

SOUTH SUDAN Food Security Outlook Update

November 2011

Below-average harvests and sustained trade restrictions to negatively impact food security

- Preliminary results from the recent crop harvest assessments indicate that, although good rainfall in the latter half of the season improved crop performance in long-term sorghum growing areas, the national-level harvest will still be below average.
- The main areas of concern through the Outlook period are Warrap, Northern Bahr El Gazal, Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Unity states. Food insecurity is likely to deteriorate in these areas after January 2012 due to early depletion of food stocks, above-average food prices due to general trade restrictions with Sudan, and ongoing insecurity. In addition, the presence of IDPs and returnees and refugees from Sudan will continue to place significant pressure on host communities. The lean season is expected to start earlier than normal, in February/March instead of May/June.

Updated food security outlook through March 2012

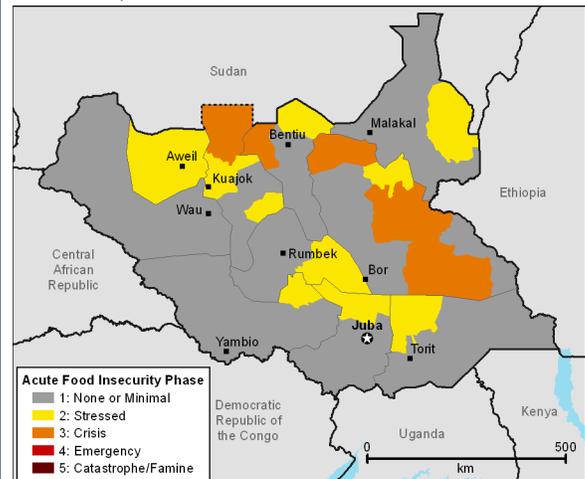
Generally, mixed food insecurity conditions will likely persist through March 2012, ranging from minimal food insecurity (IPC Phase 1) to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels. **Minimal food insecurity is defined as a situation in which households do not experience short-term instability and are able to meet basic food needs without negative coping strategies. Stressed food insecurity is defined as a situation in which households experience short-term instability, and food consumption is reduced, but households do not engage in irreversible coping strategies. Crisis food insecurity is defined as households experiencing short-term instability that results in losses of assets and/or significant food consumption deficits.**

Key areas of concern are those that are likely to experience Crisis levels of food insecurity: Northern Bahr El Gazal, Jonglei, Northern parts of Warrap and Unity, and Upper Nile areas bordering Sudan. Food insecurity in these areas will largely be driven by below-average harvests, above-average sorghum prices (two to three times the five-year average) caused by trade restrictions with Sudan, and the presence of market-dependent returnees and refugees from Sudan. The continuation of trade restrictions by Sudan could potentially result in South Sudan denying access to Sudanese herders, who traditionally graze their animals in the south starting in November/December. This has the potential to cause tension and disrupt livelihoods along the border, thus exacerbating already existing food shortages.

The 2011 crop assessment completed on November 4 confirmed that good rainfall since August improved crop performance in long-term sorghum growing areas (parts of Western Bahr El Gazal and Lakes), though production remains below average in these areas, especially in Western Bahr El Gazal. Preliminary assessment results indicate that overall

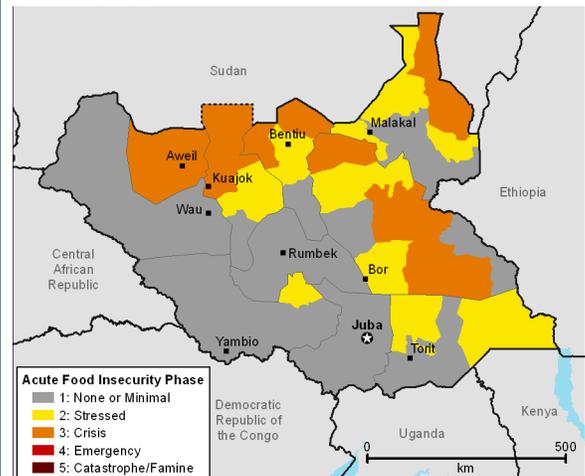
This report provides an update to the July 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in South Sudan from July through December 2011. The next Outlook report will be released in October and will cover the October 2011 through March 2012 period.

