BURKINA FASO Food Security Update April 2021

Atypical start to the lean season for poor households in the northern half of the country

KEY MESSAGES

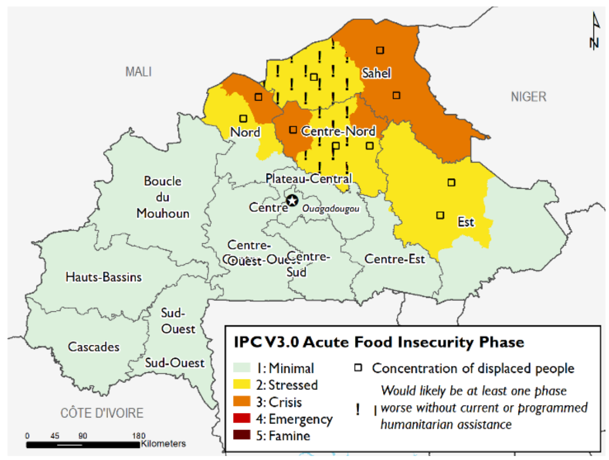
- In the insecure Sahel and Centre-Nord regions and in the Loroum and Yatenga provinces in the Nord region, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and poor host households are forced to both unsustainably sell their animals and skip meals or reduce the quantity and quality of food consumed, and will be exposed to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity until September, while food assistance promotes Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) food insecurity between April and May in the Soum and Sanmatenga provinces.

- In the calmer southern and western regions, households will continue to have a normal consumption based on self-produced stocks and their typical reliance on wild products. Poor households in these areas will remain in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity until the green harvests between August and September. In the Est region (Komondjari, Gourma, Tapoa, and Kompienga provinces), however, the decline in staple food production and rising prices will lead to a deterioration in food access, especially for IDPs and poor host households, who will remain exposed to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity until September.

- Although the number of killings has decreased since the second half of 2020, non-state armed groups continue to exert influence and control over the population, especially in the northern, northeastern, and eastern border areas. Continuing security-related incidents and threats cause further displacement and limit households' access to usual sources of income. Insecurity will continue to prevent the normal functioning of markets and disrupt agricultural and livestock activities.

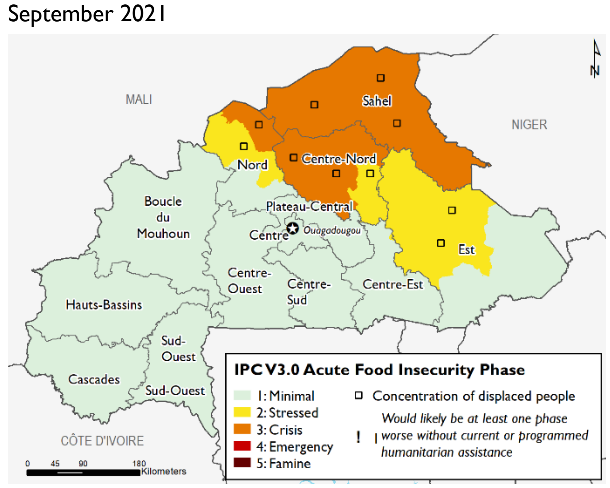
- Market cereal supplies are below average and prices are slightly higher than average overall. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a negative impact on imports of consumer goods due to higher international prices, restrictions in supplier countries, and disruptions at ports.

Map of projected most likely food security outcomes, April to May 2021



Source: *FEWS NET*

Map of projected most likely food security outcomes, June to September 2021



Source: *FEWS NET*

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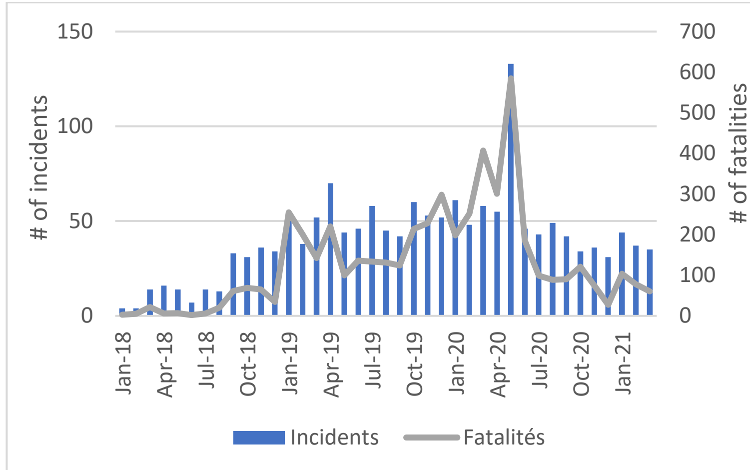
CURRENT SITUATION

