian assistance remains low overall – covering between 10 and 20 percent of requirements (according to UNHCR) – and it is still most concentrated in the central east and north of the DRC, where armed and tribal conflicts have led to renewed hostilities and a large number of displaced persons and refugees, as explained above.

Figure 1. Internal and external displacement



Source: FEWS NET/UNCR/OCHA

Food markets and prices: The price of foodstuffs fell slightly in May 2018 in the various markets that were monitored. The price of corn flour fell by 7 percent in the Lubumbashi markets between April and May. In the same period, cassava flour prices remained stable in the markets of Goma, Bukavu, Kalemie, Kabalo and Uvira.

A price comparison between April and May 2018 shows a downward trend, but more stable corn flour prices in all the markets monitored (Lubumbashi, Goma, Bukavu, Kalemie, Kabalo and Uvira).

Compared with the same period last year, the price of corn flour was rising in May 2018 in the markets of Bukavu (12 percent), Kabalo (25 percent) and Kalemie (72 percent). However, the price had fallen by more than 60 percent in the Lubumbashi market during the same period. During the same comparison period, the price of cassava flour fell in the Bukavu and Lubumbashi markets, while in Kalemie the upward trend continued (at 43 percent), and in Kabalo and Uvira prices remained unchanged.

Compared with the five-year average, corn flour and cassava flour prices were on the rise in May 2018 in all the markets monitored, apart from the Lubumbashi markets, where they dropped by more than 23 percent.

Assumptions

The most likely scenario for June 2018 to January 2019 is based on the following assumptions at the national level:

Agricultural production

- **Rainfall:** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) agroclimatic forecasts are predicting that rainfall will return to normal in the central east and southeast of the DRC from June 2018. Average rainfall is expected during season A 2018–2019, which should allow households to have a normal growing season, apart from in some areas of North Kivu (Rutshuru, Beni and Lubero), where above-average rainfall is forecast and there is a risk of flooding.

- **Crop diseases:** In light of recurrent crop diseases caused by farming households continuing to use seeds taken from infected plants for new seedlings, it is likely that banana bacterial wilt and cassava brown streak virus disease will continue spreading and affecting crop production. Their impact will increase with each growing season.

- **Crop pests:** Since 2016, the variegated grasshopper has been continuing, unchecked, to devastate a range of crops in Aru territory, Ituri province, and is advancing toward other territories in Ituri. It is therefore highly likely that during growing season A, this insect will gain ground, impacting the yield of the main crops, such as cassava, maize and rice. Although armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) has been attacking the maize crop for several growing seasons, there is no strategy to tackle the problem nor any support for implementing an adequate response plan at the smallholder level.

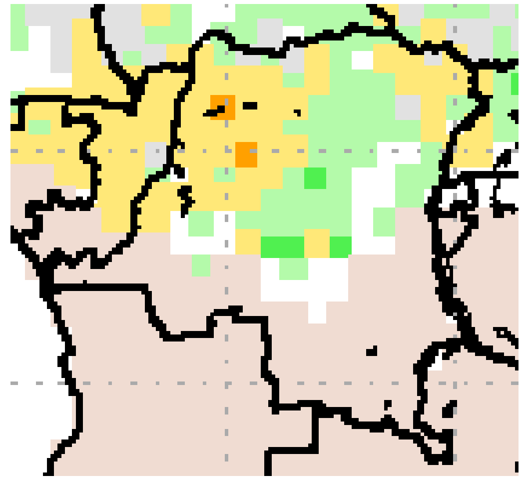
- **Growing season A:** It is very likely that growing season A 2018–2019 (beginning in September 2018) will see a large-scale armyworm attack, since such a plan has still not been implemented at the country level.

- **Market supply:** As the export restrictions on maize from Zambia have been lifted, imports of Zambian maize are expected to be above average and given the season B harvests that are under way in several parts of the DRC, it is likely that trade will remain stable in the areas that are only slightly affected by population displacement, such as the former Katanga province.

