

Food security depends on more than rainfall and harvests. Staple food and commodity prices, seasonal labor demand, livestock health, pest infestations, government and international aid, and conflict are among the many factors that affect the ability of people to grow, buy, gather, or otherwise obtain food.

Given this complexity, it is impossible to forecast food insecurity with perfect accuracy. To minimize the uncertainty and increase the reliability of its analysis, FEWS NET uses a methodology known as scenario development.

WHAT IS SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT?

Commonly used by planners, policy-makers, and researchers of various disciplines, scenario development offers a structured approach to outlining a future course of events. It relies on analysis of the current situation, assumptions about the future, assessment of potential changes to food and income sources, and analysis of the likely responses of various actors.

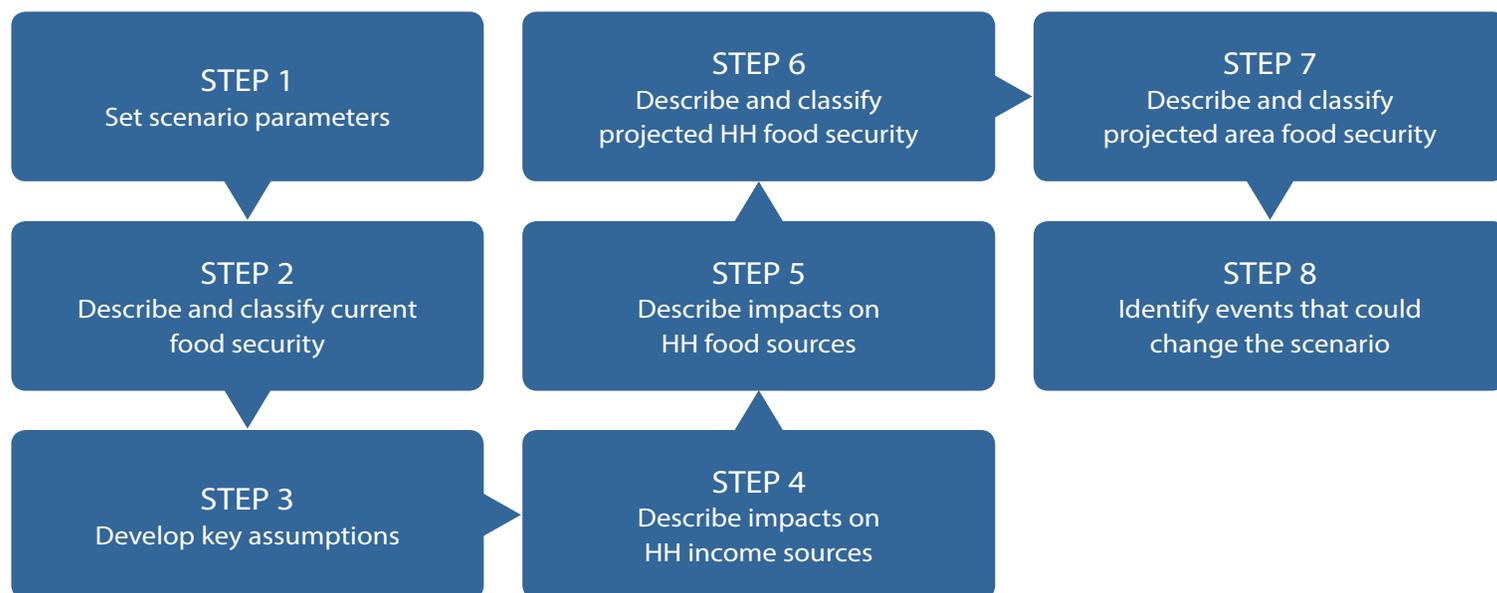
FEWS NET AND SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

To estimate future food insecurity, FEWS NET analysts conduct scenario development every four months. They collaborate closely with partners to gather the best available data on factors particular to food security in areas of concern. To classify the outcomes, the analysts draw on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 2.0 (IPC 2.0), a global standard developed by a multi-agency consortium of humanitarian partners. In addition to quarterly outlook reports, FEWS NET updates scenarios monthly as new information becomes available.

FEWS NET has used scenario building to:

- Assess the impact of drought on poor farming households in Somalia
- Estimate the effect of currency devaluation in Malawi on food security
- Project impact of extensive flooding in Nigeria on the regional market
- Understand the effects of coffee rust on labor dependent households in Central America

Scenario development helps to ensure that shocks, such as drought or conflict, are not automatically assumed to result in emergency needs. Rather, such events are considered within the local context and in light of ongoing assistance, resulting in more useful guidance on where action is required.



FEWS NET IN BRIEF

Created by USAID in response to the 1984 famines in East and West Africa, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) provides early warning and integrated, forward-looking analysis of the many factors that contribute to food insecurity. FEWS NET aims to:

- Inform decision-makers and contribute to their emergency response planning
- Support partners in conducting early warning analysis and forecasting
- Provide technical assistance to partner-led initiatives