Security situation: While the number of attacks on civilians and the defense and security forces (DSF) has remained unchanged over the past year, the number of killings dropped sharply in the second half of 2020. This trend has continued into 2021 (Figure 1). Extremist jihadist groups continue to exert influence and control over populations in the northern, northeastern, and eastern border areas, leading to further displacement. This does not encourage significant numbers of people returning to their places of origin. DSFs remain overwhelmed and rely on the collaboration of local communities and the Homeland Defense Volunteers (VDP), who have become a main force in the fight against jihadist extremist groups. In several areas of the Sahel and Est regions, curfews and movement restrictions remain active, slowing down transport activities and disrupting livelihood activities such as night hunting.

Figure 1. Security-related incident and fatality trends from January 2018 to March 2021



Source: *FEWS NET/Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) data*

Agropastoral production: Despite the disruption of agricultural activities by insecurity and localized flooding, national cereal production is up approximately 13 percent compared to the five-year average. This increase was made possible by the generally good rainfall conditions. It is mainly driven by the good production of maize, which accounts for 37 percent of total production. However, in some provinces, there are significant declines in staple products, such as a 50-percent drop in millet production in the Soum and Loroum provinces and a 40-percent drop in maize production in the Kompienga province, mainly due to insecurity. In the Tapoa province, irregular rainfall and insecurity led to a 38-percent drop in sorghum production.

Market operations and food prices: Overall, cereal and cowpea availability are below average on the markets due to, among other things, localized drops in production (from flooding and insecurity), traders' limited access to certain collection areas due to insecurity, significant outgoing flows of cereals to Niger and cowpeas to Ghana, and supplies of maize to breweries and poultry industries on local markets in response to the upward price trend and international disruptions. In March, cereal prices on retail markets were 15 to 30 percent higher than last year and 5 to 15 percent higher than the five-year average. In the more insecure regions, cereal prices are 10 to 20 percent above average, with atypical variations (40 to 60 percent compared to last year and 20 to 30 percent compared to the average) observed in the far east on the border with Niger. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to negatively impact imports of consumer goods, particularly imported rice, oil, and milk. According to the Ministry of Trade, economic operators point to international price increases and the restrictions still in force in supplier countries. On the other hand, they report blockage of their goods at ports due to the cumbersome truck-loading process. The prices of these products are controlled, so overall they are stable compared to last year. They are also stable compared to the five-year average, except for a 22-percent increase for oil.

Livestock market operations: Despite the departure of large-scale livestock farmers to the southern regions and coastal countries, the supply of animals on the main markets (Dori, Djibo, Fada, Kaya, and Pouytenga) is near average due to destocking carried out by IDPs who have a strong presence in these areas and also due to the atypically high influx of animals from Niger. Demand is satisfactory for small ruminants; at least 80 percent of animals brought to market are sold. On the other hand, cattle exports have declined. On the Djibo, Dori, and Kaya markets, ram prices have increased between 17 and 30 percent compared to the average. Goat prices are stable on the Dori market, but up 66 percent in Djibo and 10 percent in Kaya. The goat/millet and goat/sorghum terms of trade are in livestock farmers' favor. Compared to the five-year average, terms of trade have deteriorated slightly for livestock farmers who sell on the Dori and Kaya markets. However, for those who sell at the Djibo market, terms of trade have improved by 53 percent.

Sources of income: In addition to animal sales, households derive their income mainly from selling agricultural products and market garden produce, gold panning, and remittances from migration. The overall 30-percent increase in cash crop production compared to the average should help offset the slight drop in prices and allow producers to have stable incomes. Market gardening activities came to an abrupt halt in several locations due to early drying up of water sources. Demand for market garden produce, particularly onions and tomatoes, is down overall because, despite freight authorization at the borders, health restrictions prevent free movement of buyers. In Kongoussi in the Centre-Nord region, cases of tomatoes and bags of onions are sold 25 and 30 percent lower than in a normal year, respectively. As for gold mining, restrictions on movements limit people's access to gold sites, so they do not benefit from the increase in the price per gram, which now averages 32,500 compared to an average of 25,000 between 2013 and 2019, equaling a 30-percent increase.

