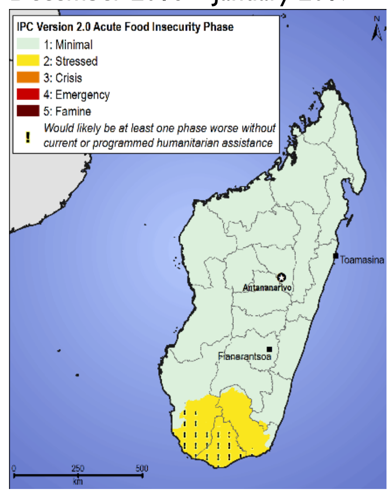
MADAGASCAR Food Security Outlook Update — December 2016

The late onset of rains in the south delays the start of the agricultural season

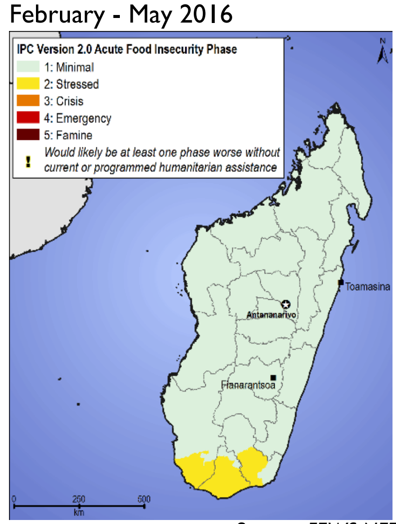
KEY MESSAGES

- Timely rains commenced in the central high plains and the southeast. In the south, however, the rainy season is approximately 5 – 7 weeks late.
- Food prices, particularly for rice, have increased across the country. The most significant price increases have been seen in the south. For example, prices for rice and maize are 17 and 20 percent more expensive than the 2-year average, respectively, in Ambovombe.
- Half rations assistance distributed in the south by WFP, ADRA and CRS is playing an important role in reducing food consumption gaps. Consequently, many drought-affected areas in the South will face Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) through the remainder of the lean season. In the absence of this assistance, food security outcomes would have been significantly worse in these areas.

Projected food security outcomes, December 2016 – January 2017



Projected food security outcomes, February - May 2016



Source: *FEWS NET*

These maps represent relevant *acute* food insecurity outcomes in significant areas of concern for emergency decision-making. They do not necessarily reflect outcomes across the country or *chronic* food insecurity. For more information, visit: http://www.fews.net/ml/en/info/pages/scale.aspx.

CURRENT SITUATION

Agroclimatology:

Timely rains commenced in the Central high plains of the Haute Matsiatra region and the southeast coast of the Vatovavy Fitovinany region, according to the latest SADC Agrometeorological Update and observations from local partners. Some areas continue to receive above-average rainfalls, allowing planting and/or normal development of crops.

Meanwhile, in southern Atsimo-Andrefana and Anosy regions, as well as in Sava and Boeny regions in the north, the rainy season has yet to start, despite one or two rains in October and November. This will likely cause the agricultural season to be 5 to 7 weeks late.

Agricultural Production:

Land preparation is ongoing in most areas in the south, but, due to the late onset of the rains, less land than normal is being labored for this time of the year. Even in areas that have received rain, vegetation recovery from the past years' droughts is slow as can be seen in the NDVI model (Figure 1). In the Eastern hills of Atsimo-Andrefana region, land preparation is reported to be normal, although planting is still pending rainfall. In this area, the demand for wage labor is normal, with normal wage rates. In the western coastal area of Atsimo-Andrefana region, land preparation has yet to begin, but here the area cropped is smaller and the demand for agricultural labor is scarce.

Markets and Prices:

Domestic rice prices increased in November in the central highlands (Fianarantsoa and Antsirabe by 17 and 11 percent, respectively, compared to the 5-year average). The largest market, Antananarivo, also recorded an increase of 13 percent for domestic rice and 13 for imported rice, compared with the 2011-2014 average.

