

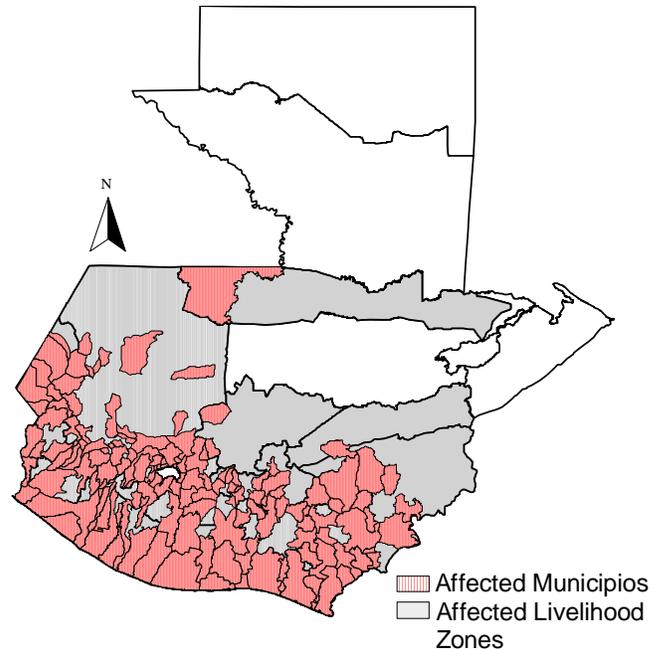
The Mesoamerican Food Security Early Warning System (MFEWS) issues periodic warnings when a food crisis is developing, where groups are now, or about to become, highly food insecure and take increasingly irreversible actions that undermine their future food security. Decision makers should urgently address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

November 2005

## Crop Losses and Livelihood Distress

In early October 2005, Guatemala was hit by Hurricane Stan, leaving damages and losses estimated at \$983 million, which represents 3.4 percent of Guatemala's 2004 gross national product: The damages include \$149 million in the social sector (housing, education and health); \$269 million in the productive sector (agriculture, livestock, fishing, industry, commerce, tourism); \$446 million in infrastructure (water, sanitation, electricity and transport), \$41 million in environment and \$78 million in emergency costs (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Nov. 2005). According to the National Coordinator for Disaster Response (CONRED), flooding and landslides have affected 474,928 people in 1,158 villages, 669 people have died, 844 are missing and 386 were injured. The affected areas are shown in figure 1. Two of the most affected departments are San Marcos and Sololá, which also show high poverty levels (70% before Stan hit). Food security is being affected via reduced access to food and markets; lack of safe water and bad sanitation conditions, especially in the Altiplano and coastal areas, where increased incidences of respiratory diseases and diarrhea have been detected by the World Food Program (WFP).

Figure 1: Affected Areas



Source: CONRED and MFEWS

The hurricane struck just before the annual harvest of basic grains and farmers lost between 45 and 90 percent of their production of basic grains and 20 to 90 percent of cash crops. With the exception of the Altiplano which, if people receive seeds before January, has the potential for a harvest in February and March 2006, the next grain harvest will not occur until August 2006. The combined effects of crop, seed and employment losses, land degradation, damages to infrastructure, housing, schools, water systems etc., is not limited in time, and it can take years for households to recover. The drought in 2004 left many poor households with little reserves for 2005, which have now been further reduced. The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that household maize reserves are down to 0 to 3 months in the southern and western parts of the country.

According to WFP, an estimated 285,000 people are in need of food aid over a six-month period. Immediate food access problems are being met through food distributions by the Ministry of Agriculture, WFP, and others; although it is still not clear if communities in more remote areas are being reached. The Government of Guatemala estimates that there is sufficient food aid to cover four to five months of the initial six months required. Emergency response efforts in the water and sanitation sector are concentrated in the coastal areas. Longer term rehabilitation programs are still being designed. In addition to food aid needs, the Secretariat of Food Security estimates that 75,000 to 85,000 families will need assistance to reactivate agricultural and livestock activities and the Ministry of Agriculture has started to distribute animals, seeds, fertilizers and farming tools to 25,000 families (families are defined as units of five people). There is still uncertainty about the total number of people needing what kind of assistance. WFP and CONRED are planning to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the situation to be presented at the beginning of 2006. If food aid ends by March 2006, and if

rehabilitation and reconstruction activities do not reach poor household, these poor households will have little means to get them through to the next harvest in August. On the positive side, the feared loss of employment in the coffee and sugar cane sectors did not occur.

**TIMELINE OF CRITICAL EVENTS**