Population displacements: The country recorded an estimated 1,147,699 IDPs at the end of March. These IDPs are mainly present in the Centre-Nord (40 percent) and Sahel (32 percent) regions. The decrease in killings and community agreements have certainly encouraged some people to return to their villages of origin, but threats and violence from jihadist groups continue to cause new displacements in the Oudalan, Yagha, and Gourma provinces.

COVID-19: Since January, there has been a downward trend in cases of community transmission of COVID-19 (132 active cases as of April 27) and ongoing restrictions are limited to compliance with safety measures. The national economic situation remained gloomy in the fourth quarter of 2020. Economic operators, particularly those in the hotel/bar/restaurant and transport sectors, have faced declines in revenue, and cash flow pressures have led to a decline in employment.

Humanitarian assistance: Food assistance (50 percent in cash and 50 percent in food) is concentrated in the Sanmatenga and Soum provinces, where most humanitarian stakeholders are present. For the months of March and April, food assistance reached an estimated 30 and 22 percent of the population and 50 percent of their needs in these provinces respectively. In other provinces, population coverage is below 20 percent. In addition to the low representation of stakeholders, threats and violence from jihadist groups are hampering stakeholder activities. Over the last three months, an average of 87 percent of planned assistance was effectively delivered to IDPs and host households. The government also planned free distribution of 30,000 tons of cereals to 747,000 people (IDPs, victims of last season's floods) to cover three months of cereal needs over the period from April to June. However, previous operations have always been conducted beyond the planned schedules due to logistical and administrative difficulties. The current distribution will not likely follow the targeted timeframe.

ASSUMPTIONS

The most likely food security scenario from April to September 2021 is based on fundamental assumptions in relation to the changing national context as follows:

- Targeted violence against civilians by extremist groups will continue at the current rate to deter local residents from joining state-supported volunteer groups. In the north and northeast, insecurity will continue to prevent normal market functioning and disrupt agricultural and livestock activities, which are the population's main livelihoods.

- Based on seasonal forecasts from the North American Multi-Model Ensemble (NMME) and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), the rains will start on time within the country. The cumulative rainfall will be normal to above average during the rainy season. This will have a positive impact on average to above-average harvests from October 2021 onwards for the main season, particularly in areas less affected by insecurity.

- Insecurity will continue to limit agricultural and livestock activities, particularly in the Centre-Nord, Nord, Sahel, and Est regions. As in the last two growing seasons, activities may be carried out mainly around villages and the growing of tall crops, particularly cereals, may be prohibited in certain areas.

- Despite overall average production in the country, market supply will remain below average due to outgoing flows and supplies from new industrial stakeholders. Household demand will remain typical, particularly in the western production areas. Ongoing government operations including selling cereals at reduced prices and distributing 33,000 tons of cereals should help reduce household pressure on the markets, particularly in areas with a high IDP presence. Overall, staple prices are expected to remain slightly above their seasonal averages until the end of the lean season in September.

- Labor supply could be above average due to the presence of IDPs in several areas and also due to reduced external migration flows. Daily labor costs are less likely to change as they have remained constant over the past three years. However, demand may decline as cash crop producers experience lower incomes due to the negative impacts of lower exports. Overall, income from labor (land preparation, crop maintenance) will be lower than normal.

- Except in the far north, fodder and water availability will be average and allow animals to endure a typical lean season between April and June while waiting for pasture to regenerate from July. As a result, their physical condition will remain average during this period, and the increased demand for animals for the Ramadan (May) and Tabaski (July) holidays will help keep prices for small ruminants above average and the terms of trade favorable to livestock farmers.