- **Food prices:** Although season B harvests are below average in several territories in the eastern part of the country, some food products should be available on the markets in the southeastern and northeastern parts during the first two months of the first scenario period (June to July 2018). This will result in a degree of stability – albeit precarious – for food prices compared with the preceding months, with an upward trend during the second scenario period (October 2018 to January 2019).

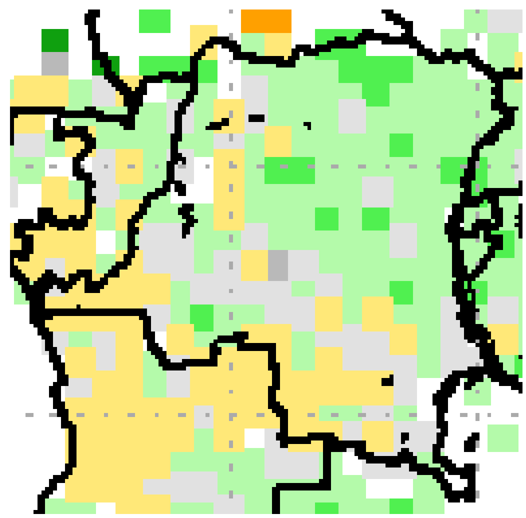
- **Lean season:** As the season B harvest is below average in several territories in the eastern part of the country, the food stocks amassed by households will last for one month to six weeks after the harvest. It is thus very likely that the lean season, which usually starts in September or October, will begin early (in August 2018). This could lead to poor households quickly developing survival strategies that are increasingly harmful.

Figure 2. Likelihood of rain, June to August 2018



Source: NOAA/NMME

Figure 3. Likelihood of rain, July to September 2018



Source: NOAA/NMME

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

June to September 2018

Throughout the entire eastern part of the country (North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema, Tshopo, Haut-Uélé, Bas-Uélé and Ituri), the main food crops – including maize, beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes and rice – are being harvested for season B 2018, while the main maize harvest in the southeastern part of the country (Haut-Katanga, Haut-Lomami and Lualaba), which only has one growing season, is under way. This will ensure that some food – albeit in small amounts – will be available in the region and will help supply local markets with staple foods, despite the climate disturbances and armyworm attacks on maize, which have caused below-average harvests in some territories (Rutshuru, Beni and Lubero in North Kivu; Uvira, Fizi and Kalehe in South Kivu; Kabambare in Maniema; and Djugu, Mambasa and Irumu in Ituri).

October 2018 to January 2019

As the season B harvest is expected to be below average, households will exhaust their stocks, which are expected to last less than two months. This period of renewed agricultural activity for growing season A, which will begin with an early lean season (end of August), will be defined by food scarcity in local markets. Between October and December 2018 (normally the lean season), households will resort to increasingly harmful survival strategies, such as reducing the number of meals and eating cheaper and less popular food.

