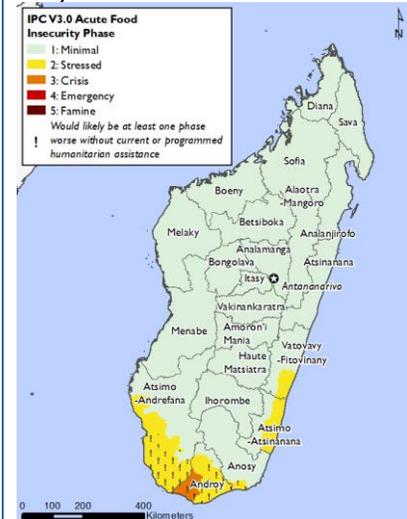


*Failed maize harvests in the far south will affect cereal availability*

**KEY MESSAGES**

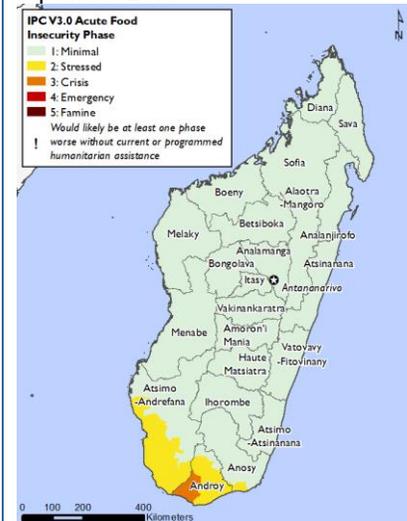
- An outbreak of Fall Army Worm (FAW, *Spodoptera Frigiperda*) is affecting maize production with the MoA and FAO reporting an estimated 60 percent infestation rate nationwide, based on data from a small sample (61 sites) collected early in the production season. Yields are expected to reduce by 47 percent, which will impact cereal availability and livestock profitability.
- Around 16,000 MT of imported rice were sold by local authorities at the subsidized price of 1,000 Ariary per kilo, 40 percent of market price, in March/April 2019 in Antananarivo, which allowed each household to purchase up to 3 kilos to help to alleviate the stress of the lean season. Additional imported rice is expected to arrive in Tulear within the next few months to be sold in the more vulnerable southern regions.
- Livestock herd sizes are gradually increasing in southern Madagascar with the current slow improvement of food availability compared to previous months, and People are starting to save and to restore their livestock. The availability of green pastures also encourages pastoralists to return to these areas. At the same time, the price of livestock is stabilizing. Cattle thefts are resurfacing in southern rural areas now that livestock body conditions have improved.
- According to the first round of the VAC Assessment, undertaken in early April, the main sources of income in the South are currently typical, like sales of agricultural products, sales of animals and sales of charcoal. Nevertheless, most households still adopt stress coping strategies to meet their food needs such as harvesting cassava before maturation.
- Most parts of Androy Semi-Arid Cassava, Maize and Livestock (MG 24) are in Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) with the exception of Beloha that remains in Crisis (IPC Phase 3!) with the important contribution of humanitarian assistance. Food consumption in Mahafaly Plain: Cassava, Goats and Cattle (MG 23) also improved for very poor households with the new harvests and recent rains and are experiencing Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) acute food insecurity. In the Southeast: coffee, litchis, cassava (MG 19), and in Rice and lima bean - Tulear II (MG20), the situation will likely remain in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity from April-May. For other households throughout Madagascar, Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity is expected.

Projected food security outcomes, April - May 2019



Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, June-September 2018



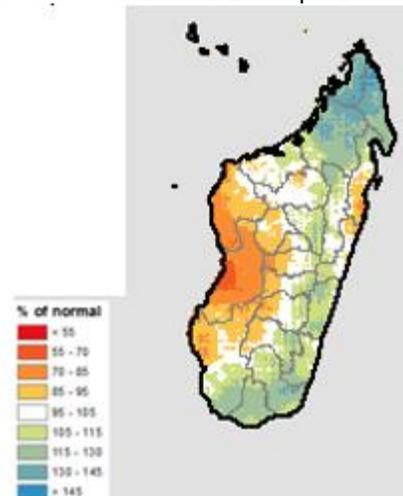
Source: FEWS NET

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.