Figure 1. Current estimated food security outcomes, November – December 2011



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Estimated food security outcomes, January - March 2011



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on the IPC Household-based Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

national harvests will be below normal, with a 30-60 percent yield reduction compared to last year. The reductions are significant in six out of 10 states, namely Warrap, Northern Bahr El Gazal, Western Bahr El Gazal, Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei. Crops contribute 25 – 35 percent of annual food needs for the majority of households in these states and general shortfalls are typically covered by a combination of purchasing food from markets and increased reliance on wild foods.

Nile-Sobat Zone counties of Mayom, Abiemnom, Pariang, KhorFulus and Fangak

Crisis conditions are likely to persist through at least March 2012 in parts of Unity State, including Mayom, Abiemnom, Pariang (Ruweng), Fangak, and Khorfulus counties, driven mainly by insecurity and the significant number of refugees from Blue Nile and South Kordofan states in Sudan, returnees from Sudan, and displaced populations from Abyei. More than 86,000 returnees have arrived in Unity since last year, equivalent to 15 percent of the host population. In Abiemnom, displaced populations from Abyei and returnees together form over 70 percent of the host population, overwhelming the capacity to support these populations. Pariang is also increasingly impacted by the ongoing influx of refugees from South Kordofan, which number approximately 20,000–23,000 people, equivalent to 25-30 percent of the county's population.

Insecurity in the zone has disrupted cultivation, reduced access to markets, and raised food prices. In Mayom, insecurity has displaced 5-10 percent of the population into Rubkona and Abiemnom, while an additional 20-25 percent of the Mayom population failed to cultivate this year due to insecurity and land mine infestation. Similarly, in Fangak and Khorfulus, less area was planted due to insecurity, especially in Khorfulus, where the season had already advanced by the time people returned to their homes. In the coming months, heightened insecurity could disrupt the harvests and host population dry season food access activities, such as wild food collection and fishing. In addition, restrictions on grazing for Sudanese herders could increase tensions in some locations, particularly Abiemnom, Mayom, and Pariang.

Typically households compensate for food shortfalls through reliance on markets for food purchases, but ongoing general trade restrictions from Sudan have reduced market food availability. Consequently, the price of the staple food, sorghum, is unseasonably high, while informal trade with Sudan is increasingly impossible due to escalating insecurity in South Kordofan, which harbors some of the main trade routes. Alternative trade routes with Sudan have not been established due to widespread tensions along the Sudan-South Sudan border. Currently, some essential commodities are being smuggled from Sudan at very high prices, supplemented by increased imports from Uganda. Imports from Uganda are much more expensive due to travel distances.

Western Flood Plains Zone (Aweil East, West, North, South, Center, Twic, Gogrial East, Gogrial West)

Following the just concluded short-term sorghum harvest in October, poor households in Northern Bahr El Gazal and northern parts of Warrap State have transitioned from Crisis to Stressed levels. However, due to expected below-average harvests, as well as high IDP and returnee concentrations, these improvements are not likely to be sustained beyond November/December 2011. Crisis conditions are likely to recur by January, when harvest stocks run out. Also, existing trade constraints with Sudan will result in reduced grain availability on markets and heightened prices. As in other areas, the restrictions could also cause tensions and insecurity with Sudanese seasonal herders if they attempt to graze in South Sudan, particularly in Aweil East, Aweil North and Twic counties.

Household-level responses to this year's crop shortfalls are likely to vary by location. Although poor households in Aweil counties are likely to increase reliance on wild food, labor, and petty trade, these strategies are unlikely to meet food needs due to the disruption of traditional trade patterns with Sudan and unusually high grain prices. Poor households in Gogrial and Twic counties are likely to increase reliance on better-off kin and increase movement to fishing areas for more fish, water lily plants and other wild foods. Nonetheless, asset poor households, returnees, and the IDP population from Abyei will continue to experience significant food consumption gaps. The gaps are likely to remain most critical in Twic County, where the displaced from Abyei number over 42,000, equivalent to 20 percent of the total Twic population. These displaced populations are relying on humanitarian assistance and the host population to meet basic food needs.

Eastern Flood Plains Zone counties of Wuror, Akobo, Ayod and neighboring Pastoral Zone county of Pibor

Despite the recent harvests, Crisis levels are likely to persist in Wuror, Akobo and Pibor counties due to the impact of violent and destructive cattle raiding since April. When rains improved in mid-August, cattle raiding disrupted weeding and replanting for 27,000 people (representing about 15 percent of the total population in the county) in Wuror.