- The slowdown in economic activities could continue to exert pressure on job opportunities and incomes and worsen household purchasing power, especially in urban areas. Additionally, remittances from migration will remain lower than normal because of the decline in this activity with continued border closures, but also because of the sluggish economic activities in host countries, mainly Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Mali. This will negatively affect rural households' purchasing power and access to agricultural inputs.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK TO SEPTEMBER 2021

In the calmer southern and western regions, households will continue to have a normal diet based on self-produced stocks and the usual availability of non-timber forest products (shea, néré, and grapes) and wild products. In these areas, at least 90 percent of households will have at least three to six months of stocks to cover their needs as of April (Early Warning System [EWS]/National Strategy for Food and Nutrition Security [ENSAN], March 2021). These areas will remain in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity.

In urban centers, declining incomes and above-average prices for basic commodities are negatively affecting food access for the poor. Increases in petroleum product and bottled gas prices over the previous month have led to increased demand and prices for firewood and charcoal. These factors will continue to put pressure on household purchasing power. Less than 20 percent of the population in these areas could be exposed to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity until September. This Stressed (IPC Phase 2) situation will also be observed in the east of the country (Komondjari, Gourma, Tapoa, and Kompienga provinces) as the decline in basic commodities and price increases will lower food access, especially for IDPs and poor host households.

In the northern half of the country, particularly in the provinces in the Sahel and Centre-Nord regions and in the provinces of Loroum and Yatenga (in the northern region), the proportion of households with less than three months' worth of available stocks varies from 20 percent in Yatenga to 77 percent in Soum. Early stock depletion leads to atypical dependence on markets and humanitarian assistance. In these areas, at least 80 percent of households reported a decline in livestock numbers due to past sales, losses, and looting by terrorist groups. With limited access to other sources of income, their livelihoods will continue to deteriorate. Planned food assistance for April (50 percent cash and 50 percent in-kind) is expected to reach an average of 22 percent and 30 percent of the population in the Soum and Sanmatenga provinces respectively. In other provinces, food assistance coverage is low. Additionally, insecurity is hindering the delivery of this assistance. Between November and January, an average of 87 percent of planned food assistance was actually delivered. This promotes Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) food insecurity in the provinces of Soum and Sanmatenga until May. Without this assistance, these provinces will worsen to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from June onwards. In other provinces, IDPs and poor host households are forced to both unsustainably sell their animals and skip meals or reduce the quantity and quality of food consumed. IDPs and poor host households in the Yatenga, Loroum, Bam, Namentenga, Yagha, Séno, and Oudalan provinces will face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity until September.

Events that could change the scenarios

Possible events over the next six months that could change the most likely scenario.

Area	Events	Impact on food security conditions
National	Irregular rainfall during the season	Irregular rainfall will reinforce pessimistic views on the outcome of the season and thus encourage speculative behavior on prices. Staple food prices could experience greater upward fluctuations, all of which would degrade households' purchasing power.
Centre-Nord, Sahel, Nord, Est	Increased insecurity	An increase in security-related incidents and fatalities could further disrupt market functioning and lead to higher food prices. This will also hamper the implementation of humanitarian assistance and limit agricultural and livestock activities.
	Deterioration of the socio-political situation in Chad, leading to the withdrawal of Chadian military troops stationed in Burkina Faso	The withdrawal of the Chadian army from the north of the country could encourage terrorist groups to strengthen or expand their presence in the Liptako-Gourma area. This could lead to an increase in violence against the civilian population and disruption of local markets and livelihood activities.

AREA OF CONCERN

North Livelihood Zone, transhumant livestock and millet (BF08)

Current situation

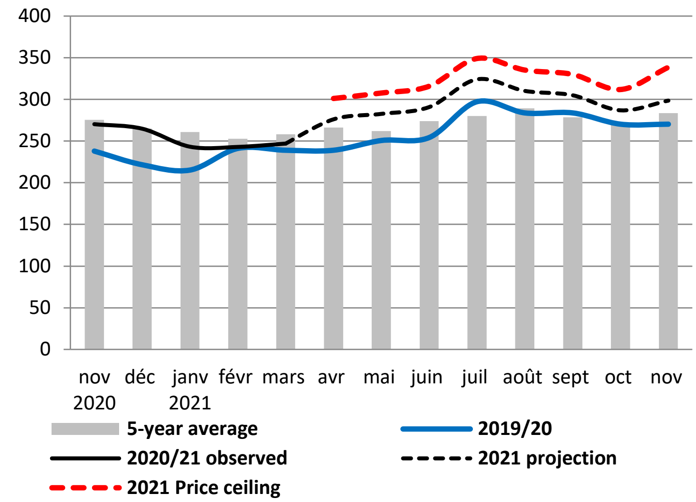
Since October 2020, the security situation has escalated further in the area through the increasing number of incursions by terrorist groups, who kidnap and kill civilians and set fire to and loot people's property and livestock. These acts of violence and threats are increasing the number of internally displaced people, who in March represented 23 percent of the total population, compared to 15 percent in November 2020. These displaced people are concentrated in the town of Gorom-Gorom (the provincial capital of Oudalan) and in the towns of Arbinda and Djibo in the province of Soum. The reinforced military presence with the G5 Sahel forces has not yet prevented these repeated acts of violence. More than one-third of villages have been emptied of their populations and most health facilities are closed or operating at minimal capacity. Healthcare is available mainly in the towns mentioned above.