AREAS OF CONCERN

Djugu territory in Ituri – CD13 & CD14

Current Situation

- **Multiple conflicts and population displacement:** Since December 2017, Djugu territory has been beset by conflicts and clashes between Hema and Lendu communities, displacing hundreds of thousands of people. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that there are more than 200,000 newly displaced people, including 3,800 households in the camps in the center of Bunia. More than 61,000 people have sought refuge in neighboring countries. According to GeoPoll, more than 60 percent of the population in this area was displaced in April 2018. The current deployment of the DRC armed forces and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) seems to be encouraging populations to gradually return.
- **Agricultural activities:** Such instability disrupted agricultural activities in the territory, while some livestock were pillaged. The territory has two growing seasons – the season B harvest in 2017 was either pillaged or abandoned in the fields, while the season A agricultural activities for 2018 have not begun because populations have been displaced. Agricultural production is also being affected by crop pests (armyworms) and plant pathologies, such as mosaic and cassava brown streak virus disease, which have caused extensive damage to the little cassava that is being produced in this area.
- **Fishing activities:** Instability in the area is also disrupting fish production. For more than 10 years, fish production in Lake Albert has been in decline (Provincial Inspectorate for Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock – IPAPEL); this is affecting the incomes of households whose livelihood depends upon this activity. The September to December 2017 catch period was below average compared with the May to June 2017 period.
- **Markets and prices:** Due to the low availability of food products on the market, there is currently an imbalance in how markets are operating. The aftermath of the conflict and the state of the roads are affecting market supply and have caused prices to increase slightly. However, between September 2017 and April 2018, the Congolese franc was relatively stable against the US dollar. These circumstances have enabled households to maintain their purchasing power for imported products and the price of the main foodstuffs has remained relatively stable.
- **Food consumption:** A GeoPoll study in April 2018 found that over 93 percent of households had eaten fewer than two meals a day in the past week.
- **Nutrition:** Rapid testing (carried out by Action Against Hunger in May 2018) suggests that the nutritional situation in the area remains a concern, with ever-increasing cases of malnutrition.
- **Humanitarian assistance:** In the past six months (January to June 2018), the WFP distributed food to more than 50,000 people throughout the territory. Trócaire is implementing a food assistance program (pooled fund) to benefit 2,670 households, while the FAO is working on an emergency agricultural revival program targeting 10,000 households in this area. The aforementioned GeoPoll study showed that around 49 percent of households were already receiving food support from various sources.

Assumptions

The most likely scenario for June 2018 to January 2019 is based on the following assumptions:

- **Agroclimatology:** NOAA's weather forecasts show near-average rainfall during the scenario period. This should, in theory, support a normal growing season.
- **Growing seasons:** It is expected that agricultural production will be below normal for the main crops, since the entire farming population will not return before the beginning of the growing season, and other external factors such as plant diseases are not being managed. In addition, returning households will have difficulty accessing land and seeds, thereby limiting the development of agricultural activities.
- **Developments in the conflict and the security situation:** Efforts are being made to improve the security situation in Djugu territory. With support from MONUSCO, the regular army seems to have brought the situation under control. During May 2018, there were fewer attacks and acts of violence perpetrated by militiamen against the population, allowing people to return to their villages and their livelihoods. This respite will extend into the scenario period, although potential troubles are anticipated in December 2018 during election time – these are expected to affect urban areas more than rural areas.
- **Income sources:** During the scenario period, household incomes in Djugu territory will remain below normal given that the two main livelihoods – agriculture and fishing – have been adversely affected by the current crisis situation.
- **Markets and prices:** Poor availability of food products on the market will continue, resulting in increased prices for staple foods.
- **Humanitarian assistance:** Although food assistance is insufficient, it will be essential during this period.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

June to September 2018: Djugu territory will be in harvest season in June. However, it will be a poor harvest overall, especially for crops such as cereals and legumes, given that the majority of the population has been displaced and therefore unable to undertake agricultural activities. The lean season will last from August to November. Owing to the state of road infrastructure and the financial means of households essentially made up of returning refugees, food availability in the territory will be lower. During this period, food assistance will be the main source of food, albeit covering less than 15 percent of households. The food security situation will be a cause for concern, with the territory in a Crisis (IPC Phase 3) situation.