Despite the presence of troops in Wuror and neighboring counties, raids by Murle tribe of Pibor County on their neighbors

appear to continue, implying that disruptions to food access are likely through March as the areas are isolated from markets due to constant insecurity. Other factors likely to constrain food security include: lack of access to some traditional areas of exchange, especially in Ayod due to the presence of armed militia; increased competition for kinship support; competition over dry season wetland resources due to likely increased population movements during the January – April dry season; and continued isolation from markets due to very poor road infrastructure. Currently, retail sorghum prices in the key market of Bor stand at 60 percent above the seasonal average.

Some poor households are likely to experience significant food consumption gaps in Wuror, Akobo, and Pibor between now and March 2012 even after increasing reliance on fish and wild foods. In Ayod, conditions are likely to deteriorate starting in January 2012, due to the spread of Kalazar disease (Visceral Leishmaniasis), which reduces labor productivity and increases vulnerability to malnutrition as well as ongoing increase of militia.

Areas of emerging food insecurity – Upper Nile areas of Maban, Renk, Manyo, Panyikang and Fashoda

Due to escalating insecurity and the potentially higher number of refugees fleeing from south Blue Nile to Upper Nile as the dry season begins, Stressed to Crisis levels of food insecurity are likely to emerge, particularly in border areas of Upper Nile (Maban, Renk, Manyo, Panyikang and Fashoda). In addition, there has been reduced crop production, especially in mechanized areas of Renk. This production typically compensates for shortfalls for local populations through informal exchange mechanisms between large farmers and subsistence farmers who comprise the general population. Meanwhile, prices in the key market of Malakal are 2-3 times above the five-year average.

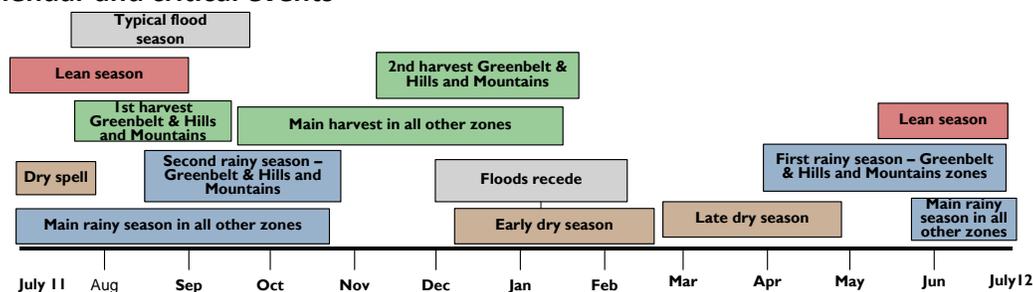
Counties of Maban, Renk and Manyo are emerging as potential hot spots due to deteriorating insecurity along the South Sudan-Sudan border and in Blue Nile State. Insecurity has caused the withdrawal of OXFAM, a lead humanitarian agency in Upper Nile. There are unconfirmed reports that up to 50,000 refugees have fled into Upper Nile, with most concentrating in Maban County, whose population is around 45,000. In addition, 11,000 people have returned to Maban County from Sudan since last year. Additional refugee influxes will overwhelm the host capacity to support them without external assistance.

Current conditions in Maban and Renk are likely to rapidly deteriorate by January should refugee inflows continue. Flood recession, expected within the next month, is likely to facilitate the flow of more refugees into this area. Increased insecurity along the South Sudan-Sudan border could destabilize food security in the western border areas of Manyo, Fashoda and Panyikang areas, in terms of lack of access to dry season hunting and gathering food activities such as fishing and water lily collection. Already, attacks by armed militia in August and November have displaced some people from Manyo into Melut. There is also a high likelihood of unseasonal food shortages due to shortfalls caused by lack of income typically obtained through agricultural labor in Sudan, which peaks around this time.

Conditions or events requiring close watch in other areas

Several factors require close monitoring: the increased spread of East Coast Fever among livestock, especially in Jonglei; increased spread of lumpy skin disease in Kapoeta Pastoral Zone (reported to have originated from Ethiopia); insecurity between Madi and Acholi in Magwi County; and dynamics of Lord’s Resistance Army attacks in Western Equatoria. Most households in Jonglei and Kapoeta are highly reliant on livestock and their products for food, and high livestock mortality levels could significantly affect food availability. Tribal insecurity in Magwi County and LRA insecurity in Western Equatoria’s Greenbelt Zone could destabilize food security in these areas, which are generally considered food secure.

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET