

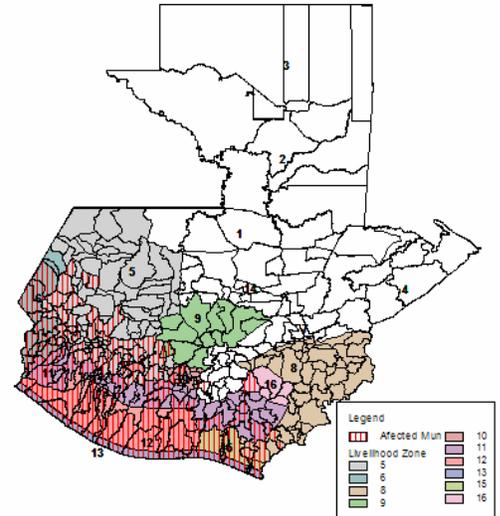
The Mesoamerican Food Security Early Warning System (MFEWS) issues periodic warnings when a food crisis is developing, where groups are now, or about to become, highly food insecure and take increasingly irreversible actions that undermine their future food security. Decision makers should urgently address the situations highlighted by this Warning.

October 2005

Flooding, Mudslides and Crop Losses in Guatemala

The southern Pacific and western regions of Guatemala currently face a severe livelihood and food security crisis. Flooding and landslides, caused by the torrential rains from Hurricane Stan, that began on October 2, 2005, have damaged crops, housing, infrastructure, and electrical and phone networks. It is expected that rehabilitation and reconstruction costs will exceed those of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. On October 6, 2005, the Government of Guatemala declared a state of emergency for all of Guatemala. According to the National Coordinator for Disaster Response (CONRED) flooding and landslides caused by Hurricane Stan have affected 292,370 people in 839 villages. Over 108,000 people have been evacuated to emergency shelters, 663 have died, 844 are missing and 382 are injured. Damage to agriculture is estimated at US\$207 million, while 24,545 houses have been damaged and 8,595 destroyed (CONRED, October 17th 2005). The GOG is starting a comprehensive damage assessment this week.

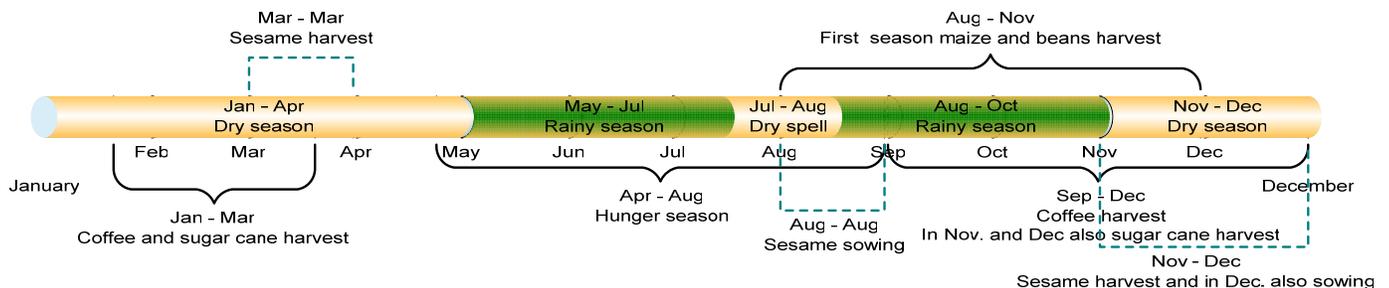
Affected areas and Livelihood Zones



The hurricane occurred during the first of this year's staple cereals harvest and left many households acutely food insecure. In the affected areas (livelihood zones 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15¹) most poor households rely on subsistence farming and on income earned as agricultural laborers to meet their food needs. The hurricane has reduced food access for poor households in multiple ways: loss of crops for household consumption (maize, beans and vegetables), price increases of staple cereals (prices which quickly surged have come down, but might increase again in three to four months, if national availability of staples such as maize and beans is exhausted), income reduction as a result of the loss of cash crops (e.g. sesame) and potentially through a reduction of labor demand in the coffee and sugar cane harvests (livelihood zones 11 and 12). Flooded sugar cane fields are at risk of rotting if they cannot dry out. If this occurs, the full impact on livelihoods and food security will be felt during the seasonal sugar cane harvest (November –March) since it is an important migratory income source for many poor households throughout Guatemala. In addition to reduced food access, people in the affected areas are at risk of contracting waterborne diseases.

Emergency response activities are ongoing; however; relief efforts in some areas have been hampered by continued rains, flooding and infrastructure damage. The short-term priorities of food, shelter, health, water and sanitation are being coordinated by CONRED.

TIMELINE OF CRITICAL EVENTS



¹ Guatemala Livelihood Zoning and Profiling, Mesoamerican Food Security Early Warning System, 2005.