

# JOURNALISTS' GUIDE TO THE FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NETWORK



# About FEWS NET

[The Famine Early Warning Systems Network \(FEWS NET\)](#) is a leading provider of early warning and analysis on acute food insecurity around the world.

Created in response to the 1984 famines in East and West Africa, 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 by working with scientists, government ministries, international agencies, and NGOs to track and publicly report on conditions in the world's most food-insecure countries.

FEWS NET maintains offices in about 20 "presence countries" where locally based analysts work full time from a national office. In addition, [FEWS NET monitors a number of countries remotely](#), typically from a nearby country office. In these remotely monitored (RM) countries, the analysis centers on identifying anomalies and spotlighting deteriorating conditions.

Every four months, FEWS NET analysts use a [scenario development process](#) to estimate food security outcomes for the coming eight months. Using a consistent eight-step process, analysts assess the current food security situation in areas of concern, make assumptions about the future, and consider how those assumptions might affect food and income sources for poor households. Then, based on the convergence of evidence, they determine the most likely scenario and classify the expected levels of food insecurity using the [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#) system. Finally, analysts identify major events or changes that could affect the outcome.

*FEWS NET implementing team members include:*



# Major Reports

## Food Security Outlook (FSO)

FEWS NET's flagship product provides an overview of current food security conditions and outcomes and projects food security eight months into the future. FSOs typically project the most likely scenario, though a section that discusses other scenarios can be included; some reports discuss a worst-case scenario. This report is completed for all presence countries.

Published: February, June, October

## Food Security Outlook Updates (FSOU)

Updates the food security conditions, drivers, and expected outcomes reported on in the previous FSO. The FSOU is prepared for all presence countries and covers a period of six months.

Published: April, August, November

## Key Messages

Updates FSOs/Remote Monitoring Reports (RMRs). The purpose is to update recent events, assumptions, and project food security outcomes. This report is completed for all countries - presence and RM.

Published: Every other month

## Food Security Alert

Aims to draw specific attention to developing or ongoing acute food security crises, specific issues driving acute food security needs, and/or monitored conditions that have the potential to drive severe needs in the future. Alerts can be for a specific country or area of a country, for a region, or can have a global scope.

Published: Ad hoc

## Global Weather Hazards

Anticipates severe weather or climate events in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central Asia. This product provides maps with current weather and climate information; short and medium-range weather forecasts (up to one week); and the potential impact on crop and pasture conditions. It does not reflect long-range forecasts or food security conditions.

Published: Weekly

[Click here](#) to access the full range of FEWS NET reports.

# Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) System

FEWS NET analysts use the [IPC scale](#) to describe the anticipated severity of acute food insecurity in its reports and mapping.

Widely accepted by the international community, IPC is based on common standards and language. This five-phase scale is intended to help governments and other humanitarian actors quickly understand a crisis (or potential crisis) and take action.

FEWS NET classifications are IPC-compatible, and while these classifications and the underlying analyses adhere to key IPC protocols, they do not always match the results generated by the IPC.

To learn more about the IPC, [click here](#).

## Using the Term “Famine” in News Coverage

Famine declarations are rare and have very specific, technical thresholds that must be met (IPC Phase 5).

Any area classification of IPC Phase 3 or higher requires humanitarian assistance and can be referred to as “food insecurity”.

- A country faces a *Risk of Famine* when Famine is not the most likely scenario, but there is credible alternative scenario in which Famine is the likely outcome.
- A *Risk of Famine* is intended to call attention to cases where the potential exists for an alternative, but not-most-likely, scenario in which Famine is the likely outcome.

Famine (uppercase) vs. famine (lowercase)	
Formal IPC Phase 5 declaration	Informal term referring to extreme scarcity of food

*FEWS NET reporting will only ever use the term Famine in accordance with its formal definition as per the IPC system. We encourage journalists to do the same to ensure clear communication to the public.*

<b>PHASE 1 Minimal</b>	Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.
<b>PHASE 2 Stressed</b>	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.
<b>PHASE 3 Crisis</b>	Households either: - Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; OR - Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.
<b>PHASE 4 Emergency</b>	Households either: - Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; OR - Are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.
<b>PHASE 5 Famine</b>	Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution, and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. (For Famine Classification, area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.)

# Key Food Security Terms

*FEWS NET uses the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) scale to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. Proper use of IPC-related terms is vital to accurate reporting of FEWS NET data.*

Acute food insecurity	Rapid-onset or short-term food insecurity of an extent that merits emergency response; severity is defined by assessing the degree to which households can meet basic survival needs and maintain normal livelihoods
Agroclimatology	A field in the interdisciplinary science of agrometeorology, in which principles of climatology are applied to the monitoring and forecasting of the performance of agricultural production systems; agroclimatology addresses the foremost role that climate plays in plant and animal production
Crisis	IPC Phase 3; households either have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition, or are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies; <b>synonyms: food insecurity, food crisis</b>
Drought	A period of below-average precipitation in a given region, resulting in prolonged shortages in the water supply, whether atmospheric, surface water or ground water
Emergency	IPC Phase 4; households either have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality, or are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation; <b>synonyms: severe food insecurity, food emergency, severe hunger</b>
Famine	IPC Phase 5; households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution, and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident; <b>synonyms: catastrophic food insecurity, starvation, communities collapse</b>
Hazard	The probability of a shock such as drought, flood, conflict, or market disruption which is likely to impact people's livelihoods
Risk	The expected losses (of lives, livelihoods, persons injured, property, economic activity disrupted, or environment damage) due to a particular hazard for a given area and reference period resulting from interactions between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions
Shock	An atypical event or series of events (either rapid or slow-onset) that have a significant impact; shocks can be positive (e.g., a significantly better than average harvest) or negative (e.g., a failed harvest or rising food prices); differs from a hazard in that it is an event which has already occurred or is occurring, while a hazard indicates a potential threat