

Risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5)

What is a Risk of Famine? A country faces a *Risk of Famine* when Famine is not the most likely scenario, but there is a credible alternative scenario in which Famine is the likely outcome.

What are the degrees of risk and what is FEWS NET’s threshold for stating a country faces a Risk of Famine? 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. All countries face some risk – however remote – that Famine could occur. The likelihood that the alternative scenario will occur determines whether FEWS NET issues a *Risk of Famine* statement. When the likelihood that the alternative scenario in which Famine is the likely outcome is considered moderate, FEWS NET communicates that a country is facing a *Risk of Famine*.

Likelihood of scenario in which Famine is the likely outcome	Summary	Communication approach
Very low	Although these scenarios are possible, the likelihood that they come to fruition is very low; FEWS NET does not consider them <i>credible</i> alternative scenarios.	FEWS NET does not communicate a <i>Risk of Famine</i>
Low	The risk of these scenarios is on our radar. Although the likelihoods of the scenarios coming to fruition are increasing, they are still low enough that FEWS NET does not consider them <i>credible</i> alternative scenarios.	
Moderate	There is a credible alternative scenario under which Famine would become likely. The scenario is not the most likely scenario but has a moderate likelihood of occurrence.	FEWS NET communicates a <i>Risk of Famine</i>
High	Scenarios with a high or very high likelihood of occurring are the most likely scenario.	Famine (or Famine Likely) would be classified
Very high		

How does FEWS NET determine the difference between a low and moderate likelihood of occurrence? As is done to determine the most likely scenario, FEWS NET relies on ground information, forecasts, and historical trends to understand the likelihood of a scenario’s occurrence.

- **Example:** Severe drought over the Horn of Africa often leads to concerns that Famine could occur in areas where households are particularly vulnerable to drought and unable to cope for whatever reason. While drought is always possible, there are some years in which there is a *low* likelihood of severe drought and other years in which there is a *moderate* likelihood of severe drought. FEWS NET does not seek to include a long-standing *Risk of Famine* statement in the Horn of Africa because there is always the potential for severe drought at some point in the future. Rather, FEWS NET would indicate there is a *Risk of Famine* when there is a *moderate* likelihood of severe drought, and there is a credible alternative scenario in which the impacts of that drought would result in Famine in the projection period.

What are the steps to determining if there is a Risk of Famine in a given country? In Step 8 of the [Scenario Development](#) process, FEWS NET determine events that could change the scenario. These events are not considered most likely but are determined to have a credible (*moderate*) chance of occurring in the projection period. If the likely outcome of the credible alternative scenario is Famine, it is determined the country is facing a *Risk of Famine*.

What is the validity period of a Risk of Famine? As the *Risk of Famine* is assessed as a part of FEWS NET’s projection period, it is valid for up to an 8-month projection period. The *Risk of Famine* is reassessed—at a minimum—every four months with each Outlook cycle, but may be evaluated more frequently if needed. As such, a *Risk of Famine* statement may be removed or added to any country at any time, as conditions evolve.