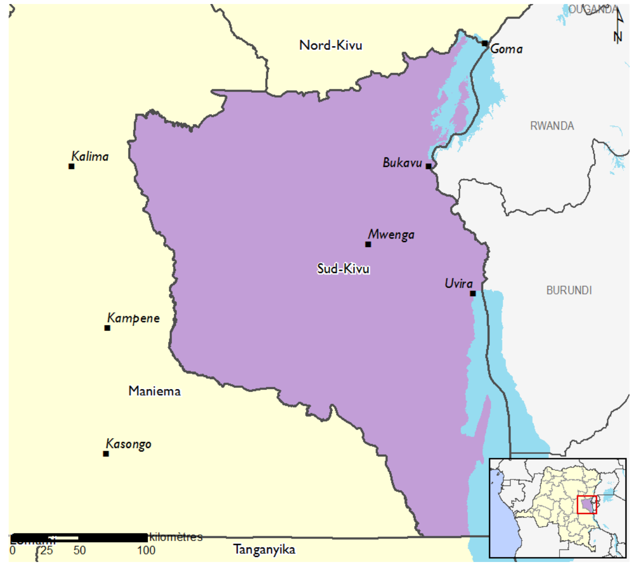
October 2018 to January 2019: This outlook period will cover the sowing season (September–October) and the green harvest (end of December–January) of growing season A. However, since not all of the displaced farming population will have returned following the conflict, the early harvest will be important. Harvest yields will be below average – yields from long-cycle crops such as cassava will be lower than usual following a period of population displacement and crops left unattended. Plant diseases that have yet to be eradicated, including the brown streak virus disease, will also influence this. Cereal and legume harvests will be poor on the whole, similarly because the displaced farming population will not have returned in full. Other households, having already lost more than two growing seasons because of population displacement, will not have access to seeds. The territory will therefore remain in a Crisis (IPC Phase 3) situation. Even in an optimistic scenario, where populations can access and cultivate land during the next growing season B, it is highly likely that the situation between now and the next harvest – expected at the end of the year – will deteriorate. As such, the nutritional situation will, in all likelihood, be critical until the end of 2018.

Fizi territory in South Kivu – CD7, CD8, CD9

Current Situation

- **Security:** The security situation in Fizi territory has been relatively stable during the first half of 2018, with displaced populations making a gradual, tentative return to their areas of origin.
- **Agriculture:** Cassava is the main crop in Fizi and is mostly grown for local consumption rather than trade. Even the poorest households set aside a significant portion of their small plots of land (less than a hectare) for growing cassava, and generally produce enough to meet their own needs. Farming households in the area are currently occupied with season B harvest-related activities, although a significant number of households have lost almost half of their expected yield (cassava, maize and market garden crops) for season B owing to unseasonal rainfall, which was excessive and frequent from January to May 2018, causing floods and excessive moisture in the soil.
- **Markets and prices**: The season B harvests currently under way in Fizi are bolstering local market supplies of cassava flour, maize and market garden crops. However, the area is still in deficit and remains dependent on imports and/or trade with other territories to supply the markets. As roads connecting the area with other territories and/or neighboring countries have deteriorated, the current harvests have not significantly influenced market prices, which usually drop around this time in a typical year. Prices for most staple foods therefore remained stable in June compared with May.
- **Consumption and food access**: Current household food consumption in South Kivu remains a cause for concern; more than one in two households do not have sufficient access to food, according to the results of the Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) survey conducted by WFP in February 2018. The results of the joint mission evaluation carried out in April 2018 by the Food Security Cluster, CAID (DRC's center for analyzing development indicators) and FEWS NET in Fizi corroborate those from other studies undertaken in the same area, particularly the aforementioned EFSA survey. They show that eight in ten households have inadequate (poor and limited) food consumption.

Figure 5. South Kivu province



Source: *FEWS NET*

Figure 6. Effects of the flooding in May 2018

Source: *Joint mission – FAO-WFP-CAID-FEWS NET/May 2018*

Assumptions

The most likely scenario for June 2018 to January 2019 is based on the following assumptions:

- **Security:** If the security situation does indeed return to normality in Fizi, as previously mentioned, displaced households will continue to return to the area. This will provide a strong boost to the territory's farming activities for the next growing season A in the overall 2018–2019 growing season, enabling returning households to quickly rebuild their livelihoods.
- **Crop conditions:** Weather forecasts for the NOAA/Climate Prediction Center (CPC) outlook period from June to August

2018 show lower rainfall and therefore better growing conditions. This will limit flooding, landslides and damage to road infrastructure, creating the conditions for the next growing season A to be successful. The green harvest period is likely to begin in December 2018.

