• Northern parts of the Western Flood Plains zone (Aweil West, North, East and South, Gogrial, and Twic Counties) and eastern parts of the Eastern Flood Plains livelihood zone (Nyiro, Waat Diror, Wuror and Akobo) remain highly food insecure due to conflict and flooding. These areas will likely remain food insecure until harvest in October.

• More flooding occurred during August-September. Recently flooded areas include Malakal, Longuchok, Maiwut, and Mabaan in addition to areas of Aweil East, Twic, and Nasir and Bor which flooded in July/August. Floods have had a mixed impact. While they have damaged crops, they will also increase access to fish, especially between October and April. Currently, the magnitude of this year’s flood impacts on crops has not been determined. This will be fully established by Crop food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) scheduled for October 2008.

• Other parts of South Sudan remain relatively stable, with isolated pockets of moderate food insecurity. Food security has improved in the Greenbelt and Hills and Mountains livelihood zones (Tambura, Ezo, Yambio, Maridi, Mundri, Yei, Juba, Magwi, Kajokeji) following end of first season harvest.

Seasonal calendar and critical events

For more information on FEWS NET’s Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

Source: FEWS NET
Progress of the June-September rains and cropping season

The June-September/November cropping season, predominant in the Western and Eastern Flood Plains, Nile-Sobat and Ironstone Plateau livelihood zones (Figures 2 and 3) is now at its final stage, marked by the onset of harvesting in September/October. Harvest of early maturing crops is also expected in the June-November cropping areas.

The June-September/November season started with an early onset of rainfall around April/May, followed by a 20-50 percent rainfall reduction during June-August in northern areas (Figure 4). Heavy rainfall in August and September led to improvements (Figure 5), but caused floods in low lying, flood-prone areas of the Eastern/Western Flood Plains and the Nile-Sobat River Zones. These areas include Aweil East, South and West counties, as well as Twic, Abiemnom, Bor, Longuchok and Nasir counties (Figure 1).

A preliminary analysis of maize and sorghum performance, based on Water Requirements Satisfaction Index (WRSI) imagery, illustrates that below average maize performance is likely in many areas (Figure 6). The same is true in a smaller number of areas for sorghum (Figure 7). However, it is important to note that due to August flooding, below average sorghum performance is likely to be more widespread than indicated in Figure 7. The forthcoming Crop Food Mission Supply Assessment (CFSAM) in October will help to confirm this analysis.

The second September-December cropping season, predominant in the Greenbelt and Hills and Mountains livelihood zones, has started following completion of short-cycle sorghum, cowpeas, maize and groundnut harvest.

Recently improved pasture conditions in the southeastern parts of the Pastoral Zone have been sustained, although slightly below-normal conditions have persisted in the northern parts of the Pastoral Zone (Figure 8).

Food security conditions by Zone

Western Flood Plains Zone

The northern parts of this zone have remained highly food insecure due to conflict, displacement and flooding. An estimated 120,000 people have been displaced by various causes this year (50,000 – Abyei May conflict, 30,000-Gogrial June conflict, and 39,000 – Aweil July-August flooding). These events exacerbated food shortages experienced during the May-August hunger season.

Recent floods have also caused an outbreak of acute watery diarrhea which has persisted despite multi-sectoral interventions including cholera treatment, food provision, water purification, sanitation improvement (toilet construction) and hygiene education. Investigations into reports of cattle deaths are currently ongoing. The floodwaters are reported to have receded.
Eastern Flood Plains Zone

High food insecurity persists in the south-eastern parts of this Zone due to last year’s flood-induced food shortages which have been exacerbated by a recent surge in cattle raiding and inter-ethnic conflict in areas of Akobo, Nyirol, Wuror, Pulchol, Dior, Duk and Yuai counties. Armed conflicts have persisted in these areas for many years and impact food security by severely curtailing cultivation and trade.

Nile-Sobat Zone

Food security conditions remain normal in areas that have not been affected by flooding. Here, the poorest households are now relying on fish, milk, water plants, and green sorghum or maize. Areas affected by flooding include the Baidit area of Bor County, where close to 3,500 people have been left homeless due to overflowing of Nile river. An additional 1,700 people displaced by floods in Nasir. Parts of Shilluk County (Malakal) are also affected. Flooding is typical in many parts of this zone, but its timing and magnitude differs from year to year. Early flooding occurs around June/July and often results in extensive crop damage. On the other hand, late flooding in September and does not usually have significant effects on crops. The impact of this year’s flooding on crops will be assessed in the coming month.

Pastoral Zone

Rains began on time during March/April, but dryness soon followed and lasted until June, negatively affecting crops. However, this Zone is predominantly pastoral and only 30-40 percent of the population cultivates crops because rainfall is typically erratic and because poor crop performance, especially in the southern parts (Kapoeta County), is not unusual. Crop performance in lowlands near rivers tends to be fair.

Due to erratic crop performance in this zone, livestock production is the most important source of food and income. The April-July dry spell affected pasture and water availability, delaying the return of animals from their dry season grazing by two months. An inter-agency assessment conducted in Kapoeta, in July, indicates that some animals that remained in homesteads reportedly died due to lack of pasture and water. The number of dead livestock has not been established. Animals began returning in August when rains improved.

Grain availability in this zone is generally poor and the price of grain is reported to have doubled. More than half of the population grain tends to purchase grain from neighbors or traders who bring grain from Kenya and Uganda. Over the past three years, goat/grain terms of trade have declined by 50 percent, eroding pastoralist purchasing power.

Though the inter-agency assessment indicates high food insecurity in the area, the coping mechanisms reported (e.g., wild food collection, livestock sales, petty trade and labor) are fairly typical. A better understanding of livestock conditions, the extent of losses, current herd sizes and grain/livestock exchange mechanisms would be better indicators as these relate more closely to key livelihood activities.

Hills & Mountains and Greenbelt

April-July crops harvested during August have improved food security conditions. The second cropping season has just begun in September and most households are likely to remain food secure until second season crop harvest due in December.

Updates from an inter agency assessment conducted in the eastern parts of the Hills and Mountains zone (Budi County) in July indicate that crops groundnuts, simsim, cowpeas, okra, cabbage, egg plants, tomatoes, onions and kale were negatively affected by April-June dryness in some parts. However, crops such as sesame and bulrush millet are being harvested, supplemented by wild foods, meat, petty trade to buy food, kinship support and labor.
Ironstone Plateau

September updates on Raga County by Intermon–OXFAM indicate increased consumption of early maturing crops of maize, some sorghum, groundnuts, assorted vegetables and fruits. Rainfall data obtained from Raga meteorological office indicates that despite reduced rainfall amounts between July – September this year, this year’s rainfall pattern and distribution closely resembles that of last year, when despite dry spells, crop production was average. Currently, sorghum, the main crop, and sesame are at an advanced growth stage and weeding is ongoing. Cassava and sweet potato root crops are also doing well. It’s worth noting that despite lack of comprehensive food security baselines, surplus crop production is typical of Raga County.

Markets and food prices

As of the first week of September, sorghum prices in key markets showed signs of stability or decline. In Juba, the price of sorghum remained the same as August, while prices in Wau dropped by 10 percent compared to August. A 30 percent drop in prices since August was recorded in Aweil, possibly due to increased food availability due to ongoing flood-related food interventions. Information for Malakal will be available in the next one or two weeks.