## CURRENT SITUATION

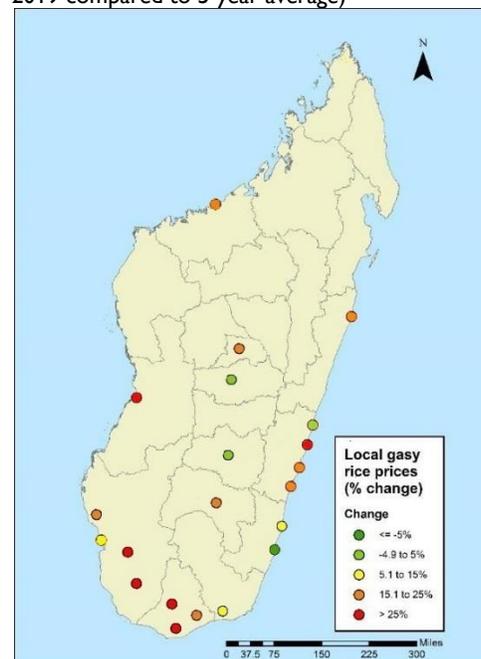
- Ongoing rainy season:** According to the Malagasy Meteorology Department, Northern Madagascar received more than 150 percent of their normal rainfall since the beginning of rainy season in October 2018. Cumulative rainfall received elsewhere, included Southern Madagascar, is so far near normal. However, the Western and Eastern coasts received well-below normal precipitation, ranging from 25 to 50 percent of average. Rainfall is ongoing in the Extreme South, the Central Highlands and the Northeastern Madagascar.
- Agricultural campaign:** Maize production in the extreme south is near zero. Although cumulative rainfall is higher than last year, it is unevenly distributed, with deficits during critical crop stages, such as flowering. In addition, a FAW outbreak affected production in the area - a FEWS NET field visit confirmed the presence of instar 3 (the larval stage of development before pupation) and above larvae. Maize seeds were also sold at prices much higher than usual, resulting in half of normal area planted. One third of farmers preferred to plant sorghum and millet in Ambovombe and southwestern Fort-Dauphin rather than maize. Their harvests are expected to start in April. Cucurbitaceous production also improved and contributes more income than usual for poor households in the South. The same is true for sweet potatoes, that's harvest just started -production is expected to be normal. Some non-mature fresh cassava is also harvested to fill food consumption gaps.
- Rice imports:** In total, Madagascar imported 38,000 MT of rice in January and February 2019 of which 16,000 MT was sold mainly in the Antananarivo, at a subsidized price of MGA 1,000, about 60 percent of market price. These quantities were very low compared to last year at the same period and compared to the 5-year average. Prices were similar or lower than last-year in most markets, except in the South where higher prices were recorded because food supply remained irregular. Throughout the country prices remained 15 to 30 percent above the five-year average.
- Prices for locally grown food products:** With the beginning of early harvests, particularly in the southern highlands, local rice prices stabilized or decreased compared to the previous month in all markets. Maize prices also decreased by 10 to 40 percent in southern markets except in Ampanihy. Dried cassava is starting to be scarce and fresh cassava is slowly replacing it in markets in the South. Sweet potatoes were also sold in Ambovombe and Tsihombe markets at half the price of previous month thanks to recent harvests. Cereal prices remain extremely high compared to the 5-year average due to below normal production particularly in the south. Prices of tubers however, are near normal.
- Humanitarian assistance:** WFP's cash transfer program is ongoing in the South. Vulnerable households in 4 communes of Fort-Dauphin district have received 70,000 ariary per household per month since January 2019. This contributes to 40-50 percent of their annual income.
- Nutrition:** The results of exhaustive screenings by the Nutrition Cluster show a deterioration of the nutritional situation in 8 southern districts during the first quarter of 2019 compared to the last quarter of 2018 due to the lean season. Particularly,

**Figure 1.** CHIRPS Seasonal Rainfall Accumulation Percent of Normal October 2018-April 2019



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

**Figure 2.** Local rice prices (% change of March 2019 compared to 5-year average)



Source: FEWSNET/ODR March 2019

the districts of Betioky, Ambovombe and Bekily passed from an “under control” situation (proxy-MAG less than 10 percent) to an emergency situation (proxy-MAG above 15 percent). The districts of Beloha and Tsihombe passed from an “under control” situation to an alert situation (proxy-MAG between 10 and 15 percent). The situation in Amboasary and Fort-Dauphin has stabilized. Compared to the first quarter of 2018, the situation is better in Fort-Dauphin and the same in Amboasary. However, it is worse in Bekily, Tsihombe, Beloha, Ambovombe, Ampanihy and Betioky reflecting the severity of the current lean season compared to the previous one. The measles epidemic may have also contributed to the current increase of MAG prevalence according to the Nutrition Cluster. SMART surveys are currently underway in three districts (Ampanihy, Amboasary and Tulear II).