In the south, larger price increases have been observed. For example, in Ambovombe, maize is 20 percent more expensive than the two-year average, while domestic and imported rice prices

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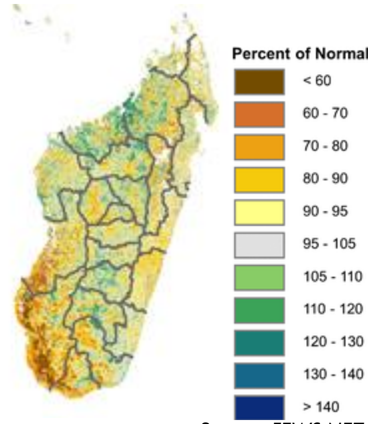
increased 17 percent. In Tsihombe, food prices are more stable: maize and domestic rice prices are 4 percent higher than the 2-year average, and cassava is 14 percent cheaper. Imported rice is 13 percent more expensive, however, for the same period.

Livestock:
On the southeast coast of Atsimo Atsinanana region, most households still have sizeable cattle herds, which are sold for cash at atypical rate, but asset stripping is slowed down by the provision of Humanitarian Assistance at half rations. The status of cattle is however beginning to physically deteriorate due to difficulties finding drinking water, especially in the Southern part of the livelihood zone.

Figure 1. eMODIS 250mm percent of NDVI from 11 to 20 Dec. 2016



Source: *FEWS NET*

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The current situation has not affected most of the assumptions used to develop FEWS NET's most likely scenario for the period of October 2016 to May 2017. However the following assumption have been updated:

- *Rainfall:* Based on forecasts of 3-month seasonal rainfall totals from SADC and other international centers, FEWS NET assumes that from December 2016 until February 2017 rains will be near normal in most parts of the country, but with an increased probability of above average rains in the southern parts of the country and below average rainfall in the north.
- *Area Cropped:* Based on recent focus groups held in the districts of Ampanihy, Ambovombe, Beloha and Tsihombe, households are said to be able to farm typical plot extensions. Seeds are said to be in shortage and more expensive than usual, by farmers themselves and partners (AINA, ACF, FAO). Farmers are expected to use coping strategies to purchase the available seeds, which should allow normal areas to be cropped, and should in turn allow a normal demand for agricultural labour, at normal wage levels, for all key stages, including harvesting**.**
- *Humanitarian Assistance:* Humanitarian assistance levels have increased in the south. Half rations assistance distributed by WFP, ADRA and CRS is expected to continue through the remainder of the lean season.

Figures 2 and 3. Plots are still not being prepared: rice paddies in Maniry (above) and maize in Androka (below), in the district of Ampanihy

Source: *FEWS NET*

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MAY 2017

Nationwide, agricultural prospects for the ongoing season look favorable, for both staple and cash crops; agricultural labor will likely be available and income levels are expected to be normal. As a result, most areas will continue to experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity through the outlook period.

However, in the districts of Ampanihy, Ambovombe, Beloha and Tsihombe, food insecurity is expected to be elevated due to the impacts of below-average 2015 production on food and income sources. To cope, atypical migration, livestock sales, and consumption of cactus pear will continue through the end of the lean season in February 2017. CRS, ADRA and WFP are providing food assistance in the districts of Betioky, Toliara II, Ampanihy, Beloha, Bekily, Tsihombe, Ambovombe, Amboasary and Fort Dauphin over the next six months, which will reach approximately 60 percent of the population in the area. Due to this food assistance distribution, most of the population will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) until the start of harvests. As production will likely be normal, food availability will improve for most between April and May. However, the recovery process will be slowed by the fact that incomes were particularly poor and assets (e.g. livestock) were depleted during this ongoing particularly difficult consumption season. As a result, most households in this livelihood zone will continue to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food security outcomes at the end of the outlook period after the start of harvests.