Terrorist groups' acts of violence have caused the departure of large-scale livestock farmers from the area, as access to the main water sources (ponds and Christine boreholes) and pastoral areas is limited. Medium and small-scale livestock farmers have moved to safer areas around the urban centers (Gorom-Gorom, Dori, and Djibo). In these areas, heavy livestock pressure has led to early drying up of water sources and rapid degradation of accessible pasture. The pastoral lean season is therefore off to a difficult start, and livestock feed prices have already risen by 12 to 15 percent, in some areas reaching their usual May-June lean season peak.

On the whole, markets have low traffic from collectors and buyers. At the main market in Gorom-Gorom, IDPs and host households are destocking their livestock to limit losses from threats of looting and to meet food and non-food needs. As a result, the supply of small ruminants is 30 percent higher than normal for this period. Nevertheless, goat and ram prices remain 31 percent and 15 percent above average respectively, creating favorable terms of trade for those farmers who still have livestock. Destocking in previous years and looting have reduced households' selling capacity, as over 90 percent have reported a decline in their numbers due to insecurity (Early Warning System [EWS]/National Strategy for Food and Nutrition Security [ENSAN], March 2021).

The Gorom-Gorom market is the only market less affected by security-related incidents. Supplies to markets in border communes (Tin-Akoff, Deou, Koutougou, and Nassoubou) are difficult because of attacks on transporters and transport trucks being set on fire. Costs of transporting goods have almost doubled, due to the decreased number of transporters, increased travel times, and escort costs. The market is households' main food source, as self-produced stocks are depleted for about 60 percent of households. Staple cereal (millet and sorghum) prices, usually the highest in the country, are up between 20 and 30 percent from last year. Compared to the five-year average, staple cereal prices are stable on the Gorom-Gorom market (Figure 2), but up by about 20 percent in border communes.

Figure 2. Gorom-Gorom market: Retail millet price per kg in FCFA



Source: *FEWS NET*

Animal sales, remittances, and livestock labor are usually the main sources of household income. Large-scale livestock farmers' abandonment of the area has reduced the demand for labor, and remittances are negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Livestock destocking is therefore the main alternative for households, resulting in a deterioration of livelihoods.

During the fourth quarter of 2020, health facilities in Gorom-Gorom and Djibo recorded a significant increase in admissions of malnourished children, which rose by 39 percent and 66 percent respectively for moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and by 94 percent and 20 percent respectively for severe acute malnutrition (SAM), compared to the same period last year. The strong presence of displaced persons places an additional burden on health services and contributes to this increase in admissions. Additionally, closures and reduced functioning of health services hinders community-based interventions to prevent malnutrition at earlier stages.

Assumptions

- The security situation in the area will remain concerning, and incursions may continue in the coming months due to open borders. This could continue negatively impacting upcoming agricultural and livestock activities in the area until at least September. This will also prevent the return of large-scale livestock farmers and thus limit the usually abundant milk supply between August and September.

- Insecurity and the deterioration of the road network during the rainy season are the main factors that will keep local markets supplied below average until the end of the lean season. Food assistance coverage remains low in the area, and IDPs and host households will depend more heavily on markets due to the early depletion of their stocks. As a result, prices will remain above average until the first harvests begin in September.