- **Agricultural production:** Despite the cumulative effects of unseasonal rainfall in February, March and April, yields in growing season B were better than those in the previous growing season A (of the same year), a year during which most households were displaced due to insecurity in the area. However, current harvests remain below average and will only cover the months of June and July in 2018.
- **Household stocks:** Based on information received from farming households in the area, stock from the season B harvest will only cover the first two months of the scenario period (six weeks) and the lean season will arrive early.
- **Food consumption:** Household food consumption will be better during the first two months (June and July) while stocks from the current season B harvest last; however, stocks will be depleted from the start of the lean season, which will arrive early (start of August or September). Household food security will therefore deteriorate further in October and November, at the height of the lean season.
- **Markets and prices:** Staple food prices will remain stable in June and July 2018. From August, most markets in the area will see a slight seasonal increase in prices following the lean season and/or preparations for growing season A. During this period, the market will be the main source of food and household supplies, which will have an impact on the prices of the main staple foods such as maize, cassava and market garden crops. Prices may increase by over 5 percent from September onward, coinciding with the start of the school year, and will stabilize toward the second half of December 2018, during the growing season A green harvest.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

June to September 2018: The security situation in the area is currently relatively stable, as evidenced by the gradual return of displaced populations. The season B harvest period, which is supposed to cover June, July, August and September, is under way in the area. However, the anticipated yield suggests that household food consumption will only be better during the first two months of the harvest, i.e. June and July. Season B yields will remain poor by comparison with the area's requirements, although showing an improvement on season A of the same year, during which most households were either absent or not undertaking farming activities.

It should also be noted that the main road between Fizi's agricultural region and Uvira – the only road facilitating the trade of food imports and exports between territories – is steadily deteriorating. If this situation persists, it will adversely affect food availability for households in Fizi, irrespective of the harvest period. This, in turn, will lead to an increase in market prices for the main food products; with the season B harvest only covering 40 percent of requirements in terms of household food consumption, Fizi is in deficit. Compounding the issue is the presence of Burundian refugees in the territory, which only serves to increase the pressure on local resources in terms of demand. For this reason, trade with other territories and/or neighboring countries to replenish the food products market is necessary. The territory will therefore be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) during the first scenario period (June to September 2018).

October 2018 to January 2019: Given the deteriorating food security during the second part of the Most Likely scenario 1 (ML1) (August to September) and the first part of ML2 (October to November), the area's nutritional situation, which is already a cause for concern, is likely to deteriorate further. Although agroclimatic forecasts are favorable, the area will remain in deficit and households will be heavily dependent on the market. The territory will therefore remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) throughout ML2 (October 2018 to January 2019).

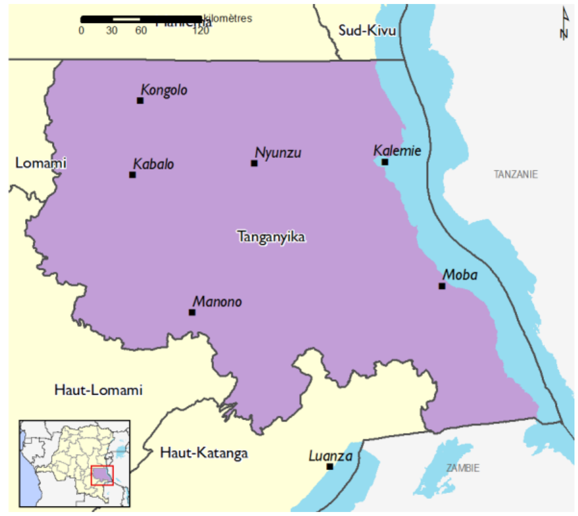
OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN IN THE COUNTRY

Tanganyika province

Following unseasonal rainfall in Tanganyika from January to April 2018, with excessive and frequent rainfall causing flooding and excessive moisture in the soil, the meteorological situation returned to normal in June 2018, allowing crops to be harvested.

Clashes between the Bantu and Batwa communities in Tanganyika province persist; the conflict has taken on a new dimension since June 2017, following incursions by militiamen from South Kivu into the northern part of Kalemie territory. In September 2017, tensions spread from Moba territory toward Haut-Katanga province (Pweto territory). The conflict has also extended to Haut-Lomami province (Malemba-Nkulu territory), which has welcomed thousands of displaced persons despite already being plagued by epidemics and food insecurity. In addition to the pre-existing tensions between communities in Tanganyika, the authorities' decision to halt small-scale ore mining in Maniema province mid-way through 2017 fueled the Mai-Mai Malaika militia's activism in Kabambare territory and at the border with Shabunda territory, in the neighboring province of South Kivu.