## 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 May to September 2019. However, the following assumptions have been updated:

- **Remaining rainy season:** The National Meteorological Department of Madagascar forecasts normal to below normal rainfall in the southwest and northern half of Madagascar, from Antananarivo to Diego, between May and July 2019. Rainfall will likely be normal to above normal in the Central, Southeast and South areas of the country. Meanwhile, the NOAA NMME probabilistic forecast does not predict any severe rainfall deficits for the outlook period.
- **Maize production:** At the national level, maize production will likely increase compared to last year due to overall favorable rainfall but will be below average because of insufficient seed availability and the persistence of FAW infestations in southern areas.
- **FAW Outbreak:** While it is difficult to predict the presence of FAW, the forecasts for normal rainfall and the fact that the pest will soon be in its adult stage and breeding, makes its persistent in the area more likely. FEWS NET assumes that the next generation of larvae will attack off-season crops (such as sweet potatoes and horticultural crops) but not cassava. In addition, because these crops are usually planted after maize, plants will be lignified when larvae reach instar 3 and 4 (larval maturity just before pupation), meaning that while not able to significantly reduce the foliar surface.
- **Macroeconomic context and imports:** Crude oil prices are expected to increase in the next few months. Prices of imported products, including rice and fuel, will likely stabilize. The volume of imported rice will likely continue to decrease through May despite the expected government imports that will be sold at subsidized prices in Southern Madagascar in May. Total rice imports for the 2018/2019 marketing year will likely be near 340,000 MT, half of last year and 10 percent above the 5-year average.
- **Prices of staple food:** According to FEWS NET price projections, food prices will likely remain above normal within the remaining outlook period. Average imported rice prices in Tulear will likely remain stable until August 2019 despite the expected subsidized sales by local authorities. Maize prices in Ambovombe will likely stabilize at their current level until the end of the outlook period with the short season maize harvests. Based on the continuation of the harvests, local rice prices will continue to decrease until June and will likely then remain stable through September 2019. Prices of tubers will likely decrease in the South within the next few months.
- **Nutrition:** From June onwards, acute malnutrition will likely reduce due to increased food availability, improved water access particularly in Beloha and the improved vaccination and other campaign coverage particularly in Ampanihy. Nevertheless, Androy and Atsimo Andrefana regions will remain in an “alert situation” with fewer communes in emergency whereas the situation in Amboasary and Fort-Dauphin will improve.

## PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2019

**Androy Semi-Arid Cassava, Maize and Livestock (MG 24)** Between April and May 2019, food consumption availability improved compared to previous months thanks to sweet potato, cucurbitaceous and pulse harvests. Nevertheless, severe food gaps remain since households are still highly dependent on markets rather than on their own production. Food prices, although starting to decrease, remain above normal, particularly in Tsihombe and Beloha, which limit poor households’ access to energetic staple foods and limits their consumption diverse foods. Cash distribution programs targeting an important percentage of households in all fokontany, are ongoing and will likely extend into May. Therefore, most parts of the zone will likely be in **Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) acute food insecurity situation with the important contribution of humanitarian assistance**. From June onwards, food consumption availability will continue to improve with the tuber harvests. Tubers prices will be near normal. Food gaps will reduce but most households will continue to face **Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) acute food insecurity situation with the contribution of humanitarian assistance**. Within the outlook period, Beloha will remain in the worst situation.

Between April and May 2019, food consumption in [Mahafaly Plain: Cassava, Goats and Cattle \(MG 23\)](#) also will improve as very poor households will have new harvests thanks to recent rains. Nevertheless, wild foods consumption and sales like wild tubers and prickly pear cactus fruit remain predominant. Local labor for weeding cassava and planting sweet potatoes is intensified. Humanitarian assistance will continue to be distributed until May 2019 with a higher coverage than in the previous months. Very poor and poor households in most of MG23 are therefore experiencing **Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) acute food insecurity**. From June onwards, staple food consumption will improve with the harvests and the lower market prices. Food gaps will reduce but will persist due to the expected below average harvest and low incomes. For poor households, agricultural activities will be intensified during the harvest period. Sales of staple foods will slightly increase but will remain below normal. Very poor and poor households in MG23 will experience **Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity between June and September 2019**.

In the [Southeast: coffee, litchis, cassava \(MG 19\)](#), and in [Rice and lima bean - Tulear II \(MG20\)](#), the situation will likely stabilize in **Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity** from April-March. [For other households throughout Madagascar](#), **Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity** is expected.

#### ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates the FEWS NET's Food Security Outlook, which is published three times per year. Learn more about our work [here](#).