- Until the rains resume and pastures regenerate in July, farmers will be forced to increase destocking as a strategy to mitigate a more difficult lean season. Supplies will be higher in markets. Despite the additional demand for animals during the upcoming Muslim holidays in May and July, increased supply and declining livestock conditions may result in prices falling to around the five-year average. Below-average prices may be seen in the northern border towns less frequented by buyers. Terms of trade for livestock and cereals will likely be worse than normal.

Most likely food security outcomes

Because of early food stock depletion and difficult humanitarian access to the area, IDPs and poor host households will reduce the quality and number of meals eaten per day. Unsustainable animal sales and begging are the most common strategies. These strategies may intensify in the coming months as food access keeps deteriorating. Humanitarian assistance is difficult to provide in most villages in the area due to lack of access. Assistance planned for March and April only covers an average of 14 percent of the population. Access to drinking water is also a concern and heat waves between April and June will cause the water table to lower, thereby reducing available water sources. The population's limited access to health care and drinking water, paired with decreased food consumption, will cause an increase in the number of malnourished people in an area already experiencing a critical nutritional situation (Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition

[SMART], October 2020). The area will remain exposed to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity until the end of the lean season in September.

Events that could change the scenarios

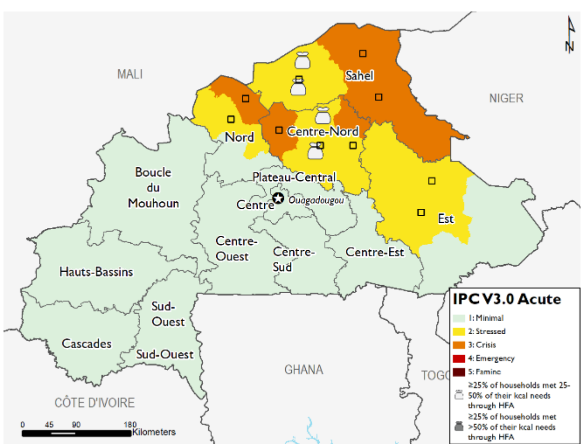
Possible events over the next six months that could change the most likely scenario.

Area	Events	Impact on food security conditions
BF08	Early rains	The onset of early rains in June will help increase the availability of water for livestock. This will prevent pronounced decline of their physical conditions and increase their market value, thus improving the terms of trade.
	Blocking of the Dori-Gorom-Gorom highway by jihadist groups	The Dori-Gorom-Gorom highway is the main supply route for the area. Blocking this highway would lead to a disruption in the supply of basic foodstuffs and would prevent buyers from visiting the livestock market. Food prices would then rise more significantly while animal prices would fall more sharply. This will lead to a decline in terms of trade and household food access.

MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES AND AREAS WITH SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE*

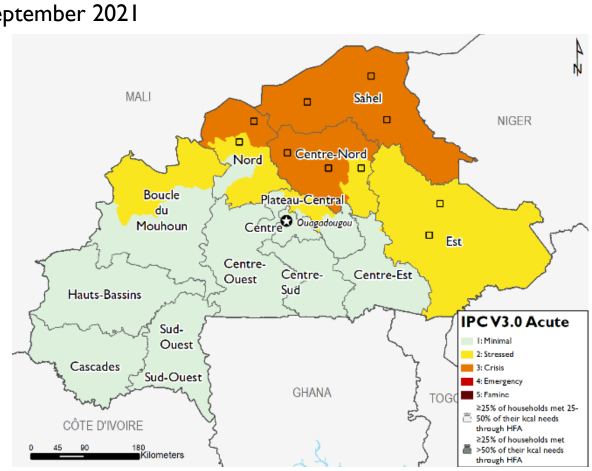
Each of these maps conforms to IPC version 3.0 humanitarian food assistance mapping protocols, and indicates locations where significant levels of humanitarian assistance are or should be provided. The symbol indicates that at least 25 percent of households received on average 25 to 50 percent of their caloric needs through food assistance. The symbol indicates that at least 25 percent of households received on average more than 50 percent of their caloric needs through food assistance. This mapping protocol differs from the (!) protocol used at the top of the report. Use of the (!) symbol indicates areas that would likely be at least one phase worse without current or programmed humanitarian assistance.

Projected most likely food security outcomes, April to May 2021



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected most likely estimated food security outcomes, June to September 2021



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This food security update covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates the FEWS NET Food Security Outlook, which is published three times a year. Learn more about our work here.