Figure 7. Map of Tanganyika province



Source: *FEWS NET*

Although the security situation in Tanganyika seems to be improving over time, favoring the gradual return of displaced populations to their places of origin and their livelihoods, pockets of violence persist in Moba territory.

Prices of the main staple foods have noticeably dropped during this production period. By way of example, the price of maize dropped by 43 percent on the Kalemie market and by 37 percent on the Moba market. However, this drop in prices will be short-lived owing to pressure on local production, which will have a direct impact on the availability of staple foods on the markets, and therefore on prices. These will pick up again as soon as the production period comes to an end.

Stock duration is relatively short (six weeks) compared with a normal year. Rainfall anomalies and population displacement have resulted in poor harvests with insufficient yields for the lean season in comparison with average growing seasons in the past (which usually last two to three months). As such, households will have consumed their yield and will quickly exhaust their food stocks. Moreover, there has been reduced fishing catch owing to the violent winds that rage across Lake Tanganyika from June to August each year.

Bearing in mind that the previous seasons' harvests in this area (seasons A and B of 2016–2017–2018) have been below average overall, the prospect of agricultural production returning to normal in the area remains very unlikely. To fully provide for the area's requirements, supplies will continue to be sourced from neighboring countries, but in significantly smaller volumes, owing to restrictions on food product exports introduced by Zambia in 2017. The populations of Tanganyika will therefore remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

This season B harvest period has seen good market availability of food products. Food consumption should therefore improve during this period, before deteriorating in the subsequent months given the poor harvests and the long lean season ahead. Households will be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) between June 2018 and January 2019

Kasaï region

Despite a period of relative respite in the Kasaï region, there is still cause for concern in the Demba and Dibaya territories in Kasaï Central, where the Kamuina Nsapu militia have resumed hostilities against government forces (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo – FARDC).

At the beginning of 2018, populations began gradually, if apprehensively, to return to their places of origin. However, in April 2018, Kasaï Central witnessed another surge in violent activism from the Kamuina Nsapu militia, particularly in the aforementioned territories. This resurgence of violence could plunge the already fragile province into an uncertain future and cause further damage to the precarious livelihoods of largely vulnerable populations.

Despite humanitarian organizations being present in the region, these populations are receiving minimal assistance owing to access and funding constraints – only 10 to 20 percent of the region's requirements are being met. Households have therefore had to resort to crisis and distress strategies, such as selling their productive assets, which has led to significant deficits in food consumption.

Figure 8. Kasaï region

Source: *FEWS NET*

EVENTS THAT MIGHT CHANGE THE OUTLOOK

Table 1. Possible events over the next eight months that could change the most likely scenario.

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National	Widespread crisis following election-related events	This situation could create difficulties in accessing livelihoods and bring regular subsistence activities to a halt; it could also result in accessibility issues for various areas in the country.
Fizi territory	Resumption of hostilities	This could result in renewed population displacement, thereby weakening and/or destroying the livelihoods that are currently being rebuilt.
	New influx of refugees	Significant pressure on livelihoods.
	Deterioration of transport infrastructure	This could have an adverse effect in the area and weaken trade between territories.
	Climate disruption	Excessive and/or delayed rainfall could adversely affect the crop cycle.
Djugu territory	Resumption of hostilities in the region	If the conflict resumes, populations could once again be displaced, and the situation could deteriorate further. This area of concern is still unstable; an outbreak of conflict could trigger new population movements and disrupt the main market supply routes.
	Regularization of rainfall	The rains may stabilize and return to normal during the second scenario period. In the event of delayed rainfall, as has been the case in the previous three years, crop conditions may be unfavorable in the growing season.

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.